

# Public Document Pack

**Date of meeting** Monday, 30th September, 2024  
**Time** 7.00 pm  
**Venue** Astley Room - Castle  
**Contact** Geoff Durham



**NEWCASTLE  
UNDER LYME**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Castle House  
Barracks Road  
Newcastle-under-Lyme  
Staffordshire  
ST5 1BL

## Audit and Standards Committee

### AGENDA

#### OPEN AGENDA

- 1 APOLOGIES**
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
To receive Declarations of Interest from Members on items included in the agenda
- 3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING** (Pages 3 - 6)  
To consider the minutes of the previous meeting(s).
- 4 AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023/24** (Pages 7 - 126)
- 5 HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24** (Pages 127 - 142)
- 6 CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT** (Pages 143 - 148)
- 7 INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE 2024/25** (Pages 149 - 154)
- 8 WORK PROGRAMME** (Pages 155 - 158)
- 9 URGENT BUSINESS**  
To consider any business which is urgent within the meaning of Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972

**Members:** Councillors P Waring (Chair), Burnett-Faulkner (Vice-Chair), Holland, Whieldon, Stubbs, Brockie and Lewis

**Members of the Council:** If you identify any personal training/development requirements from any of the items included in this agenda or through issues raised during the meeting, please bring them to the attention of the Democratic Services Officer at the close of the meeting.

**Meeting Quorums:** Where the total membership of a committee is 12 Members or less, the quorum will be 3 members.... Where the total membership is more than 12 Members, the quorum will be one quarter of the total membership.

**SUBSTITUTE MEMBER SCHEME** (Section B5 – Rule 2 of Constitution)

The Constitution provides for the appointment of Substitute members to attend Committees. The named Substitutes for this meeting are listed below:

|                     |         |           |
|---------------------|---------|-----------|
| Substitute Members: | Panter  | Lawley    |
|                     | Parker  | Northcott |
|                     | Gorton  | Reece     |
|                     | S Jones |           |

***If you are unable to attend this meeting and wish to appoint a Substitute to attend on your place you need to identify a Substitute member from the list above who is able to attend on your behalf***

Officers will be in attendance prior to the meeting for informal discussions on agenda items.

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# Agenda Item 3

*Audit and Standards Committee - 15/07/24*

## AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Monday, 15th July, 2024  
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

[View the agenda here](#)

[Watch the meeting here](#)

|                     |  |  |
|---------------------|--|--|
| <b>Present:</b>     | Councillor Paul Waring (Chair)   |  |
| Councillors:        | Burnett-Faulkner<br>Whieldon   | Stubbs<br>Lewis  |
| Apologies:          | Councillor(s) Holland and Brockie  |  |
| Substitutes:        | Councillor Simon Jones (In place of Councillor Mark Holland)<br>Councillor Philip Reece (In place of Councillor Wendy Brockie) |  |
| Officers:           | Sarah Wilkes<br>Anthony Harold<br><br>Clare Potts  | Service Director - Finance / S151 Officer<br>Service Director - Legal & Governance /<br>Monitoring Officer |
| Also in attendance: | Councillor Stephen Sweeney   | Deputy Leader of the Council<br>and Portfolio Holder - Finance,<br>Town Centres and Growth                 |

### 1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were shared as stated above.

### 2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

### 3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2024 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

### 4. **INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

The Head of Internal Audit (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) gave an overview of the Internal Audit Report.

Members submitted questions and responses were provided as follows.

Cllr Stubbs wished for officers to go through areas where a marginal opinion had been issued.

– Sundry Debtors had been transferred 18 months ago and was now managed by the Finance Team via the Civica Debtors System. A Debt Recovery Policy had also been fully implemented. About the General Project Governance, this audit had been

## **Audit and Standards Committee - 15/07/24**

requested by the Director for Finance (S151 Officer) in relation to the various central government grants and Town Deal Funds managed by the Council. A Corporate Project Register had been implemented gathering all information about any specific project of which ownership, source of funding, project management, financial and legal approvals, priorities it is linked to, directorate, procedures and framework in place, monitoring etc. The recommendations were to do with the fact it was something completely new that had never been done before. The best way to use this document was still to be decided.

Cllr Stubbs asked if the grant procedures requirements were incorporated into the actual governance of the projects.

– Yes they were as demonstrated with the management of projects funded by the Town Deal and Future High Street Funds.

Cllr Stubbs asked if a finance officer was included in the project board.

– Indeed that was the case.

Cllr Stubbs enquired about the Decision Making audit which had a marginal opinion.

– A number of issues had been looked at by the auditor. A few points had been challenged, which had been taken into account. Assurance had been given by the appropriate chief officers that the actions required to improve the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control environment were being taken, which would be reflected in the Annual Governance Statement. Decisions were to be recorded in the right places and improvements were in hand to facilitate this and would be carried out by the end of September. A business plan was used by service directors listing all meetings and when the reports were due to go to each of them for decision.

The Chair thanked the Head of Internal Audit and expressed his regrets that she wouldn't be presenting the next audit, a new firm having been appointed. The Service Director for Finance (S151 Officer) wished for the thanks to be recorded and added that it had been very nice working with her for the past four years.

**Resolved:** That the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2023/24 be considered.

[Watch the debate here](#)

### **5. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

The Service Director for Finance (S151 Officer) went through the Treasury Management Report.

Cllr Stubbs commented that the report was worded in a way difficult for elected members to understand and being more aimed at a finance literate audience. A less technical jargon would be appreciated.

– This would be passed on to the team so that future reports be drafted in terms easier to understand for non-professionals.

The Chair suggested that a one-page overview would be helpful.

Cllr Whieldon supported Cllr Stubbs' comment and the response provided, adding that an executive summary in layman's terms rather than glossary terms would also benefit members of the public.

**Resolved:** That the Treasury Management Report for 2023/24 be received and be reported to Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

[Watch the debate here](#)

## 6. **CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT**

The Service Director for Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) presented the Corporate Risk Management Report.

