

Public Document Pack

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 7TH SEPTEMBER, 2020

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Please find attached supplementary papers relating to the above meeting.

The following reports have been added under urgency provisions. The reason for urgency is: 'that the Statement of Accounts must be approved by 30 November 2020, in line with the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. The next scheduled Finance, Audit and Risk Committee is due to take place after this deadline on 3 December 2020.'

Agenda No	Item
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| 9. | <u>STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2019/20</u> (Pages 3 - 108)
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES
To consider the Statement of Accounts 2019/20. |
| 10. | <u>DRAFT AUDIT RESULTS REPORT</u> (Pages 109 - 158)
REPORT OF ERNST AND YOUNG
To consider the Draft Audit Results Report. |

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**FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE
7 SEPTEMBER 2020**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2019/20

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR- RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: *NON-EXECUTIVE*

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A MORE WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE COUNCIL / BUILD THRIVING AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES / RESPOND TO CHALLENGES TO THE ENVIRONMENT / ENABLE AN ENTERPRISING AND CO-OPERATIVE ECONOMY / SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF GOOD QUALITY AND AFFORDABLE HOMES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to ask Finance, Audit and Risk Committee to approve the audited Statement of Accounts for 2019/20. The Annual Statement of Accounts has been subject to external audit and a draft is enclosed with the report as Appendix A.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the draft 2019/20 Annual Statement of Accounts, as set out in Appendix A, be approved based on the draft Audit Results report.
- 2.2. That subject to the final Audit Results report not requiring any substantial changes, the Committee delegates to the Chair of the Committee the final approval of the 2019/20 Annual Statement of Accounts. This will include confirming that the Chair of the Committee can sign the Statement of Accounts to confirm that they have been approved by the Committee.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that the Council abides by the Audit and Account Regulations 2015, which require the approval and publication of audited Statement of Accounts.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None. The Authority is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts and must follow accounting practices guidance issued by the Secretary of State and follow 'proper practices' governing the preparation of the annual Statement of Accounts (Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2003).

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. Consultation on the Statement of Accounts is not required.
- 5.2 The draft Statement of Accounts was published on the Council's website at the end of June 2020.
- 5.3 The accounts are subject to audit by the Council's External Auditors, Ernst and Young LLP.
- 5.4 Under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (sections 26 and 27) and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (sections 14 and 15), members of the public and Local Government electors have certain rights in respect of the audit process. This includes inspection of the accounts, associated documents and being able to ask questions. This opportunity was advertised in accordance with the regulations. No one took up this opportunity.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The Council is legally required to produce a statement of accounts detailing the financial activities for the year and overall financial position as at 31 March. Generally it has a statutory responsibility to publish its draft Statement of Accounts by 31 May, and that an audited version should be approved by 31 July 2020. Due to the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic the deadlines have been extended, and an audited version should be approved by 30 November 2020.
- 7.2 The Council's external auditors, Ernst & Young LLP, have carried out the vast majority of their audit work during July and August. Their draft report will be presented to Members at this meeting tonight.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. A draft of the audited version of the Statement of Accounts is attached at Appendix A.
- 8.2. As detailed in the draft Audit Results report from Ernst and Young LLP (also on the agenda for this meeting), they have not yet completed all of their audit work and therefore are not in a position to issue a final Audit Results report. While they do not expect that the remaining work will require any significant changes to the Statement of Accounts, it is possible that there might be some minor changes required in relation to pensions. This therefore requires a change to the usual recommendation that would accompany this report. The Committee are asked to approve the Statement of Accounts based on the draft Audit Results Report, and to delegate to the Chair of the Committee the final approval when the final Audit Results Report is issued.

This will be on the basis that there are no substantial changes required, as if there are then the Statement of Accounts will be brought back to the Committee for approval. Once finally approved, the Statement of Accounts will be formally signed. The Chair will sign page 1 of the Statement of Accounts to confirm that they have been approved by the Committee. The Service Director- Resources (as the Council's Chief Finance Officer) will sign the Statement of Responsibilities (page 1 of Appendix A) to certify that the statement of accounts give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2020 and its income and expenditure for the year then ended. The Service Director- Resources (as Chief Finance Officer) and the Chair of the Committee will also sign the Letter of Representation on behalf of the Council. The wording of the Letter of Representation can be found as an appendix to the Audit Results Report document, which will be presented by Ernst & Young this evening.

- 8.3 The Narrative Report (page 6 of Appendix 1) within the statement of accounts provides an overview of how the accounts are presented and highlights the most significant matters.
- 8.4 Officers are not aware of any events that have occurred since the year end that provide additional evidence of conditions that existed at the 31 March 2020 or materially affect the amounts included in the Statement of Accounts. In particular there has not been any subsequent event that would require an amendment to the contingent assets and liabilities listed in the accounts. The implications of the Covid-19 pandemic were already being felt by the Council at the 31st March and have continued to have significant impacts since. A summary of this is provided in the narrative report. There is also a justification on page 43 that it is still appropriate to prepare the accounts on a Going Concern basis.
- 8.5 In note 36 (Related Party Transactions) on page 76 there are two amounts that are still to be confirmed. These relate to the Council's share of any profit in relation to Hertfordshire Building Control Limited and Hertfordshire CCTV Partnership Limited. These amounts will only be available when the audits of the respective company accounts are complete. The amounts involved are not material or significant to the accounts overall. When the amounts are available then the Statement of Accounts will be updated.
- 8.6 The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is also recommended to be approved by Finance, Audit & Risk Committee at this meeting tonight. The Council has a legal duty to ensure that the publication of the Statement of Accounts is accompanied by the publication of the Annual Governance Statement.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 determine how and when the Annual Statement of Accounts should be approved and published. For 2019/20 the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 have amended the dates by which the accounts have to be prepared and approved.

- 9.2. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (section 9) state the accounts should be signed and dated by the Member presiding at the meeting which formally approves the accounts. Under the constitution, the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee has responsibility to “review and approve the Statement of Accounts” (constitution 10.1.5a).
- 9.3. The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (sections 26 and 27) and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (sections 14 and 15) grant members of the public and Local Government electors certain rights in respect of the audit process.
- 9.4 The Local Government Act 2003 (section 21) determines that the Council must follow ‘proper practices’ in the preparation of the annual Statement of Accounts.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The outturn reports were presented to Members in June. These provided the end of year position of the general fund, other reserves and capital expenditure. None of the changes to the Statement of Accounts identified from the audit have resulted in any change to the outturn position reported.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The process of compiling the Statement of Accounts is a control mechanism to help mitigate against the risk of poor financial management and is a way the Council can demonstrate to the public how it has managed its resources and acted in its responsibility as a steward of public funds

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to *this report*.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no direct human resource implications arising from this report.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A - Draft Audited Statement of Accounts 2019/20

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

17.1 *Ian Couper, Service Director- Resources, ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk, Ext 4243*

17.2 Antonio Ciampa, Accountancy Manager, Antonio.ciampa@north-herts.gov.uk, Ext: 4566

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 *None*

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**Statement of Accounts
2019/2020**

**North
Hertfordshire
District Council**

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The Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts

The Authority's Responsibilities

The Authority is required to:

- Make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In this Authority, that officer is the Service Director – Resources;
- Manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets;
- Approve the statement of accounts.

Service Director – Resources' Responsibilities

The Service Director – Resources is responsible for the preparation of the Authority's statement of accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code).

In preparing the statement of accounts, the Service Director – Resources has:

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

The Service Director – Resources has also:

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

I certify that the Statement of Accounts gives a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority at the 31 March 2020 and its income and expenditure for the year then ended.

Ian Couper

Service Director – Resources

The Chair of the Approving Committee Responsibilities

I confirm that these accounts were approved by the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee at the meeting held on 7 September 2020. Signed on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council:

Chair of meeting approving the accounts:

Councillor Aspinwall, Chair of the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee

Date:

Independent Auditor's Report

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Independent Auditor's Report

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Narrative Report

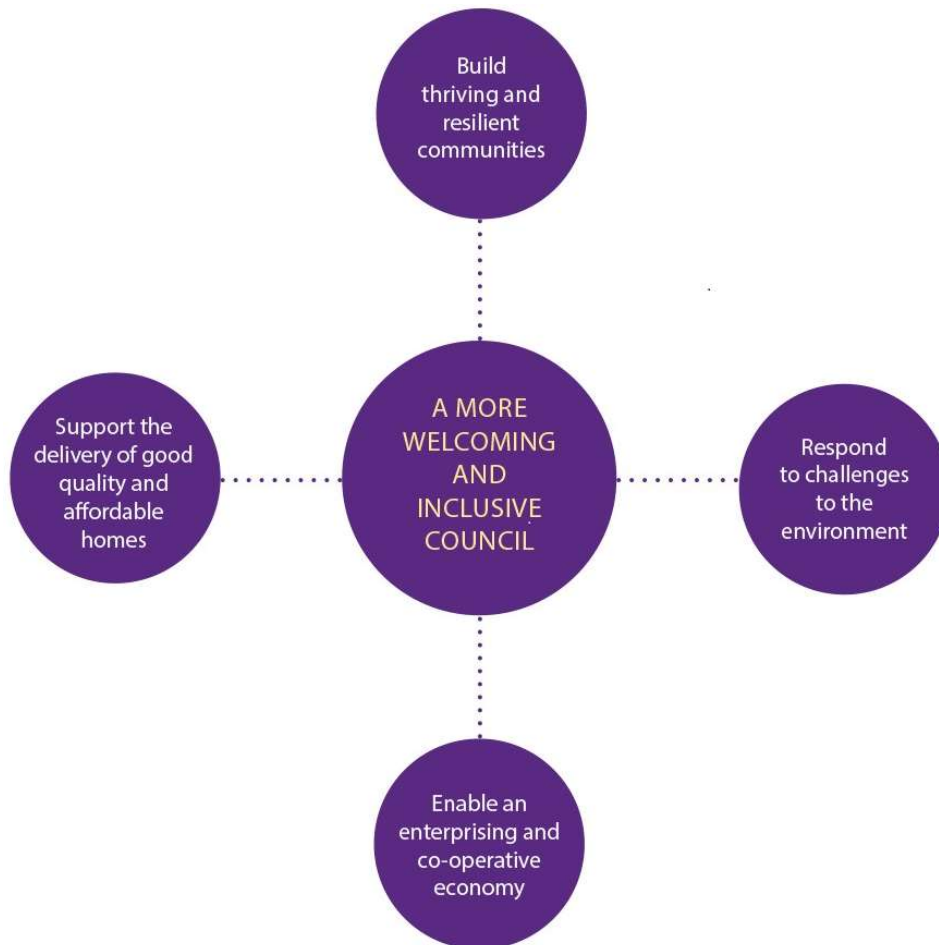
This narrative report provides a summary of the key information that is contained within the Statement of Accounts, as well as providing more information about the Council. This includes the vision and objectives, performance over the year and how resources are allocated.

The Council Plan, Vision and Objectives

The Council has a five year Council Plan that it reviews each year, although the intention is that the vision and objectives should be in place for at least a five year period. Following the local elections in May 2019, a joint administration of Labour and Co-operative and Liberal Democrat Councillors was formed. The plan agreed in November 2019 for the period 2020-25 reflects the aims and ambitions of the joint administration. The full plan can be found here <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/council-plan>

The Council's overall vision is to make **“North Hertfordshire a district in which everyone who lives, works or visits is able to flourish”**.

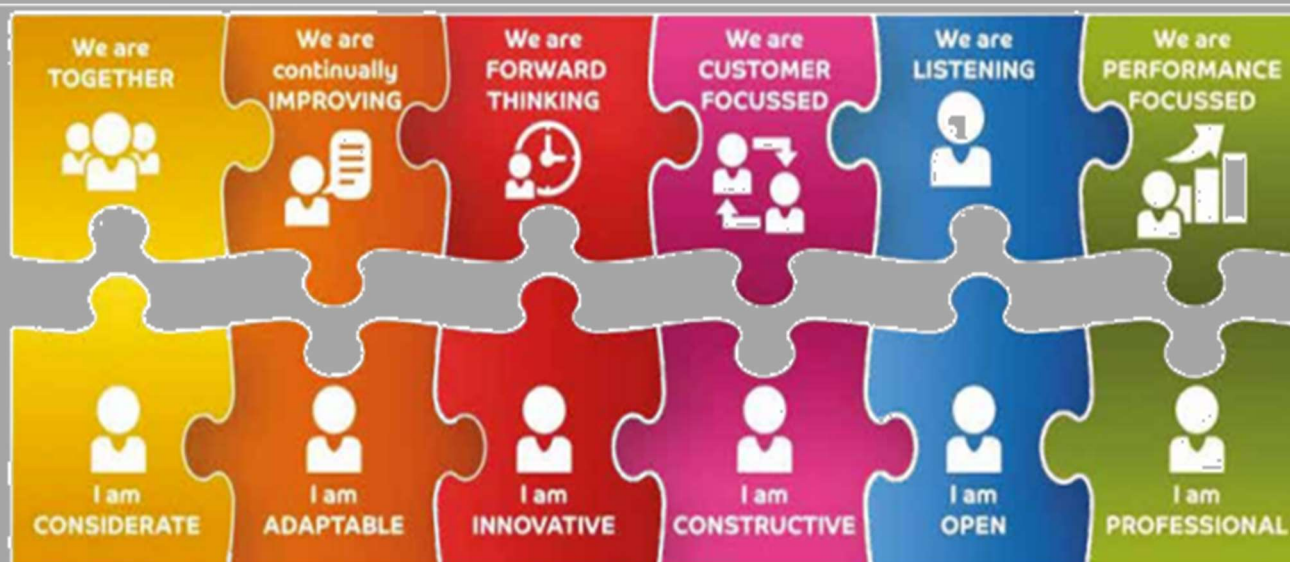
The Council understands that it must work with its partners, businesses, and urban and rural communities to achieve this vision. This is reflected in our five objectives which are:



Narrative Report

We will operate in line with the principles of a co-operative council. The Council will be one that builds the co-operative values of mutual support, accountability, fairness and responsibility into everything it does.

New organisational values have recently been adopted. These are expected to be demonstrated by staff and these values are embedded in our appraisal system to ensure our plan is delivered in a co-operative manner. The values (“We are”) are matched with corresponding behaviours for staff (“I am”). The values and behaviours are: -



What we do

Despite reductions in funding, the Council continues to deliver a wide range of statutory and non-statutory services. Some of the statutory services are provided at levels beyond the statutory minimum.

Examples of the delivery of statutory duties are:

- Waste collection from just over 58,000 households
- 57% of household waste sent for re-use, recycling and composting
- Street cleansing over 400 miles of roads
- Food inspections of around 600 premises.
- Collecting Council Tax and Business Rates from just over 58,000 homes and 4,500 businesses
- Planning for the second largest district in Hertfordshire at 145 square miles.
- Issuing of approximately 2,200 licences to premises and licenced individuals, around 550 licences to taxi and private hire vehicles and drivers and in the region of 650 temporary licenses to premises/individuals.
- Homelessness provision
- Housing Benefit to around 4,700 claimants
- Regulation e.g. Parking, Fly-tipping.

Non-statutory services provided include:

- Leisure centres in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston
- Five swimming pools including 2 outdoor pools
- Maintenance of 100 hectares of parks and gardens
- ‘Splash’ parks in the four towns.
- Museum provision in the new North Hertfordshire Museum in Hitchin
- Local information and signposting to other services and providers
- Active Communities events

Narrative Report

Impact of Covid-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the Council, although the vast majority of the financial impact will be in 2020/21 and possibly beyond. The Council is incurring and expects to incur additional costs for things like:

- providing accommodation for homeless peoples
- supporting our waste to reintroduce the garden waste service and bulky waste collections, and manage the increased waste being collected from residents spending more time at home
- the additional costs of processing recycling materials and the expected reduction in the value of those materials
- setting aside reserve funding to support community groups to provide support to vulnerable people during the pandemic
- the additional set-up costs of enabling our staff to work at home to continue to deliver our services, which as a result of existing high levels of home-working has worked very well.

However the more significant impact is likely to be on our income and funding. The impacts have been seen during the lock-down period and (in some cases) are expected to continue for a longer period during the recovery phase too. The areas which have been impacted include:

- Leisure Facilities
- Parking
- Increase in the number of households eligible for reductions in their Council Tax
- Trade Waste
- the additional set-up costs of enabling our staff to work at home to continue to deliver our services, which as a result of existing high levels of home-working has worked very well.
- Planning Fees
- Hitchin Town Hall and Museum

In addition to the above, the Cabinet Office issued a Procurement Policy Note in March relating to supplier relief. This covers providing support to our contractors and suppliers, including advanced payments and open book accounting. This means that where services delivered by contractors have not been provided (e.g. due to lock-down) the Council will not necessarily see a reduction in the costs incurred.

The total impact of all the above in 2020/21 is very dependent on how quickly things recover. The Council has evolving recovery plans in place that cover:

- Reintroducing any services that have had to be temporarily suspended. This includes working with our contractors.
- Reviewing how staff can work in our buildings where they need to
- Supporting our staff where they continue to work at home in relation to health and safety needs and general wellbeing

Narrative Report

Impact of Covid-19

The Council has received general funding from Government of £1.55m, as well as some targeted funding in relation to homelessness. We have also been provided with some of the additional funding for the extra work that has been taken on in administering Business Rate rebilling, Business Grants and Council Tax Hardship payments. Government has also provided details of an income guarantee, which will provide a contribution of 75% towards lost sales, fees and charges income above an initial threshold. Whilst these payments are welcome, it is expected that the overall financial impact the Council will face will be far greater. The Council will continue to petition Government for additional funding that would reduce the impact that has to be funded by local taxpayers.

The Council has built up reserves in recent years to provide some time to adapt when future expected reductions in Government were implemented. If necessary, these reserves will be used to cover any shortfall in the funding provided by Government in 2020/21. There could also be a financial impact going beyond 2020/21 as a result of a slow economic recovery or longer-term changes affecting the Council's income and/or Business Rates funding. There could also be a longer-term impact in relation to an increased eligibility for Council Tax reductions, and therefore the reduced Council Tax income that the Council can collect. The reserves should also provide coverage for the impacts in 2021/22.

The Council's budget planning will primarily be focused on a one-year budget for 2021/22 (whilst considering medium-term implications) that may continue to include some short-term recovery spend. It will include any efficiency savings that can be identified but will not involve significant service changes or reductions. New or additional spend will be avoided wherever possible, unless it is strictly time-limited and is expected to deliver transformation or future savings. It is then expected that the Council will receive more information on future funding levels during 2021/22 for implementation from 2022/23. The budget process during 2021/22 will therefore focus back on the medium term and include longer term considerations as well.

The Council has needed to keep a lot more of its cash liquid, which has included keeping more money in its current account and short-term deposits with the Debt Management Office. This is due to:

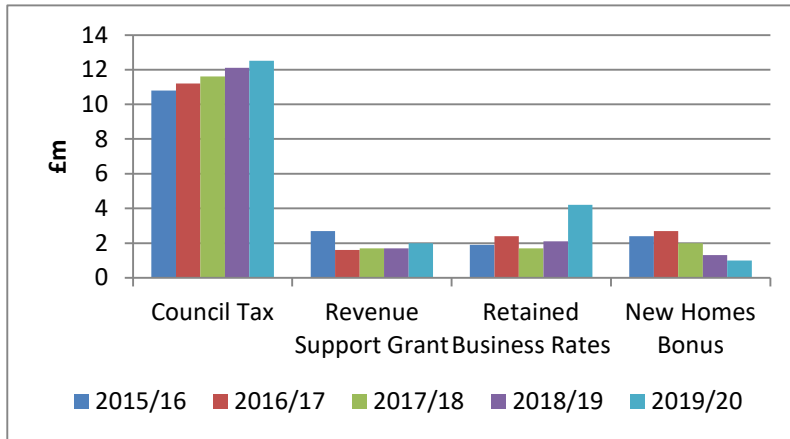
- the receipt of additional funding to be paid out as business grants
- forward funding of other grants
- the uncertainty over the receipt of fees and charges income
- the uncertainty over the receipt and timing of those receipts for Council Tax and Business Rates, and the need to fund precept payments to Hertfordshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Parish Councils and Business Improvement Districts.

Narrative Report

Our funding

The Council is required to split its spending between Revenue (day-to-day running costs) and Capital (buying and creating assets with a useful life of more than one year). Similarly, our funding is split between Revenue and Capital. We can only use Capital funding sources for Capital spend (i.e. we can't use this funding for day-to-day running costs).

Revenue funding sources (Taxation and General Grants):



Increases in Council Tax are limited by Central Government, unless agreed by a local referendum. In 2019/20 the Council raised its element of Council Tax by £5 for a band D property (with other bands pro-rata to this), which was the maximum possible without a referendum.

The Revenue Support Grant total includes section 31 grants, which is where Central Government provides reimbursements for reliefs and discounts in relation to Business Rates. The actual grant to support general expenditure has decreased substantially in recent years and has been zero for the last few years.

The current Business Rates system involves 50% of funding being retained within Local Government, and the balance going to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Each Authority has an assessed baseline need and, as the Council's assessed need is a lot lower than the income it collects, it has to pay a levy which redistributes the funding to other Authorities. The Council retains some of any growth in Business Rates, but is also exposed to falls as well (subject to a safety net level). This would mean that usually the Council keeps around 6p out of every £1 it collects. During 2019/20, the Council was part of a Business Rates Pilot with Hertfordshire County Council and the other Hertfordshire Districts/ Boroughs. For one year, this resulted in a greater proportion of Business Rates being retained locally. Overall the Council retained approximately 10p of every £1 collected.

Income from New Homes Bonus increased up to 2016/17 as the period for which the Bonus was paid increased each year. In 2016/17 Authorities received the bonus for new housing in the previous 6 years. For 2017/18, the period reduced to 5 years, and further has reduced year by year since then. Alongside this a baseline was also introduced, so the Bonus is only paid if housing growth for that year is above a certain level.

The increase in overall funding to £19.7m in 2019/20, compared to a total of £17.5m in 2018/19, is primarily due to the one-off financial benefit from the Business Rates Pilot.

How we allocate our funding

At the same time that the Council reviews its Council Plan, it also carries out an annual review of its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). This estimates the funding that we expect to have in future years and sets the strategy for meeting any shortfall. This strategy is inherently linked to the Council Plan. The current MTFS can be found here:

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/budgets-and-spending/medium-term-financial-strategy>

Current spend provides a good starting point for assessing the future costs of providing services. Future budgets are estimated from this starting point, with adjustments for inflation, service changes, efficiencies and demography.

Each year, Officers and Councillors are asked to come up with ideas for reducing expenditure (e.g. income generation, efficiencies and service changes). Each of the Political Groups are given an opportunity to comment on these proposals at Budget Workshops held in the Autumn. These comments are considered by Cabinet when they formulate a budget in January. This budget is presented to Full Council in February for approval.

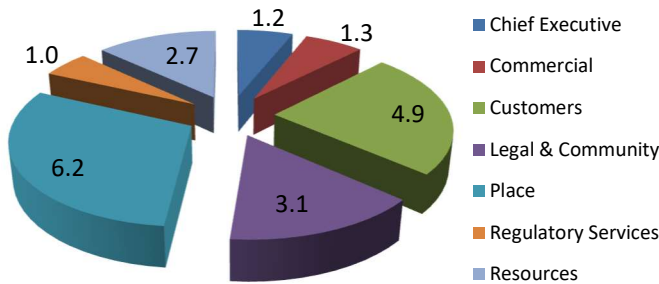
In the future it may be necessary to carry out a fuller review of the services that the Council provides. This could involve determining the cost of providing statutory services and see what funding is left to provide discretionary services. It will be down to Councillors to decide which of these services continue to be provided.

Narrative Report

Spend by service area

For 2019/20 the Council was managed under 6 Service Directorates and the Chief Executive area (including Communications), and spend against these was as follows:

Service related net spend (by Strategic Directorate), £m



Future Funding

Reforms to Council funding are now expected to be implemented in 2022/23 (further delayed due to Covid-19). It is still expected that this will include a move to 75% Business Rate Retention and a new Fair Funding Formula. This means that more money will be provided to Local Government but will be matched by new responsibilities. The way that this pot of money is then allocated to individual Councils will also change. It is expected that this will result in more money being provided to Social Care authorities, and therefore less to Authorities like North Hertfordshire District Council. Any change may be phased in, although it is expected that this phasing will be quite short.

The Council is continuing to look at ideas for income generation, efficiencies and service changes to help meet this challenge if/ when it happens.

Budgeting for Risk

In setting the budget each year, the Council's Chief Finance Officer is required to recommend a minimum level of General Fund reserves (the money that the Council has that is not allocated to a specific purpose). This minimum level is currently calculated as:

- 5% of the net budget of the Council- which is an allowance for unknown financial risks
- +
- An assessment of known financial risks by both value and likelihood of occurring

For 2019/20, this resulted in a recommended minimum General Fund level of £1.96 million. The budgeted balance was £7.1 million at the start of the year and £7.1 million at the end of the year. The actual balance at 31st March 2020 was £9.4 million.

Monitoring expenditure

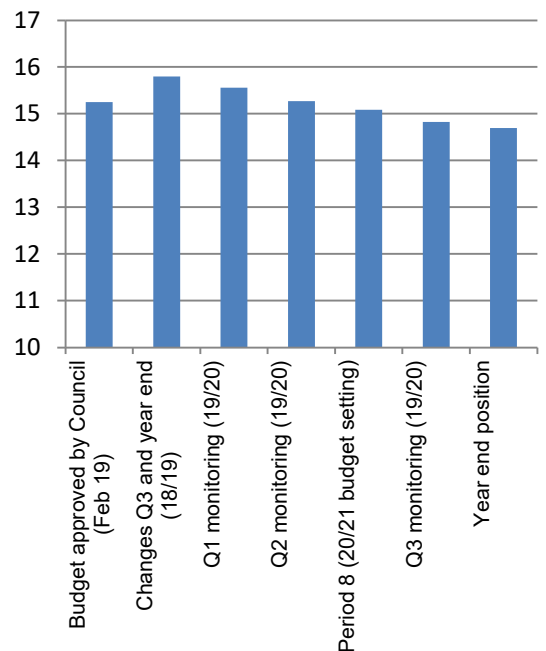
The Council's Cabinet are responsible for monitoring expenditure (both revenue and capital) and they receive quarterly reports to enable them to do this. The Finance, Audit and Risk Committee review the financial performance of the Council. They receive the same reports and are able to make recommendations to Cabinet.

Success at achieving savings

Budgeted revenue savings achieved by year since 2010/11 (efficiencies, income generation and service change)

Year	Savings Achieved (£m)
2010/11	1.3
2011/12	1.9
2012/13	0.6
2013/14	0.7
2014/15	1.6
2015/16	0.4
2016/17	0.4
2017/18	1.2
2018/19	2.9
2019/20	0.6
Total	11.6

Reported spend forecasts in 2019/20 (£m)



Narrative Report

Corporate Financial Health Indicators (Income)

In addition to overall monitoring, the quarterly reports also detail performance in relation to 4 of the Council's key sources of income.

Income category	Budgeted Income (£'000)	Q1 Status	Q2 Status	Q3 Status	Q4 Status	Actual Income (£'000)
Planning Application Fees	950	Green	Green	Red	Red	861
Land Charges	164	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green	165
Car Parking Fees	1,809	Green	Green	Green	Green	1,823
Penalty Charge Notices	532	Green	Green	Green	Green	726

Capital funding

The Council funds capital expenditure from these main sources:

- Government Grants
- S106 developer contributions
- Other Contributions – including third party contributions and financing from revenue.
- Capital receipts - amounts received from the sale of surplus assets
- Set aside capital receipts - the remainder of the amounts received from the sale of our housing stock to North Herts Homes in 2003

The Council can also borrow money to fund capital expenditure, subject to meeting certain conditions. The Council has historic borrowing of £423k which is not worth repaying early (as at 31st March 2020).

During 2019/20 the Council's capital expenditure was funded from the following sources:

	£'000
Government Grants	2
S106 Developer Contributions	346
Other Contributions	89
Capital Receipts	639
Set-aside receipts	397
Total	1,473

As at the end of the year, the Council had £1.9m of Capital Receipts and £5.5m of set-aside receipts remaining.

Significant Capital Projects in 2019/20

Multi Use Games Area at Bancroft Recreation Ground, Hitchin,
Renovate the play area at District Park, Great Ashby
Walsworth Common Pitch Improvements
Grants for improvements to community facilities
Capitalisation of three-year Microsoft Enterprise Agreement

All projects with spend greater than £50,000 in 2019/20

The Council's capital assets

The total value of the Authorities capital (long-term) assets is £116.5 million.