**Resolved:**

1. That there were currently no risks that were more than 6 months overdue for a review up to end of Q4 2023/24, be noted.
2. That there had been no risk level increases, be noted.
3. That there had been no changes to the Corporate Risk Register, be noted.
4. That officers be advised of any individual risk profiles that the Committee would like to scrutinise in more details at its next meeting.
5. That whilst the likelihood of a risk materialising may be mitigated, the likely impacts may not change, be noted

[Watch the debate here](#)

## 7. **WORK PROGRAMME**

**Resolved:** That the work programme be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

## 8. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

**Councillor Paul Waring  
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 7.29 pm

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**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S  
REPORT TO**

**Audit & Standards Committee  
30 September 2024**

**Report Title:** Audited Statement of Accounts 2023/24

**Submitted by:** Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer)

**Portfolios:** Finance, Town Centres and Growth

**Ward(s) affected:** All

|  |
|--|
| <p><b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b></p> <p>To receive the final accounts and audit findings report for the financial year 2023/24.</p>  |
| <p><b><u>Recommendation</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The final accounts for the financial year 2023/24 be received and delegated authority given to the Service Director for Finance and the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee to sign off the Statement of Accounts once the audit has been completed.</li> <li>2. The audit findings report for the financial year 2023/24 be received.</li> </ol> |
| <p><b><u>Reasons</u></b></p> <p>The Council is required to publish its audited accounts for the financial year 2023/24 by 30 September 2024, or where circumstances dictate, as soon as reasonably practicable after this date.</p>  |

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations require that for the 2023/24 accounting period the publication of authority accounts and supporting documents (together with any certificate or opinion of the local auditor) shall be no later than 30 September 2024 if the audit has been concluded. Where it is not possible to publish the audited Statements by the deadline, the council must publish a statement giving reasons why this date has not been met. A statutory backstop date of 28 February 2025 has been introduced by the Government by which audits of all 2023/24 Statements must have been completed.
- 1.2 The Accounts and Audit Regulations govern the way in which a local authority should present its financial affairs. The regulations require the Council to produce a statement of accounts for the financial year detailing its financial transactions for the year and its position at the year end and that this Statement be scrutinised and approved by an appropriate committee, in this case the Audit and Standards Committee. The Statement is produced in a standardised form in line with CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) guidelines. They set out procedures which must be followed with regard to public inspection rights, audit, approval and publication of the statement.
- 1.5 The Regulations require the draft Statement of Accounts to be certified by the responsible financial officer, the Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer), as presenting a true and fair view of the Council's financial position by 31 May and this was done on 20 May 2024. During the period 1 June 2024 to 28 June 2024, the public had the right to inspect the accounts. No objections to the draft accounts were received.

1.6 The Council's external auditors KPMG have advised that they expect to issue their final Audit Findings Report and opinion on the financial statements by the 30 September 2024 however this may be slightly delayed until they have received the outcome of a national issue ,regarding the accounting for pension assets and the recognition of associated liabilities, and therefore this will be shared with Committee Members as soon as it has been received.

## 2. **Issues**

2.1 Since the last meeting of this Committee officers have continued to work closely with the new external auditors, KPMG to complete the audit.

2.2 KPMG have advised that they expect to issue their Audit Findings Report including their opinion on the financial statements by 30 September 2024. The accounts will be recertified by the Council's Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer) and be made available for Members to inspect at this point.

2.3 The audit of the Statement of Accounts 2022/23 by Grant Thornton identified one recommendation for the Council which was that 'an individual transaction listing for Council Tax and NNDR debtors and creditors as at 31 March be run and retained for the purpose of year end audit testing'. This recommendation has been completed for the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts.

2.4 The Committee are now asked to formally receive the audited accounts and the audit findings report. The annual audit letter will be presented to the Committee at the November meeting.

2.5 The National Audit Office has updated its guidance to auditors to allow them to postpone completion of their work on arrangements to secure value for money and to focus resources on the delivery of opinions on the financial statements. As a result the Auditor's Annual Report, including commentary on arrangements to secure value for money will be published no later than 3 months of the accounts opinion and will be reported to the Audit and Standards Committee no later than 3 February 2025.

## 3. **Proposal**

3.1 The final accounts for the financial year 2023/24 be received and delegated authority given to the Service Director for Finance and the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee to sign off the Statement of Accounts once the outcome of a national issue ,regarding the accounting for pension assets and the recognition of associated liabilities, has been received and accounted for.

3.2 The audit findings report for the financial year 2023/24 be received.

## 4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

4.1 Regular reporting of the Council's financial position is a key discipline supporting sound financial management and corporate governance.

## 5. **Options Considered**

5.1 Completion of the statement is best practice and demonstrates the transparency of the Council's Governance arrangements for 2023/24.

## 6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**



6.1 The Council must comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, in particular the requirement to publish the financial statements.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 There are no differential equality issues arising directly from this report.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 There are no financial and resource implications arising directly from this report.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 If internal controls are not managed effectively and within the law, public resources will not be safeguarded from waste or properly accounted for.

9.2 If internal controls are not reviewed regularly, continuous improvement may not be exercised.

10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**

10.1 The External Audit Arrangement via KPMG and the Fraud Hub supports UNSG and Climate Change objectives in a number of ways. Principally, through partnership working and supporting sustainable cities and communities via the correct use of public monies. The following UNSGs are supported.



11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 This is not a key decision, the report is for informational purposes and is considered best practice.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 Not applicable for this report.

13. **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1: Statement of Accounts for the Financial Year 2023/24

Appendix 2: Audit Findings – KPMG

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# Statement of Accounts

2023/24



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# Guide to the Statement of Accounts

The Statement of Accounts contains a number of different elements, which are shown in the following table, together with an explanation of the purpose of each item. Throughout the Statement, various unusual or technical terms are employed which may not be familiar to all readers. A Glossary (page 74) has therefore been provided which explains the meaning of such items.

| Page | Item   | Purpose  |
|------|--|--|
| 5    | Narrative Report                               | A guide to the main features of the accounts and a commentary on the Council's financial position and the factors affecting its finances.  |
| 17   | Statement of Responsibilities                  | Sets out the responsibilities of the Council and the Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer) in relation to financial administration and accounting.                                  |
| 18   | Annual Governance Statement                    | Explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the Council to carry out its functions effectively. Produced following a review of the Council's governance arrangements.               |
| 28   | Financial Statements                           | The Financial Statements which the Council must publish.   |
| 28   | Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement | Shows the accounting cost of providing services in accordance with accounting practice.  |
| 29   | Movement in Reserves Statement                 | Shows movements in reserves split between usable and unusable reserves. It also reconciles the outturn on the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) to the General Fund balance. |
| 30   | Balance Sheet                                  | Sets out the Council's financial position on 31 March 2024. Provides details of the Council's balances, reserves and assets employed in Council operations together with any liabilities.        |
| 31   | Cash Flow Statement                            | Details the total cash movement of the Council's transactions.   |
| 32   | Notes to the Financial Statements              | Provide additional information in relation to the Financial Statements and outline technical issues such as the Council's accounting policies.   |
| 71   | Collection Fund                                | Records details of receipts of Council Tax and business rates and the associated payments to precepting authorities/central government.  |
| 74   | Glossary                                       | Explanation of technical or unusual terms used in the Statement of Accounts.   |

# Narrative Report

## Commentary by the Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer)

### a. Introduction

Welcome to Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2023/24. The accounts give a summary of the money that the Council has received, what it has been spent on during the year, and its financial position at 31 March 2024. This Narrative Report provides a context to the accounts by presenting a summary of the Council's financial activities and its prospects for future years.

### Regulations Governing the Production of the Statement of Accounts

The accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis and in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the requirements of the "Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom" published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Under the provisions of Sections 25/26 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 the accounts were made available for inspection between 3 June 2024 and 28 June 2024, as notified on the Council's website.

The accounts are scheduled to be approved by the Audit and Standards Committee on 30 September 2024 in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The signature of the Committee Chair (who presided over the meeting) will be included at the conclusion of this report in line with these regulations as evidence of approval of the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts.

### General Accounting Policies

The accounting policies adopted by the Council comply with the relevant recommended accounting practice. The Council's service costs have been analysed in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement reflecting the Council's management reporting structure. Materiality considerations follow the policies set out in the CIPFA Code of Accounting Practice. In addition, the analysis of capital expenditure follows CIPFA's recommendations showing non-current and intangible assets separately. These recommended practices are all designed to meet the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

There have been no changes in the Council's statutory functions during the year.

### Statement of Accounts

The information contained within these accounts is presented as simply and clearly as possible. However, the accounts of a local authority are both technical and complex, which does not always lead to a style which is easily understood. Accordingly, a Guide to the Statement of Accounts (page 4) has been provided.

### Accountability/Financial Reporting

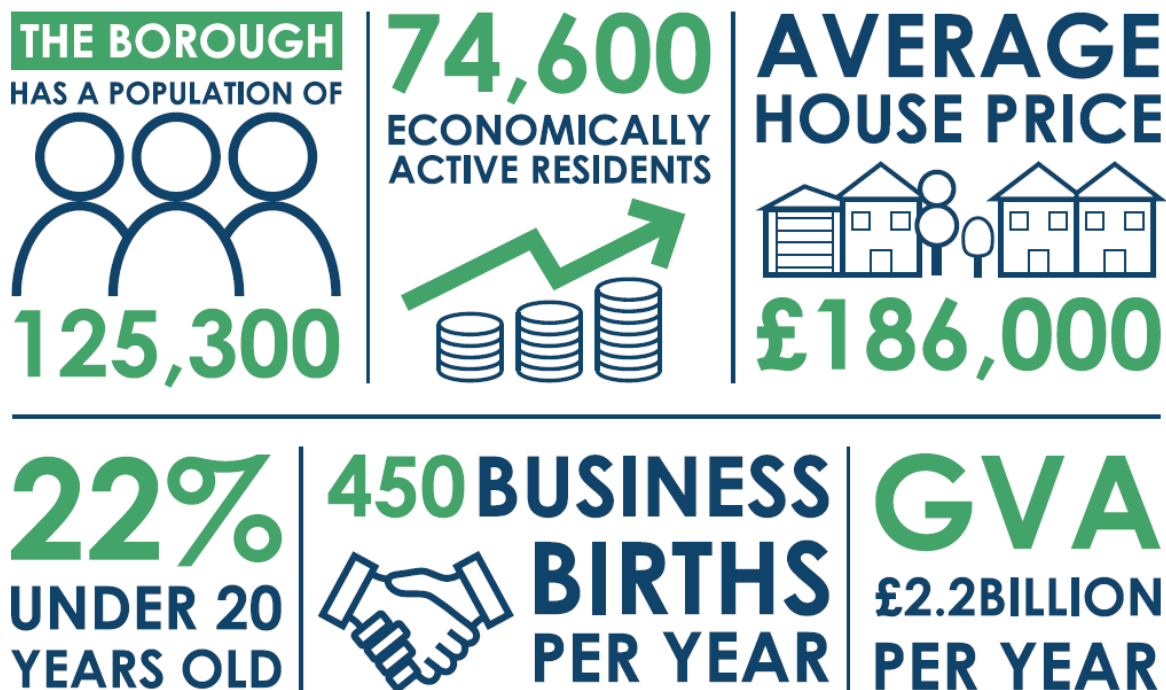
Local authorities are governed by a rigorous structure of controls to provide stakeholders with confidence that public money has been properly accounted for. As part of the process of accountability, the Council is required to produce a Statement of Accounts, in order to inform stakeholders that it has properly accounted for all the public money received and spent, and that the financial standing of the Council is secure.

The Statement of Accounts concentrates on clear and accurate reporting of the financial position of the Council in relation to a particular year. It does not, however, aim to fulfil the role of an annual report of a company.

## Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

The Council is a second tier district Council within the County of Staffordshire, covering 211 square kilometres with a population density of 584 residents per square kilometre, compared to 337 across the County. 53,400 households making up a population of approximately 125,300 and are spread across a mix of urban and rural areas. There are two town centres, Newcastle and Kidsgrove, and a number of rural and urban villages across the Borough containing nine parishes, each with a parish Council.

### Newcastle-under-Lyme **Facts and Figures**



In 2023, the Borough celebrated the 850th anniversary of the charter granted by King Henry II which brought the Borough into being.

The Council has 44 Members representing residents in 21 wards following elections in May 2022. Full Council, consisting of all Members, is responsible for setting Council policy, whilst other decisions within the policy framework set by Full Council are determined by a Cabinet, currently consisting of 6 Members.

Operational management is carried out under the direction of the Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive, and nine Service Directors who include the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer making up the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). The Council employed 437 people (391 full time equivalents), at 31 March 2024.

The Council Plan 2022-2026 signals a step change in the Council's focus on climate change and sustainability. The Council Plan, which can be found on the Council's website, details the Council's plans for the period incorporated in the Statement of Accounts. The plan sets out the Council's aspirations and priorities.