The main components of this are:

- Property, Plant and Equipment (£95.6 million) used to deliver services
- Heritage assets (£0.9 million), the museum collections and public artwork
- Investment properties (£18.4 million) that generate an annual income from being leased out (£1.2 million in 2019/20)
- Long-term treasury investments (£1.0 million)

The property assets are revalued on a regular basis (at least every 5 years).

Narrative Report

The Council's liabilities

The most significant liability that the Council has is its pension fund, which is administrated by Hertfordshire County Council. All of the Council's employees are eligible to join the pension scheme, which provides a retirement benefit that is linked to earnings. Employees make a contribution as part of their salary based on percentage rates that are set nationally. The Council also makes employer contributions. These contributions are based on:

- The estimated cost of the benefits being accrued by current employees – it is impossible to know what this really is as they will be payable from an unknown future date (when the employee retires) for an unknown period (depending on how long the employee lives for).
- Making up the shortfall from the past where the previous contributions are now considered to be insufficient – the shortfall is due to a combination of factors including people living longer and the old scheme where pensions were based on final salary. To stabilise the impact on Council Tax, this is being caught up on over a number of years.

The pension scheme is fully revalued every 3 years, with a less detailed revaluation each year in between. These valuations are undertaken by an actuary and involve a number of assumptions about the future. As the shortfall is being caught up on over time, this leaves an outstanding liability. This liability is the difference between the estimated value of the future pension payments that have been accrued and the value of the assets held by the pension fund.

As at the 31st March 2020, the value of the liability was £30.9 million (compared with £51.4 million at 31st March 2019). During the year, the Council made contributions of £2.7 million (of which £1.0 million was a lump sum relating to past shortfalls) and its employees contributed £0.6 million.

Key partners and contractors

Services may not always be delivered by the Council alone, but increasingly in a partnership with others.

Key partners include those in partner authorities and other Councils across the country, Urbaser (waste contract), John O'Connor (grounds maintenance contract), Stevenage Leisure Limited, settle, Countryside Management Service and Groundwork.

We work to support local, County wide and wider partnerships that seek to improve the wellbeing of our local community e.g. through the North Herts Health and Wellbeing Partnership and Hertfordshire Public Health Board.

Other key partners in the operation of the Council include District Councillors, County Councillors, Parish Councillors, local Members of Parliament, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association, the East of England Local Government Association, the Local Government Ombudsman, housing associations, North Herts Centre for Voluntary Service, Citizens Advice North Hertfordshire, North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum, Youth Connexions Herts, Business Improvement Districts, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, the Police, Herts Young Homeless and the Stevenage Haven.

Governance

The Council is required to review its governance arrangements annually and assess these against the International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector. An Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is published alongside the Statement of Accounts.

The Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee approves the AGS and monitors the actions identified.

The Action Plan from 2019/20 was last considered by the Committee at their meeting on 16th March 2020.

Narrative Report

Alternatives Models of Service Delivery

CCTV

The Council is engaged in a jointly controlled operation for the provision and management of CCTV in the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire area. This arrangement is with Stevenage Borough Council, North Hertfordshire Council, East Hertfordshire Council and Hertsmere Borough Council. Each member of the arrangement accounts for their share of the assets, liabilities and cash flows of the CCTV in their accounts. In 2013/14 all partner authorities agreed to incorporate a new company to conduct the commercial trading affairs of the CCTV partnership. This new company, Hertfordshire CCTV Partnership Ltd, started trading on the 1 April 2015. The Council's interest in this company is not considered to be material, and therefore it is not included within the Statement of Accounts.

Building Control

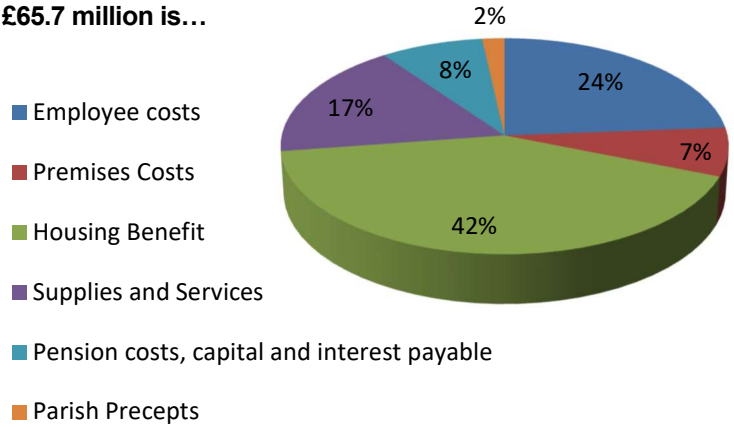
The Council set up a joint Building Control Company with six other Hertfordshire Authorities. The company began trading in August 2016. The company delivers statutory building control services on behalf of the Council, as well being able to access further areas of work to help spread the cost of the service. The Council's interest in this company is not considered to be material, and therefore it is not included within the Statement of Accounts.

Home Improvement Agency

During 2017/18 the Council was part of the setting up of a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) arrangement that is hosted by Hertfordshire County Council. The HIA integrates Disabled Facilities Grants and Occupational Therapists to provide a more seamless service to those who need housing adaptations. The Council shows its contribution to running costs and use of Disabled Facilities Grants within its accounts.

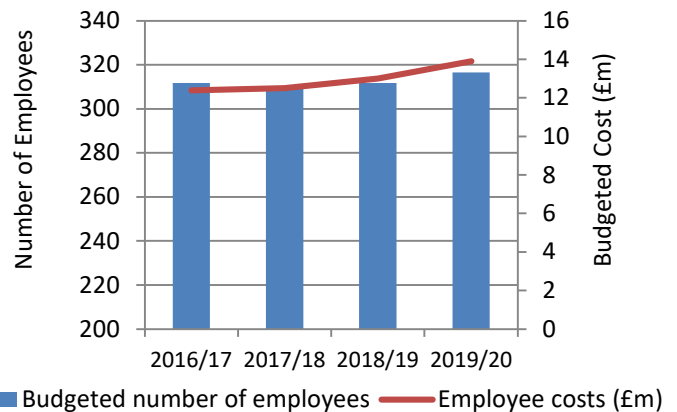
Spend by type, including employee spend

The breakdown of the Council's gross spend of £65.7 million is...



By far the largest area of expenditure is Housing Benefit, which the Council is responsible for administering. The Council claims a subsidy from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) towards the costs of benefits paid. In general, the subsidy covers the cost of the grants awarded.

The next two most significant areas of expenditure are employee costs and supplies and services. Supplies and services include the amounts paid to suppliers to deliver services on the Council's behalf (e.g. waste collection, street cleansing and grounds maintenance). The graph below shows the trend in numbers and costs of employees:







Whilst there is little fluctuation in the number of employees (as measured by the number of whole time equivalents) over the 4 years, the costs have increased. This reflects wage inflation and increasing pension contributions.

Narrative Report

Monitoring Projects









The Council's projects and performance are monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee receive quarterly update reports on projects and will receive an end of year report in June.

A summary of the position on the key projects throughout the year is:

Status	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
 Halted/ Funding not available	1	1	0	0
 Behind original due date or forecast not to meet due date	2	3	3	4
 Not due for completion in year or has not reached due date	3	2	2	1
-- Project pending	1	1	1	1
 Project Completed	2	0	1	0
	9	7	7	6

After being reported as completed the project is taken off for the next quarter. At Q1, 2 projects were reported as completed. 1 project was reported as completed at Q3.

The end of year position on the 9 projects was:

Project	Progress
Bancroft recreation ground MUGA	Reported as completed at Q1 
Renovation of Play area, District Park, Great Ashby	Reported as completed at Q1 
Complete the fit out and open the North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility	Museum opened on 6 th July 2019. The project was reported as halted in the first two quarters of the year with post-project review and evaluation pending. The project status was changed to completed at Q3 following sign-off by the project board of the project closure and lessons learned report. 
Development of a Crematorium in North Hertfordshire	Central Bedfordshire refused an outline planning application in March 2019. Cabinet approved funding for an appeal. New date for appeal hearing is awaited (postponed due to COVID-19). 
Submission of a Local Plan for North Herts	The Planning Inspector identified further queries in Summer 2019 and the Council submitted its responses before the end of the calendar year 2019. Further hearings in March 2020 were suspended due to COVID-19 restrictions and will resume when circumstances allow. 
Designating air quality management areas in Hitchin to address the improvement of the air quality – Stevenage Road and Paynes Park.	Officers are preparing an electric vehicle charging strategy and investigating enforcement options relating to vehicle idling. Other component project work streams have been halted or delayed during the year, either due to funding or staff capacity in the face of other work priorities. 
Churchgate	The Council was unsuccessful with the bid submitted to the "Future High Streets Fund" in Spring 2019. Project status subsequently reported as pending while officers explore alternative options. --
Investigating a range of options to improve use of Council assets	Stated aim to set up a company with subsidiary companies, the first being a Property Letting Company. Commercial viability assessed as marginal based on current portfolio. Officers looking at options to enhance viability through acquisition, developments and refurbishments. Conclusions anticipated in approximately six months. 
Brexit (Preparation for Brexit - deal or no deal) and implementation / management of those impacts, challenges and risks)	Dedicated Brexit page on Council website acts as information signpost for residents and local businesses. Monthly updates on preparations are provided to the Brexit Project Board set up in July 2019. As a corporate risk, risk assessments and mitigating actions are subject to scrutiny from the Council's Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. 

Narrative Report

Key Projects 2020/21

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee have identified the following key projects for 2020/21:





- Work with Hertfordshire County Council and East Hertfordshire District Council on a joint business case for a purpose-built depot, transfer facility and household waste recycling centre.
- Refurbishment of the gym changing rooms at North Hertfordshire Leisure Centre.
- Renovate play are at Howard Park, Letchworth.
- Churchgate
- Brexit
- Long-term museum storage solutions
- Examination and adoption of the 2011-2031 Local Plan.
- Development of a crematorium.
- Implement a “customer account” for customers to help them access information.
- Undertake actions to reduce emissions in Air Quality Management Areas.
- Deliver the Climate Change Strategy
- Disposal of surplus land and buildings
- Acquisition of property investments
- Property conversion at Harkness Court, Hitchin to provide housing at market rates

The Committee will receive updates against these projects on a quarterly basis which will be available here:





<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=134&Year=0>

Monitoring Performance

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also receive quarterly reports on Performance Indicators. During 2019/20 there were 19 indicators that were monitored, with some having targets and others for information only. A summary of the position on these throughout the year is:

Status	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
 Met or exceeded target	7	8	6	8
 Target not achieved but within agreed tolerance	3	4	6	4
 Not achieved and outside tolerance	2	0	0	0
 For information only and traffic light status is not applicable	7	7	7	7

The indicators that did not meet or exceed their target at Q4 were:

Indicator	Target	Actual Value	Comments
Working days lost due to short-term sickness absence per FTE employee	3.5	3.56 	Short-term absence reduced from 4.10 days per FTE recorded in 18/19. The mild spring and extensive homeworking may have helped reduce time lost to normal cold and flu viruses.
Number of visits to leisure centres	1.488m	1.448m 	A decrease in usage at Letchworth Outdoor Pool was due to the poor weather experienced over the outdoor pool season. The decreased usage at all other facilities resulted directly from COVID-19 restrictions.
Overall Tonnage of Food Waste collected	5,000	4,866 	Total tonnage affected by suspension of services in March 2020 due to COVID-19.
Overall Tonnage of Garden Waste collected	10,000	9,240 	Garden waste tonnages are both seasonal and dependent on weather patterns. Annual fluctuations are therefore to be expected.

Narrative Report

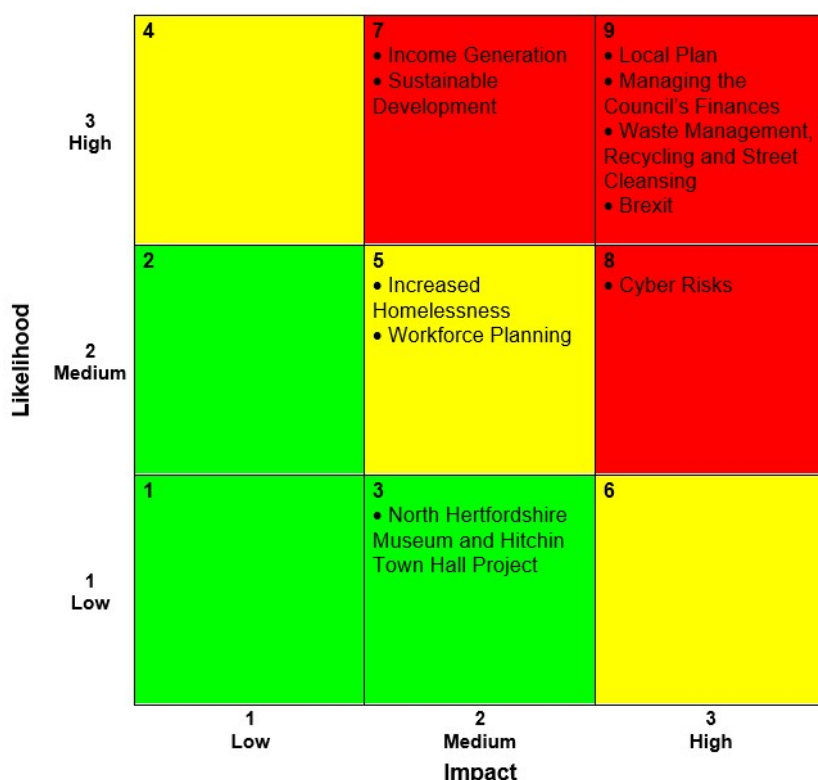
Monitoring Risk and Opportunities

The Council's processes for the development and operation of risk management are monitored by the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. The committee review reports and can make recommendations to Cabinet on any changes.

In March 2020, the Committee reviewed the Council's 'Risk Management Framework' (which can be found here; <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/performance-and-risk-management>). They recommended that the framework be adopted, which was then approved. The committee also receive quarterly reports on Corporate Risks.

Full Council receives an Annual Report on Risk Management in July each year.

At the start of the year the Council's Corporate Risks were:



During the year, the Committee received recommendations on changes to the following risks:

- North Hertfordshire Museum and Hitchin Town Hall Project to be removed as Museum is fully open and post-project review has been completed.
- Creation of a new corporate risk for the impact of anti-social behaviour on Council facilities with a risk score of 7.
- Waste services parent risk (scored at 9) to be replaced with a new 'Delivery of the Waste Collection and Street Cleansing Services Contract' risk, at a score of 8.
- Addition of 'External Factors Affecting the Future Provision of Waste Services' corporate risk, with a risk score of 6, to replace existing sub-risk.
- Introduction of a Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) risk with a score of 9.

Understanding the Accounts

The accounts are made up of 5 core financial statements:

- Expenditure and Funding Analysis
- Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- Movement in Reserves Statement
- Balance Sheet
- Cashflow statement

These are supported by a series of notes that provide further details of the numbers that they contain. Much of the information is of a technical nature and has been completed to be compliant with the 2019/20 Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and Service Reporting Code of Practice, which are based on the International Financial Reporting Standards. On the next page there is a summary of the key information from each of these statements.

Narrative Report

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

This statement shows the Council's cost of providing services. There are two key totals:

- Surplus or Deficit on provision of services
- Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure

The deficit on provision of services is £2.0 million, which includes actual income and expenditure incurred as well as adjustments for the cost of using capital assets (e.g. depreciation) and pension costs.

The total comprehensive income and expenditure (which is a surplus of £26.4 million) also includes the estimated gains on the revaluation of non-current (e.g. land and buildings) and pension assets. These gains would only be realised if the assets were actually sold.

Movement in Reserves Statements

This statement starts with the surplus or deficit on provision of services total (from the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement). A series of adjustments are then applied to get to the movement in the General Fund balance.

The General Fund balance is like the Council's savings account. We try to balance income and expenditure each year, but there will be variations which lead to amounts being added to or taken out of the General Fund. There is a need to maintain a certain level of savings, and Council Tax will be set to try and keep these at the right level.

The adjustments to get to the General Fund balance reflect that:

- The Council has separate funding sources for capital so rather than reflect the full cost of using assets; it only has to make allowances for the repayment of any borrowing that it has taken out to fund capital purchases.
- Rather than reflect the full cost of future pension liabilities, the Council only has to show current year contributions. These already include an element of catching up on previous deficits.

The overall result is that the movement on the General Fund is -£1.5 million, which means that the balance at the start of the year of £7.9 million is now £9.4 million.

This statement also shows the other reserves that the Council has. The key ones are:

- Earmarked Reserves - money that the Council has chosen to set aside for a specific purpose.
- Capital Receipts Reserve - funding that can be used to fund future capital expenditure.

Expenditure and Funding Analysis

This statement is the most relevant to Council Taxpayers as it shows the Council's spend by Directorate (net total of £15.2 million). It then goes on to show how this is funded from taxation and grants. The final section shows the impact on the General Fund balance.

Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the 31 March of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Council. The net assets of the Authority (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held. The total value of net assets of the Authority at 31 March 2020 is £114.4 million. Key assets and liabilities include:

- Property, Plant and Equipment used to deliver services: £95.6 million
- Investment properties used to generate income: £18.4 million
- Treasury investments: Long-term £1.0 million and Current £26.6 million
- Pension liabilities: -£30.9 million

Cashflow Statement

This shows the reason for changes in the Council's cash balances during the year, and whether that change is due to operating activities, new investment, or financing activities (such as repayment of borrowing and other long term liabilities).

Statement of Accounting Policies

1. GENERAL

- 1.1. The Statement of Accounts summarises the Authority's transactions for the 2019/20 financial year and the position at the year-end of 31 March 2020. The Authority is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Those Regulations require the accounts to be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and statutory guidance issued under section 12 of the 2003 Local Government Act.
- 1.2. 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. All disclosures are subject to materiality as the intention of the statement of accounts is to present a 'true and fair' view of financial position, financial performance and cashflows.

2. ACCRUALS OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

- 2.1. Subject to materiality, activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received. In particular:
- Revenue from the sale of goods is recognised when the Authority transfers the significant risks and rewards or ownership to the purchaser and it is probable that economic benefits or service potential associated with the transaction will flow to the Authority.
 - Revenue from the provision of services is generally recognised when the Authority can measure reliably the percentage of completion of the transaction and this reflects that the same proportion of the economic benefits or service potential associated with the transaction will flow to the Authority. Where the revenue is not material in value and the time interval between the receipt of the payment and transfer of the service to the service recipient is insignificant, the revenue is recognised when the payment is received. Where the provision of the service occurs over a period of time and the expectation of receiving the economic benefits or service potential only flows to the authority when the performance obligations have been completely fulfilled, the revenue will only be recognised when performance obligations in the contract have been fully satisfied.
 - Works are charged as expenditure when they are completed, before which they are carried as works in progress on the Balance Sheet.
 - 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.
 - Where revenue 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.
 - Expenses in relation to services received (including services provided by employees) are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made.
 - Interest receivable on investments and payable on borrowings is accounted for respectively as income and expenditure on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instrument rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract.

Statement of Accounting Policies

3. COUNCIL TAX AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES

- 3.1 Billing authorities act as agents, collecting Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) on behalf of the major preceptors (including government for NDR) and, as principals, collecting Council Tax and NDR for themselves. Billing authorities are required by statute to maintain a separate fund (i.e. the Collection Fund) for the collection and distribution of amounts due in respect of Council Tax and NDR. Under the legislative framework for the Collection Fund, billing authorities, major preceptors and central government share proportionately the risks and rewards that the amount of Council Tax and NDR collected could be less or more than predicted.
- 3.2 The Council Tax and NDR income included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the authority's share of accrued income for the year. However, regulations determine the amount of Council Tax and NDR that must be included in the authority's General Fund. 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 is taken to the Collection Fund Adjustment Account and included as a reconciling item in the Movement in Reserves Statement.
- 3.3 The Balance Sheet includes the authority's share of the end of year balances in respect of council tax and NDR relating to arrears, impairment allowances for doubtful debts, overpayments and prepayments and appeals.

4. BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

- 4.1 Business Improvement District (BID) schemes apply in Hitchin, Royston and Letchworth. The scheme is funded by a BID levy paid by non-domestic ratepayers. The Authority acts as an agent only under the scheme and so income is not shown in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement since the BID levies are collected on behalf of the relevant BID body.

5. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

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

6. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Benefits Payable During Employment

- 6.1. Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled wholly within 12 months of the year-end. They include such benefits as salaries, paid annual leave, paid sick leave, and banked hours in the flexi scheme for current employees and are recognised as an expense for services in the year in which employees render service to the Authority. 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.

Statement of Accounting Policies

Termination Benefits

- 6.2. 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. They are charged on an accruals basis in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and recognised at the earlier of when the Authority can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the authority recognises costs for a restructuring that involves the payment of termination benefits.
- 6.3. Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Authority 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 for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

Post Employment Benefits

- 6.4. As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers and other employees, the Authority offers retirement benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until the employees retire, the Authority has a commitment to make the payments that need to be disclosed at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.
- 6.5. The Authority participates in one pension scheme, the Local Government Pension Scheme, administered locally by Hertfordshire County Council. This is a funded defined benefit final salary scheme, meaning that the Authority and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pensions liabilities with investment assets.

The Local Government Pension Scheme

- 6.6. The Local Government Pension Scheme is accounted for as a defined benefits scheme:
- The liabilities of the Hertfordshire Local Government Pension Scheme 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 earnings for current employees.
 - Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate based on the indicative current rate of return on high quality corporate bonds of equivalent currency and term as the liabilities (rated at the level of AA or equivalent).
 - The assets of the Hertfordshire Local Government Pension Scheme attributable to the Authority are included in the balance sheet at their fair value:

quoted securities	– bid price
unquoted securities	– professional estimate
united securities	– average of the bid and offer rates
property	– market value

Statement of Accounting Policies

- 6.7. 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 in the financial year, allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the services for which the employees worked.

Past service cost – the increase in liabilities arising from current year decisions 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 Distributed Costs.

Net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset) – i.e. the net interest expense for the authority – the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. This is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability at the beginning of the period – taking into account any charges in the net defined benefit liability during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments.

Re-measurements comprising:

The return on plan assets – excluding amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit liability – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.

Actuarial gains and losses – changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions, charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.

Contributions paid to the Hertfordshire Pension Scheme – cash paid as employer's contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

- 6.8. 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

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

Statement of Accounting Policies

7. EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

- 7.1. Events after the Balance Sheet date are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue. Two types of events can be identified:
- Those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is adjusted to reflect such events.
 - Those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts 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.
- 7.2. Events taking place after the date of authorisation for issue are not reflected in the Statement of Accounts.

8. EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS

- 8.1. When items of income and expenditure are material and significant to the understanding of the Council's financial performance, their nature and amount is disclosed separately in the notes to the accounts.

9. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

- 9.1. A financial instrument is any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another. The term 'financial instrument' covers both financial assets and financial liabilities.

Financial Liabilities

- 9.2. 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 the Council's borrowings, the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable; and interest charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount payable for the year according to the loan agreement.
- 9.3. Gains and losses on the repurchase or early settlement of borrowing are credited and debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year of repurchase/settlement. However, where repurchase has taken place as part of a restructuring of the loan portfolio that involves the modification or exchange of existing instruments, the premium or discount is respectively deducted from or added to the amortised cost of the new or modified loan and the write-down to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is spread over the life of the loan by an adjustment to the effective interest rate.
- 9.4. Where premiums and discounts have been charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, regulations allow the impact on the General Fund Balance to be spread over future years. The Authority 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 repaid. 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.

Statement of Accounting Policies

FINANCIAL ASSETS

- 9.5. Financial assets are classified into two types:
- Loans and receivables – assets that have fixed or determinable payments but are not quoted in an active market
 - Available for sale assets – assets that have a quoted market price and/or do not have fixed or determinable payments
- 9.6. The Authority does not have any available for sale assets.

Loans and Receivables

- 9.7. Assets of this type will arise where the Council provides money, goods or services to another party and contracts to defer the settlement of the debt that arises, but in the meantime will not plan to trade the receivable on the 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 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.
- 9.8. 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.
- 9.9. Any gains and losses that arise on the de-recognition of the asset are credited/debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

10. GOVERNMENT GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

- 10.1. 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.
- 10.2. 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.

Statement of Accounting Policies

- 10.3. 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 revenue grants have been ring-fenced to a specific service and have not been spent at the Balance Sheet date they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance and posted to an ear-marked reserve (revenue grants with less than £1,000 left unspent at the Balance Sheet date are treated as Creditors and not transferred to an ear-marked reserve).
- 10.4. 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.

11. HERITAGE ASSETS

Tangible and Intangible Heritage Assets (described in this summary of significant accounting policies as heritage assets)

- 11.1 Heritage assets have historical, artistic, scientific, technological, geophysical or environmental qualities and are held and maintained principally for their contribution to knowledge and culture. The Authority's Heritage Assets consist of collections of assets or artefacts either exhibited or stored in the Authority's Museums (North Hertfordshire, Letchworth and Hitchin Museums) or the Museum Resource Centre, and items of public Sculpture and Artwork.
- 11.2 Heritage Assets are recognised and measured (including the treatment of revaluation gains and losses) in accordance with the Authority's accounting policies on property, plant and equipment. However, some of the measurement rules are relaxed in relation to heritage assets as the majority of them do not have a material monetary value and are therefore not recognised on the Balance Sheet.
- Where the Museums' Manager determines that an asset has a monetary value then they will undertake an annual programme of valuations by reviewing the archives of auctions houses to identify similar paintings by the same artist which have sold in the recent past.
 - Purchased acquisitions are initially recognised at cost.
 - For any donated acquisitions the Museums' Manager will determine whether they are likely to have a monetary value. If they do, then they will either provide a valuation or obtain an external valuation (as per above). Otherwise they will not be recognised on the Balance Sheet.
- 11.3 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 Authority's general policies on impairment – see section 18.13 in this summary of significant accounting policies.
- 11.4 The Authority has a policy for the acquisition and disposal of Museum collections. The policy states there is a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in the museum's collection and decisions to dispose of items will not be made with the principal aim of generating funds. The proceeds of such items are accounted for in accordance with the Authority's general provisions relating to the disposal of property, plant and equipment.

Statement of Accounting Policies

12. INTANGIBLE ASSETS

- 12.1. Expenditure on non-monetary assets that do not have physical substance but are controlled by the Authority as a result of past events (e.g. software licences) is capitalised when it is expected that future economic benefits or service potential will flow from the intangible asset to the Authority.
- 12.2. Internally generated assets are capitalised where it is demonstrable that the project is technically feasible and is intended to be completed (with adequate resources being available) and the Authority will be able to generate future economic benefits or deliver service potential by being able to sell or use the asset. Expenditure is capitalised where it can be measured reliably as attributable to the asset and is restricted to that incurred during the development phase (research expenditure cannot be capitalised).
- 12.3. Expenditure on the development of websites is not capitalised if the website is solely or primarily intended to promote or advertise the Authority's goods or services.
- 12.4. Intangible assets are measured initially 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. In practice, no intangible asset held by the Authority meets this criterion, and they are therefore carried at amortised cost. The depreciable amount of an intangible asset is amortised over its useful life to the relevant service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. 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 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.
- 12.5. Where expenditure on intangible assets qualifies as capital expenditure for statutory purposes, amortisation, impairment losses and disposal gains and losses are not permitted to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account and (for any sale proceeds greater than £10,000) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

13. INVENTORIES AND LONG TERM CONTRACTS

- 13.1. Inventories are included in the Balance Sheet at the lower of cost and net realisable value. Work in Progress is subject to an interim valuation at the year-end and recorded in the Balance Sheet at cost plus any profit reasonably attributable to the works.
- 13.2. Long term contracts are accounted for on the basis of charging the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services with the value of works and services received under the contract during the financial year.

14. INVESTMENT PROPERTY

- 14.1. 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.
- 14.2. Investment properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value, based on the amount at which the asset could be exchanged in an orderly transaction between participants at the measurement date, and assuming that highest and best use is made of that asset. 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 Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The same treatment is applied to gains and losses on disposal.

Statement of Accounting Policies

- 14.3. 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.

15. JOINTLY CONTROLLED OPERATIONS AND JOINTLY CONTROLLED ASSETS

- 15.1. Jointly controlled operations are activities undertaken by the Authority in conjunction with other partners that involve the use of the assets and resources of the partners rather than the establishment of a separate entity. The Authority recognises on its Balance Sheet the assets that it controls and the liabilities that it incurs, and debits and credits the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement with the expenditure it incurs and the share of income it earns from the activity of the operation.
- 15.2. Jointly controlled assets are items of property, plant or equipment that are jointly controlled by the Authority and other partners, with the assets being used to obtain benefits for the partners. The joint venture does not involve the establishment of a separate entity. The Authority accounts for only its share of the jointly controlled assets, the liabilities and expenses that it incurs on its own behalf or jointly with others in respect of its interest in the joint venture and income that it earns from the venture.