It sets out the vision of the Council as, 'good local services, a prosperous Borough, and safe and welcoming places for all'. It also focuses the work of everyone in the Council on four key priorities:

- One Council Delivering for Local People,
- A Successful and Sustainable Growing Borough,
- Healthy, Active and Safe Communities,
- A Town Centre for All.



The plan sets out how the Council will work to make the Borough an even better place for everyone who lives, works, studies or visits here. The Council's aims can only be achieved by taking advantage of every opportunity available and developing new ones through innovation and a more collaborative approach. The Council is committed to strong and sustainable economic growth for the Borough, focusing upon opportunities around Keele University, Newcastle town centre and Kidsgrove.

The Council has worked hard to secure more than £50m from government programmes aimed at boosting the economic fortunes of areas such as Newcastle and Kidsgrove. This plan includes a transformational portfolio of major projects but also reflects our ambition to attract yet more funding and take this work even further.

The plan builds on four years of achievement, despite the huge disruption caused by the COVID-19 lockdowns. It is very likely that the initial period of this plan's delivery will be strongly influenced by the impact of rising energy costs and their impact on the cost of living. Our key achievements, summarised in the plan, provide an excellent foundation from which to respond to this issue and to shape the next four years of delivery and improvement.

Details of the services which the Council provides and their budgets are set out in budget books for each financial year which are available on the Council's website.

## Financial Summary 2023/24

The financial activities of the Council can be categorised as either revenue or capital. Revenue spending represents the cost of providing services delivered by the Council in its day to day business during the year. Capital spending relates to items which will provide benefit to the Borough over a number of years such as buildings, plant and equipment.

Major Government investment into the Borough has been secured via the Future High Streets Fund and the Town Deals Fund for both Newcastle and Kidsgrove to ensure that exciting and unique projects to help future economic growth can be progressed during the medium term.

Funding secured from the Future High Street Fund and Town Deals Fund are now being utilised and the following projects are underway;

- The demolition of the former Civic Offices building and the redevelopment of the wider Ryecroft site as a key strategic anchor for the town with a mix of employment and residential uses and the development of a new multi storey car park on the site, project funding from the Future High Streets Fund is £7.2m. The Civic Offices has now been demolished, a new multi storey car park is currently being built and plans in respect of the residential developments are currently being designed in order to obtain planning permission.
- Improvement to the market area to support a more vibrant market and performance spaces, £0.075m. This project has also been commenced with the purchase of new market stall canopies and designs have been drawn up in respect of the Market area.
- Improving a key area of upper High Street to improve connectivity between the Ryecroft area and core Town Centre whilst generating activity and footfall in surrounding buildings, £3m. The York Place Shopping Centre has been purchased and designs to re-model the building have been completed. This will link the Ryecroft and Town Centre areas together.
- New pedestrian wayfinding around the town centre to aid navigation between key sites in and around the town centre, £0.321m.

£23.6m has been awarded via the Town Deals Fund for Newcastle to enable a vision to improve communications, infrastructure and connectivity in Newcastle-under-Lyme to become reality. The three key objectives of the successful Town Investment Plan are:

- To open up growth opportunities through enhanced physical and digital connectivity aligned with clean and sustainable economic development (sustainable public transport solutions £3.6m, electric charging infrastructure £0.42m, full fibre network £2.38m and town centre cycle and pedestrian improvements £0.95m),

- To diversify and enhance the town centre experience by encouraging new uses to increase demand, footfall and boost the dwell time of residents and visitors (digital society £3.6m, gateway site (Zanzibar and Midway) £3.91m and centre for circus £1.91m),
- To channel investment into regenerating communities, ensuring these areas are sustainable places to live and provide residents with the infrastructure needed to improve their quality of life (Knutton Village masterplan £3.72m and Cross Street, Chesterton £3.11m).

£16.9m has been awarded via the Town Deals Fund for Kidsgrove to enable real and lasting economic benefits to be realised in Kidsgrove and the surrounding area. Three objectives clearly stand out in the successful Town Investment Plan:

- To drive growth and opportunity through an enhanced enterprise infrastructure in Kidsgrove (the development of Chatterley Valley West £3.68m),
- To create a connected, accessible town centre (improvement to Kidsgrove railway station £3.85m, canal network £0.42m and a shared service hub in the town centre £6.5m),
- To maximise the leisure and recreation opportunities available in Kidsgrove (contribution to the refurbishment and re-opening of Kidsgrove Sports Centre £2.45m).

In addition the Council has been awarded £4.8m, over a three year period, of UK Shared Prosperity Funding as part of the governments mission to level up opportunity and prosperity and to overcome geographical inequalities. It also aims to level up people's pride in the places they love and seeing that reflected in empowered local leaders and communities, a stronger social fabric and better life chances. 33 projects have been identified for which spend has commenced. The 2022/23 and 2023/24 allocations totalling £1.8m have been received, total spend at 31 March 2024 amounted to £1.6m

Projects under the UK Shared Prosperity Funding include the setting up of a new Homeless Hub, provision for a Cold Night Shelter and Community and Business Connects. Below is a list of all the projects and respective funding allocation;

| Project                       | Award (£000's) |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| CML Community Hubs            | 6              |
| Newcastle 850 Anniversary     | 20             |
| Nature and Wellbeing          | 22             |
| Canal Connectivity            | 102            |
| Clough Hall Park              | 234            |
| Cold Night Shelter            | 160            |
| Mental Health Worker          | 86             |
| Nature Recovery               | 265            |
| Epicentre for Circus          | 100            |
| Homelessness Hub              | 955            |
| Beat The Street               | 20             |
| New Vic Theatre - 850 Event   | 10             |
| Kidsgrove Workshop            | 156            |
| Community Connector           | 67             |
| Promotional Videos/Photos     | 15             |
| Honeybox                      | 55             |
| Volunteering for all          | 71             |
| Discharge Officer             | 86             |
| BES Enterprise Coaching       | 89             |
| Kidsgrove Town Hall           | 250            |
| Security Marshalls            | 32             |
| Flourishing Keele (KU)        | 466            |
| Moving Ahead (KU)             | 276            |
| Advanced Digital Technologies | 408            |
| Chamber Growth Hub            | 59             |
| Brampton Wedding Venue        | 54             |
| Markets For All               | 21             |
| Community Connects            | 55             |
| Feasted                       | 45             |
| Business Connects             | 6              |

| Project                         | Award<br>(£000's) |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Technical Innovation Upskilling | 159               |
| Disadvantaged Upskill Project   | 28                |
| Green Projects                  | 164               |
| Project Management              | 294               |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>4,836</b>      |

## Revenue Expenditure and Income

### *Where does the money come from, and where is it spent?*

Local authorities receive income from a variety of sources, from the Government in the form of grants, from households in the form of Council Tax (a property based charge payable by local residents dependent upon the Valuation Office's valuation band for their property), from consumers in respect of fees and charges and rents and from a share of business rates from occupiers of commercial premises within the Borough (based upon the rateable value set by the Valuation Office in respect of the properties concerned).

In accordance with the Business Rates Retention Scheme, the Council retains a share of the business rates collected after paying part over to the Government, Staffordshire County Council and the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

The gross income (£35.854m) and expenditure (£58.267m) attributable to management reporting areas is shown in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (page 28).

### *General Fund Revenue Budget Outturn*

The General Fund is the main revenue account of the Council and relates to all of those services which are funded by the Council Tax, Retained Business Rates and Government Grant.

The Council approved a General Fund Revenue Budget of £16.857m on 15 February 2023. The outturn for 2023/24 shows a favourable variance of £0.007m against this budget.

The adverse variances that occurred during 2023/24 include:

- a. Income shortfalls from sales, fees and charges which amount to £0.611m for the financial year.
- b. A shortfall of £0.505m in Housing Benefits subsidy grant regarding accommodation for which full subsidy is not claimable.
- c. A pay award of £1,925 per full time employee, which is in excess of the amount provided for in the budget (4%), including national insurance and pension the additional amount totalled £0.400m for the financial year.
- d. Additional audit fees of £0.100m for the audit of the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts will be incurred following the re-tender completed by the Public Sector Audit Appointments board,
- e. Backdated rent payable on a commercial property rented by the Council amounting to £0.082m and business rates payable on empty properties owned by the Council which amounted to £0.031m,
- f. Additional overtime and temporary staff costs within the Waste and Recycling service have amounted to £0.240m.

These adverse variances have been offset in full by the following favourable variances:

- a. Utilisation of the Cost of Living Reserve that was established during the budget setting for 2023/24 in order to respond to any above inflationary increases in costs. The £0.400m paid into this reserve will be fully used.
- b. Interest receivable on cash that the Council holds in terms of Town Deal and Future High Street funding, together with Section 31 grant and remaining Coronavirus grant funding (that are repayable or have been repaid during the financial year to Central Government) totals £1.400m. This has also eliminated the need for any in year borrowing to be undertaken saving £0.255m in interest payments.

A reconciliation of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the deficit declared above can be seen in the table below, further information can be obtained from the statements and notes referenced:

|   | £000       |
|---|------------|
| Service provision (per CIES-p28)  | (2,840)    |
| Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis (Note 8-p48)       | 2,837      |
| Movement in useable reserves (excluding transfer of surplus) (Note 9-p50) | (4)        |
| <b>(Surplus)/Deficit for 2023/24</b>                                      | <b>(7)</b> |

## Capital Expenditure

Capital expenditure includes expenditure such as the acquisition, construction, repair and maintenance of fixed assets. As capital spending contributes to the Council's priorities and vision over the short, medium and long term, the Council plans and budgets for expenditure by means of a rolling programme.

A Capital Programme totalling £31.360m was approved for 2023/24. Of this total £17.863m relates to the total cost of new schemes for 2023/24 together with £12.497m for schemes funded by external sources (Town Deals Fund, Future High Streets Fund and Disabled Facilities Grants) and £1.000m contingency. In addition £24.013m was brought forward from the 2022/23 Capital Programme (including £22.771m from the Town Deals Fund and the Future High Streets Fund), resulting in a total Capital Programme of £55.373m for 2023/24.

A mid-year review of the capital programme for 2023/24 has been undertaken as part of the Efficiency Board and budget setting process. The revised capital programme for 2023/24 totalling £55.433m (including a £1m contingency and agreed carry forwards from 2022/23) was approved by Cabinet on 5 December 2023.

In addition to the revised 2023/24 Capital Programme additional capital expenditure of £0.124m regarding the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts was incurred as well as expenditure that was fully funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund (£0.344m).

Planned expenditure financed via capital for 2023/24 therefore totalled £55.901m. Actual expenditure has totalled £11.630m, £44.271m below that planned. This relates to expenditure that has been rolled forward into 2024/25 (£42.174m) including projects planned under the Town Deals and Future High Streets funds that will be progressed during 2024/25 (£25.641m), the Council's contribution towards the construction of a new multi storey car park (£8.100m) and fleet replacement (£4.751m). There is an unused amount of capital contingency (£0.922m) and a number of projects whereby costs have been value engineered or whereby a decision has been made not to progress with the project until a future period (£1.173m).

The capital investment made during 2023/24 and the financing of this expenditure is shown in Note 27 (page 61).

## Collection Fund

Local tax income (i.e. Business Rates and Council Tax) is collected by billing authorities and paid into local 'collection funds' (page 71) (the Council is a billing authority). Where there is a shortfall in tax receipts (compared to expected levels), this leads to a deficit on the collection fund for which the precepting authorities are liable. Billing and major precepting authorities are usually required to meet their share of any deficit during the following financial year.

The variance between the estimated business rates shared between Central Government, Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council as per the NNDR1 return (£37.898m) and the actual business rates payable per the NNDR3 return (£36.416m) is £1.482m - a deficit to the collection fund for 2023/24 due to a number of revaluations downwards in term of rateable value.

In addition to the business rates shares payable for 2023/24, the estimated 2022/23 surplus declared in January 2023 regarding business rates of £1.434m was repaid to the Council, Central Government, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority from the collection fund.

The actual 2022/23 surplus was calculated to be £1.709m, therefore there remains £0.275m in the collection fund balance carried forward which is payable from the Collection Fund to the Council, Central Government, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority in relation to 2022/23.

Taking into account the remaining 2022/23 amount to be paid back to the preceptors and the 2023/24 deficit, the business rates collection fund has a deficit of £1.207m as at 31 March 2024.