16. LEASES

- 16.1. 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.
- 16.2. 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 Authority as Lessee

Finance Leases

- 16.3. Property, plant and equipment held under finance leases is recognised on the Balance Sheet at the commencement of the lease at its fair value measured at the lease's inception (or the present value of the minimum lease payments, if lower). The asset recognised is matched by a liability for the obligation to pay the lessor. Initial direct costs of the Authority are added to the carrying amount of the asset. Premiums paid on entry into a lease are applied to writing down the lease liability. Contingent rents are charged as expenses in the periods in which they are incurred.
- 16.4. 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).

Statement of Accounting Policies

- 16.5. 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).
- 16.6. 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

- 16.7. 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).

The Authority as Lessor

Finance leases

- 16.8. 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 and 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.
- 16.9. 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).
- 16.10. 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.
- 16.11. 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.

Statement of Accounting Policies

Operating Leases

- 16.12. Where the Authority grants an operating lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the asset is retained on 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.

17. OVERHEADS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

- 17.1. The costs of overheads and support services are charged to service segments in accordance with the authority's arrangements for accountability and financial performance.

18. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

- 18.1. 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 classed as Property, Plant and Equipment.

Recognition

- 18.2. Expenditure, above the de-minimis level, 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 authority and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) or is below the de-minimis level, is charged as an expense when it is incurred.
- 18.3. The Authority's de-minimis level is £20,000 for property and £10,000 for vehicles, plant and equipment.

Measurement

- 18.4. Assets, other than surplus assets (see below), 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 initial estimate of the costs of dismantling and removing the item and restoring the site on which it is located.

Surplus assets are measured at fair value, based on the highest and best use of that asset.

- 18.5. The cost of assets acquired other than by purchase is deemed to be its current value. Where an acquisition does not have commercial substance (i.e. it will not lead to a variation in the cash flows of the Authority) and is acquired via an exchange, the cost of the acquisition is the carrying amount of the asset given up by the Authority.
- 18.6. Donated assets are measured initially at current value. The difference between current value and any consideration paid is credited to the Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, unless the donation has been made conditionally. Until conditions are satisfied, the gain is held in the Donated Assets Account. 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.

Statement of Accounting Policies

- 18.7. Assets are then carried in the Balance Sheet using the following measurement bases:
- Infrastructure, community assets and assets under construction – depreciated historical cost.
 - All other assets – current value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use (existing use value – EUV).
- 18.8. 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. In such cases an estimate of the cost to re-build a similar asset (to provide the same function), using modern building practices and the latest information from the Building Cost Information Services is used as the value of the asset.
- 18.9. Where non-property assets have short useful lives or low values (or both), depreciated historical cost basis is used as a proxy for current value.
- 18.10. Assets included in the balance sheet at current value are revalued sufficiently regularly to ensure 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 Income and Expenditure Account where they arise from the reversal of a loss previously charged to a service.
- 18.11. Where decreases in value are identified, they are accounted for by:
- Where there is a balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the amount of the accumulated gains)
 - Where there is no balance in the Revaluation Reserve or an insufficient balance, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.
- 18.12. 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

- 18.13. 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.
- 18.14. 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.
- 18.15. 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.

Statement of Accounting Policies

Depreciation

- 18.16. Depreciation is provided for 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).
- 18.17. Depreciation is calculated on a straight line allocation over the useful life of the property as estimated by the valuer. There is no depreciation in the year of disposal but a full year's depreciation charge in the year of acquisition. Assets are typically depreciated over the following lives:

Fixed Asset	Life
Operational Buildings	Up to 50 years
Vehicles & Plant	5 to 10 years
Community Assets	Up to 50 years
Infrastructure	Up to 40 years

- 18.18. Where an item of Property, Plant and Equipment asset has major components whose cost is significant in relation to the total cost of the item, the components are depreciated separately.
- 18.19. An individual item of property, plant or equipment is componentised and each resultant significant component is recognised and depreciated separately subject to the following principles:
- Individual assets with a carrying value less than £500k are disregarded for componentisation (subject to an assessment of the materiality of any group of assets that have been disregarded).
 - A component is judged to be significant and hence recognised and depreciated separately if the cost of the component is at least 20% of the overall cost of the asset and the components useful life and required method of depreciation is different to the overall asset.
 - The significance of a component relative to the overall asset is determined when an asset is enhanced, acquired or revalued (e.g. as part of the five-year rolling programme).
 - The cost of a component is based on best estimates where historical cost of assets and components is not available.
- 18.20. 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

- 18.21. 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.

Statement of Accounting Policies

- 18.22. 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.
- 18.23. Assets that are to be abandoned or scrapped are not reclassified as Assets Held for Sale.
- 18.24. 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.
- 18.25. 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. 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.
- 18.26. 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.

19. PRIOR PERIOD ADJUSTMENTS, CHANGES IN ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND ESTIMATES AND ERRORS

- 19.1. Prior period adjustments may arise as a result of a change in accounting policy 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.
- 19.2. 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. When 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.
- 19.3. Material errors discovered in prior period figures are corrected retrospectively by amending opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period.

Statement of Accounting Policies

20. PROVISIONS, CONTINGENT LIABILITIES AND CONTINGENT ASSETS

Provisions

- 20.1. Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the Authority 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.
- 20.2. Provisions are charged to the appropriate service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year that the Authority 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.
- 20.3. 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.
- 20.4. 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 obligation is settled.

Contingent Liabilities

- 20.5. A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Authority a possible obligation whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Authority. Contingent liabilities also arise in circumstances where a provision would otherwise be made but either it is not probable that an outflow of resources will not be required or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured reliably. Contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts.

Contingent Assets

- 20.6. 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 benefits or service potential.

21. RESERVES

- 21.1. The Authority 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 in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate service in that year to score against the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The reserve is then appropriated back into the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement so that there is no net charge against Council Tax for the expenditure.
- 21.2. Certain reserves are kept to manage the accounting processes for non-current assets, financial instruments, and retirement and employee benefits and do not represent usable resources for the Authority – these reserves are explained in the relevant policies.

Statement of Accounting Policies

22. REVENUE EXPENDITURE FUNDED FROM CAPITAL UNDER STATUTE

- 22.1. Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provisions but does not result in the creation of a long term asset has been charged as expenditure to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year.
- 22.2. 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.
- 22.3. While the Authority has a de-minimis level for capitalising expenditure on its own assets there is no de-minimis level for revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute.

23. TRUST FUNDS AND THIRD PARTY ASSETS

- 23.1. Where the Authority acts as sole managing trustee for a Trust the net balance of the transactions incurred in running the Trust is included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The Authority also holds income received for S106 legal agreements and unilateral undertakings relating to the submission of planning applications and these are treated as receipts in advance in the Balance Sheet before they are applied.

24. VAT

- 24.1. 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.

Expenditure and Funding Analysis

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources (government grants, rents, council tax and business rates) by local authorities in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by authorities in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. It also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between the Council's Directorates. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES).

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis is a note to the financial statements however it is positioned here as it provides a link between the figures in the narrative statement and the CIES.

2018/19			2019/20		
Net Expenditure chargeable to the General Fund £'000	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Directorate £'000	Net Expenditure chargeable to the General Fund £'000	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000
1,716	(541)	1,175 Chief Executive	2,005	(775)	1,230
775	457	1,232 Commercialisation	783	519	1,302
3,521	957	4,478 Customers	3,861	1,062	4,923
2,058	847	2,905 Legal & Community	2,230	845	3,075
3,373	2,684	6,057 Place	3,561	2,632	6,193
1,113	540	1,653 Regulatory	415	630	1,045
2,315	539	2,854 Resources	2,310	361	2,671
14,871	5,483	20,354 Net Cost of Services	15,165	5,274	20,439
1,096	0	1,096 Other Operating Expenditure	1,160	0	1,160
(764)	639	Financing and Investment Income (125) and Expenditure	(947)	1,240	293
(17,166)	(365)	Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income and Expenditure (17,531)	(19,055)	(864)	(19,919)
(1,963)	5,757	3,794 (Surplus) or Deficit on Provision of Services	(3,677)	5,650	1,973
(7,403)		Opening General Fund Balance	(7,862)		
(1,963)		(Surplus) or Deficit on General Fund Balance in year	(3,677)		
1,504		Transfers to / (from) Earmarked Reserves	2,161		
(7,862)		Closing General Fund Balance at 31st March	(9,378)		

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Authorities raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in both the Expenditure and Funding Analysis and Movement in Reserves Statement.

2018/19			Note	2019/20		
Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure		Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure
£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000
1,205	(30)	1,175	Chief Executive	1,300	(70)	1,230
1,456	(224)	1,232	Commercialisation	1,681	(379)	1,302
40,515	(36,037)	4,478	Customers	35,811	(30,888)	4,923
3,507	(602)	2,905	Legal & Community	4,017	(942)	3,075
10,654	(4,597)	6,057	Place	10,820	(4,627)	6,193
6,219	(4,566)	1,653	Regulatory	6,262	(5,217)	1,045
2,891	(37)	2,854	Resources	2,787	(116)	2,671
66,447	(46,093)	20,354	Cost of Services	62,678	(42,239)	20,439
		1,096	Other Operating Expenditure	13		1,160
		(125)	Financing and Investment Income & Expenditure	14		293
		(17,531)	Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income & Expenditure	15		(19,919)
		3,794	(Surplus) or Deficit on Provision of Services			1,973
		(5,756)	(Surplus) or Deficit on revaluation of non-current assets			(3,920)
		(81)	(Surplus) or Deficit on revaluation of available for sale assets			(1,293)
		4,030	Re-measurements of the net defined benefit liability	39		(23,191)
		(1,807)	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			(28,404)
		1,987	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			(26,431)

Service Reporting Code of Practice:

The above revenue service analysis is compliant with the latest accounting code of practice.

Movement in Reserves Statement

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Authority, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and other reserves. The Surplus or (Deficit) on the Provision of Services line shows the true economic cost of providing the Authority's services, more details of which are shown in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. These are different from the statutory amounts required to be charged to the General Fund Balance for council tax setting purposes and reflect the adjustments between the accounting basis and the funding basis under regulations. The Net Increase/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves line shows the statutory General Fund Balance before any discretionary transfers to or from earmarked reserves undertaken by the Council.

	General Fund Balance	Earmarked Reserves	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	Total Usable Reserves	Unusable Reserves	Total Authority Reserves
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance at 31 March 2018	7,403	5,679	3,090	954	17,126	72,807	89,933
Movement in Reserve during 2018/19							
Surplus or (deficit) on provision of services	(3,794)	0	0	0	(3,794)	0	(3,794)
Other Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	0	0	0	0	0	1,807	1,807
Total Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	(3,794)	0	0	0	(3,794)	1,807	(1,987)
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations (Note 12)	5,757	0	(510)	(16)	5,231	(5,231)	0
Net Increase/(Decrease) before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	1,963	0	(510)	(16)	1,437	(3,424)	(1,987)
Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves (Note 27)	(1,504)	1,504	0	0	0	0	0
Increase / (Decrease) in Year	459	1,504	(510)	(16)	1,437	(3,424)	(1,987)
Balance at 31 March 2019	7,862	7,183	2,580	938	18,563	69,383	87,946
Movement in Reserve during 2019/20							
Surplus or (deficit) on provision of services	(1,973)	0	0	0	(1,973)	0	(1,973)
Other Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	0	0	0	0	0	28,404	28,404
Total Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	(1,973)	0	0	0	(1,973)	28,404	26,431
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations (Note 12)	5,650	0	(639)	0	5,011	(5,011)	0
Net Increase/(Decrease) before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	3,677	0	(639)	0	3,038	23,393	26,431
Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves (Note 27)	(2,161)	2,161	0	0	0	0	0
Increase / (Decrease) in Year	1,516	2,161	(639)	0	3,038	23,393	26,431
Balance at 31 March 2020	9,378	9,344	1,941	938	21,601	92,776	114,377

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2020

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Authority. The net assets of the Authority (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Authority. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category of reserves are usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the Authority may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use (for example the Capital Receipts Reserve that may only be used to fund capital expenditure or repay debt). The second category of reserves are those that the Authority is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example the Revaluation Reserve), where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold; and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement line 'Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'.

31 March 2019 £'000		Note	31 March 2020 £'000
95,048	Property, Plant and Equipment	16	95,603
853	Heritage Assets	17	853
18,839	Investment Property	18	18,429
38	Intangible Assets	19	289
1,500	Long Term Investments (non-property)	20	1,000
1	Mortgages	20	1
16	Loans	20	17
423	Other Long Term Debtors		320
116,718	Long Term Assets		116,512
237	Inventories	21	299
5,639	Short Term Debtors	22	6,632
25,115	Short Term Non Property Investments	20	26,627
627	Assets Held for Sale	24	2,909
6,050	Cash & Cash Equivalents	23	8,848
37,668	Current Assets		45,315
(24)	Short Term Borrowing	20	(25)
(5,026)	Short Term Creditors	25	(4,653)
(5,257)	Receipts in Advance	25	(8,249)
(10,307)	Current Liabilities		(12,927)
(423)	Long Term Borrowing	20	(405)
(2,750)	Long Term Creditors	38	(2,388)
(1,527)	Provisions (> 1 year)	26	(882)
(51,449)	Liability related to Pension Scheme	39	(30,897)
49	Deferred Credits		49
(33)	Capital Grants Receipt in Advance	35	0
(56,133)	Long Term Liabilities		(34,523)
87,946	Net Assets		114,377
18,563	Usable Reserves	27	21,601
69,383	Unusable Reserves	28	92,776
87,946	Total Reserves		114,377

The un-audited accounts were authorised for issue on 30th June 2020.

Cash Flow Statement

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Authority during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Authority generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Authority are funded by way of taxation and grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the Authority. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Authority's future service delivery. Cash flows arising from financing activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital (i.e. borrowing) to the Authority.

2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
(3,794) Net surplus or (deficit) on the provision of services	(1,973)
5,875 Adjustments for non-cash movements (Note 29)	5,667
(4,951) Adjustments for items that are investing and financing activities (Note 29)	(1,314)
(2,870) Net cash flows from operating activities	2,380
(1,920) Investing Activities (Note 29)	(602)
264 Financing Activities (Note 29)	1,019
(4,526) Net Increase or (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	2,797
10,576 Cash and Cash Equivalents at the beginning of the year	6,050

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Notes to the Core Financial Statements

INTRODUCTION

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 (the Code) and the accounting policies set out prior to the financial statements. The notes that follow (1 to 42) set out supplementary information to assist readers of the accounts.

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

The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code) requires the disclosure of information relating to the expected impact of an accounting change that will be required by a new standard that has been issued but not yet adopted. This applies to the adoption of the following new or amended standards within the 2020/21 Code:

- Amendments to IAS 28 Investments in Associates and Joint Ventures: Long Term Interests in Associates and Joint Ventures.
- Annual Improvements to IFRS Standards 2015 - 2017 Cycle
- Amendments to IAS19 Employee Benefits: Plan Amendment, Curtailment or Settlement.

The Code will require implementation from 1 April 2020 and there is therefore no impact on the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts. It is also considered that these standards and amendments will not have a material impact on the Council's Statement of Accounts when they become applicable.

2. CRITICAL JUDGEMENTS IN APPLYING ACCOUNTING POLICIES

In applying the accounting policies (see the Statement of Accounting Policies), the Authority has had to make certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events. The critical judgements made in the Statement of Accounts are:

- There is a high degree of uncertainty about future levels of funding for local government. However, the Authority has determined that this uncertainty is not yet sufficient to provide an indication of the degree to which the assets of the Authority might be impaired as a result of a need to close facilities and reduce levels of service provision.
- The Authority has determined that the ownership of the freehold of the Churchgate Shopping Centre in Hitchin is an investment property (carrying value of £1.8million) as there is no alternative policy for ownership other than for rental income or capital appreciation.
- The Authority considers the vehicles used in the delivery of the refuse and recycling service as held under a finance lease, with the underlying assets included on the balance sheet (carrying value of £2.3 million). This reflects long-term leases economic benefits of ownership, through the performance of the contract. The seven-year contract commenced in May 2018, with the vehicle assets recognised at an initial value of £3.2 million.
- The full final financial impact of COVID-19 is unknown at the date of signing of the accounts. Key items of uncertainty are highlighted in Notes 3 and 4 and the Narrative Report.

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

The Statement of Accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Authority about the future or that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking into account historical experience, current trends and other relevant factors. However, because balances cannot be determined with certainty, actual results could be materially different from the assumptions and estimates.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

The items in the Authority's Balance Sheet at 31 March 2020 for which there is a risk of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year are as follows:

Item	Uncertainties	Effect if Actual Results Differ from Assumptions
Property, Plant and Equipment	<p>Assets are depreciated over estimated useful lives. If, for any reason, an individual asset should deteriorate at a quicker rate than expected, then this could bring into doubt the useful lives assigned to individual assets. This could happen, for example, if the current period of austerity meant the necessary programme of repairs and maintenance was delayed.</p> <p>The valuations have been provided amidst the economic uncertainty created as a result of COVID-19 and, as a result, valuations have been reported subject to a Material Valuation Uncertainty clause.</p>	<p>If the useful life of assets is reduced, depreciation increases and the carrying amount of the asset falls. It is estimated that the annual depreciation charge for buildings would increase by £307,000 for every year that useful lives had to be reduced.</p> <p>If market conditions are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, every 1% change in value would equate to a change in the long-term assets of the Council of £1.17m</p>
Investment Properties	<p>Investment Properties are not depreciated but are revalued annually according to market conditions. In the current economic climate it is uncertain if there will be a significant change in property prices over the next 12 months. However, the majority of the Authority's investment properties are ground leases which are considered to be relatively secure investments and less liable to large swings in value.</p> <p>See also comments regarding COVID-19 above.</p>	<p>A yield of 7.0% has been used in the calculation of the value of investment properties. A 0.5% reduction in the yield would reduce the carrying value of investment property by approximately £1.4million (this is a simple estimation for illustration only and does not consider the complexities and circumstances of individual assets).</p>
Debtors	<p>At 31 March 2020 the Authority had a balance of short term debtors of £8.2million. A review of the trend in collection rates and the age profile of the outstanding debt suggested an impairment of £1.6million was appropriate. However, in the current economic climate it is not certain if such an allowance is sufficient.</p>	<p>If collection rates were to deteriorate, a doubling of the amount of impairment of the doubtful debt would require an additional £1.6million to be set aside.</p>
National Non Domestic Rates – Provision for Appeals	<p>The Local Government Finance Act 2012 introduced a business rates retention scheme that enabled local authorities to retain a proportion of the business rates generated in their area. The new arrangements for the retention of business rates came into effect on 1 April 2013.</p> <p>The Authority, acting as an agent on behalf of the major preceptors, central government and itself (as principal) is required to make provisions in accordance with the requirements of the Code and legislation for refunding ratepayers who have successfully appealed against the rateable value of their properties on the rating list. This includes amounts relating to non-domestic rates charged to businesses in 2012-13 and earlier financial years.</p>	<p>A provision of £842k has been made, as at 31 March 2020, for the Authority's share of refunding outstanding appeals that are successful. This amount is based on the amount of outstanding appeals with the Valuation Office Agency, as at 31 March 2020, after applying a success factor of 25% and likely reduction in RV of 18.8% and, following the 2017 revaluation, an allowance for appeals not yet lodged. An increase of 1% in the success factor would increase the amount of provision required by £23,000.</p>

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

Item	Uncertainties	Effect if Actual Results Differ from Assumptions
Pensions Liability	<p>Estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex judgements. A firm of actuaries is engaged to provide the Authority with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied.</p> <p>The pension valuations have been provided amidst the economic uncertainty created as a result of COVID-19 and therefore valuations and estimations are subject to an even higher level of future uncertainty.</p>	<p>The assumptions interact in complex ways. Actuarial valuations are carried out every three years, with the latest undertaken in 2019/20. The Authority's actuaries advised that following the valuation the net pensions liability had reduced by £20.5million.</p>

4. GOING CONCERN

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

The Council's accounts for 2019/20 include the early impacts of COVID-19 on its financial position, which mainly relate to reduced parking and Council Tax court summons income. The Council is carrying out regular reviews of its forecast financial position during 2020/21, which includes the following:

- Forecast loss of income for all services, including the impact of lock-down closures and ongoing reductions.
- Forecast additional expenditure for all services, including the additional costs of continuing to run Council services and meeting Government requirements (e.g. providing hotel accommodation to the homeless and those in hostels).
- The additional costs of implementing Government policy in relation to additional Business Rate Reliefs; Small Business Grants; Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants; and Discretionary Business Grants. These costs will be off-set by New Burdens funding.
- Changes to the Council's capital programme, including works that need to be delayed and also works that can be brought forward.
- The impact on the Council's cashflow, including making sure that the Council has sufficient liquid cash available.
- Known Government funding and assumptions around the funding that will be received under the income guarantee.
- The overall estimated impact on the Council's General Fund balance.

A report for the Council's Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and Cabinet in late July forecast that the net General Fund impact in 2020/21 would be around £1.3m. This is against a General Fund balance as at 31st March 2020 of £9.4m (subject to audit), and a draft minimum General Fund balance of around £3.5m (based on the 2020/21 original assessment with an additional risk-based allowance of £1m). The report therefore recommends that there is not a need for an emergency budget.

The Council will publish an update to its Medium Term Financial Strategy in September. The assessments carried out in preparation for this consider the potential for impacts on key areas of income and expenditure continuing in to 2021/22. It also considers the impact on funding in terms of:

- Deficits on the Collection Funds in 2020/21 that would need to be funded in later years.
- The implications of a decline in Business Rate income down to safety net levels.
- Changing the assumptions around growth in the Council Tax base, due to reductions in the building of new properties and increased eligibility for Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

The Strategy will show that the impact is affordable in 2021/22 by mainly using some reserve balances, even when more negative scenarios are considered. The negative scenarios are still forecast to leave a reserves balance of around £7.9m against a draft recommended minimum balance of around £3.5m. This gives the Council some time to focus on recovery and hopefully get some more certainty on funding (in relation to tax base and ongoing Central Government funding) before embarking on a strategy to achieve a balanced in-year budget by the end of the 5 year period.

It is therefore noted that there is significant headroom within the General Fund to absorb the estimated financial impact of COVID-19 in the short to medium-term. Furthermore, the Code requires that local authorities prepare their accounts on a going concern basis, as they can only be discontinued under statutory prescription. For these reasons, the Council does not consider that there is material uncertainty in respect of its ability to continue as a going concern for the foreseeable future.

5. MATERIAL ITEMS OF INCOME AND EXPENSE

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

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

Directorate	Description of Material Item	Comment
Customers	Careline Service – Contribution from Hertfordshire County Council	Total income receivable under the terms of the contractual agreement with Hertfordshire County Council was £1.1million in 2019/20 (£1m in 2018/19).
Customers	Housing and Council Tax Benefits	The Authority paid a total of £27.4million of Housing Benefit payments in 2019/20 (£32.4million in 2018/19). This was funded by a grant subsidy from the Department for Work and Pensions of £26.9million (£32.1million in 2018/19).
Place	Grounds Maintenance Contract	Contract payments for the core service maintenance of amenity areas, burial grounds and rivers totalled £1.3million in 2019/20 (£1.2million in 2018/19)
Place	Waste and Recycling Contract	Waste and Recycling Contract expenditure totalled £3.5million in 2019/20 (£3.2million in 2018/19).
Regulatory	Off-Street Car Parking Income	Off-Street Car Parking income received by the authority totalled £1.8million in 2019/20 (£1.9million in 2018/19).

6. EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

Whilst present at 31 March 2020 and therefore partly reflected in valuations and estimations within these accounts, the full future financial impact of COVID-19 is unknown at the date of signing. Key items of estimation uncertainty are highlighted in Note 3 and Note 4 and the Narrative Report.

7. PRIOR PERIOD ADJUSTMENTS

There were no prior period adjustments that needed disclosing in 2019/20.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

8. ACQUIRED AND DISCONTINUED OPERATIONS

There were no acquired or discontinued operations during 2019/20 or 2018/19. These would normally arise following boundary changes or from legislation, neither of which affected North Hertfordshire District Council during 2019/20. All operations are therefore classified as 'continuing operations'.

9. NOTE TO THE EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis presents the total adjustments required to the amounts chargeable to the General Fund in order to arrive at the Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The main adjustments required are detailed and explained below.

Adjustments for Capital Purposes (Note 1)	2018/19			Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts	2019/20			Total Adjustments
	Net Change for the Pension Adjustments (Note 2)	Other Differences (Note 3)	Total Adjustments		Net Change for the Pension Adjustments (Note 2)	Other Differences (Note 3)	Total Adjustments	
£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
0	(541)	0	(541)	Chief Executive	0	(815)	40	(775)
362	95	0	457	Commercialisation	368	151	0	519
319	638	0	957	Customers	278	784	0	1,062
650	197	0	847	Legal & Community	566	279	0	845
2,528	156	0	2,684	Place	2,446	186	0	2,632
81	459	0	540	Regulatory	59	571	0	630
338	201	0	539	Resources	129	232	0	361
4,278	1,205	0	5,483	Net Cost of Services	3,846	1,388	40	5,274
0	0	0	0	Other Operating Expenditure	0	0	0	0
(546)	1,185	0	639	Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	(11)	1,251	0	1,240
(311)	0	(54)	(365)	Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income and Expenditure	(267)	0	(597)	(864)
(857)	1,185	(54)	274	Other Income and Expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis	(278)	1,251	(597)	376
3,421	2,390	(54)	5,757	Difference between the General Fund Surplus or Deficit and the CIES surplus or deficit on the provision of services	3,568	2,639	(557)	5,650

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

1) Adjustments for Capital Purposes

This column adds in depreciation and impairment and revaluation gains and losses in the Services lines, and for the following items in Other Income and Expenditure:

- Other operating expenditure – adjusts for capital disposals with a transfer of income on disposal of assets and the amounts written off for those assets.
- Financing and investment income and expenditure – the statutory charges for capital financing and other revenue contributions are deducted from other income and expenditure as these are not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices.
- Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure – capital grants are adjusted for income not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices. Revenue grants are adjusted from those receivable in the year to those receivable without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied throughout the year. The Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income and Expenditure line is credited with capital grants receivable in the year without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied in the year. The gain to the authority on receipt of a donated asset is also credited to this line.

2) Net Change for the Pensions Adjustments

This column reflects the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS 19 Employee Benefits pension related expenditure and income:

- For services this represents the removal of the employer pension contributions made by the authority as allowed by statute and the replacement with current service costs and past service costs.
- For Financing and investment income and expenditure -- the net interest on the defined benefit liability is charged to the CIES.

3) Other Differences

This includes those other differences between amounts debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and amounts payable/receivable to be recognised under statute:

- For Financing and investment income and expenditure the other differences column recognises adjustments to the General Fund for the timing differences for premiums and discounts.
- The charge under Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure represents the difference between what is chargeable under statutory regulations for Council Tax and NNDR that was projected to be received at the start of the year and the income recognised under generally accepted accounting practices in the Code. This is a timing difference as any difference will be brought forward in future Surpluses or Deficits on the Collection Fund.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

10. SEGMENTAL INCOME

Income received on a segmental basis is analysed below.