The Council Tax shared between Staffordshire County Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council as per the precepts (£78.061m) and the actual Council Tax payable (£78.062m) is £0.001m - a surplus to the collection fund for 2023/24

In addition to the Council Tax payable for 2023/24, the estimated 2022/23 surplus declared in January 2023 regarding Council Tax of £0.330m was repaid to preceptors (Staffordshire County Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council).

The actual 2022/23 surplus was calculated to be £0.273m, therefore £0.057m is repayable to the collection fund by Staffordshire County Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council in relation to 2022/23.

Taking into account the remaining 2022/23 amount to be repaid and the 2023/24 surplus, the Council Tax collection fund has a deficit of £0.056m as at 31 March 2024.

## Financial Prospects

### Revenue

The Council is committed to the delivery of high quality services. Integral to this is the need to effectively target financial resources in line with stated aims and objectives working against the background of an adverse economic situation.

The Council closely manages all of its resources to ensure it delivers the services that local people need, and to prepare for future challenges. The priority actions under 'One Council Delivering for Local People' include workforce development, community engagement, partnership working, financial discipline, high quality value for money services and delivering the transformational One Council Programme, which won a bronze award for 'Best Transformation Team' category in the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards 2023. The programme has to date made recurrent savings of £1.173m.

During the year the Council has had to utilise resources (both financial and staff time) in dealing with an environmental crisis due to Hydrogen Sulphide (H<sub>2</sub>S) escaping from a local landfill site. This problem, which has been debated in Parliament and which the national press have used to characterise the village of Silverdale as "Britain's Smelliest Village", has generated over 20,000 complaints to the Council. The scale of work undertaken by the Council on this issue soaked up a huge amount of corporate resource but has resulted in a greatly improved situation for local residents and securing an Abatement Notice against the site operator – a rare achievement on an Environment Agency regulated site. Unfortunately this site continues to remain a problem for the residents of the Borough and the Council continues to work with partners to resolve this issue.

### Economic and Community Impact

The ongoing impact on the UK from the war in Ukraine, together with higher inflation, higher interest rates, uncertain government policy, and a deteriorating economic outlook, will be major influences on the Council's outlook for 2024/25.

UK inflation remained stubbornly high over much of the period compared to the US and Eurozone, keeping expectations elevated of how much further the Bank of England (BoE) would hike rates compared to the regions. However, inflation data published in the latter part of the period undershot expectations, causing financial markets to reassess the peak in BoE Bank Rate. This was followed very soon after by the BoE deciding to keep Bank Rate on hold at 5.25% in September, against expectation for another 0.25% rise.

Economic growth in the UK remained relatively weak over the period. In calendar Q2 2023, the economy expanded by 0.2%. However, monthly Gross Domestic Product (GDP) data showed a 0.5% contraction in July, the largest fall to date in 2023 and worse than the 0.2% decline predicted which could be an indication the monetary tightening cycle is starting to cause recessionary or at the very least stagnating economic conditions.

July data showed the unemployment rate increased to 4.3% (3mth/year) while the employment rate rose to 75.5%. Pay growth was 8.5% for total pay (including bonuses) and 7.8% for regular pay, which for the latter was the highest recorded annual growth rate. Adjusting for inflation, pay growth in real terms were positive at 1.2% and 0.6% for total pay and regular pay respectively.

Inflation continued to fall from its peak as annual headline Consumer Price Index (CPI) declined to 6.7% in July 2023 from 6.8% in the previous month against expectations for a tick back up to 7.0%. The largest downward contribution came from food prices. The core rate also surprised on the downside, falling to 6.2% from 6.9% compared to predictions for it to only edge down to 6.8%.

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) continued tightening monetary policy over most of the period, taking Bank Rate to 5.25% in August. Against expectations of a further hike in September, the Committee voted 5-4 to maintain Bank Rate at 5.25%. Each of the four dissenters were in favour of another 0.25% increase.

Financial market Bank Rate expectations moderated over the period as falling inflation and weakening data gave some indication that higher interest rates were working. Expectations fell from predicting a peak of over 6% in June to 5.5% just ahead of the September MPC meeting, and to then expecting 5.25% to be the peak by the end of the period.

Following the September MPC meeting, Arlingclose, the Council's treasury adviser, modestly revised its interest forecast to reflect the central view that 5.25% will now be the peak in Bank Rate. In the short term the risks are to the upside if inflation increases again, but over the remaining part of the time horizon the risks are to the downside from economic activity weakening more than expected.

The lagged effect of monetary policy together with the staggered fixed term mortgage maturities over the next 12-24 months means the full impact from Bank Rate rises are still yet to be felt by households. As such, while consumer confidence continued to improve over the period, the GfK measure hit -21 in September, it is likely this will reverse at some point. Higher rates will also impact business and according to S&P/CIPS survey data, the UK manufacturing and services sector contracted during the quarter with all measures scoring under 50, indicating contraction in the sectors.

The US Federal Reserve increased its key interest rate to 5.25-5.50% over the period, pausing in September following a 0.25% rise the month before, and indicating that it may have not quite completed its monetary tightening cycle.

Having fallen throughout 2023, annual US inflation started to pick up again in July 2023, rising from 3% in June, which represented the lowest level since March 2021, to 3.2% in July and then jumping again to 3.7% in August, beating expectations for a rise to 3.6%. Rising oil prices were the main cause of the increase. US GDP growth registered 2.1% annualised in the second calendar quarter of 2023, down from the initial estimate of 2.4% but above the 2% expansion seen in the first quarter.

The European Central Bank increased its key deposit, main refinancing, and marginal lending interest rates to 4.00%, 4.50% and 4.75% respectively in September, and hinted these levels may represent the peak in rates but also emphasising rates would stay high for as long as required to bring inflation down to target.

Although continuing to decline steadily, inflation has been sticky, Eurozone annual headline CPI fell to 5.2% in August while annual core inflation eased to 5.3% having stuck at 5.5% in the previous two months. GDP growth remains weak, with recent data showing the region expanded by only 0.1% in the three months to June 2023, the rate as the previous quarter.

Residents of the Borough continue to be impacted by the Cost of Living Crisis by increasing energy and food costs. The Council has provided support via the Energy Bills Support Scheme funded by Central Government together with the Council Tax Support Fund.