	2018/19	2019/20
Directorate	£'000	£'000
Chief Executive	(699)	(752)
Commercialisation	(1,302)	(1,544)
Customers	(36,039)	(30,889)
Legal & Community	(602)	(942)
Place	(4,598)	(4,627)
Regulatory	(4,566)	(5,218)
Resources	(37)	(116)
Total Directorate Income	(47,843)	(44,088)
Other Income Received		
Non-Ringfenced Government Grants	(3,020)	(2,982)
Income from Council Tax and Business Rates	(14,201)	(16,670)
Total Income within Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(65,064)	(63,740)

11. EXPENDITURE AND INCOME ANALYSED BY NATURE

The authority's expenditure and income is analysed as follows:

	2018/19	2019/20
	£000	£000
Employee costs	14,922	15,647
Other Service Expenditure	15,304	16,172
Housing Benefit Payments	32,381	27,351
Interest Payments	661	612
Net Pension Costs	1,185	1,251
Capital Charges:		
- Depreciation of Property, Plant & Equipment	3,401	3,370
- Amortisation of Intangible Assets	162	150
- Impairment / Downward Revaluation of Assets	289	0
(Increase) / Decrease in Fair Value of Investment Properties	(543)	0
Parish Council Precepts	1,096	1,160
Total Expenditure	68,858	65,713
Fees and Charges	(9,027)	(9,549)
Interest and Rental Income	(1,596)	(1,795)
Housing Benefit Subsidy	(32,100)	(26,921)
Grants and Contributions	(8,140)	(8,805)
Income from Council Tax and Business Rates	(14,201)	(16,670)
Total Income	(65,064)	(63,740)
(Surplus) or Deficit on the Provision of Services	3,794	1,973

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

12. ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN ACCOUNTING BASIS AND FUNDING BASIS UNDER REGULATIONS

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

The first table shows the adjustments made in the comparative year 2018/19:

2018/19	Usable Reserves			Movement in Unusable Reserves £'000
	General Fund Balance £'000	Capital Receipts Reserve £'000	Capital Grants Unapplied £'000	
Adjustments Primarily involving the Capital Adjustment Account:				
Reversal of items debited or credited to the comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:				
Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(3,689)	0	0	3,689
Movements in the market value of Investment Properties	543	0	0	(543)
Amortisation of Intangible Assets	(162)	0	0	162
Capital Grants and contributions applied	607	0	16	(623)
Revenue Expenditure funded from capital under statute	(723)	0	0	723
Insertion of items not debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:				
Statutory Provision for the financing of capital investment	3	0	0	(3)
Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund	0	0	0	0
Adjustments involving the Capital Receipts Reserve:				
Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure	0	510	0	(510)
Adjustments primarily involving the Pension Reserve:				
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(4,958)	0	0	4,958
Employers pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in year	2,568	0	0	(2,568)
Adjustments primarily involving the Collection Fund Account:				
Movement in the Authority's share of the Collection Fund surplus / deficit	54	0	0	(54)
Adjustments primarily involving the Accumulated Absences Account:				
Accrued employee absence adjustment	0	0	0	0
Total Adjustments	(5,757)	510	16	5,231

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

The following table shows the adjustments made in 2019/20:

2019/20	Usable Reserves			Movement in Unusable Reserves £'000
	General Fund Balance £'000	Capital Receipts Reserve £'000	Capital Grants Unapplied £'000	
Adjustments Primarily involving the Capital Adjustment Account:				
Reversal of items debited or credited to the comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:				
Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(3,370)	0	0	3,370
Movements in the market value of Investment Properties	0	0	0	0
Amortisation of Intangible Assets	(150)	0	0	150
Capital Grants and contributions applied	429	0	0	(429)
Revenue Expenditure funded from capital under statute	(488)	0	0	488
Insertion of items not debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:				
Statutory Provision for the financing of capital investment	3	0	0	(3)
Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund	8	0	0	(8)
Adjustments involving the Capital Receipts Reserve:				
Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure	0	639	0	(639)
Adjustments primarily involving the Pension Reserve:				
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(5,309)	0	0	5,309
Employers pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in year	2,670	0	0	(2,670)
Adjustments primarily involving the Collection Fund Account:				
Movement in the Authority's share of the Collection Fund surplus / deficit	597	0	0	(597)
Adjustments primarily involving the Accumulated Absences Account:				
Accrued employee absence adjustment	(40)	0	0	40
Total Adjustments	(5,650)	639	0	5,011

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

13. OTHER OPERATING EXPENDITURE

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
1,096	Parish council precepts	1,160
1,096	Total	1,160

14. FINANCING AND INVESTMENT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
661	Interest payable and similar charges	612
1,185	Pensions interest cost and expected return on pensions assets	1,251
(360)	Interest receivable and similar income	(416)
(543)	Change in Fair Value of Investment Properties	0
(1,068)	Income and expenditure in relation to investment properties	(1,154)
(125)	Total	293

15. TAXATION & NON-SPECIFIC GRANT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

2018/19		2019/20	2019/20
£000		£000	£000
(12,093)	Council Tax Income		(12,491)
(1,756)	Section 31 Business Rates Reliefs Grant		(1,998)
(1,263)	New Homes Bonus		(984)
	National Non-Domestic Business Rates (NNDR)		
(15,345)	Share of total collectible income	(13,745)	
12,633	NNDR Tariff and Levy	10,848	
604	NNDR Collection Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	(365)	
-	Share of Hertfordshire Pilot Gain	(917)	
(2,108)	Net Recognised NNDR		(4,179)
(311)	Capital Grants and Contributions (see below)		(267)
(17,531)			(19,919)

2018/19	Capital Grants and Contributions	2019/20
£000		£000
77	S106 Developer Contributions	186
50	Museum Heritage Lottery Funding	21
172	Stevenage Leisure Limited contribution to North Herts Leisure Centre Redevelopment.	0
28	Stevenage Leisure Limited contribution to purchase of fitness equipment for Archers Gym and Royston Leisure Centre	0
(16)	Performance Reward Grant	0
0	Bancroft Rec MUGA – Sports England Grant	60
311	Total	267

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

16. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

The movement on property, plant and equipment balances during the year and in the 2018/19 comparable year is detailed in the following tables.

Within each classification heading are the following types of assets:

Land & Buildings	– Offices, Depots, Leisure Facilities, Community Centres, Museums and Pavilions
Infrastructure Assets	– Capital Works to Public Roads and Drainage Schemes
Community Assets	– Commons and Parks

REVALUATIONS

The Authority has a 5 year rolling revaluation programme for its properties. The Authority's Investment properties are valued annually. Revaluations completed during the year are reflected as at 1 April of the financial year when the valuation takes place. Valuations of the Authority's properties are overseen by the Estates Surveyor, who is a professional member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. When necessary, specialist external valuers are used for assets which require particular knowledge of the asset valued.

Revaluations have been undertaken in 2019/20 in line with the 5 year rolling programme. These have resulted in a net increase to the carrying value of property, plant and equipment of just over £3.920million.

The following table shows which class of assets have been scheduled for revaluation over the last 4 years:

2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Industrial Properties	Industrial Properties	Industrial Properties	Industrial Properties
Investment Properties	Investment Properties	Investment Properties	Investment Properties
Amenity Land	Burial Ground	Agricultural	Assets Held for Sale
Allotments	Car Park	Allotments	Surplus Assets
Depot/Storage	Community Centres	Amenity Land	
Museum	Leisure Centres	Recreation Grounds	
Public Halls	Markets		
Scouts & Guides	Museum		
Storage	Pavilions		
Trust Property	Play Areas		
	Public Conveniences		
	Public Halls		
	Public Open Spaces		
	Storage		
	Swimming Pools		
	Trust Property		

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

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

The Authority uses appropriate valuation techniques for each circumstance, maximising the use of relevant known data and minimising the use of estimates or unknowns. The three widely used valuation techniques are:

- the market approach - uses prices and other relevant data generated by market transactions involving identical or comparable (i.e. similar) assets or group of assets.
- the cost approach - reflects the amount that would be required currently to replace the service capacity of an asset (often referred to as current replacement cost).
- the income approach - converts future amounts (e.g. cash flows or income and expenses) to a single current (i.e. discounted) amount. When the income approach is used, the fair value measurement reflects current market expectations about those future amounts.

The market approach and the cost approach were both employed for the valuation of all surplus assets. The use of more than one valuation technique in the measurement of an asset is to ensure as far as possible that the valuation is most representative of fair value in the circumstances.

The market approach was employed for the valuation of all investment properties. For certain investment properties, where sufficient data was available, the income approach was also employed for valuation corroboration purposes, in accordance with valuation good practice.

The fair value measurements take into account the three levels of categories for inputs to valuations for fair value assets:

Level 1 Quoted Prices in active markets for identical assets accessible at the measurement date.

Level 2 Observable (either directly or indirectly) other than quoted prices at Level 1

Level 3 Unobservable

The Authority's investment properties and surplus assets have been assessed as Level 2 for valuation purposes.

An impairment review was completed as at 31 March 2020 to ascertain if the carrying value of the assets had decreased materially since the last revaluation. The value of the Hitchin Portmill Lane Public Conveniences was impaired by £16,300.

As a result of Covid-19 there is the potential for material uncertainty in relation to the valuation of property assets. This is considered to be particularly relevant for the freehold of the Churchgate Shopping Centre, Hitchin. This is predominantly a retail asset, although the lettings risk does sit with the leaseholder. As at the 31st March 2020 the Government had mandated the closure of most retail properties and there was significant uncertainty over when they could reopen and then what the effect would be after they could reopen. This could then have a material impact on trading performance, rental income, rental valuation and capital valuation metrics. For other property assets, market activity is being impacted in many sectors. The valuer therefore considers that they can attach less weight to previous market evidence for comparison purposes, to inform opinions of value.

DISPOSALS

No assets were disposed of during 2019/20.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

MOVEMENT ON BALANCES OF PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT IN 2018/19

	Land & Buildings	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	Infra-structure Assets	Community Assets	Surplus Assets	Assets Under Construction	Total Property, Plant & Equipment
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost of Valuation							
At 1 April 2018	77,714	10,705	93	5,795	6,758	7,303	108,368
Additions	1,306	3,484	0	0	0	53	4,843
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reclassifications	6,322	0	0	0	(546)	(7,141)	(1,365)
Write Off to Revenue	0	0	0	0	0	(115)	(115)
Upward and Downward Revaluations taken to Revaluation Reserve	1,218	0	0	0	4,253	0	5,471
Upward Revaluations recognized in the Surplus/Deficit on Provision of Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Impairments / Downward Revaluations recognized in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	(119)	0	0	0	0	0	(119)
At 31 March 2019	86,441	14,189	93	5,795	10,465	100	117,083
Depreciation & Impairments							
At 1 April 2018	(9,021)	(8,456)	(37)	(1,264)	(20)	0	(18,798)
Depreciation Charge for 2018/19	(2,183)	(1,085)	(3)	(131)	0	0	(3,402)
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reclassifications	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	165	0	0	0	0	0	165
At 31 March 2019	(11,039)	(9,541)	(40)	(1,395)	(20)	0	(22,035)
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2019	75,402	4,648	53	4,400	10,445	100	95,048
Balance Sheet amount at 1 April 2018	68,693	2,249	56	4,531	6,738	7,303	89,570

Included in the Land and Buildings total is a donated asset with a carrying value of £1.8 million.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

MOVEMENT ON BALANCES OF PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT IN 2019/20

	Land & Buildings	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	Infra-structure Assets	Community Assets	Surplus Assets	Assets Under Construction	Total Property, Plant & Equipment
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost of Valuation							
At 1 April 2019	86,441	14,189	93	5,795	10,465	100	117,083
Additions	112	331	0	0	0	141	584
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reclassifications	(619)	71	0	0	40	(71)	(579)
Write Off to Revenue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Upward and Downward Revaluations taken to Revaluation Reserve	0	0	0	0	3,912	0	3,912
Upward Revaluations recognized in the Surplus/Deficit on Provision of Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Impairments / Downward Revaluations recognized in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
At 31 March 2020	85,934	14,591	93	5,795	14,417	170	121,000
Depreciation & Impairments							
At 1 April 2019	(11,039)	(9,541)	(40)	(1,395)	(20)	0	(22,035)
Depreciation Charge for 2019/20	(2,172)	(1,057)	(2)	(131)	(8)	0	(3,370)
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reclassifications	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	0	0	0	0	8	0	8
At 31 March 2020	(13,211)	(10,598)	(42)	(1,526)	(20)	0	(25,397)
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2020	72,723	3,993	51	4,269	14,397	170	95,603
Balance Sheet amount at 1 April 2019	75,402	4,648	53	4,400	10,445	100	95,048

Included in the Land and Buildings total is a donated asset with a carrying value of £1.8 million.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

17. HERITAGE ASSETS

Reconciliation of the Carrying Value of Heritage Assets Held by the Authority.

	Museum Collections	Public Sculpture / Artwork	Total Heritage Assets
	£'000	£'000	£'000
1 April 2018	687	46	733
Additions	120	0	120
31 March 2019	807	46	853
1 April 2019	807	46	853
Additions	0	0	0
31 March 2020	807	46	853

Museum Collections

A small number of items in the Authority's art collection and one item of the Authority's archaeology collection are reported in the Balance Sheet at insurance valuations which are based on market values. These valuations are reviewed annually and updated where relevant.

Many of the paintings owned by the Authority have been donated by local painting societies and are, therefore, not by artists who would attract value for their work. Of the grand total of 2,600 items in the art collection many of them are simple sketches which have no value.

The items of the art collection recognised on the Balance Sheet include eight paintings of note by William Ratcliffe. The Authority has been donated a number of Ratcliffe paintings, prints and drawings and has added to the collection by the occasional purchase. The collection is documented in a book on William Ratcliffe published by the Authority in 2011.

Other individual items of the Museum's collections, recognised on the Balance Sheet, include a Henry Moore Sculpture, an oil painting by Spencer Gore called The Road and "The Wymondley Hoard", which consists of 600 silver Tudor coins. There are a number of other paintings in the collection, of the local area. These are of local interest but do not have a significant monetary value to a national audience.

The Authority's Museums Manager carried out a full valuation of the collections as at 31 March 2012 and reviewed these valuations as at 31 March 2020. The valuations were based on commercial markets, including transaction information from auctions where similar paintings are regularly being purchased.

The principal museum collections are not considered to have a significant monetary value and include (all numbers are approximations):

- Archaeological (small finds such as coins, jewellery, nails) – 10,000 items
- Archaeological (other finds such as pots and broken pottery, human and animal bone, building materials) – 350,000 items
- Art collection – 2,600 items
- Ceramics and glass – 600 items
- Costume and costume accessories – 4,500 items
- Documents – 20,000 items
- Military – 1,000 items
- Natural Sciences – 500,000 items
- Photography – 500,000 items
- Social History – 22,000 items

The majority of the collections are not recognised in the Authority's Balance Sheet since there is no readily available information on the cost or market value of such items and to obtain such information would involve a disproportionate cost in comparison to the benefits to the users of the Authority's financial statements. The unvalued collections are insured for £2million as at 31 March 2020.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

Public Sculpture / Artwork

The Authority has two items of public sculpture in Letchworth. These are the Bronze Statue of Sappho installed in Howard Gardens during 2011 and the centenary artwork 'Paradise Is' located next to the Town Hall on Gernon Road.

The Authority's civic regalia is not recognised in the financial statements. There are four ceremonial chains, which are insured in total for £19,180.

The Authority's sculpture of a bronze bust of Erica Lee by Reginald Hine and an M4 painting by Richard Smith are not recognised in the financial statements. These are each insured for £5,000.

The Authority has piece of granite toe of an Egyptian Pharaoh statue, which is 6 inches wide. This was donated by the Sculptor John Mills and has been insured for £8,000.

There are other Authority assets which could be considered to have attributes consistent with the definition of Heritage Assets. However, because it is deemed that they are maintained for purposes other than for their contribution to knowledge and culture, they have been classified in the financial statements as Community Assets. These include the Hitchin War Memorial and open spaces and parks such as Priory Memorial Gardens in Royston and Broadway Gardens in Letchworth.

Heritage Asset Transactions

The summary for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 is as follows:

The Authority accepted 24 donations into the museum collection, many of which were groups of related items. These included:

- 35 Samuel Lucas watercolours; oil painting by Robin Mackertich; watercolour by Brynhild Parker; print and small bronze sculpture by John Mills, all donated from Hertfordshire County Council School Loan Collection.
- Medals and badges relating to George Howlett, Herts. Yeomanry, WW1 onwards.
- 4 x receipts from Moss' shop, Bancroft, 1936
- Anglo-Saxon brooch, found at Sandon
- Souvenir cup, saucer and plate depicting the Hermit of Redcoats, Titmore Green, Little Wymondley
- Metal name sign from the German Hospital Convalescent Home (now Pinehill)
- Archival material relating to Beds & Herts Regiment
- Pamphlet of Liberal & Unionist speeches made at Hitchin Town Hall, 1892
- Unused Fuel Ration book, WW2
- Toe from Egyptian statue, probably from the massive sculpture of Amenhotep III, around 1350BC
- Documents relating to a Hitchin military policeman, WW2
- School bell from Lilley School, c. 1870
- Catalogues produced from 1901 onwards, by Phillips of Hitchin, antique dealers
- Manual calculator used by accountant in Offley

A number of items left the permanent collections, transferred to other museums, including:

- 57 items relating to local schools from 1826 onwards, which were already on loan to the British Schools Museum, were permanently transferred.
- 1871 Biggleswade British Schools school report was found in store and transferred to the British Schools Museum.
- Collection of spirit specimens from Tring was transferred to a specimen conservator for teaching purposes.
- 1947 school report from a school in Walthamstow was transferred to Vestry House Museum, Walthamstow.
- Various items and photographs relating to Letchworth Garden City were transferred to the Garden City Collection.

Three items were purchased:

- 'Barges on a river', watercolour, William Ratcliffe. Purchased at auction for £3,421.60. Funded partly from a £1,300 grant from the Hertfordshire Heritage Fund.
- FA Cup programme, Hitchin Town v Millwall, 1958 £9.99
- FA Cup programme, replay of above match, 1958 £2.99

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

18. INVESTMENT PROPERTIES

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

	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Rental Income from Investment Property	(1,079)	(1,165)
Direct Operating Expenses arising from Investment Property	11	11
Net Gain / (Loss)	(1,068)	(1,154)

There are no restrictions on the Authority's ability to realise the value inherent in investment property or on the Authority's right to the remittance of income and the proceeds of disposal. The Authority has no contractual obligations to purchase, construct or develop investment property or repairs, maintenance or enhancement.

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

	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Balance at Start of the Year	17,647	18,839
Net Gains / (Losses) from Fair Value adjustments	543	0
Transfers (to) / from Assets Held for Sale	0	(410)
Transfers (to) / from Property, Plant and Equipment	649	0
Balance at End of Year	18,839	18,429

19. INTANGIBLE ASSETS

	Purchased Software Licences £'000
Original Cost	1,974
Amortisations to 1 April 2019	(1,936)
Balance at 1 April 2019	38
Expenditure in Year	401
Written off to Revenue in Year	(150)
Balance at 1 April 2020	289

20. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The borrowings and investments disclosed in the Balance Sheet are made up of the following categories of financial instruments:

	Long-term		Current	
	31 March 2019 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000	31 March 2019 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000
	Financial Liabilities at amortised cost:			
Creditors payable in one year	0	0	3,733	1,457
Borrowing	423	405	24	25
Total Financial Liabilities:	423	405	3,757	1,482
Financial Assets (loans and receivables):				
Debtors	440	338	3,912	3,166
Investments	1,500	1,000	25,115	26,627
Cash & Cash Equivalents	0	0	6,050	8,848
Total Financial Assets:	1,940	1,338	35,077	38,641

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

The gains and losses recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account in relation to financial instruments are made up as follows:

	Financial Liabilities At amortised cost £'000		Financial Assets Loans & Receivables £'000		Total £'000	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
	Interest Expense	(661)	(611)	0	0	(661)
Interest Payable & Similar Charges	(661)	(611)	0	0	(661)	(611)
Interest Income	0	0	354	411	354	411
Interest & investment income	0	0	354	411	354	411
Net gain/(loss) for year	(661)	(611)	354	411	(307)	(200)

Financial Liabilities and financial assets represented by loans and receivables are carried on the Balance Sheet at amortised cost. Their fair value is assessed as the amount for which an asset could be exchanged, or a liability settled, between knowledgeable, willing parties in an arm's length transaction, using the following assumptions:

- A 'premature repayment' set of rates, supplied by the Council's financial advisors, in force on the 31 March 2020 has been used to supply the fair value for loans
- Transaction costs on all financial liabilities and financial assets are immaterial (transaction costs do not include internal administrative costs)
- Interest payable and receivable reflects market rates
- No early repayment or impairment is recognised
- Where an instrument will mature in the next 12 months, carrying amount is assumed to approximate to fair value
- The fair value of trade and other receivables is taken to be the invoiced or billed amount.

The Council is required to classify the valuation of financial instruments into three levels according to the quality and reliability of information used to determine fair value:

Level 1 Quoted Prices in active markets for identical assets accessible at the measurement date.

Level 2 Observable (either directly or indirectly) other than quoted prices at Level 1

Level 3 Unobservable

The valuation basis adopted below uses Level 2 inputs – i.e. inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the financial asset/liability.

The fair values are calculated as follows:

	31 March 2019		31 March 2020	
	Carrying Amount	Fair Value	Carrying Amount	Fair Value
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Financial Liabilities	4,534	4,997	1,887	2,304

The fair value of the financial liabilities is more than the carrying amount because the Authority's portfolio of loans includes fixed rate loans where the interest rate payable is higher than the rates available for similar loans at the Balance Sheet date. This commitment to pay interest above current market rates increases the amount that the Authority would have to pay if the lender requested or agreed to early repayment of the loans.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

	31 March 2019		31 March 2020	
	Carrying Amount	Fair Value	Carrying Amount	Fair Value
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Loans & Receivables	33,626	33,655	39,872	40,009

The fair value of the loans & receivables is more than the carrying amount because valuation is made by comparison of the fixed term investment with a comparable investment with the same/similar lender for the remaining period of the deposit.

Nature and Extent of Risks Arising from Financial Instruments

The Authority's activities expose it to a variety of financial risks:

- Credit risk – the possibility that other parties might fail to pay amounts due
- Liquidity risk – the possibility that the Authority might not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments
- Market risk – the possibility that financial loss might arise for the Authority as a result of changes in such measures as interest rates and stock market movements

The Authority's overall risk management programme focuses on the unpredictability of financial markets and seeks to minimise potential adverse effects on the resources available to fund services. Risk management is carried out by a Central Treasury Team, under policies approved in the annual Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy). The Authority provides written principles for overall risk management, as well as written policies covering specific areas, such as interest rate risk, credit risk, and the investment of surplus cash.

Credit Risk

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

The Council regards a prime objective of its treasury management activities to be the security of the principal sums it invests. Accordingly, the Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy) ensured that its counterparty lists and limits reflected a prudent attitude towards organisations with whom funds were deposited, and limited its investment activities to the instruments, methods and techniques referred to in the Treasury Management Practices adopted by the Authority. It also maintains a formal counterparty policy in respect of those organisations from which it may borrow, or with whom it may enter into other financing arrangements. There were no defaults on investments in 2019/20 or 2018/19. The table below details the investment limits for 2019/20.

Investment Category	Maximum amount of investment allowable in category	Investment Type	Maximum Amount of Investment Allowable in any one Institution	Amount Invested as at 31 March 2020* £'000
Banks	£22M	UK Clearing Banks	£3M	2,000
		UK Clearing Banks (Wholly owned Subsidiaries)	£3M	0
		Non-UK Clearing Banks	£3M	0
UK Building Societies and UK Property Market Funds	£18M	Building Societies (Assets £4.5bn)	£3M	1,000
		Building Societies (Assets £2.5bn - £4.5bn)	£3M	1,000
		Building Societies (Assets £1bn to £2.5bn)	£3M	1,000
		Building Societies (Assets £0.3bn to £1bn)	£2M	6,500
		Property Market Funds	£8M	0
Money Market Funds	£8M	Money Market Funds	£3M	0
UK Local Authorities	No limit	Other Local Authorities	£3M	16,000
UK Government	No limit	Debt Management Office	No limit	2,000
Total Invested				29,500

* This column shows the total invested in all counterparties in the group (for example, there was £6.5million invested in five separate building societies, assets £0.3bn to £1bn, as at 31 March 2020).

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

The analysis of the £29.5million of investments by credit rating at year end is as follows:

AAA or equivalent	AA / AA- or equivalent	A+ / A- or equivalent	BBB+ / BBB or equivalent	AAA money market fund	Other Local Authorities	Not rated*	Total Investments
£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
0	0	4,000	0	0	16,000	9,500	29,500

* Many Building Societies do not pay to be credit rated. The Authority has chosen not to exclude Building Societies from its counterparty list for this reason alone and has continued to make cash deposits with Building Societies during the year.

The Authority does not allow credit facilities for customers with relation to payments for the provision of services. £0.288M of the total £1.095M sundry debtor balance at 31 March 2020 has passed its due date for payment. The risk of default is accounted for through the corresponding bad debt provision, which is determined primarily by the age of the sundry debtor outstanding. The sundry debtor balance and corresponding provision is presented in the table below.

Age of Debt	Sundry Debtors	Provision Percentage	Provision Required	Net Sundry Debtors
	£'000		£'000	£'000
Within payment terms	807	0%	0	807
1-3 months over term	144	0%	0	144
3-12 months overdue	40	25%	(10)	30
12-24 months overdue	19	75%	(14)	5
More than 24 months overdue	85	100%	(85)	0
Total at 31 March 2020	1,095		(109)	986

The equivalent position at the end of 2018/19 is shown in the table below:

Age of Debt	Sundry Debtors	Provision Percentage	Provision Required	Net Sundry Debtors
	£'000		£'000	£'000
Within payment terms	905	0%	0	905
1-3 months over term	85	0%	0	85
3-12 months overdue	40	25%	(10)	30
12-24 months overdue	36	75%	(27)	9
More than 24 months overdue	189	100%	(189)	0
Total at 31 March 2019	1,255		(226)	1,029

Liquidity Risk

As the Authority has ready access to borrowings from the Public Works Loans Board, there is no significant risk that it will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments under financial instruments. Instead, the risk is that the Authority will be bound to replenish a significant proportion of its borrowings at a time of unfavourable interest rates. The Authority reviews its borrowing requirements as part of its annual Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy) and the standard policy has been to limit the amount of borrowing and reduce the exposure to liquidity risk. The strategy for 2019/20 was to utilise capital receipts and set aside reserves and no new borrowing was taken out.

The total financial liability is made up as follows:

	31 March 2019 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000
Public Works Loan Board	440	423
Banks and Other Monetary Sectors	0	0
Total Borrowing	440	423
Less: Debt Maturing in 12 Months	17	18
Total Long Term Borrowing	423	405

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

At 31 March 2020 the average rates of interest on the different varieties of loans were as follows:

	%
Public Works Loan Board	9.8

The consolidated rate of interest, the rate used for internal transactions, was 13.26%.

The maturity analysis of the long term financial liabilities is as follows:

	£'000
Maturing in more than 1 and less than 2 years	18
Maturing in more than 2 and less than 5 years	61
Maturing in more than 5 and less than 10 years	69
Maturing in more than 10 years	<u>257</u>
Total	405

Market Risk

Interest rate risk

The Authority is exposed to risk in terms of its exposure to interest rate movements on its borrowings and investments. Movements in interest rates have a complex impact on the Authority. For instance, a rise in interest rates would have the following effects:

- Borrowings at variable rates – the interest expense charged to the Income and Expenditure Account will rise
- Borrowings at fixed rates – the fair value of the liabilities borrowings will fall
- Investments at variable rates – the interest income credited to the Income and Expenditure Account will rise
- Investments at fixed rates – the fair value of the assets will fall

Borrowings are not carried at fair value, so nominal gains and losses on fixed rate borrowings would not impact on the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account. However, changes in interest payable and receivable on variable rate borrowings and investments will be included in the Surplus or Deficit on Provision of Services and affect the General Fund Balance pound for pound. Movements in the fair value of fixed rate investments will be reflected in the Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.

The Authority has a number of strategies for managing interest rate risk. The policy is to aim to keep a maximum of 30% of borrowings in variable rate loans. During periods of falling interest rates, and where economic circumstances make it favourable, fixed rate loans will be repaid early to limit exposure to losses. The risk of loss is mitigated by the fact that a proportion of government grant payable on financing costs will normally move with prevailing interest rates or the Authority's cost of borrowing and provide compensation for a proportion of any higher costs.

The Authority has an active strategy for assessing interest rate exposure that feeds into the setting of the annual budget and which is used to update the budget quarterly during the year. This allows any adverse changes to be accommodated. The analysis will also advise whether new borrowing taken out is fixed or variable.

According to this assessment strategy, at 31 March 2020 if interest rates had been 1% higher with all other variables held constant, the effects seen in the Income and Expenditure Statement would have been an increase of £21k in interest receivable from cash investments. The fair value of the loans outstanding would have been £8k higher (cost of repayment would have increased). This is shown below:

	£'000
Increase in interest receivable on variable rate investments	(21)
Impact on Income and Expenditure Account	(21)
Increase in fair value of fixed rate loans	<u>8</u>

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

Price risk

The Council does not have any equity shares or shareholdings and thus has no exposure to a loss arising from movements in the prices of shares.

Foreign exchange risk

The Authority has no financial assets or liabilities denominated in foreign currencies and thus have no exposure to loss arising from movements in exchange rates.

21. INVENTORIES

	31 March 2019 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000
Inventory:		
Paper and Stationery	6	1
Postage	5	8
Waste & Recycling equipment	36	35
Museum merchandise	7	6
Careline Telecare equipment	170	243
Hitchin Town Hall Bar/Café Supplies	5	5
Electrical equipment	7	1
Other	1	0
Total	237	299

22. DEBTORS

	31 March 2019 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000
Central Government Bodies	824	458
Impairment	0	0
Net Total Central Government Bodies	824	458
Other Local Authorities	1,799	2,819
Impairment	0	0
Net Total Other Local Authorities	1,799	2,819
Ratepayers / Council Tax Payers	1,626	1,539
Impairment	(723)	(605)
Net Total Ratepayers / Council Tax Payers	903	934
Housing Benefit Overpayments	1,601	1,641
Impairment	(747)	(848)
Net Total Housing Benefit Overpayments	854	793
Other Entities and Individuals	1,523	1,785
Impairment	(264)	(157)
Net Total Other Entities and Individuals	1,259	1,628
Total Net Debtors	5,639	6,632

23. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

The balance of Cash and Cash Equivalents is made up of the following elements:

31 March 2019 £000		31 March 2020 £000
28	Cash held by the Authority	5
2,522	Bank current accounts	6,843
3,500	Short-term Deposits with other Local Authorities	0
0	Short-term Deposits with Central Government	2,000
6,050	Total	8,848

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

24. ASSETS HELD FOR SALE (Non-Current)

	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Balance Outstanding at Start of Year	0	627
Assets newly classified as held for sale:		
Property Plant & Equipment	716	579
Investment Properties	0	410
Impairment losses	(170)	(157)
Revaluation gains	81	1,450
Balance Outstanding at End of Year	627	2,909

25. SHORT TERM CREDITORS AND RECEIPTS IN ADVANCE

Short Term Creditors	31 March 2019 £000	31 March 2020 £000
Central government bodies	1,137	783
Other local authorities	808	2,182
Other entities and individuals*	3,081	1,688
Total	5,026	4,653

* As at 31 March 2020 there was £8k of prepayments received in the last few days of the year (£15k as at 31 March 2019).

Receipts in Advance	31 March 2019 £000	31 March 2020 £000
Central government bodies	400	2,466
Other local authorities	135	140
Other entities and individuals	4,722	5,643
Total	5,257	8,249

26. PROVISIONS

	Provisions > 1 year		Total
	Insurance Fund	NNDR Appeals	
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance at 1 April 2019	(26)	(1,501)	(1,527)
Additional provisions made in 2019/20	(33)	(482)	(515)
Amounts used in 2019/20	19	173	192
Unused amounts reversed in 2019/20	0	968	968
Balance at 31 March 2020	(40)	(842)	(882)

Insurance Provision

The insurance provision covers the uninsured aspect of outstanding insurance claims (the amount of our policy excess and any self-insured losses to be covered by the Insurance Fund). This varies throughout the year and the provision amount is adjusted at the end of each quarter on receipt of revised estimates from insurers.

NNDR Appeals Provision

The Authority is required to recognise a provision for NNDR appeals liabilities. The balance includes provision for appeals not yet lodged. The provision calculation is based on information from the Valuation Office (VOA) and the methodology and key assumptions are agreed by North Herts external auditors. The total at the end of 2019/20 was £2.4 million (£3.75million in 2018/19) and, as this is shared between North Herts, Herts County Council and Central Government, the North Herts proportion reflected in the balance sheet was £842k (£1.50million in 2018/19). The unused amounts reversed in 2019/20 relate to the calculation of the provision for unlogged appeals. An underlying assumption was amended because, as at 31 March 2020, there were no appeals lodged against the most recent VOA rating list effective from April 2017. The outcome from the revised calculation was a reduction in the assessed provision required.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

27. USABLE RESERVES

Movements in the Authority's usable reserves are detailed in the Movement in Reserves Statement and the following notes.

	Balance at 1 April 2019 £'000	Net Movement in Year £'000	Balance at 31 March 2020 £'000
Usable Capital Receipts	2,580	(639)	1,941
Earmarked Reserves	7,183	2,161	9,344
Capital Grants Unapplied	938	0	938
General Fund Reserve	7,862	1,516	9,378
Total Usable Reserves	18,563	3,038	21,601

	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Usable Capital Receipts		
Amounts applied to finance new capital investment	(510)	(639)
Total increase / (decrease) in realised capital resources	(510)	(639)
Balance brought forward at 1 April	3,090	2,580
Balance carried forward at 31 March	2,580	1,941

Earmarked Reserves

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

Earmarked Reserve	Balance as at 31st March 2018 £'000	Transfers out 2018/19 £'000	Transfers in 2018/19 £'000	Balance at 31st March 2019 £'000	Transfers out 2019/20 £'000	Transfers in 2019/20 £'000	Balance at 31st March 2020 £'000
Cemetery Mausoleum Reserve	140	0	21	161	(1)	7	167
Children's Services Reserve	8	(1)	0	7	(2)	52	57
Climate Change Grant Reserve	30	(2)	0	28	(2)	0	26
Community Development Reserve	1	(1)	0	0	0	0	0
Community Right to Challenge Reserve	45	0	0	45	(45)	0	0
MHCLG Grants Reserve	868	(817)	1,763	1,814	(77)	2,004	3,741
Welfare Reform Grants Reserve	129	(56)	117	190	(121)	116	185
Environmental Warranty Reserve	209	0	0	209	(209)	0	0
Funding Equalisation Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	68	68
Growth Area Fund Reserve	53	0	0	53	0	0	53
Homelessness Grants Reserve	203	(145)	204	262	(59)	210	413
Housing & Planning Delivery	768	(13)	387	1,142	(168)	95	1,069
Information Technology Reserve	82	0	0	82	(4)	0	78
Insurance Reserve	34	0	0	34	0	0	34
Land Charges Reserve	104	(10)	0	94	0	0	94
Leisure Management Maintenance Reserve	47	0	0	47	0	30	77

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

Earmarked Reserve	Balance as at 31st March 2018	Transfers out 2018/19	Transfers in 2018/19	Balance at 31st March 2019	Transfers out 2019/20	Transfers in 2019/20	Balance at 31st March 2020
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Museum Exhibits Reserve	12	0	0	12	0	1	13
Neighbourhood Plan Reserve	41	0	0	41	(3)	40	78
Office Move IT Works	7	0	0	7	(7)	0	0
Paintings Conservation Reserve	11	0	0	11	0	0	11
Property Maintenance Reserve	62	0	10	72	(72)	0	0
S106 Monitoring Reserve	53	(17)	0	36	(17)	0	19
Special Reserve	1,720	(325)	0	1,395	(220)	0	1,175
Street Furniture	17	0	4	21	(21)	0	0
Street Name Plates	16	0	0	16	0	0	16
Syrian Refugee Project	87	0	28	115	(182)	339	272
Taxi Reserve	13	0	0	13	0	2	15
Town Centre Maintenance	38	(1)	8	45	0	8	53
Traffic Regulation Orders	296	0	51	347	(1)	0	346
Waste Reserve	585	0	46	631	0	99	730
Waste Vehicles Reserve	0	0	253	253	0	301	554
Total Earmarked Reserves	5,679	(1,388)	2,892	7,183	(1,211)	3,372	9,344

The Authority has taken the decision to set aside resources in a number of Earmarked Reserves to be used for specific purposes. The Reserves are reviewed annually during the budget estimate process to ensure the balance available is appropriate for the purpose. A description of each earmarked reserve is provided below:

The **Cemetery Mausoleum reserve** is held to cover the Authority's obligation to supply Mausoleum niches at the Wilbury Hills Cemetery and is funded from the sale of currently available niches.

The **Children's Services Reserve** is being used to help fund Active Communities projects in the district and is funded from grant income.

The **Climate Change Grant** was awarded to help combat the effects of climate change. The grant is currently being used to fund work on Climate Strategy.

Community Development Reserve – various grants for Community Development.

Community Right to Challenge represents the one-off grant funding received to recognize the additional burden of the new legislation. With the legislation in place for 5 years and with no significant burden transpiring, the Council has transferred the amount held in the earmarked reserve to the General Fund balance in 2019/20.

MHCLG Grants Reserve holds unapplied Section 31 business rate relief grants, which will be used to fund NNDR Collection Fund deficit contributions and levy payments in future years. It also provides some protection against potential future reductions in NNDR receipts.

Welfare Reform Grants are awarded to the Authority for different initiatives or changes relating to Housing & Council Tax benefit scheme. These grants will be used when the initiatives or changes are carried out.

The **Environmental Warranty Reserve** relates to an environmental warranty provided to North Herts Homes on the transfer of the Housing stock, equivalent to the cost of obtaining insurance for 10 years. Council approved the release of this amount to the General Fund balance in 2019/20, with the potential liability instead recognized as a financial risk in future years.

Where anticipated annual revenue funding has exceeded estimated net expenditure, the Council has opted to contribute the surplus amount to the **Funding Equalisation Reserve**, rather than raise Council Tax by less than the maximum amount allowed. The reserve balance will be used to cushion the impact of future expected funding reductions and provide more time to implement the savings that are likely to be required to address the future forecast budget gap.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

Growth Area Fund Reserve is the reserve where revenue Growth Area Grant has been transferred.

The **Homelessness Grant** is awarded to help prevent homelessness in the district. The entire grant is earmarked for different homelessness projects or resources.

The **Housing & Planning Delivery Reserve** holds unspent Housing & Planning Delivery grant to fund Cabinet approved spending plans in subsequent years. The Authority has also made a commitment to the Local Development Framework and funds are held in this reserve for this purpose. Additional income from the 20% increase in statutory planning fees is also transferred here to fund the development of Planning Services.

The **Information Technology Reserve** is used to help ensure the Authority has adequate resources to purchase hardware and software items when they are required.

The **Insurance Reserve** is used to finance potential claims for risks that are not covered by external policies together with higher excesses currently being borne by the Authority.

Land Charges Reserve was established to help meet the potential cost should the financial risk of the repayment of personal search fees occur.

The **Leisure Management Maintenance Reserve** is to cover the cost of any future repairs liabilities on the leisure facilities. The Leisure Contract requires a contribution from the Council for maintenance items over £5k.

The **Museum Exhibits Reserve** funds the purchase of museum exhibits and is funded from donations.

The **Neighbourhood Plan Reserve** is where funds received for neighbourhood plans from MHCLG have been transferred. The funding has been provided from government to local authorities who have received neighbourhood plans from Parishes, as funding will be needed in future years as plans are formalised and public examinations and public referendums are required

Office Move IT Works is a reserve to cover the cost of moving cabling between Authority buildings when required.

The **Paintings Conservation Reserve** is being used to help restore paintings. This is funded through donations and publication income.

The **Property Maintenance Reserve** is to cover the cost of any unplanned emergency maintenance costs that may occur at any of the Authority's properties. The Council considers this reserve to no longer be required and the balance has been transferred to the General Fund in 2019/20.

The **S106 Planning Monitoring** reserve is used to cover the cost of monitoring s106 obligations in future years.

The **Special Reserve** was originally the residual balance from the Housing Revenue Account that was used to fund the realignment of costs of the Authority following stock transfer. This reserve is maintained for any special financial pressures such as pump priming for initiatives for shared services, changes in working practice, major contract renewals, unexpected contract variation, support the response to and reduce the impact of major incidents and other financial pressures.

Street Furniture is a reserve to fund new street furniture as and when required. The Council considered this reserve to no longer be needed and the balance held has been transferred to the General Fund in 2019/20.

Street Name Plate Reserve is a reserve to fund Street Name Plates as and when required.

Syrian Refugee Project - The council has agreed to house Syrian Refugees over five years under the government's resettlement scheme. The scheme is fully funded by the government and the reserve enables the multiple year funding for each household to be maintained for future expenditure associated with their placement in the district, such as housing and support costs.

Taxi Reserve is a reserve where any surplus from the taxi service will be transferred to the earmarked reserve where it can be used to offset any future deficit or to fund investment in the taxi service.

Town Centre Maintenance reserve is for the implementation of the Town Wide Reviews and ad hoc town centre maintenance.

Traffic Regulation Orders. An audit was done to identify TRO work to be carried out in the district. However due to other priorities this work was delayed and the budget has been transferred to a reserve, to be drawn down as and when the work is done.

Waste Reserve – is a reserve where unspent AFM monies are transferred to help mitigate any potential risk to the waste service, for example the construction of a Northern Transfer Station.

Waste Vehicles Reserve – as repayment of the finance lease principal embedded within the waste contract is funded from the Council's cash reserves, the saving on the revenue account is transferred to this reserve to fund the purchase of vehicles when they next need to be replaced.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

28. UNUSABLE RESERVES

	Balance at 1 April 2019	Net Movement in Year	Balance at 31 March 2020
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Revaluation Reserve (note 28A)	49,306	4,198	53,504
Capital Adjustment Account (note 28B)	71,996	(1,914)	70,082
Pensions Reserve (note 28C)	(51,449)	20,552	(30,897)
Collection Fund Adjustment Account (note 28D)	(314)	597	283
Short Term Accumulating Compensated Absences Account (note 28E)	(156)	(40)	(196)
Total Unusable Reserves	69,383	23,393	92,776

Note 28A – Revaluation Reserve

The Revaluation Reserve contains the gains made by the Authority arising from increases in the value of its Property, Plant and Equipment. The balance is reduced when assets with accumulated gains are:

- revalued downwards or impaired and the gains are lost
- used in the provision of services and the gains are consumed through depreciation, or
- disposed of and the gains are realised.

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

	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Balance at 1 April	44,491	49,306
Upward revaluation of assets	7,008	5,843
Downward revaluation of assets and Impairment losses not charged to the surplus/deficit on the Provision of Services.	(1,171)	(630)
Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation.	(1,022)	(1,015)
Balance at 31 March	49,306	53,504

Note 28B – Capital Adjustment Account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction or enhancement of those assets under statutory provisions. The Account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or enhancement as depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations which are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (with reconciling postings from the Revaluation Reserve to convert fair value figures to a historical cost basis). The Account is credited with the amounts set aside by the Authority as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction and enhancement. The Account has also been credited with all the Housing capital receipts required by regulation to be set aside at the time of the Housing stock transfer in 2003.

The Account contains accumulated gains and losses on Investment Properties and gains recognised on donated assets that have yet to be consumed by the Authority.

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

Note 11 provides details of the source of all transactions posted to the Account, apart from those involving the Revaluation Reserve.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Balance at 1 April	73,869	71,996
Reversal of items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:		
Depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(3,689)	(3,370)
Amortisation of Intangible assets	(162)	(150)
Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute	(723)	(488)
Sub-Total	(4,574)	(4,008)
Adjusting amounts written out of the Revaluation Reserve.	1,022	1,015
Total net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in the year	(3,552)	(2,993)
Capital resource adjustments in the year:		
Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure	510	639
Capital grants and contributions credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	607	429
Application of grants to capital financing from the Capital Grants Unapplied Account	16	0
Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment charged against the General Fund	3	3
Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund	0	8
Sub-Total	1,136	1,079
Movements in the market value of investment properties	543	0
Balance carried forward at 31 March	71,996	70,082

Note 28C – Pension Reserve

The Pension Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Authority accounts for post employment benefits in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned, to be financed as the Authority makes employer's contributions to pension funds, or eventually pay any pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance on the Pensions Reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Authority has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Balance at 1st April	(45,029)	(51,449)
Actuarial gains or losses on pension assets and liabilities	(4,030)	23,191
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the surplus or deficit on the provision of services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(4,958)	(5,309)
Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year.	2,568	2,670
Balance at 31st March	(51,449)	(30,897)

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

Note 28D – Collection Fund Adjustment Account

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

	2018/19	2019/20
	£'000	£'000
Balance at 1 April	(368)	(314)
Movement in the Authority's share of the Collection Fund surplus / deficit	54	597
Balance at 31 March	(314)	283

Note 28E Accumulated Absences Account

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

	2018/19	2019/20
	£'000	£'000
Balance at 1 April	(156)	(156)
Amounts accrued at the end of the current year	0	(40)
Balance at 31 March	(156)	(196)

29. NOTES RELATING TO THE CASH FLOW STATEMENT

Cash Flow Statement - Operating Activities

The cash flows for operating activities include the following items:

2018/19	2019/20
£'000	£'000
405 Interest Received	405
(661) Interest Paid	(612)
(256) Net cash flows from operating activities	(207)

The adjustments for non-cash movements are as follows:

2018/19	2019/20
£'000	£'000
3,400 Depreciation	3,370
289 Impairments and downward revaluations	0
162 Amortisation of intangible assets	150
(643) Movement in Creditors	2,211
623 Movement in Debtors	(1,938)
(78) Movement in Inventories	(62)
2,390 Pension Liability	2,639
0 Carrying amount of non-current assets sold	0
(268) Movement in other provisions	(703)
5,875 Net Adjustment for non-cash movements	5,667

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

The adjustments for items that are investing or financing activities are as follows:

2018/19		2019/20
£'000		£'000
(612)	Grants applied to the financing of capital expenditure	(429)
(4,339)	Proceeds from the sale of non-current assets	(885)
(4,951)	Net Adjustment for investing or financing activities	(1,314)

Cash Flow Statement - Investing Activities

2018/19		2019/20
£'000		£'000
(2,477)	Purchase of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	(1,081)
(62,339)	Purchase of short-term and long-term investments	(121,135)
0	Other payments for investing activities	0
0	Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	0
62,339	Proceeds from short-term and long-term Investments	121,135
557	Other receipts from investing activities	479
(1,920)	Net cash flows from investing activities	(602)

Cash Flow Statement - Financing Activities

2018/19		2019/20
£'000		£'000
0	Cash receipts of short and long-term borrowing	0
283	Council Tax and NNDR adjustments	1,039
(3)	Cash payments for the reduction of finance leases liabilities	(3)
(16)	Repayments of short and long-term borrowing	(17)
264	Net Cash flows from financing activities	1,019

30. TRADING OPERATIONS

The Council has no trading operations.

31. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

The following table shows the amount of Members' allowances paid in 2019/20 compared to the previous financial year:

	2018/19	2019/20
	£'000	£'000
Allowances	335	339
Expenses	12	10
Total	347	349

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

32. EMPLOYEES REMUNERATION

Senior Employee Remuneration in 2019/20

The Authority is required to disclose individual remuneration details for senior employees. The first table that follows details the individual remuneration for senior employees in 2019/20. The second table details the equivalent information for the comparative year, 2018/19. The Authority is voluntarily opting to disclose the name of the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive. For senior employees, compensation for loss of office comprises the employer pension contribution amount calculated as part of the redundancy or termination package, as well as any other payments receivable on termination of employment (e.g. redundancy payments and payment in lieu of notice).

Post Title	Note	Salary (including fees & allowances)	Expense Allowances	Compensation for loss of office	Total Remuneration (excluding pension contributions)	Pension Contributions	Total Remuneration (including pension contributions 2019/20)
		£	£	£	£	£	£
David Scholes Chief Executive	1	113,565	0	0	113,565	20,379	133,944
Anthony Roche Deputy Chief Executive		103,001	0	0	103,001	18,360	121,361
Service Director - Resources		74,024	0	0	74,024	13,117	87,141
Service Director - Regulatory		78,767	0	0	78,767	13,991	92,758
Service Director - Customers		79,064	0	0	79,064	14,055	93,119
Service Director - Place		78,597	0	0	78,957	13,957	92,554
Service Director - Legal and Community		74,496	0	0	74,496	13,183	87,679
Service Director - Commercialisation		69,783	0	0	69,783	12,297	82,080

1 The Chief Executive also held the position of Returning Officer for the Council and received £9,012 of expense allowances for this role in 2019/20

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

Senior Employee Remuneration in 2018/19

Post Title	Note	Salary (including fees & allowances)	Expense Allowances	Compensation for loss of office	Total Remuneration (excluding pension contributions)	Pension Contributions	Total Remuneration (including pension contributions 2018/19)
		£	£	£	£	£	£
David Scholes Chief Executive	1	121,804	0	0	121,804	21,912	143,716
Anthony Roche Deputy Chief Executive		100,285	120	0	100,405	17,883	118,288
Head of Finance Performance and Asset Management	2	10,673	0	0	10,673	1,877	12,550
Service Director - Resources		57,593	0	0	57,593	10,170	67,763
Head of Development and Building Control	3	12,925	0	0	12,925	2,296	15,221
Service Director - Regulatory		64,248	0	0	64,248	11,408	75,656
Head of Revenues, Benefits & IT	4	12,515	0	0	12,515	2,219	14,734
Service Director - Customers		62,784	0	0	62,784	11,135	73,919
Head of Leisure and Environmental Services	5	11,555	0	0	11,555	2,095	13,650
Service Director - Place		62,630	0	0	62,630	11,043	73,673
Corporate Legal Manager	6	9,646	0	0	9,646	1,701	11,347
Service Director - Legal and Community		57,638	0	0	57,638	10,170	67,808
Service Director Commercialisation	7	55,237	0	0	55,237	9,704	64,941
Head of Housing and Public Protection Service	8	6,663	0	99,081	105,744	1,066	106,810

- 1 The Chief Executive also held the position of Returning Officer for the Council and received £3,753 of expense allowances for this role in 2018/19
- 2 The Head of Finance Performance and Asset Management was in post until 31/05/18. The annualised salary excluding fees and allowances was £60,540. Appointed to the new post of Service Director - Resources from 01/06/18 for which the annualised salary excluding fees and allowances was £66,935
- 3 The Head of Development and Building Control was in post until 31/05/2018. The annualised salary excluding fees and allowances was £62,412. Appointed to the new post of Service Director - Regulatory from 01/06/18 for which the annualised salary excluding fees and allowances was £71,340
- 4 The Head of Revenues, Benefits & IT was in post until 31/05/2018. The annualised salary excluding fees and allowances was £62,412. Appointed to the new post of Service Director - Customers from 01/06/2018 for which the annualised salary excluding fees and allowances was £71,340
- 5 The Head of Leisure and Environmental Services was in post until 31/05/2018. The annualised salary excluding fees and allowances was £62,412. Appointed to the new post of Service Director - Place from 01/06/2018 for which the annualised salary excluding fees and allowances was £71,340
- 6 The Corporate Legal Manager was in post until 31/05/2018. The annualised salary excluding fees and allowances was £52,620. Appointed to the post of Service Director - Legal and Community from 01/06/2018 for which the annualised salary excluding fees and allowances was £66,935
- 7 The Service Director - Commercial was appointed on 01/06/2018. The annualised salary excluding fees and allowances was £62,532
- 8 The Head of Housing and Public Protection Service left the Council on 30/04/2018; the annualised salary excluding fees and allowances was £62,412. Amounts paid as Compensation for Loss of Office were recognised within the Provision for Restructure costs created in the 2017/18 accounts.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

The Authority is also required to disclose the authority's other employees that received more than £50,000 remuneration for the year. For this purpose, remuneration comprises all amounts paid to or receivable by an employee, other than employers pension contributions, and includes sums due by way of taxable expenses, the estimated monetary value of any benefit, and compensation for loss of office. The remuneration is shown in each bracket of a scale in multiples of £5,000.

Remuneration Band	2018/19	2019/20
	Employees	Employees
£50,000-£54,999	16	13
£55,000-£59,999	6	10
£60,000-£64,999	2	0
£65,000-£69,999	0	1
Total	24	24

33. TERMINATION BENEFITS AND EXIT PACKAGES

The Authority terminated the contracts of 2 employees in 2019/20, incurring liabilities of £144,168 (£580,860 in 2018/19) that have been charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the current year. The total payable was in the form of compensation for loss of office.

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

(a) Exit package cost band (including special payments)	(b) Number of compulsory redundancies		(c) Number of other agreed departures		(d) Total number of exit packages by cost band		(e) Total cost of exit packages in each band	
	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20
							£	£
£0 - £49,999	5	1	2	0	7	1	93,397	31,243
£50,000 - £99,999	1	0	1	0	2	0	186,061	0
£100,000 - £149,999	1	0	0	1	1	1	144,658	112,925
£150,000 - £199,999	1	0	0	0	1	0	156,744	0
Total Cost included in bandings and in CIES							580,860	144,168

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

34. FEES PAYABLE TO THE AUTHORITY'S APPOINTED EXTERNAL AUDITORS

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

	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Fees payable with regard to external audit services carried out by the appointed auditor for the year	40	36
Fees payable for the certification of grant claims and returns for the year	6	13
Total	46	49

The fees payable for external audit services for 2019/20 is inclusive of an amount of £4,042 received from Public Sector Appointments Ltd (PSAA). This refund relates to retained earnings transferred from the Audit Commission when it closed in March 2015 and the PSAA continuing to generate surplus funds and make further efficiencies since its establishment in April 2015.

The fees payable for the certification of grant claims and returns for 2019/20 includes £4,300 of additional fees relating to the certification of the 2018/19 Housing Benefit subsidy claim.

35. GRANT INCOME RECOGNISED IN THE COST OF SERVICES

The Authority credited the following **capital** grants, contributions and donations to the net cost of services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Disabled Facilities Grant	122	2
Developer Contribution	159	160
Performance Reward Grant	16	0
Total	297	162

The Authority credited the following **revenue** grants, contributions and donations to the net cost of services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Benefits Administration and Fraud Initiative Grants	851	757
Housing and Council Tax Benefit Subsidy	32,100	26,921
Waste minimisation – Herts County Council contribution	423	577
Waste Service Transport Subsidy	4	3
National Non-Domestic Rates Administration Grant	180	176
Refugees Syrian Project	172	339
Community Safety Grant	0	2
Homelessness Prevention Grant	212	212
Individual Electronic Registration Grant	19	18
Planning Control Grants – MHCLG	126	133
MHCLG Neighbourhood Plans	0	40
Public Health Grant	23	2
Get Active Grant	51	23
Spring In Your Step Grant	2	7
Local Land Charges	33	0
MHCLG Waste Grants for Flats Recycling	81	33
Hertfordshire Museums – Lottery Fund	0	23
Brexit Preparations	17	35
Flu Pandemic - MHCLG	0	48
Healthy Hub	0	13
Total	34,294	29,362

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

Capital Grants Received in Advance

The Authority received a grant in 2012/13 from the DCLG for the Weekly Collection Support Scheme. This grant is recognised as income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement over the life of the scheme as there are conditions attached that may require the monies to be returned if the criteria of the grant are not met. As at the 31st March 2020 all conditions of the grant have been met and the grant is fully spent.

36. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

The Authority is required to disclose material transactions with related parties, bodies or individuals that have potential to control or influence the Authority or to be controlled or influenced by the Authority.

Central Government

Central Government has significant influence over the general operations of the Authority - it is responsible for providing the statutory framework within which the Authority operates, provides the majority of funding in the form of grants and prescribes the terms of many of the transactions that the Authority has with other parties (e.g. housing benefits). Grants received from government departments are detailed in Note 34.

Members

Members have direct control over the Authority's financial and operating policies. The total of members' allowances paid in the year is shown in Note 30.

During 2019/20, the Authority made grants payments totalling £273k under Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements to organisations in which 10 members are Trustees, board members or otherwise involved. The support provided by these grants helps maintain the wellbeing and resilience of the District's communities. The most significant MOU grant payments were £220k to Citizens Advice North Herts, £36k to North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum and £10k to North Herts CVS. Other grants totalling £71k were paid to organisations in which 14 members declared an involvement.

Works and services to the value of £115k (2018/19: £51k) were commissioned from organisations in which 16 members had an interest.

Two members are also elected members of Royston Town Council. Payments recorded under a Service Level Agreement between the Authority and Royston Town Council totalled £55k. Six members are also members of Hertfordshire County Council.

Details of all of these transactions are recorded in the Register of Members' Interest and Disclosure of Personal Interest at Meetings. Both these documents are available for public inspection at Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire.

Officers

Officers are obliged under the code of conduct in the Council's constitution to declare any personal interest, financial and/or otherwise, in any business of the Council. They are also required to record any gifts and/or hospitality received in a format prescribed and held by the Monitoring Officer. In addition, senior officers are required to complete an annual return disclosing the details of any interest of themselves or close family members which may have an impact on their activities on behalf of the Council. There were no transactions considered of material significance to warrant separate disclosure in the accounts.

Hertfordshire Building Control Limited

The Council partnered with six local authorities across Hertfordshire to create a new fully integrated building control service, which was launched in August 2016. An additional local authority joined in 2019, so eight local authorities have equal control. The Council holds 13% of the share capital (£8) and is represented on the board. The company aims to provide a more flexible and efficient response to building control issues across the county. In 2019/20 the Council's share of the profit for the year amounted to £TBC (2018/19 £21.7k profit). In August 2016 the council made a loan to the company of £107k, which is held in Long Term Debtors (other loans) on the balance sheet.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

Hertfordshire CCTV Partnership

The Authority is engaged in a jointly controlled operation for the provision and management of CCTV in the Hertfordshire area. This arrangement is with Stevenage Borough Council, North Hertfordshire Council, East Hertfordshire Council and Hertsmeire Borough Council. Each member of the partnership arrangement accounts for their share of the assets, liabilities and cash flows of the CCTV in their accounts. In 2019/20 total payments to the Partnership of £105k (£98k 2018/19) were charged to the Council's Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. In 2019/20 the Partnership reported a small deficit of which NHDC share is £0.4k

Hertfordshire CCTV Partnership Limited

In 2013/14 all partner authorities within the Hertfordshire CCTV Partnership agreed to incorporate a new company to conduct the commercial trading affairs of the CCTV partnership. The new limited company, Hertfordshire CCTV Partnership Ltd, started trading on the 1 April 2015. The Council holds 27% of the share capital (£27) and is represented on the board. For the year ended 31 March 2020 the company produced a profit after tax of £TBC. NHDC's share of the profit is £TBC with the remainder belonging to the partner councils. In 2019/20 £19k (£19k 2018/19) was paid by the Council for services provided by Hertfordshire CCTV Partnership Limited and charged to the CIES.

37. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND FINANCING

The total amount of capital expenditure incurred in the year is shown in the table below, together with the resources that have been used to finance it. Of the total expenditure of £1.473million, only £1.076million has been financed immediately, resulting in an increase of £0.4million in the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This is a measure of the capital expenditure incurred historically by the Authority that has yet to be financed. The CFR remains negative (£5.6million at 31 March 2020) because the Authority has set aside capital receipts that exceed the amount of outstanding loans and borrowings.

	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Capital Investment:		
Operational Assets		
Land & Buildings	1,306	112
Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	3,484	331
Non-Operational Assets		
Assets Under Construction	53	141
Intangible Assets - Software	8	401
Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute	723	488
Total Capital Investment	5,574	1,473
Sources of Finance:		
Capital Receipts	626	639
Government Grants and Other Contributions	607	429
Sums set aside from Revenue	0	8
Total Finance Sources	1,233	1,076
Increase / (Decrease) in CFR	4,341	397

Capital expenditure and income is accounted for on an accruals basis and is financed in the year the accrual appears in the accounts.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

38. ASSETS HELD UNDER LEASE AND FOR LEASE

Assets held under lease

Operating Leases

Vehicles, Plant and Equipment

The Authority uses service vans and I.T. equipment financed under terms of an operating lease. The amount paid under these arrangements in 2019/20 was £50,292 (2018/19 £68,744).

Property

The Authority paid £55,719 in rent / leasing charges for properties in 2019/20. The most significant amount of £27,500 was paid for the King James Way Car Park. This agreement is due to expire in January 2024.

Commitments under operating leases

The Authority was committed at 31 March 2020 to making payments of £1.249 million under operating leases over the following periods:

	31 March 2019 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000
Not later than one year	104	89
Later than one year and not later than five years	154	191
Later than five years	981	969
	1,239	1,249

Finance leases

The Authority leases the Letchworth multi-storey car park from the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. The lease term is 60 years from 19 April 1977.

The Authority considers the vehicles used in the delivery of the refuse and recycling service as held under a finance lease. This reflects long-term leases economic benefits of ownership, through the performance of the contract. The seven year contract commenced in May 2018 and the vehicles had an initial value of £3.178 million.

The assets acquired under these leases are carried as Property, Plant and Equipment in the Balance Sheet at the following net amounts.

	31 March 2019 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000
Land and Buildings	5	10
Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	2,724	2,270
	2,729	2,280

The Council is committed to making minimum payments under these leases, comprising settlement of the long term liability for the interest and the finance costs payable in future years while the liability remains outstanding. The minimum lease payments are made up of the following amounts:

	31 March 2019 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000
Finance Lease Liabilities	3,055	2,750
Finance costs in future years	2,362	1,792
Minimum Lease Payments	5,417	4,542

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

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

	Minimum Lease Payments		Finance Lease Liabilities	
	31 March 2019	31 March 2020	31 March 2019	31 March 2020
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Not later than one year	874	874	305	362
Later than one year and not later than five years	3,496	3,496	1,918	2,282
Later than five years	1,047	173	833	106
	5,417	4,543	3,056	2,750

Assets held for lease

Operating Leases

The Authority has granted various leases to community, commercial and industrial organisations under terms of an operating lease. The future minimum lease payments (rental income) expected from contractual obligations are:

	2018/19	2019/20
	£'000	£'000
Not later than one year	(1,133)	(1,282)
Later than one year and not later than five years	(4,384)	(4,860)
Later than five years	(82,494)	(63,363)

The minimum lease payments do not include rents that are contingent on events taking place after the lease was entered into, such as adjustments following rent reviews. In 2019/20 no material contingent rents were receivable by the Council.

39. PENSION SCHEMES

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

The Authority participates in one pension scheme; the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), administered locally by Hertfordshire County Council. This is a funded defined benefit final salary scheme, meaning that the Authority and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liabilities with investment assets.

Further information concerning the scheme can be found in Hertfordshire County Council Pension Fund's Annual Report, which is available upon request from Herts Finance Service, Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Hertford, Herts. SG13 8DQ.

The Authority recognises the cost of retirement benefits in the Cost of Services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are actually paid as pensions. However, the charge the Authority is required to make against council tax is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of retirement benefits is reversed out of the General Fund via the Movement in Reserves Statement. The following transactions have been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the General Fund Balance via the Movement in Reserves Statement during the year:

Local Government Pension Scheme	2018/19	2019/20
Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account:	£'000	£'000
Cost of Services:		
Service cost comprising:		
Current Service Cost *	3,384	3,965
Past Service Costs	389	93
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure:		
Net Interest Expense	1,185	1,251
Total Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	4,958	5,309

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

Other Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

Re-measurement of the net defined liability comprising:

Return on Plan Assets	(5,291)	2,320
Actuarial (gains) and losses arising on changes in demographic assumptions	0	(4,005)
Actuarial (gains) and losses arising on changes in financial assumptions	9,327	(12,911)
Other	0	(8,358)
Total Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	8,994	(17,645)

* The service cost figures include an allowance for administration expenses of 0.5% of payroll.

Movement in Reserves Statement:	2018/19	2019/20
	£'000	£'000
Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or Deficit for the Provision of Services for post employment benefits in accordance with the Code	(4,958)	(5,309)

Actual Amount charged against the General Fund balance for pensions in the year:

• Employers' contributions payable to the scheme **	2,574	2,907
Net chargeable amount against the General Fund balance	2,574	2,907

** The figure of £2.907million for employer's contributions to the scheme in 2019/20 was an estimate for the year, used by the Actuary, based on the first nine months contributions. The actual amount paid in the general fund in 2019/20 was £2.670million (£237k less than shown). There is a corresponding adjustment in the actuarial gain recognised in the Income and Expenditure Statement.

Pensions Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

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

Local Government Pension Scheme	2018/19	2019/20
	£'000	£'000
Present value of the defined benefit obligation	(178,029)	(156,581)
Fair Value of plan assets	126,580	125,684
Sub-total	(51,449)	(30,897)
Other movements in the liability (asset)	0	0
Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation	(51,449)	(30,897)

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

Local Government Pension Scheme	2018/19	2019/20
	£'000	£'000
Opening fair value of scheme assets	120,245	126,580
Interest Income	3,098	3,025
Re-measurement gain / (loss):		
The return on plan assets, excluding the amount included in the net interest expense	5,291	(2,320)
Other		
The effect of changes in foreign exchange rates		
Contributions from employer	2,574	2,907
Contributions from employees into the scheme	589	610
Benefits paid	(5,217)	(5,118)
Closing fair value of scheme assets	126,580	125,684

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

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

Local Government Pension Scheme	2018/19	2019/20
	£'000	£'000
Opening balance at 1 April	165,274	178,029
Current service cost	3,384	3,965
Interest cost	4,283	4,276
Contributions from scheme participants	589	610
Re-measurement (gains) and losses:		
Actuarial (gains) / losses arising from changes in demographic assumptions	0	(4,005)
Actuarial (gains) / losses arising from changes in financial assumptions	9,327	(12,911)
Other	0	(8,358)
Past Service Cost	389	93
Benefits paid	(5,217)	(5,118)
Closing balance at 31 March	178,029	156,581

Local Government Pension Scheme assets comprised:

	Fair Value of scheme assets (Quoted Prices)					
	31 March 2019			31 March 2020		
	Active Markets £'000	Not in Active Markets £000	% of total assets	Active Markets £'000	Not in Active Markets £000	% of total assets
Cash and cash equivalents	4,096	0	3%	2,714	0	2%
Equity instruments:						
Consumer	5,630	0	4%	2,399	0	2%
Manufacturing	4,908	0	4%	1,916	0	2%
Energy and utilities	1,307	0	1%	0	0	0%
Financial Institutions	5,219	0	4%	1,841	0	1%
Health and care	1,030	0	1%	1,131	0	1%
Information technology	3,960	0	3%	4,306	0	3%
Other	338	0	0%	206	0	0%
Sub-total equity	22,392	0	17%	11,799	0	9%
Bonds:	0	58	0%	0	3,257	3%
Private equity:						
All	0	5,935	5%	0	6,724	5%
Real Estate:						
UK Property	0	4,484	4%	0	3,800	3%
Overseas Property	0	4,801	4%	0	7,500	6%
Sub-total real estate	0	9,285	8%	0	11,300	9%
Investment funds and Unit Trusts:						
Equities	31,940	0	25%	39,099	0	31%
Bonds	44,038	0	35%	41,206	0	33%
Commodities	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Infrastructure	0	1,227	1%	0	115	0%
Other	1,070	6,690	6%	1,060	8,542	8%
Sub-total other investment funds	77,048	7,917	67%	81,365	8,657	72%
Derivatives:						
Forward foreign exchange contracts	0	(151)	0%	0	(132)	0%
Total assets	103,536	23,044		95,878	29,806	

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

All scheme assets have fair values based on quoted prices. Some of these assets are in active markets and some are in non-active markets. An active market has a high volume and frequency of transactions which provides better pricing information and means that the asset is more liquid.

The scheme history is as follows:

	31 March 2016 £'000	31 March 2017 £'000	31 March 2018 £'000	31 March 2019 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000
Present Value of Liabilities	(152,804)	(165,071)	(165,274)	(178,029)	(156,581)
Fair Value of Assets	104,968	115,748	120,245	126,580	125,684
Deficit in the scheme	(47,836)	(49,323)	(45,029)	(51,449)	(30,897)

The liabilities show the underlying commitments that the Authority has in the long run to pay for post employment (retirement) benefits. The total liability of £156,581million has a substantial impact on the net worth of the Authority, as recorded in the Balance Sheet, resulting in a negative overall balance of £30,897million. However, statutory arrangements for funding the deficit mean that the financial position of the Authority remains healthy:

- The deficit on the local government scheme will be made good by increased contributions over the remaining working life of employees (i.e. before payments fall due), as assessed by the scheme actuary.
- Finance is only required to be raised to cover discretionary benefits when the pensions are actually paid.

The contributions paid by the Authority are set by the Fund Actuary at each triennial actuarial valuation (the most recent being as at 31 March 2019), or at any other time as instructed to do so by the Administering Authority. Further details on the approach adopted to set contribution rates for the Authority are available in the latest formal valuation report and Funding Strategy Statement.

The total contributions expected to be made to the Local Government Pension scheme by the Authority in the year to 31 March 2021 is £2,694,000.

Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels etc. The pension fund liabilities have been assessed by Hymans Robertson, an independent firm of actuaries, estimates being based on the latest formal valuation of the Fund as at 31 March 2020. The significant assumptions used in their calculations are:

	31 March 2019 %	31 March 2020 %
Mortality Assumptions:		
Longevity at 65 for current pensioners*:		
Men	22.5	21.9
Women	24.9	24.1
Longevity at 65 for future pensioners**		
Men	24.1	22.8
Women	26.7	25.5
Rate of increase in salaries	2.6	2.3
Rate of increase in pensions	2.5	1.9
Rate for discounting scheme liabilities	2.4	2.3
Proportion of Employees opting to take a commuted sum		
- pre April 2008 service	50.0	50.0
- post April 2008 service	75.0	75.0

* Life expectancy is based on the Fund's Vita Curves with improvements in line with the CMI 2013 model assuming current rates of improvement have peaked and will converge to a long term rate 1.25% p.a. Based on these assumptions the average future life expectancies at age 65 are as shown.

** Figures assume members aged 45 as at the last formal valuation date.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. The sensitivity analyses below have been determined based on reasonable possible changes of the assumptions occurring at the end of the reporting period and assumes for each change that the assumption analysed changes while all other assumptions remain constant. The assumptions in longevity, for example, assume that life expectancy increases or decreases for men and women. In practice, this is unlikely to occur, and changes in some of the assumptions may be interrelated. The estimations in the sensitivity analysis have followed the accounting policies for the scheme, is on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method.

	% Increase to Liability £'000	Impact on the Defined Benefit Obligation in the scheme Monetary amount £'000
Real Discount Rate (decrease by 0.5%)	9%	13,665
Rate of increase in salaries (increase by 0.5%)	1%	1,229
Rate of increase in pensions (increase by 0.5%)	8%	12,330

The table below shows the maturity profile of the defined benefit obligation. The figures below are for the funded obligations only and do not include any unfunded pensioner liabilities. The durations are as they stood at the date of the most recent actuarial valuation.

	Liability split (£'000)	Liability split (%) as at 31 March 2020
Active members	51,518	32.9%
Deferred members	35,748	22.8%
Pensioner members	69,315	44.3%
Total	156,581	100.0%

40. CONTINGENT ASSETS

There are no contingent assets for 2019/20.

41. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

Contractor Pension Fund Contributions

The Council has transferred the management of its waste collection service, leisure centres and grounds maintenance services to Urbaser, Stevenage Leisure Ltd and John O'Connor Ltd, respectively. All of these bodies administer contributions to the Hertfordshire Local Government Pension Fund. In order for these bodies to be admitted to the Pension Fund the Council has given a commitment to be ultimately liable for payments to the fund. In the event that the Contractor fails to make payment and there is no bond in place to cover the default, the Council would seek to offset the amount due from the contract price in the first instance. With regards to the contract with John O'Connor Ltd there is a bond in place with a value of £43,000 and that value is due for reassessment after 31 March 2020. The Council is liable only for the existing staff at the time of transfer of services to these bodies and as at the 31 March 2020 the Council has not been called upon to make any such payments.

Municipal Mutual Insurance Ltd Scheme of Arrangement

The Council has paid a 25% levy for the claw-back of claims under the MMI Scheme of Arrangement. The Council will still be liable to pay a levy on any future claims and could also be required to pay an increased levy on the claims settled so far. As at 31st March 2020 the council had one outstanding liability claim with MMI with a value of £3,257.

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

42. TRUST FUNDS AND THIRD PARTY FUNDS

Trust Funds

The Authority acts as the sole managing trustee for the following trusts:

- Hitchin Town Hall Gymnasium and Workman's Hall Trust
- King George V Playing Fields Trust.
- Smithson Recreation Ground Trust

Without the annual contribution from the Council, the Trusts would not have had adequate resources to manage the facilities during the year. The Trust's accounts reflect the fixed assets and the in-year expenditure and income incurred in running the facilities. The net balance of these transactions, as at the 31 March 2020, is included in the Authority's accounts. A summary of the value of assets held by the trusts and the amounts administered by the authority is provided in the table below;

	Fixed Assets Closing Net Book Value	Directly Attributable Expenditure	Externally Generated Income
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Hitchin Town Hall Gymnasium and Workman's Hall Trust	2,447	169	35
King George V Playing Fields Trust	89	44	-
Smithson Recreation Ground Trust	22	3	-

Third Party Funds

The Authority holds income received for S106 legal agreements or unilateral undertakings relating to the submission of planning applications. This income is 'ring-fenced' to different types of capital expenditure/locations within the district. The funds will be used to finance the Council's capital programme, when schemes meet the funding criteria. Until then the funds are treated as a receipt in advance in the Balance Sheet, under current liabilities.

The total value of all S106 contributions, as at the 31 March 2020, available to fund capital and revenue activities is £3,740,972 (2018/19 £3,158,744).

Collection Fund Accounts

The Collection Fund is a separate statutory fund under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1988. The statement shows the transactions of the billing authority in relation to the collection from taxpayers of Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates and its distribution to local government bodies and the Government. The Authority's share of the assets and liabilities are included in the Authority's Balance Sheet and its income and expenditure is included within the cash flow statement.

The accounts have been prepared on an accruals basis.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

Council Tax £'000	2018/19 Business Rates £'000	Total £'000	Note	Council Tax £'000	2019/20 Business Rates £'000	Total £'000
Income						
(85,604)		(85,604)		(89,309)		(89,309)
	(37,566)	(37,566)			(39,096)	(39,096)
	0	0			0	0
Contribution towards previous year deficit:						
0	(164)	(164)		0	(14)	(14)
0				0		0
	(821)	(821)			(72)	(72)
0	(656)	(656)		0	(58)	(58)
(85,604)	(39,207)	(124,811)		(89,309)	(39,240)	(128,549)
Expenditure						
Precepts, Demands and Shares						
64,859	3,824	68,683		67,315	15,037	82,352
8,055		8,055		9,306		9,306
10,975	15,294	26,269		11,391	13,157	24,548
1,096		1,096		1,160		1,160
	19,118	19,118			9,398	9,398
Distribution of previous years Surplus						
288		288		162		162
35		35		20		20
				301		301
Charges to Collection Fund						
0	0	0		0	0	0
0	180	180		0	176	176
	(438)	(438)			(216)	(216)
	42	42			33	33
504	231	735		651	379	1,030
	935	935			(1,344)	(1,344)
(41)	(30)	(71)		(85)	(127)	(212)
85,771	39,156	124,927		90,221	36,493	126,714
167	(51)	116		912	(2,747)	(1,835)
(492)	1,561	1,069		(325)	1,509	1,184
(325)	1,510	1,185		587	(1,238)	(651)
Share of Balance:						
(40)	151	111		445	(905)	(460)
(5)		(5)		60		60
(280)	604	324		82	(365)	(283)
	755	755			32	32
(325)	1,510	1,185		587	(1,238)	(651)

Collection Fund Accounts

1. INCOME FROM BUSINESS RATES

The Council collects non-domestic rates (NNDR) from business across the District based on local rateable values provided by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) and multiplied by a uniform rate set nationally by Central Government. The total non-domestic rateable value for North Hertfordshire District Council is £103.3 million, (£85.8 million 2018/2019). The NNDR multiplier is 50.4p in the pound (49.3p in the pound in 2018/2019). The small business non-domestic rating multiplier is 49.1p in the pound (48.0p in the pound in 2018/2019).

The business rates retention scheme was introduced in 2013/14. The main aim of the scheme is to give Councils a greater incentive to grow businesses in the District. It does, however, also increase the financial risk to Councils, due to non-collection and the volatility of the NNDR tax base.

The business rates retention scheme allows the Council to retain a proportion of the total NNDR collected. In 2018/19, North Herts share was 40% with the remainder paid over to Hertfordshire County Council (10%) and Central Government (50%). In 2019/20 North Herts was part of the Hertfordshire Business Rates Pilot scheme, which allowed Hertfordshire Local Authorities to retain a total of 75% of business rates income recorded for the year. The design of the Pilot scheme changed the income proportions retained in 2019/20; North Herts (35%), Hertfordshire County Council (40%) and Central Government (25%).

The business rates shares payable for 2019/20 were estimated before the start of the financial year as £9.398 million to Central Government, £15.037 million to Hertfordshire County Council and £13.157 million to North Hertfordshire District Council. These sums have been paid in 2019/20 and charged to the collection fund.

When the scheme was introduced, Central Government set a baseline level for each Authority, identifying the expected level of retained business rates, and a top up or tariff amount to ensure that all authorities receive the set baseline amount. In addition, the requirement of the retention scheme was that the Council must pay a levy of 50% to Central Government for income recorded above the baseline. A corresponding 'safety net' built into the scheme means that the Council would be reimbursed by Government up to 92.5% of the set baseline for the year should rates income fall below this.

North Hertfordshire paid a tariff of £10.835 million to Central Government from the General Fund in 2019/20. As a Business Rates Pilot in 2019/20, Hertfordshire Local Authorities have benefitted from both retaining an additional 25% of business rates collected and the removal of the requirement to pay a levy to Central Government for income recorded above baseline. The resulting financial benefit makes up an overall 'pilot gain' for Hertfordshire, some of which has been earmarked for investment projects within Hertfordshire. The rest has been allocated to Hertfordshire authorities. North Herts share of the pilot gain is £917k.

The total net amount of NNDR income collectable in 2019/20, after all reliefs and deductions, was £39.096 million. An increase of £252k has been made for the provision of outstanding amounts that are not subsequently paid (bad debts) bringing the total provision to £476k as at 31 March 2020. A total of £379k of outstanding business rates were written off during 2019/20.

The business rates retention scheme has also meant responsibility for refunding ratepayers who have successfully appealed against the rateable value of their properties on the rating list has transferred to the Authority, as the agent. As such it is necessary for the Authority to make provision for future successful appeals on behalf of itself the major preceptor and Central Government. A reduction of £431k has been made to the provision of outstanding appeals, bringing the total provision for appeals to £1.66 million. This amount is based on the amount of outstanding appeals with the Valuation Office Agency, as at 31 March 2020, after applying an estimated overall success factor of 25%. In addition, a reduction of £913k has been made for the provision of appeals not yet lodged, bringing the total movement on the appeals figure (both lodged and unlogged) to £1,344k for 2019/20.

NNDR surpluses in relation to the Collection Fund are apportioned to the relevant precepting bodies in the subsequent financial year. Deficits likewise are proportionately charged to the relevant precepting bodies in the following year.

Collection Fund Accounts

2. COUNCIL TAX

The amounts credited to the Collection Fund can be analysed as follows:

	2018/19		2019/20	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Original Debt	100,960		105,540	
Additional Debt	10,209		10,394	
		111,169		115,934
Less:				
Council Tax Reductions		6,685		6,926
Transitional Relief		0		0
Discounts		7,590		8,061
Amounts Written-off, Exemptions & Allowances		11,291		11,638
		85,603		89,309

Council tax income derives from charges raised according to the value of residential properties, which have been classified into 8 valuation bands estimating 1 April 1991 values for this specific purpose. Individual charges are calculated by estimating the amount of income required to be taken from the Collection Fund by Hertfordshire County Council, The Police and Crime Commissioner and the Council for the forthcoming year and dividing this by the council tax base (the total number of properties in each band adjusted by a proportion to convert the number to a Band D equivalent and adjusted for discounts). This basic amount of council tax for a Band D property, £1,778.07, (£1,707.91 2018/2019) is multiplied by the proportion specified for a particular band to give an individual amount due.

Council tax bills were based on the following proportions for Bands A to H:

Proportion of Band D charge

Band	Property Numbers	Proportion	Basic Amount £
A	3,370	0.67	1,185.38
B	9,032	0.78	1,382.94
C	19,948	0.89	1,580.51
D	10,119	1.00	1,778.07
E	7,213	1.22	2,173.20
F	4,580	1.44	2,568.33
G	3,359	1.67	2,963.45
H	346	2.00	3,556.14
Total	57,967		

An increase of £567k has been made for the provision of outstanding amounts that are not subsequently paid (bad debts) bringing the total provision to £1.54million as at 31 March 2020. A total of £650k of outstanding council tax was written off during 2019/2020.

3. PAYMENT OF SURPLUS/ DEFICITS FROM THE COLLECTION FUND

The element of the surplus/ deficit on the Collection Fund at 31 March 2020 will be distributed in subsequent financial years to Hertfordshire County Council, The Police and Crime Commissioner and the Council. The apportioned (surplus)/deficit is shown at the bottom of the Income and Expenditure Statement.

Collection Fund Accounts

4. PRECEPTS

	2018/19	2019/20
	£'000	£'000
Hertfordshire County Council	64,859	67,315
Hertfordshire Police	8,055	9,306
North Hertfordshire District Council and Local Town and Parish Councils	12,071	12,551
	84,985	89,172

Following the introduction of Council Tax on 1 April 1993, parish precepts are now payable from the Council's General Fund and not the Collection Fund.

Glossary of Financial Terms

Term	Definition
Accruals	The concept that Income & Expenditure are recognised as they are earned or incurred, not as money is received or paid.
Actuarial Gains and Losses	For a defined benefit pension scheme the changes in actuarial deficits or surpluses that arise because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events have not coincided with the actuarial assumptions made for the last valuation (experience gains and losses). • The actuarial assumptions have changed.
Accumulated Absences	Holiday entitlements (or any form of leave such as time off in lieu) earned by employees but not taken before the year end which can be carried forward into the following year.
Agency Arrangements	Services which are performed by or for another Council or public body, where the agent is reimbursed for the cost of the work done.
Asset	Anything which somebody owns which can be given a monetary value, for example buildings, land, vehicles, machinery, cash, investments etc. It is always considered in comparison with liabilities in an organisation's accounts.
Balances	The capital or revenue reserves of the Council made up of the accumulated surplus of income over expenditure on the General Fund, Earmarked Reserves etc.
Capital Expenditure	Expenditure on the acquisition of a fixed asset, or expenditure, that adds to the life, or value, of an existing fixed asset.
Capital Financing Requirement	A measure of the capital expenditure incurred historically by an authority that has yet to be financed by capital receipts, capital grants or revenue financing. The Prudential Code requires that the Council monitors and controls its CFR through its Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy) and Medium Term Financial Strategies.
Capital Receipts	Monies received from the sale of assets, which may be used to finance capital expenditure or to repay outstanding loan debt as prescribed by Central Government, but they cannot be used to finance day-to-day spending.

Glossary of Financial Terms

Term	Definition
Cash Equivalents	Cash investments which are held on deposit and are repayable on demand without financial penalty.
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The principal accountancy body dealing with local government finance
Collection Fund	A fund administered by charging authorities into which Council Tax income and Business Rates collected locally are paid. Precepts are paid from the fund as is a charge in respect of the Council's own requirements.
Collection Fund Adjustment Account	This account holds the difference between the income (including accruals) held in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the amount required by statutory regulation to be credited to the Collection Fund.
Community Assets	Assets that a local Council intends to hold in perpetuity, that have no determinable useful life and that may have restrictions on their disposal. Examples of community assets are parks and historic buildings.
Consistency	The concept that the accounting treatment of like items within an accounting period and from one period to the next is the same.
Contingent Assets	A contingent asset is a possible asset arising from past events whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain events not wholly within the local authority's control.
Contingent Liability	A contingent liability is a possible liability arising from past events whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain events not wholly within the local authority's control.
Council Tax	This is a local tax set by local Councils to help pay for local services.
Creditor	An amount owed by the Council for work done, goods received, or services rendered to the Council within the accounting period and for which payment has not been made at the Balance Sheet date.

Glossary of Financial Terms

Term	Definition
Current Assets	Assets which can be classified as cash or cash equivalents, assets held primarily for the purposes of trading (e.g. inventories), or any asset which is expected to be realised within the next financial year.
Current Service Cost (Pensions)	The increase in the present value of a defined benefit scheme's liabilities expected to arise from employee service in the current period.
Curtailment	<p>For a defined benefit scheme, an event that reduces the expected years of future service of present employees or reduces for a number of employees the accrual of defined benefits for some or all of their future service. Curtailments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Termination of employees' services earlier than expected, for example as a result of closing a factory or discontinuing a segment of a business. • Termination of, or amendment to the terms of, a defined benefit scheme so that some or all future service by current employees no longer qualifies or only qualifies for a reduced benefit.
Deficit	An excess of expenditure over income (or liabilities over assets)
Debtors	Amounts due to the Council before the end of the accounting period but for which payments have not yet been received by the end of that accounting period.
Defined Benefits Scheme	A pension or other retirement benefit scheme other than a defined contribution scheme. Usually, the scheme rules define the benefits independently of the contributions payable, and the benefits are not directly related to the investments of the scheme. The scheme may be funded or unfunded (including notionally funded).
Depreciation	The measure of the cost or revalued amount of the benefit of the non-current assets that have been consumed during the period. Consumption includes the wearing out, using up or other reduction in the useful life of a fixed asset whether arising from use, effluxion of time obsolescence through either changes in technology or demand for the goods and services produced by the asset.
MHCLG (DCLG)	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, successor to Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG).