## Financial Recovery

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the Council's financial position over the next 5 years. This is aligned to the Council Plan 2022-2026 and is the key vehicle for ensuring efficiency in service delivery and targeting resources to priority areas. The updated MTFS was reported to Cabinet on 16 January and 6 February 2024, and reflects the impact of the Local Government Finance Settlement. The MTFS provides for a gap in 2024/25 of £2.692m and a revised gap to reflect the continued review of the capital programme, over the 5 year period of the MTFS of £6.885m.

A number of savings and funding strategies have been identified as being both feasible and sustainable, via a vigorous Financial Efficiency Board process. The Financial Efficiency Board is made up of the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Town Centres, the Cabinet Portfolio Holders, the Corporate Leadership Team and Finance Officers. During the summer months service directorates are asked to provide saving plans for the coming financial year and future years. These saving proposals are then challenged and discussed at various meetings held with the members of the Financial Efficiency Board which acts like a star chamber session. Once the saving proposals have been reviewed and challenged, the approved savings are put forward as part of the MTFS update and form part of the budget setting process. Savings proposals put forward can be revisited at any time.

One Council is a “spend to save” programme with an agreed investment of £1.2m. Recurrent benefits of £1.173m have been achieved (£0.196m achieved in 2021/22, £0.601m achieved in 2022/23 with a further £0.376m in 2023/24).

The Council has a Borough Growth Fund which was established in 2020 for the purpose of enabling investment in corporate priorities. The Borough Growth Fund is required to be used to invest in initiatives that are forecast to generate on-going revenue savings through reducing the costs of service delivery or through the generation of additional income.

The savings and funding strategies identified will enable continued investment of £0.250m in the Council’s priorities as per the Council Plan 2022-2026 via the Borough Growth Fund. The Borough Growth Fund will continue to be used to provide pump priming investment in initiatives, including Digital Delivery, that are forecast to generate on-going revenue savings through reducing the costs of service delivery or through the generation of additional income.

The Council intends to consider ways it can facilitate and participate in the commercial and industrial development of the Borough and thereby gain access to income streams to contribute to a sustainable revenue budget. The basis for this is set out in the Commercial Strategy and the Investment Strategy.

## Capital

The Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2026/27 is based on new schemes which are vital to ensure continued service delivery and in assisting the Council to achieve its corporate and service objectives as set out in the Council Plan 2022-26 approved by Cabinet on 5 September 2023. These schemes total £41.269m, including major investment into the Borough via external funding (and elements of matched funding contributions from the Council) in terms of the Future High Streets Fund and the Town Deals Fund for both Newcastle and Kidsgrove.

The Capital Programme is produced in line with the Capital Strategy for 2024/25 to 2033/34, which was approved by Full Council on 14 February 2024. In addition to the Council’s corporate and service objectives, as set out in the Council Plan 2022-26, the Capital Programme is also influenced by a number of external parties and factors including Central Government and its agencies, legislation requiring capital works, partner organisations, businesses, developers and the needs and views of Borough residents.

Delivering the Capital Programme for 2024/25 will require prudential borrowing to be undertaken. The impact of borrowing is included in the MTFs pressures for 2024/25 and future years.

Advice will be sought from the Council’s Treasury Management advisors, Arlingclose, as to the most beneficial timing of prudential borrowing. Their current advice remains to borrow on a short term basis (up to 4 years) from other local authorities whilst interest rates remain relatively low.

## Strategic Risks

Major strategic risks affecting the Council which could impact on future service provision are currently as set out in the table below, which shows for each risk its potential impact and measures to mitigate the risk:

| Risk   | Impact   | Mitigation  |
|--|--|---|
| Failure to realise potential for land sales to provide funding for capital investment                                    | Insufficient resources to fund capital investment needed to maintain service provision or to achieve objectives                                      | Asset Management Plan, Cabinet decisions to sell, planning approvals  |
| Failure to recruit and retain staff with required experience and skills  | Reduced amount and quality of service provision. Inability to provide services   | Workforce development plan, business continuity planning  |
| Major incident   | Unable to provide services during and for some time after the incident   | Major incident and emergency response plans in place, incident response guide, business continuity planning |
| Long term decline in income including reduction in government funding and failure to provide funding for new initiatives | Pressure on revenue budget   | Included in calculation of prudent minimum balances   |
| Pay and price increases  | Pressure on revenue budget   | Included in calculation of prudent minimum balances   |
| ICT - system/software failure or malicious software incursion  | Unable to provide services during and after the failure. Loss of data, corruption of data, ransom demands, unable to provide service after incursion | Business continuity planning, back up servers   |
| Failure to comply with legislation including data protection breaches  | Legal action, compensation claims, fines, reputational damage  | Standing orders and financial regulation, training, internal audit, monitoring officer                      |
| Overall budget realisation fails   | Reduction in reserves, unplanned cuts to services, impact on future budgets  | Budget monitoring, adequate reserves levels   |
| Business rates retention   | If overall funding reduces, there will be pressure on the revenue budget   | Medium term financial strategy, modelling, business rates reserve   |
| Failure of major contractor  | Unable to provide services, additional unbudgeted costs  | Market intelligence, credit checks, procurement rules and procedures  |

## Reserves

The Council holds a number of reserves the majority of which are earmarked to meet specific categories or items of expenditure. Levels of reserves are reviewed to determine their adequacy to meet the Council's commitments and future plans and are an important consideration when preparing the budget.

The Council's Section 151 Officer has recommended that a minimum level of un-earmarked reserves and contingencies of £1.910m be held to reflect the Council's levels of revenue risk.

The General Fund balance can be used to contribute to the revenue account. The required level is determined by a risk assessment of factors which might adversely impact upon the revenue budget on a worst case basis, the increased level of un-earmarked reserves and contingencies held reflects a strategic decision to increase the Council's financial resilience.

## Partnerships

The Council participates in a wide range of partnership arrangements. Some are formal partnerships regulated by an agreement between the partners and some are informal in nature, many of them designed to facilitate community cohesion or to ensure awareness of community needs or to enable more efficient working practices. Examples of formal partnerships are a shared apprenticeship scheme in conjunction with Newcastle College and the administration of the Business Improvement District (BID) scheme for Newcastle town centre. Businesses within the BID area pay a supplementary business rate, collected by the Council and used by the BID Board to promote the economic wellbeing and development of the town centre.