Glossary of Financial Terms

Term	Definition
Earmarked Reserves	These are reserves set aside for a specific purpose or a particular service or type of expenditure.
Employee Benefits	Entitlements accrued by employees as part of their employment rights, e.g. annual leave (holiday), sick pay and payments as a result of their employment being terminated before normal retirement age.
Exceptional Items	Material items which derive from events or transactions that fall within the ordinary activities of the Council and which need to be disclosed separately by virtue of their size or incidence to give fair presentation of the accounts.
Expected Rate of Return on Pension Assets	For a funded defined benefit scheme, the average rate of return, including both income and changes in fair value but net of scheme expenses, expected over the remaining life of the related obligation on the actual assets held by the scheme.
Extraordinary Items	Material items, possessing a high degree of abnormality, which derive from events or transactions that fall outside the ordinary activities of the Council and which are not expected to recur. They do not include exceptional items, nor do they include prior period items merely because they relate to a prior period.
Finance and Operating Lease	A finance lease transfers all of the risks and rewards of ownership of a fixed asset to the lessee and such assets have been valued and included within Non-current assets in the Balance Sheet. With an operating lease the ownership of the asset remains with the Leasing Company and the annual rent is charged to the relevant service account.
Financial Instruments	Any document with monetary value. For example, securities such as bonds and stocks which have value and may be traded in exchange for money.
General Fund	The main revenue account of the Council. It contains the excess to date of income over expenditure in the Income and Expenditure Account.
Government Grants	Assistance by Central Government and inter-government agencies and similar bodies, whether local, national or international, towards either revenue or capital expenditure incurred in providing local Council services.

Glossary of Financial Terms

Term	Definition
Heritage Asset	An asset which is held solely for its cultural, environmental or historic associations. This encompasses such things as civic regalia, historical buildings and monuments, museum collections and works of art. Any asset which is used for operational purposes would not be classified as a Heritage Asset.
Housing Benefits	A system of financial assistance to individuals towards certain housing costs, which is administered by Local Authorities. Assistance takes the form of rent rebates, rent allowances, and council tax rebates toward which central government pays a subsidy.
Impairment	A reduction in the value of a non current asset below its carrying amount on the balance sheet.
Infrastructure Assets	Expenditure on works of drainage, construction or improvement to highways, cycle ways, footpaths or other land owned by the Council.
Intangible Assets	An asset that brings benefit for more than one financial year, that does not have physical substance but is identifiable and controlled by the owner (e.g. software licences).
Interest Cost (Pensions)	For a defined benefit scheme, the expected increase during the period in the present value of the scheme liabilities because the benefits are one period closer to settlement.
Inventories	<p>The amount of unused or unconsumed inventories (stock) held in expectation of future use. When use will not arise until a later period, it is appropriate to carry forward the amount to be matched to the use or consumption when it arises. Stocks comprise the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goods or other assets purchased for resale; • Consumable stores; • Raw materials and components purchased for incorporation into products for sale; • Products and services in intermediate stages of completion • Long term contract balances; and • Finished goods.

Glossary of Financial Terms

Term	Definition
Investments (Non-Pension Fund)	A long-term investment is an investment that is intended to be held for use on a continuing basis in the activities of the Council. Investments should be so classified only where an intention to hold the investment for the long term can clearly be demonstrated or where there are restrictions as to the investor's ability to dispose of the investment. Investments, other than those in relation to the pension fund, that do not meet the above criteria should be classified as current assets.
Investments (Pension Fund)	The investments of the Pensions Fund will be accounted for in the statements of that fund. However, authorities (other than Town Parish and Community Councils) are required to disclose, as part of the transitional disclosures relating to retirement benefits, the attributable share of pension scheme assets associated with their underlying obligations.
Investment Property	Property which is held solely to earn rentals and/or for capital appreciation but not used for the purpose of service delivery.
Levy	The Council's Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement include a share of any surplus or deficit arising for the year on the collection of business rates. Where, after taking into account any surpluses on collection, the Council's income exceeds a threshold set by Central Government, a levy is payable to Central Government, but the Council may retain a proportion of the surplus.
Liabilities	Money owed to somebody else.
Minimum Revenue Provision	A charge made to the General Fund to repay borrowing taken out for capital expenditure, effectively replacing depreciation (which is reversed out in the MiRS). Authorities determine their own prudent MRP charge.
Net Book Value	The amount at which non-current assets are included in the Balance Sheet, i.e. their historical or current value less the cumulative amounts provided for depreciation.
Net current replacement cost	The cost of replacing or recreating the particular asset in its existing condition and in its existing use, i.e. the cost of its replacement or the nearest equivalent, adjusted to reflect the current condition of the existing asset.

Glossary of Financial Terms

Term	Definition
Net Realisable Value	The open market value of the asset in its existing use (or open market value in the case of non operational assets), less the expenses to be incurred in realising the asset.
NNDR (National Non Domestic Rates)	These are rates charged on properties other than domestic property. The business rate poundage is set annually by Central Government and is a flat rate throughout the country.
Non-current assets	Tangible assets that yield benefits to the Council for a period of more than one year.
Non-operational assets	Non-current assets held by a local Council but not directly occupied, used or consumed in the delivery of services. Examples of non-operational assets are commercial and industrial properties.
Obligating Event	An event which creates a legal or constructive obligation that results in the Council having no realistic alternative to settling that obligation.
Operational assets	Non-current assets held and occupied, used or consumed by the Council in the direct delivery of those services for which it has either a statutory or discretionary responsibility.
Past service cost	For a defined benefit scheme, the increase in the present value of the scheme liabilities related to employee service in prior periods arising in the current period as a result of the introduction of, or improvement to, retirement benefits.
Post balance sheet events	Those events, both favourable and unfavourable, which occur between Balance Sheet date and the date on which the Statement of Accounts is signed by the responsible officer.
Precepts	The levy made by one Council on another. Hertfordshire County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner, who do not administer the council tax system, each levy an amount on North Herts, which collects the required income from local taxpayers on their behalf.
Prior year adjustments	Those material adjustments applicable to prior years arising from changes in accounting policies or from the correction of fundamental errors.
Projected unit method	An accrued benefits valuation method in which the scheme liabilities make allowance for projected earnings.

Glossary of Financial Terms

Term	Definition
Provisions	An amount set aside to provide for a liability that is likely to be incurred but the exact amount and the date on which it will arise is uncertain.
Prudence	The concept that revenue is not anticipated but is recognised only when realised in the form either of cash or of other assets, the ultimate cash realisation of which can be assessed with reasonable certainty. The overall objective of this principle is not to overstate the net worth shown in the Statement of Accounts.
Related Parties	<p>Two or more parties are related parties when at any time during the financial period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One party has direct or indirect control of the other party. • The parties are subject to common control from the same source. • One party has influence over the financial and operational policies of the other party to an extent that the other party might be inhibited from pursuing at all times its own separate interests. • The parties, in entering a transaction, are subject to influence from the same source to such an extent that one of the parties to the transaction has subordinated its own separate interests.
Related Party Transaction	<p>A related party transaction is the transfer of assets or liabilities or the performance of services by, to, or for a related party irrespective of whether a charge is made. Examples of related party transactions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purchase, sale lease, rental or hire of assets or loans, irrespective of any direct economic benefit to the pension fund. • The provision of a guarantee to a third party in relation to a liability or obligation of a related party. • The provision of services to a related party, including the provision of pension fund administration services. • Transactions with individuals who are related parties of the Council or a pension fund, except those applicable to other members of the community or pension fund, such as council tax, rents and payments of benefits. • The materiality of related party transactions is judged not only in terms of their significance to the Council, but also in relation to its related party.

Glossary of Financial Terms

Term	Definition
Rent Allowances	Subsidies payable by local authorities to tenants in private rented accommodation (either furnished or unfurnished) whose incomes fall below prescribed amounts.
Rent Rebates	Subsidies payable by local authorities to their own housing tenants whose incomes fall below prescribed amounts.
Reserves	A reserve is an amount set aside for a specific purpose in one financial year and carried forward to meet expenditure in future years.
Retirement Benefits	All forms of consideration given by an employer in exchange for services rendered by employees that are payable after completion of employment. Retirement benefits do not include termination benefits payable as a result of either (i) an employer's decision to terminate an employee's employment before the normal retirement date or (ii) an employee's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits, because these are not given in exchange for services rendered by employees.
Revaluation Reserve	An account containing any unrecognised gains or losses arising from the revaluation of non current assets held by the Council. When assets are sold, the gain or loss on sale will be recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement once all previous entries relating to unrecognised gains or losses have been removed from the accounts.
Revenue Expenditure	Day to day expenses, mainly salaries and wages, general running costs and debt charges.
Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute	Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provisions but does not result in the creation of a non current asset.
Revenue Support Grant	Central Government Grant towards the cost of Local Council Services.
Scheme Liabilities	The liabilities of a defined benefit scheme for outgoings due after the valuation date. Scheme liabilities measured using the projected unit method reflects the benefits that the employer is committed to provide for service up to the valuation date.
Surplus	An excess of income over expenditure (or assets over liabilities)

Glossary of Financial Terms

Term	Definition
Usable Capital Receipts	This is generally the balance of any capital receipt after deducting the reserved part and any repayment to the Central Government of grants made to the Council on disposal of the asset.
Useful Life	The period over which the authority will derive benefits from the use of a non current asset.

North Hertfordshire District Council Audit results report

Year ended 31 March 2020
26 August 2020

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EY
Building a better
working world

Agenda Item 10



North Hertfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth
SG6 3JF

26 August 2020

Dear Finance, Audit and Risk Committee Members

We are pleased to attach our audit results report for the forthcoming meeting of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. This report summarises our preliminary audit conclusion in relation to the audit of North Hertfordshire District Council (the Authority) for 2019/20. We have agreed the content of the report with the Service Director - Resources.

At the date of this report our audit of the Authority's accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020 is substantially complete. Subject to concluding the outstanding matters listed in our report, we anticipate issuing an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements in the form at Section 3 of this report. As set out on pages 5 to 7, as per our update to the Committee in June 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the statements and our audit opinion. We have no matters to report on your arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources.

This report is intended solely for the use of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, other members of the Authority, and senior management. It should not be used for any other purpose or given to any other party without obtaining our written consent. We would like to thank your staff for their help during the engagement given the additional pressures they have faced responding to the pandemic and working remotely.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the contents of this report with you at the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 7 September 2020.

Yours faithfully

Suresh Patel

Associate Partner

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

Encl

Contents



Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) have issued a 'Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies'. It is available from the Chief Executive of each audited body and via the PSAA website (www.psa.co.uk). This Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The 'Terms of Appointment (updated April 2018)' issued by PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and statute, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This Audit Results Report is prepared in the context of the Statement of responsibilities / Terms and Conditions of Engagement. It is addressed to the Members of the audited body, and is prepared for their sole use. We, as appointed auditor, take no responsibility to any third party.

Our Complaints Procedure - If at any time you would like to discuss with us how our service to you could be improved, or if you are dissatisfied with the service you are receiving, you may take the issue up with your usual partner or director contact. If you prefer an alternative route, please contact Hywell Ball, our Managing Partner, 1 More London Place, London SE1 2AF. We undertake to look into any complaint carefully and promptly and to do all we can to explain the position to you. Should you remain dissatisfied with any aspect of our service, you may of course take matters up with our professional institute. We can provide further information on how you may contact our professional institute.



01

Executive Summary

Scope update

In our audit planning report tabled at the January 2020 Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting, we provided you with an overview of our audit scope and approach for the audit of the financial statements. We carried out our audit in accordance with this plan, with the following exceptions which we reported to the Committee in June 2020.

Changes to reporting timescales

As a result of COVID-19, new regulations, the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 No. 404, have been published and came into force on 30 April 2020. This announced a change to publication date for final, audited accounts from 31 July to 30 November 2020 for all relevant authorities.

Changes to our risk assessment as a result of Covid-19

- ▶ **Valuation of Property Plant and Equipment** - The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the body setting the standards for property valuations, issued guidance to valuers highlighting that the uncertain impact of Covid-19 on markets might cause a valuer to conclude that there is a material uncertainty. Caveats around this material uncertainty were included in the year-end valuation report produced by the Authority's external valuer. We considered that the material uncertainties disclosed by the valuer gave rise to an additional risk relating to disclosures on the valuation of property, plant and equipment. This is particularly relevant for assets valued at fair value (such as investment properties) or some valued at existing use value (EUV) because of the paucity of reliable market information available at 31 March 2020 upon which to give those valuations. We have recognised the valuation of investment properties and other land and buildings valued using market data as a significant risk.
- ▶ **Disclosures on Going Concern** - The pandemic has had a significant impact on the Authority's finances and as a result there was a need for the Authority to revisit and update financial plans for 2020/21 and the medium term financial plan. We determined that the unpredictability of the current environment gave rise to a risk that the Authority would not appropriately disclose the key factors relating to going concern, underpinned by management's assessment with particular reference to Covid-19 and the Authority's actual year end financial position and performance.
- ▶ **Events after the balance sheet date** - We identified an increased risk that further events after the balance sheet date concerning the Covid-19 pandemic would need to be disclosed. The amount of detail required in the disclosure needs to reflect the specific circumstances of the Authority.
- ▶ **Adoption of IFRS16** - The adoption of IFRS 16 has been deferred until 1 April 2021. We therefore no longer considered this to be an area of audit focus for 2019/20.
- ▶ **Impairment of receivables** - We identified impairment of receivables as a new area of focus. The Authority holds material third party receivable balances as at 31 March 2020. There is a risk of increasing amounts written off as irrecoverable and impairment of year-end balances due to the potentially increasing number of businesses and residents unable to meet their financial obligations. We have reviewed significant judgements made by management.

Executive Summary

Scope update

New significant risks not identified at planning stage - In the January Audit Plan, we identified no significant risks. However, as outlined in the previous page we have identified new risks arising as a result of Covid-19.

Changes to the scope of our audit as a result of Covid-19

- ▶ As the Authority holds material land and buildings, which are valued at market value, we have engaged our own experts to support our audit procedures.

Changes in materiality - We updated our planning materiality assessment using the draft financial statements and have also reconsidered our risk assessment. Based on our materiality measure of 2% of gross expenditure on provision of services, we have updated our overall materiality assessment to £1.28m (Audit Planning Report – £1.32m). This results in updated performance materiality, at 75% of overall materiality, of £0.966m, and an updated threshold for reporting misstatements of £0.064m.

Information Produced by the Entity (IPE): We identified an increased risk around the completeness, accuracy, and appropriateness of information produced by the Authority due to the inability of the audit team to verify original documents or re-run reports on-site from the Authority's systems. We undertook the following to address this risk:

- Used the screen sharing function of Microsoft Teams to evidence re-running of reports used to generate the IPE we audited; and
- Agree IPE to scanned documents or other system screenshots.

Additional EY consultation requirements concerning the impact on auditor reports because of Covid-19.

The continued impact of the Covid-19 pandemic increases the risks to the material accuracy of financial statements and disclosures. To ensure we are providing the right assurances to the Authority and its stakeholders the firm has introduced a rigorous consultation process for all auditor reports to ensure that they include the appropriate narrative.

The changes to audit risks, audit approach and auditor reporting requirements changed the level of work we needed to perform. We will determine the impact on our audit fee and discuss with the Service Director - Resources at the conclusion of the audit.



Executive Summary

Status of the audit

We have substantially completed our audit of North Hertfordshire District Council financial statements for the year 31 March 2020 and have performed the procedures outlined in our Audit planning report. Subject to satisfactory completion of the following outstanding items we expect to issue an unqualified opinion on the Authority's financial statements in the form which appears at Section 3. However until work is complete, further amendments may arise:

- ▶ Completion of procedures on property valuations.
- ▶ Completion of procedures on the pension disclosures as we are awaiting assurances from the auditor of Hertfordshire Pension Fund.
- ▶ Completion of our review of the Authority's going concern assessment and new disclosure note.
- ▶ Review of the final version of the financial statements.
- ▶ Completion of our final review processes.
- ▶ Completion of our audit report consultation processes.
- ▶ Completion of subsequent events review.
- ▶ Receipt of the signed management representation letter.

Due to changes made by Treasury to the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) timetable, we do not expect to issue the audit certificate at the same time as the audit report.

Our audit opinion will emphasise the following :

- ▶ Valuation of investment properties and other land and buildings valued using market data - We will include an "emphasis of matter" paragraph to draw users attention to the valuation uncertainty disclosure in Note 3 of the accounts. This is not a modification to the audit report.
- ▶ Going concern - We will include an "emphasis of matter" paragraph to draw users attention on going concern's disclosure. This is not a modification to the audit report and will be reflected in virtually all council audit reports for 2019/20.

Audit differences

At the date of this report there are no unadjusted or adjusted audit differences arising from our audit.

Executive Summary

Areas of audit focus

Our audit plan and the June 2020 update, identified one significant risk and three areas of focus for our audit of the Authority's financial statements. We summarise below our latest findings.

Significant risk	Findings & conclusions
Valuation of investment property & other land and buildings valued using market data Arising from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the valuation at 31 March 2020	We are awaiting the output of the work of our valuation experts, EY Real Estates. We anticipate including an emphasis of matter paragraph in our audit report about the material uncertainty reported by the Authority's valuer. This is not a modification to the audit report but highlighting to the reader an important disclosure.
Other area of audit focus	Findings & conclusions
Pension liability	We are awaiting assurances from the auditor of the Hertfordshire County Council Pension Funds.
Going concern	The Service Director - Resources, reported the forecast financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic to the July meeting of the Committee. We are currently completing our review of the assessment. Based on the Service Director - Resources' response to our queries, the Authority has included a going concern disclosure in the statement of accounts and, subject to the EY consultation process, we are likely to include an emphasis of matter paragraph in our audit report about the impact of Covid-19. This is not a modification to the audit report but highlighting to the reader an important disclosure.
Impairment of receivables Arising from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic	We have completed our audit procedures and found that the impairment of receivables is materially stated.

We ask you to review these and any other matters in this report to ensure:

- There are no other considerations or matters that could have an impact on these issues
- You agree with the resolution of the issue
- There are no other significant issues to be considered.

There are no matters, apart from those reported by management or disclosed in this report, which we believe should be brought to your attention.



Executive Summary

Control observations

We have adopted a fully substantive approach, so have not tested the operation of controls. However, from the results of substantive procedures performed we have not identified any significant deficiencies in the design or operation of an internal control that might result in a material misstatement in your financial statement.

Value for money

We have considered your arrangements to take informed decisions; deploy resources in a sustainable manner; and work with partners and other third parties. In our Audit Planning Report we identified the property acquisition and development strategy and associated investment strategy as significant risk. We have completed our procedures and found that the Authority has the expected arrangements in place to manage the property acquisition and development strategy as they relate to the value for money conclusion.

Other reporting issues

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

Subject to the finalisation of the areas in the Status of Audit work section, we have no other matters to report.

Independence

We have no matters relating to our Independence to bring to your attention. Please refer to Section 8 for our update on Independence.



02

Areas of Audit Focus



Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

Valuation of investment properties and other land & buildings valued using market data

What is the risk?

Covid-19 has impacted the valuation of the Authority's investment properties and other assets valued using market data as outlined by the Authority's valuer. This is because of the paucity of reliable market information available at 31 March 2020 upon which to give those valuations. The Authority has included in Note 3 of the accounts reference to the valuers material uncertainty. There is a risk that the valuation of these assets could be materially misstated.

What judgements are we focused on?

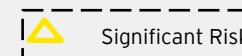
The reasonableness of the methodologies adopted by the valuer in undertaking their valuations in 2019/20 and of the key assumptions input into these valuations. In particular assets with reference to fair value/market value. Additionally, we considered assets not revalued in the current year for the potential of material misstatement in valuation as of 31 March 2020.

What did we do?

- Considered the work performed by the Authority's valuer, including the adequacy of the scope of the work performed, their professional capabilities and the results of their work.
- Engaged our valuations specialist (EY Real Estates) to review a sample of other land & buildings & investment properties asset valuations to verify the reasonableness of the valuation methodology applied and key assumptions used.
- Challenged the assumptions used by the valuer. We sample tested key asset information used by the valuer in performing their valuation (e.g. floor plans to support valuations based on price per square meter).
- Reviewed assets not subject to valuation in 2019/20 to confirm that the valuation of remaining asset base was not materially misstated.
- Checked that the material uncertainty reported by the Authority's valuer was appropriately disclosed in the financial statements.

What are our conclusions?

- We have substantially completed our work in response to this risk, including the work carried out by our valuations specialist (EY Real Estates).
- The draft accounts did not include a material valuation uncertainty paragraph reported by the valuer in their valuation report. This was subsequently updated. We have reviewed the disclosure in the financial statements, and consider the disclosure appropriate.
- Overall our audit work did not identify any material issues at the time of writing this report. However our work on valuations is still in progress and needs to be concluded.





Areas of Audit Focus



Pension Liability Valuation

The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Authority to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding its membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme administered by Hertfordshire County Council. The Authority's pension fund deficit is a material estimated balance and the Code requires that this liability be disclosed on the Authority's balance sheet. At 31 March 2020 this totalled £30.8 million (£50.4 million at 31 March 2019).

The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 report issued to the Authority by the actuary to the Pension Fund.

Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

Our approach has focused on:

- ▶ Liaising with the auditors of Hertfordshire Pension Fund to obtain assurances over the information supplied to the actuary in relation to North Hertfordshire District Council;
- ▶ Assessing the work of the Pension Fund actuary (Hymans Robertson) including the assumptions they have used by relying on the work of PWC - Consulting Actuaries commissioned by the NAO for all Local Government sector auditors, and considering any relevant reviews by the EY actuarial team; and
- ▶ Reviewing and testing the accounting entries and disclosures made within the Authority's financial statements in relation to IAS19.

At the date of this report, we are awaiting the IAS19 assurance letter from the auditor of the Pension Fund to enable us to complete our procedures.



Areas of Audit Focus



Going concern disclosure

There is presumption that the Authority will continue as a going concern. However, the current and future uncertainty over government funding and other sources of Authority revenue as a result of Covid-19 increases the need for the Authority to undertake a detailed going concern assessment to support its assertion. In light of the unprecedented nature of Covid-19, its impact on the funding of public sector entities and uncertainty over the form and extent of government support, we requested that management provide a documented consideration to support their assertion regarding the going concern basis. We also reviewed the Authority's subsequent new disclosure note.

Our approach has focused on:

- ▶ Assessing the adequacy of disclosures required in 2019/20;
- ▶ Discussing with management the going concern assessment and challenging management's underlying assumptions;
- ▶ Considering the impact on our audit report, including completing the EY consultation requirements.

Findings and conclusions

The draft accounts did not include a going concern disclosure but the Service Director - Resources, had carried out an assessment of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Authority's income, expenditure, balances and reserves for the July Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. We reviewed the assessment, focusing on the reasonableness of the financial impact assessment, cashflow and liquidity forecasts, known outcomes, sensitivities, mitigating actions and key assumptions, particular around reductions in fees and charges. We also discussed with management the need to make specific disclosures in the 2019/20 statements.

The Authority is forecasting that the net General Fund impact in 2020/21 of the Covid-19 pandemic will be around £1.3m. In common with similar authorities, the biggest impact is forecast to be lost income and additional expenditure to support the provision of leisure centre services and the loss of car parking income. The net impact of £1.3m compares to a General Fund balance as at 31st March 2020 of £9.4m and a minimum General Fund balance of £3.5m (based on the 2020/21 original assessment with an additional risk-based allowance of £1m). We therefore note that the Authority has headroom within the General Fund to absorb the estimated financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the short to medium-term.

We have now reviewed the new going concern disclosure included in the statement of accounts, and are satisfied that it adequately reflects the Authority's assessment and informs the reader of the impact of the pandemic on the Authority's finances.

At the time of writing this report, we also need to formally complete internal consultation to agree final audit opinion and conclusions in respect of the going concern disclosure but we anticipate including an emphasis of matter paragraph in the audit report similar to the draft included in Section 3.



Areas of Audit Focus



Impairment of receivables

At 31 March 2020 the Authority had £8.2m of total debtors. This included £3.2m of receivables from central government bodies and other local authorities. For the remaining balance, there may be risk to collection due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. To address the risk, we have performed the following procedures:

- ▶ Evaluated the reasonableness of the methods and assumptions used by management to estimate the allowances for doubtful debts.
- ▶ Tested the accuracy and completeness of the data used by management to compute the bad debts provision.
- ▶ For a sample of 15 debtors, representing just over £2m of total debtor balance, reviewed the debt position as at July 2020 to evaluate reasonableness of collection as at 31 March 2020.

Findings and conclusions

When preparing the draft accounts the Authority based its calculation of the provision for bad debts on the consideration that there was little evidence to suggest an increased risk to collectability. Through our audit procedures, we determined that the Authority had considered the impact of Covid-19 through evidence that some debtors had agreed with the Authority temporary deferment of payment. Our sample testing confirmed that the impairment of receivables in the accounts was fairly stated.



03 Audit Report



Audit Report

Draft audit report

This is an example report - our audit report will not be completed and issued until the work and internal consultation on opinion is complete.

Our opinion on the financial statements

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of North Hertfordshire District Council for the year ended 31 March 2020 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The financial statements comprise the:

- ▶ Movement in Reserves Statement,
- ▶ Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement,
- ▶ Balance Sheet,
- ▶ Cash Flow Statement and the related notes 1 to [x].
- ▶ Collection Fund and the related notes 1 to [x]

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- ▶ give a true and fair view of the financial position of North Hertfordshire District Council as at 31 March 2020 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- ▶ have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report below. We are independent of the authority in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and the Comptroller and Auditor General's (C&AG) AGN01, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of matter - Disclosure in relation to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic

We draw attention to pages x to x and note x of the statement of accounts which describes the forecast financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Authority. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Emphasis of matter - Property, Plant and Equipment and Investment Property valuation

We draw attention to Note 3 - Sources of estimation uncertainty of the statement of accounts, which describes the valuation uncertainty the Authority is facing as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to specific property valuations. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.



Audit Report

Draft audit report

This is an example report - our audit report will not be completed and issued until the work and internal consultation on opinion is complete.

Our opinion on the financial statements

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report to you where:

- ▶ the Service Director - Resource's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- ▶ the Service Director - Resource's has not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the Authority's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Statement of Accounts 2019/20, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Service Director - Resource is responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in this report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of the other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters prescribed by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

Arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, having regard to the guidance issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in April 2020, we are satisfied that, in all significant respects, North Hertfordshire District Council put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2020.

Matters on which we report by exception

We report to you if:

- ▶ in our opinion the annual governance statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit or our knowledge of the Council;
- ▶ we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; or
- ▶ we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.



Audit Report

Draft audit report

This is an example report - our audit report will not be completed and issued until the work and internal consultation on opinion is complete.

Our opinion on the financial statements

Responsibility of the Service Director - Resources

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Responsibilities set out on page 1, the Service Director - Resource's is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20, and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view.

In preparing the financial statements, the Service Director - Resources is responsible for assessing the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Authority either intends to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

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

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at <https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

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

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance on the specified criterion issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in April 2020, as to whether North Hertfordshire District Council had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined this criterion as that necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether North Hertfordshire District Council put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2020.

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

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) requires us to report to you our conclusion relating to proper arrangements.



Audit Report

Draft audit report

This is an example report - our audit report will not be completed and issued until the work and internal consultation on opinion is complete.

Our opinion on the financial statements

We report if significant matters have come to our attention which prevent us from concluding that the Authority has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Delay in the certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate until we have completed the work necessary to issue our assurance statement in respect of the Authority's Whole of Government Accounts consolidation pack. We are satisfied that this work does not have a material effect on the financial statements or on our value for money conclusion.

Until we have completed these procedures we are unable to certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the NAO.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of North Hertfordshire District Council, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Suresh Patel (Key Audit Partner)

Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)

Luton Date



04

Value for Money



Value for Money

Background

We are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources. This is known as our value for money (VFM) conclusion.

For 2019/20 this is based on the overall evaluation criterion:

"In all significant respects, the audited body had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people"

Proper arrangements are defined by statutory guidance issued by the National Audit Office (NAO). They comprise your arrangements to:

- Take informed decisions;
- Deploy resources in a sustainable manner; and
- Work with partners and other third parties.

When considering your proper arrangements, we will draw on the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework for local government to ensure that our assessment is made against a framework that you are already required to have in place and to report on through documents such as your annual governance statement.

Impact of covid-19 on our VFM assessment

On 16 April 2020 the NAO published an update to auditor guidance in relation to the 2019/20 VFM assessment in the light of Covid-19. This clarified that in undertaking the 2019/20 VFM assessment auditors should consider local authorities responses to Covid-19 only as far as it relates to the 2019-20 financial year and only where clear evidence comes to the auditor's attention of a significant failure in arrangements as a result of Covid-19 during the financial year, would it be appropriate to recognise a significant risk in relation to the 2019-20 VFM arrangements conclusion.

We identified no such evidence for the Authority and therefore identified no significant VFM risk associated to Covid-19.

Overall conclusion

We identified one significant risk around these arrangements in respect of the Authority's property acquisition, development strategy and associated investment strategy. The tables overleaf present our findings in response to the risk and concludes that we found that the Authority had appropriate arrangements in place to manage the risks associated to the new strategy as it relates to our VFM responsibilities.

As a result we have no matters to include in the auditor's report about your arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources.



Value for Money Risks

We are only required to determine whether there are any risks that we consider significant within the Code of Audit Practice, where risk is defined as:

“A matter is significant if, in the auditor’s professional view, it is reasonable to conclude that the matter would be of interest to the audited body or the wider public”

Our risk assessment supports the planning of enough work to deliver a safe conclusion on your arrangements to secure value for money, and enables us to determine the nature and extent of any further work needed. If we do not identify a significant risk we do not need to carry out further work.

The table below presents the findings of our work in response to the risks areas in our Audit Planning Report.

What is the significant value for money risk?

What arrangements did the risk affect?

Property acquisition and development strategy and associated investment strategy.

The Authority has put in place a property acquisition and development strategy and an associated investment strategy, aimed at making £20 million of investments in the five years commencing 2020/21.

This represents a new and ambitious activity for the Authority. It will need to ensure that it puts into place appropriate arrangements to enable it make informed decisions and deploy its resources in a sustainable manner.

Taking informed decisions
Deploying resources in a sustainable manner

What did we do?

We have assessed the arrangements in place supporting this strategy, focusing on the:

- A. Relationship with the Authority’s strategy and objectives;
- B. Legal and other third party advice obtained;
- C. Impact on the Authority’s compliance with the Prudential Code as a result of strategy ;
- D. Financial impact on the budget and MTFS including assessments of downside risks associated to falling capital values and increasing borrowing costs;
- E. Process in place for investment decisions; and
- F. Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on this strategy.

We also reviewed the Authority’s financial resilience by completing a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the Authority’s budget, medium term financial strategy and capital, treasury management strategies produced in the period to 31 March 2020.



Value for Money risks (continued)

What are our findings?

A. Relationship with the Authority's strategy and objectives

The Property Acquisition and Development Strategy (the Strategy) was agreed by Council in February 2020. There is clear evidence that it contributes to the Authority's Commercial Strategy which was approved by Cabinet in January 2019. The Commercial Strategy feeds directly in to the objective of "Enable an enterprising and co-operative economy". It is also intended to generate returns that help support spend in other areas of the Council Plan (or reduce for service changes that would otherwise be necessary to balance the budget).

B. Legal and other third party advice obtained

To date the Authority has relied on internal advice, using in-house expertise in estates, legal and finance. The Authority has made it clear that it will obtain relevant external advice tailored to individual investments and developments. This is a reasonable arrangement.

C. Impact on compliance with the Prudential Code

As detailed in the Strategy, the Authority will only use powers under s120 of the Local Government Act (1972) to acquire property. This would therefore be where the purposes of that acquisition is for:

- any of its functions under this or any other enactment, or
- the benefit, improvement or development of its area.

Using this power for the investment is consistent with being able to borrow, when needed, under the Prudential Code. The Authority will consider its prudential borrowing indicators as part of evaluating any need for borrowing.

D. Financial impact on the budget and MTFS

This will be assessed when opportunities are identified and taken forward to the next stage. Currently the provision for the spend is included in the capital programme and no revenue impact has been accounted. The Strategy is clear that investments will not be undertaken unless the initial return is greater than the cost of capital (assuming external borrowing, although internal borrowing may be used), plus a margin for risk. A full appraisal of return and risk will be carried out on each investment. This will consider capital value and borrowing cost changes. The Authority may use fixed rate borrowing to eliminate some of that risk.

E. Process in place for investment decisions

The Authority has established a Property Scrutiny Group comprising a directors and officers. Their core responsibilities will be to conduct appraisals of property acquisition and development opportunities based on the principles, core goal and objectives of the Strategy. The Group will make recommendations as to which opportunities to pursue and reject. This is a reasonable arrangement.

F. Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic the Authority has halted any property acquisition, which is a reasonable course of action.



05 Other reporting issues

Other reporting issues

Consistency of other information published with the financial statements, including the Annual Governance Statement

We must give an opinion on the consistency of the financial and non-financial information in the Statement of Accounts 2019/20 with the audited financial statements.

We must also review the Annual Governance Statement for completeness of disclosures, consistency with other information from our work, and whether it complies with relevant guidance.

Financial information in the Statement of Accounts 2019/20 and published with the financial statements was consistent with the audited financial statements.

We have reviewed the latest version of the Annual Governance Statement and can confirm it is consistent with other information from our audit of the financial statements and we have no other matters to report.

Whole of Government Accounts

The Authority is below the threshold for requiring audit procedures on its WGA submission however as the WGA timetable has been moved to later in the year we have yet to review the Authority's consolidation pack for consistency with the audited statements.

Other powers and duties

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to consider whether to report on any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit, either for the Authority to consider it or to bring it to the attention of the public (i.e. "a report in the public interest"). We also have a duty to make written recommendations to the Authority, copied to the Secretary of State, and take action in accordance with our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. We have had no reason to exercise these duties.



06

Assessment of Control Environment



Assessment of Control Environment

Financial controls

It is the responsibility of the Authority to develop and implement systems of internal financial control and to put in place proper arrangements to monitor their adequacy and effectiveness in practice. Our responsibility as your auditor is to consider whether the Authority has put adequate arrangements in place to satisfy itself that the systems of internal financial control are both adequate and effective in practice.

As part of our audit of the financial statements, we obtained an understanding of internal control sufficient to plan our audit and determine the nature, timing and extent of testing performed. As we have adopted a fully substantive approach, we have therefore not tested the operation of controls. Although our audit was not designed to express an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control we are required to communicate to you significant deficiencies in internal control.

We have not identified any significant deficiencies in the design or operation of an internal control that might result in a material misstatement in your financial statements of which you are not aware.

We considered whether circumstances arising from Covid-19 resulted in a change to the overall control environment of effectiveness of internal controls, for example due to significant staff absence or limitations as a result of working remotely. We identified no issues which we wish to bring to your attention.

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07 Data Analytics



Use of Data Analytics in the Audit

► Data analytics – Journal Entry Analysis and Payroll Analysis

Analytics Driven Audit

Data analytics

We used our data analysers to enable us to capture entire populations of your financial data. These analysers:

- ▶ Help identify specific exceptions and anomalies which can then be the focus of our substantive audit tests; and
- ▶ Give greater likelihood of identifying errors than traditional, random sampling techniques.

In 2019/20, our use of these analysers in the Authority's audit included testing journal entries and employee expenses, to identify and focus our testing on those entries we deem to have the highest inherent risk to the audit.

We capture the data through our formal data requests and the data transfer takes place on a secured EY website. These are in line with our EY data protection policies which are designed to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of business and personal information.

Journal Entry Analysis

We obtain downloads of all financial ledger transactions posted in the year. We perform completeness analysis over the data, reconciling the sum of transactions to the movement in the trial balances and financial statements to ensure we have captured all data. Our analysers then review and sort transactions, allowing us to more effectively identify and test journals that we consider to be higher risk, as identified in our audit planning report.

Payroll Analysis

We also use our analysers in our payroll testing. We obtain all payroll transactions posted in the year from the payroll system and perform completeness analysis over the data, including reconciling the total amount to the General Ledger trial balance. We then analyse the data against a number of specifically designed procedures. These include analysis of payroll costs by month to identify any variances from established expectations, as well as more detailed transactional interrogation.

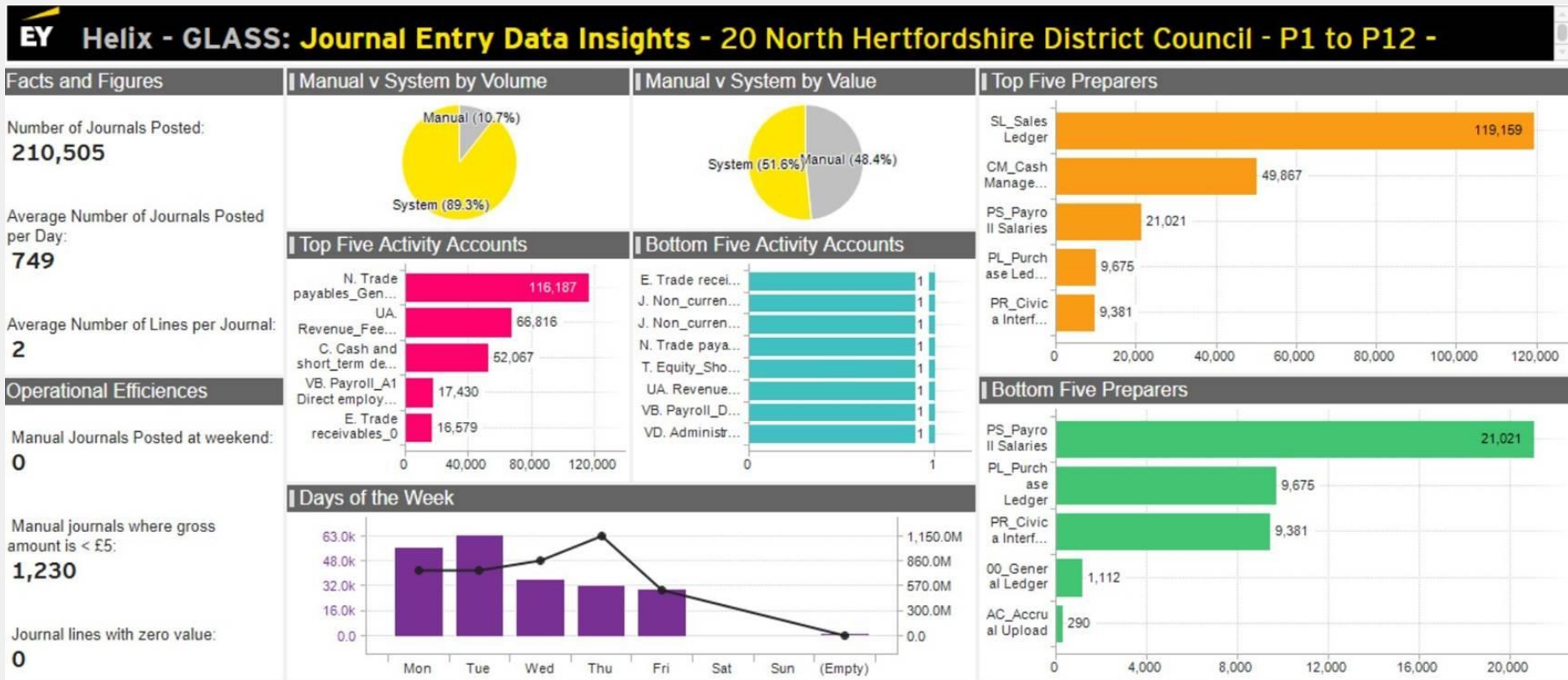


Use of Data Analytics in the Audit

► Data analytics – Journal Entry Analysis and Payroll Analysis

Journal Entry Data Insights

In line with ISA 240 we are required to test the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the statement of accounts. The graphic outlined below summarises the journal population for 2019/20. We review journals by certain risk based criteria to focus on higher risk transactions, such as journals posted manually by management, those posted around the year-end, those with unusual debit and credit relationships, and those posted by individuals we would not expect to be entering transactions. The purpose of this approach is to provide a more effective and risk focused approach to auditing journal entries.



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08 Independence

Independence

Confirmation

We confirm there are no changes in our assessment of independence since our confirmation in our audit planning report dated January 2020. We complied with the APB Ethical Standards. In our professional judgement the firm is independent and the objectivity of the audit engagement partner and audit staff has not been compromised within the meaning of regulatory and professional requirements.

We consider that our independence in this context is a matter which you should review, as well as us. It is important that you and your Finance, Audit and Risk committee consider the facts known to you and come to a view. If you would like to discuss any matters concerning our independence, we will be pleased to do this at the meeting of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee on 7 September 2020.

We confirm we have not undertaken any non-audit work outside the NAO Code requirements in relation to our work.

Page 140 Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

The FRC Ethical Standard requires that we provide details of all relationships between Ernst & Young (EY) and your Authority, senior management and its affiliates, including all services provided by us and our network to your Authority, senior management and its affiliates, and other services provided to other known connected parties that we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on the our integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence and the related safeguards that are in place and why they address the threats.

There are no relationships from 1 April 2019 to the date of this report, which we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence and objectivity.

Services provided by Ernst & Young

The table overleaf includes a summary of the fees that you have paid to us in the year ended 31 March 2020 in line with the disclosures set out in FRC Ethical Standard and in statute.

As at the date of this report, there are no future services which have been contracted and no written proposal to provide non-audit services has been submitted.

Fee analysis

As part of our reporting on our independence, we set out below a summary of the fees paid for the year ended 31 March 2020.

We have included the fees paid by the Authority in engaging us as a reporting accountant on DWP's the housing benefits assurance programme. We have adopted the necessary safeguards in completing this work and complied with Auditor Guidance Note 1 issued by the NAO.

In our Outline Audit Plan and subsequent reporting to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, we have communicated our proposal to increase the scale fee for 2019/20. This proposal is currently being considered by PSAA as part of their national consideration of EY's fee proposals. The table below does not reflect those proposals.

All fees exclude VAT	Final fee 2019/20	Planned fee 2019/20	Scale fee 2019/20	Final Fee 2018/19
	£	£	£	£
Code work - scale fee	40,068	40,068	40,068	44,068
Additional code work:				
• VFM conclusion significant risk (Note 1)	4,000	TBC	N/A	N/A
• Going concern disclosure (Note 2)	TBC	-	-	-
• Asset valuations impacted by Covid-19 (Note 3)	TBC			
• EY consultations on auditor report (Note 4)	TBC	-	-	-
Total audit	TBC	40,068	40,068	44,068
Other non-audit services not covered above (Housing Benefits)	TBC	9,140	N/A	9,140
Total other non-audit services	TBC	9,140	N/A	9,140
Total fees	TBC	TBC	40,068	53,208

Notes: These items are outside of the PSAA scale fee and will be subject to agreement with the Service Director - Resources and then PSAA.

1. We reported in the Outline Audit Plan that the VFMC significant risk would necessitate an additional fee.
2. We have carried out additional work to review, assess and challenge the Authority's going concern assessment and associated disclosure.
3. We have carried out additional work in response to the material uncertainty reported by the Authority's valuer on investment property valuations. This has led to an emphasis of matter paragraph in the audit report.
4. To ensure that we are giving the right assurance to the Authority, EY have instigated a consultation process involving the Firm's Professional Practice Directorate.

Independence

New UK Independence Standards

The Financial Reporting Council (FRC) published the Revised Ethical Standard 2019 in December and it will apply to accounting periods starting on or after 15 March 2020. A key change in the new Ethical Standard will be a general prohibition on the provision of non-audit services by the auditor (and its network) which will apply to UK Public Interest Entities (PIEs). A narrow list of permitted services will continue to be allowed.

Summary of key changes

- Extraterritorial application of the FRC Ethical Standard to UK PIE and its worldwide affiliates
 - A general prohibition on the provision of non-audit services by the auditor (or its network) to a UK PIE, its UK parent and worldwide subsidiaries
 - A narrow list of permitted services where closely related to the audit and/or required by law or regulation
 - Absolute prohibition on the following relationships applicable to UK PIE and its affiliates including material significant investees/investors:
 - Tax advocacy services - Remuneration advisory services - Internal audit services - Secondment/loan staff arrangements
 - An absolute prohibition on contingent fees.
- Requirement to meet the higher standard for business relationships i.e. business relationships between the audit firm and the audit client will only be permitted if it is inconsequential.
- Permitted services required by law or regulation will not be subject to the 70% fee cap.
- Grandfathering will apply for otherwise prohibited non-audit services that are open at 15 March 2020 such that the engagement may continue until completed in accordance with the original engagement terms.
- A requirement for the auditor to notify the Audit Committee where the audit fee might compromise perceived independence and the appropriate safeguards.
- A requirement to report to the audit committee details of any breaches of the Ethical Standard and any actions taken by the firm to address any threats to independence. A requirement for non-network component firm whose work is used in the group audit engagement to comply with the same independence standard as the group auditor. Our current understanding is that the requirement to follow UK independence rules is limited to the component firm issuing the audit report and not to its network. This is subject to clarification with the FRC.

Next Steps

We do not provide any non-audit services which would be prohibited under the new standard.

Other communications

EY Transparency Report 2019

Ernst & Young (EY) has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained. Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the year end 30 June 2019: https://assets.ey.com/content/dam/ey-sites/ey-com/en_uk/about-us/transparency-report-2019/ey-uk-2019-transparency-report.pdf






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Appendices

Appendix A

Required communications with the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

There are certain communications that we must provide to the Audit Committees of UK clients. We have detailed these here together with a reference of when and where they were covered:

		 Our Reporting to you
Required communications	 What is reported?	 When and where
Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies
Our responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter.	Audit Plan - January 2020
Planning and audit approach	Communication of the planned scope and timing of the audit, any limitations and the significant risks identified.	Audit Plan - January 2020
Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures ▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit ▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management ▶ Written representations that we are seeking ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report ▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process 	Audit Results Report - September 2020

Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Going concern	<p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty ▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements ▶ The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements 	No conditions or events were identified, either individually or together to raise any doubt about North Hertfordshire District Council's ability to continue for the 12 months from the date of our report
Misstatements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion ▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods ▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected ▶ Material misstatements corrected by management 	Audit Results Report - September 2020
Subsequent events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiry of the Finance, Audit and Risk committee where appropriate regarding whether any subsequent events have occurred that might affect the financial statements. 	
Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiries of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the Authority ▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist ▶ Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the Authority, any identified or suspected fraud involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Management; b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or c. Others where the fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements. ▶ The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected ▶ Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to Finance, Audit and Risk Committee responsibility. 	Audit Results Report - September 2020

Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Related parties	<p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the Authority's related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Non-disclosure by management ▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions ▶ Disagreement over disclosures ▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations ▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the Authority 	Audit Results Report - September 2020
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, objectivity and independence.</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The principal threats ▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness ▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards ▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence <p>Communications whenever significant judgments are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place.</p> <p>For public interest entities and listed companies, communication of minimum requirements as detailed in the FRC Revised Ethical Standard 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Relationships between EY, the company and senior management, its affiliates and its connected parties ▶ Services provided by EY that may reasonably bear on the auditors' objectivity and independence ▶ Related safeguards ▶ Fees charged by EY analysed into appropriate categories such as statutory audit fees, tax advisory fees, other non-audit service fees ▶ A statement of compliance with the Ethical Standard, including any non-EY firms or external experts used in the audit 	Audit Plan - January 2020 and Audit Results Report - September 2020

Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Details of any inconsistencies between the Ethical Standard and Group's policy for the provision of non-audit services, and any apparent breach of that policy ▶ Details of any contingent fee arrangements for non-audit services ▶ Where EY has determined it is appropriate to apply more restrictive rules than permitted under the Ethical Standard ▶ The Finance, Audit and Risk committee should also be provided an opportunity to discuss matters affecting auditor independence 	
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations ▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures. 	We have received all requested confirmations
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Subject to compliance with applicable regulations, matters involving identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, other than those which are clearly inconsequential and the implications thereof. Instances of suspected non-compliance may also include those that are brought to our attention that are expected to occur imminently or for which there is reason to believe that they may occur ▶ Enquiry of the Finance, Audit and Risk committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the Finance, Audit and Risk committee may be aware of. 	We have asked management and those charged with governance. We have not identified any material instances or non-compliance with laws and regulations
Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit. 	Audit Results Report - September 2020

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Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance 	Audit Results Report - September 2020
Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise 	Audit Results Report - September 2020
Auditors report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report 	Audit Results Report - September 2020
Fee Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Breakdown of fee information when the audit planning report is agreed ▶ Breakdown of fee information at the completion of the audit ▶ Any non-audit work 	Audit Plan - January 2020 and Audit Results Report - September 2020



Management representation letter

Management Rep Letter

[To be prepared on the entity's letterhead]

Xx September 2020

Suresh Patel
Associate Partner
Ernst & Young LLP
400 Capability Green
Luton
LU1 3LU

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of North Hertfordshire District Council ("the Council") for the year ended 31 March 2020. We recognize that obtaining representations from us concerning the information contained in this letter is a significant procedure in enabling you to form an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of North Hertfordshire District Council as of 31 March 2020 and of its income and expenditure and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.

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

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

A. Financial Statements and Financial Records

1. We have fulfilled our responsibilities, under the relevant statutory authorities, for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.
2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the Council, our responsibility for the fair presentation of the financial statements. We believe the financial statements referred to above give a true and fair view of the financial position, financial performance (or results of operations) and cash flows of the Council in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20, and are free of material misstatements, including omissions. We have approved the financial statements.
3. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are appropriately described in the financial statements.
4. As members of management of the Council, we believe that the Council has a system of internal controls adequate to enable the preparation of accurate

financial statements in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. We have disclosed to you any significant changes in our processes, controls, policies and procedures that we have made to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our system of internal controls.

5. There are no unadjusted audit differences identified during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented.

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

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible to determine that the Council's business activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible to identify and address any non-compliance with applicable laws or regulations, including fraud.
2. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud.
3. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
4. We have no knowledge of any identified or suspected non-compliance with laws or regulations including fraud that may have affected the Council (regardless of the source or form and including without limitation, any allegations by "whistleblowers"), including non-compliance matters:
 - Involving financial improprieties
 - Related to laws or regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the Council's financial statements
 - Related to laws or regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the Council's business, its ability to continue in business, or to avoid material penalties
 - Involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal control, or others

In relation to any allegations of fraud, suspected fraud or other non-compliance with laws and regulations communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others

C. Information Provided and Completeness of Information and Transactions

1. We have provided you with:
 - Access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters



Management representation letter (continued)

Management Rep Letter

- Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit and
 - Unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.
2. All material transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements, including those related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of Council and Finance, Audit and Risk Committee held through the 1 April 2019 to the most recent meeting on the following date: 7 September 2020.
 4. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Council's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware, including sales, purchases, loans, transfers of assets, liabilities and services, leasing arrangements, guarantees, non-monetary transactions and transactions for no consideration for the period ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at the 31 March 2020 end. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the financial statements.
 5. We believe that the significant assumptions we used in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable.
 6. We have disclosed to you, and the Council has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance, including all covenants, conditions or other requirements of all outstanding debt.
 7. From 1 April 2019 through the date of this letter we have disclosed to you any unauthorized access to our information technology systems that either occurred or to the best of our knowledge is reasonably likely to have occurred based on our investigation, including of reports submitted to us by third parties (including regulatory agencies, law enforcement agencies and security consultants), to the extent that such unauthorized access to our information technology systems is reasonably likely to have a material impact to the financial statements, in each case or in the aggregate.

D. Liabilities and Contingencies

1. All liabilities and contingencies, including those associated with guarantees, whether written or oral, have been disclosed to you and are appropriately reflected in the financial statements.
2. We have informed you of all outstanding and possible litigation and claims, ~~whether or not~~ they have been discussed with legal counsel.
3. We have recorded and/or disclosed, as appropriate, all liabilities related to litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and have disclosed in Note [X] to the financial statements all guarantees that we have given to third parties.

E. Subsequent Events

1. There have been no events, including events related to the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequent to period end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the financial statements or notes thereto.

F. Other information

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises Narrative Report and Annual Governance Statement.
2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.

G. Going Concern

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

H. Estimates

When we have identified following estimates as significant or higher risk:

- i. Pension Liability
- ii. Property, Plant & Equipment / Investment Properties – Valuation and Impairment
- iii. Provision for impairment of receivables
- iv. NDR Appeals Provision

1. We believe that the measurement processes, including related assumptions and models, used to determine the accounting estimates have been consistently applied and are appropriate in the context of CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.
2. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the accounting estimates appropriately reflect our intent and ability to carry out the operations on behalf of the Council.
3. We confirm that the disclosures made in the financial statements with respect to the accounting estimates are complete, including the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on 31 March 2020 and made in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.
4. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimates and disclosures in the financial statements due to subsequent events, including due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I. Retirement benefits

1. ~~On the basis of~~ the process established by us and having made appropriate enquiries, we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the scheme liabilities are consistent with our knowledge of the business. All significant



Appendix B

Management representation letter (continued)

Management Rep Letter

retirement benefits and all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for.

Yours faithfully,

Service Director – Resources (Chief Financial Officer)

Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

EY | Assurance | Tax | Transactions | Consultancy

About EY

EY is a global leader in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services. The insights and quality services we deliver help build trust and confidence in the capital markets and in economies the world over. We develop outstanding leaders who team to deliver on our promises to all of our stakeholders. In so doing, we play a critical role in building a better working world for our people, for our clients and for our communities.

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ED None

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[To be prepared on the entity's letterhead]

Xx September 2020

Suresh Patel
Associate Partner
Ernst & Young LLP
400 Capability Green
Luton
LU1 3LU

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of North Hertfordshire District Council ("the Council") for the year ended 31 March 2020. We recognize that obtaining representations from us concerning the information contained in this letter is a significant procedure in enabling you to form an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of North Hertfordshire District Council as of 31 March 2020 and of its income and expenditure and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.

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

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

A. Financial Statements and Financial Records

1. We have fulfilled our responsibilities, under the relevant statutory authorities, for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.
2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the Council, our responsibility for the fair presentation of the financial statements. We believe the financial statements referred to above give a true and fair view of the financial position, financial performance (or results of operations) and cash flows of the Council in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20, and are free of material misstatements, including omissions. We have approved the financial statements.
3. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are appropriately described in the financial statements.
4. As members of management of the Council, we believe that the Council has a system of internal controls adequate to enable the preparation of accurate

financial statements in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. We have disclosed to you any significant changes in our processes, controls, policies and procedures that we have made to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our system of internal controls.

5. There are no unadjusted audit differences identified during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented.

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

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible to determine that the Council's business activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible to identify and address any non-compliance with applicable laws or regulations, including fraud.
2. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud.
3. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
4. We have no knowledge of any identified or suspected non-compliance with laws or regulations including fraud that may have affected the Council (regardless of the source or form and including without limitation, any allegations by "whistleblowers"), including non-compliance matters:
 - Involving financial improprieties
 - Related to laws or regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the Council's financial statements
 - Related to laws or regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the Council's business, its ability to continue in business, or to avoid material penalties
 - Involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal control, or others

In relation to any allegations of fraud, suspected fraud or other non-compliance with laws and regulations communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others

C. Information Provided and Completeness of Information and Transactions

1. We have provided you with:
 - Access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters

- Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit and
 - Unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.
2. All material transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements, including those related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of Council and Finance, Audit and Risk Committee held through the 1 April 2019 to the most recent meeting on the following date: 7 September 2020.
 4. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Council's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware, including sales, purchases, loans, transfers of assets, liabilities and services, leasing arrangements, guarantees, non-monetary transactions and transactions for no consideration for the period ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at the 31 March 2020 end. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the financial statements.
 5. We believe that the significant assumptions we used in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable.
 6. We have disclosed to you, and the Council has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance, including all covenants, conditions or other requirements of all outstanding debt.
 7. From 1 April 2019 through the date of this letter we have disclosed to you any unauthorized access to our information technology systems that either occurred or to the best of our knowledge is reasonably likely to have occurred based on our investigation, including of reports submitted to us by third parties (including regulatory agencies, law enforcement agencies and security consultants), to the extent that such unauthorized access to our information technology systems is reasonably likely to have a material impact to the financial statements, in each case or in the aggregate.

D. Liabilities and Contingencies

1. All liabilities and contingencies, including those associated with guarantees, whether written or oral, have been disclosed to you and are appropriately reflected in the financial statements.
2. We have informed you of all outstanding and possible litigation and claims, whether or not they have been discussed with legal counsel.
3. We have recorded and/or disclosed, as appropriate, all liabilities related to litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and have disclosed in Note [X] to the financial statements all guarantees that we have given to third parties.

E. Subsequent Events

1. There have been no events, including events related to the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequent to period end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the financial statements or notes thereto.

F. Other information

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises Narrative Report and Annual Governance Statement.
2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.

G. Going Concern

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

H. Estimates

When we have identified following estimates as significant or higher risk:

- i. Pension Liability
 - ii. Property, Plant & Equipment / Investment Properties – Valuation and Impairment
 - iii. Provision for impairment of receivables
 - iv. NDR Appeals Provision
1. We believe that the measurement processes, including related assumptions and models, used to determine the accounting estimates have been consistently applied and are appropriate in the context of CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.
 2. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the accounting estimates appropriately reflect our intent and ability to carry out *the operations* on behalf of the Council.
 3. We confirm that the disclosures made in the financial statements with respect to the accounting estimates are complete, including the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on 31 March 2020 and made in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.
 4. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimates and disclosures in the financial statements due to subsequent events, including due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I. Retirement benefits

1. On the basis of the process established by us and having made appropriate enquiries, we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the scheme liabilities are consistent with our knowledge of the business. All significant

retirement benefits and all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for.

Yours faithfully,

Service Director – Resources (Chief Financial Officer)

Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

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