The Council continues to work closely with other public sector organisations to obtain value for money in relation to supplies and services and to provide the public with easy access to all of the partners' services from its facilities. An example of this is the Newcastle Partnership Funding Commissioning Group which co-ordinates contributions to third sector organisations. There are also reciprocal arrangements between neighbouring authorities for providing assistance, such as the secondment of staff, to provide continuity of service. The Council's offices at Castle House are shared with Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Police and Aspire Housing.

## **Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness in the Use of Resources**

Local authorities are obliged to achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources. Arrangements are in place to ensure that value for money is obtained when Council resources are expended, that there is proper stewardship and governance in relation to these matters and the arrangements are kept under review to ensure they are adequate and effective.

Financial Regulations, Contract Procedural Rules, Standing Orders and the Council's Constitution set out the basic framework and internal controls by which Council business and administration must be conducted and are binding on all employees and Members of the Council. Financial Regulations and the Contract Procedural Rules lay down procedures which must be followed when obtaining supplies and services for use by the Council to ensure that transparent and effective processes are in place. The arrangements and their effectiveness are continually kept under review as part of the ongoing management of the Council's services, medium term financial planning, continuous budgetary control procedures and regular internal audit reviews and reports.

The Corporate Leadership Team receive and review monthly budget monitoring reports and initiate action to deal with any significant variances revealed. Members are kept up to date regarding the budgetary position via quarterly performance monitoring reports to Cabinet, which also include non-financial performance indicators showing how services are delivering on their key targets. The quarterly reports are available on the Council's website. There is also a formal Member led scrutiny process, with key priority focused Scrutiny Committees enabling service delivery to be monitored.

Formal review takes place via the Annual Governance Statement considered and approved by Council Members, which is published within the Statement of Accounts (page 18). This is informed by the Corporate Leadership Team, Service Directors and Business Managers to provide assurance that governance arrangements are in place and to identify required improvements.

The Capital Strategy, Investment Strategy and Asset Management Strategy set out the framework within which the capital programme is managed and resources made available to finance the programme. Approval to proceed with capital investment is only given provided the necessary resources are available to finance it. An important element providing assurance regarding resource availability is an approved realistic programme of asset disposals. Capital investment and resources are assessed and monitored by the Capital, Assets and Commercial Investment Review Group which is chaired by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth. The group aims to ensure that the capital investment programme meets the Council's priorities, is affordable and that projects are carried out on time and within budget.

## **Pension Scheme Liability**

The liability (and the corresponding reserve) relating to defined benefit pension schemes of £3.010m at 31 March 2023 has transferred to a net asset at 31 March 2024 of £13.820m due to strong investment returns that have increased assets held and positive assumption changes, which lower the value placed on the obligations of the scheme. These amounts are required to be included in the Council's accounts as a result of the application of International Accounting Standard 19 (IAS19). They relate to transactions of the Staffordshire County Council Pension Fund of which the Council is a member and represent the Council's share of net scheme assets or liabilities.

Formal actuarial valuations are carried out every three years, where each employer's assets and liabilities are calculated on a detailed basis, using individual member data, for cash contribution setting purposes. The most recent formal valuations for English and Welsh Local Government Pension Scheme Funds were concluded by 31 March 2024. A reconciliation of the balance sheet from 31 March 2023 to 31 March 2024 can be seen in the 'Transactions relating to post-employment benefits' table in Note 30 (page 63), in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (re-measurement of the defined benefit liability/asset, (page 28) and in the Balance Sheet (pension liability and pension reserve, page 30).

## **Audit of the Accounts**

The Council's appointed auditors, KPMG LLP, currently undertake the annual audit of the accounts. Their contact details are:

Richard Lee, KPMG LLP, 1 Snow Hill, Queensway, Birmingham, B4 6GH.

## **Further Information**

Further information about the accounts is available from:

Sarah Wilkes, Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer), Castle House, Barracks Road, Newcastle, Staffordshire, ST5 1BL

## **Comments**

If you have any comments about the way that the information is presented in this Statement of Accounts, or about possible alternative ways of making the information available, we would be pleased to receive them, at the above address.

## **Approval of Statement of Accounts**

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Statement of Accounts to be considered by and approved by a Council Committee or the Full Council and for the Statement to be signed at the meeting by the person presiding. This statement has been approved by the Audit and Standards Committee and this is evidenced by the signature of that Committee's Chair.

Signed:

Dated:

Cllr Paul Waring

Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee

# Statement of Responsibilities

## 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 for Finance (Section 151 Officer),
- To manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets,
- To approve the Statement of Accounts.

## The Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer) - Responsibilities

The Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer) is the Council's statutory Section 151 Officer and as such is responsible for the preparation of the authority's Statement of Accounts which, in terms of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code) are required to present a true and fair view of the financial position of the authority at the accounting date and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2024.

In preparing the statement of accounts the Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer) has:

- Selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently,
- Made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent,
- Complied with the Code,
- Kept proper accounting records which were up-to-date,
- Taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

## The Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer) Certificate

I certify that the Statement of Accounts presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2024 and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Sarah Wilkes

Dated:

Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer)

# Annual Governance Statement

## Introduction and Scope of Responsibility

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that:

- Business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards,
- Public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively,
- Risk is properly managed as part of the governance arrangements.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. A copy of the Code is available on the Council's website or can be obtained from:

***Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer), Castle House, Barracks Road, Newcastle, Staffordshire, ST5 1BL***

## The Governance Statement

The Governance Statement explains how Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council complies with the Code and also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Regulation 6(1), which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

In this document the Council:

- Acknowledges its responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of governance,
- Summarises the key elements of the governance framework and the roles of those responsibilities for the development and maintenance of the governance environment,
- Describes how the Council has monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in the year, and on any planned changes in the coming period,
- Provides details of how the Council has responded to any issue(s) identified in last year's governance statement,
- Reports on any key governance matters identified from this review and provides a commitment to addressing them.

The Annual Governance Statement reports on the governance framework that has been in place for the year ended 31 March 2024 and up to the date of approval on the Statement of Accounts.

## The Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services. To demonstrate compliance with the principles of good corporate governance, the Council must ensure that it does the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

Good governance is crucial as it leads to good management, good performance, good stewardship of public money, good public engagement and ultimately good outcomes for residents and service users. Further, good governance enables an authority to pursue its aims effectively whilst controlling and managing risk.

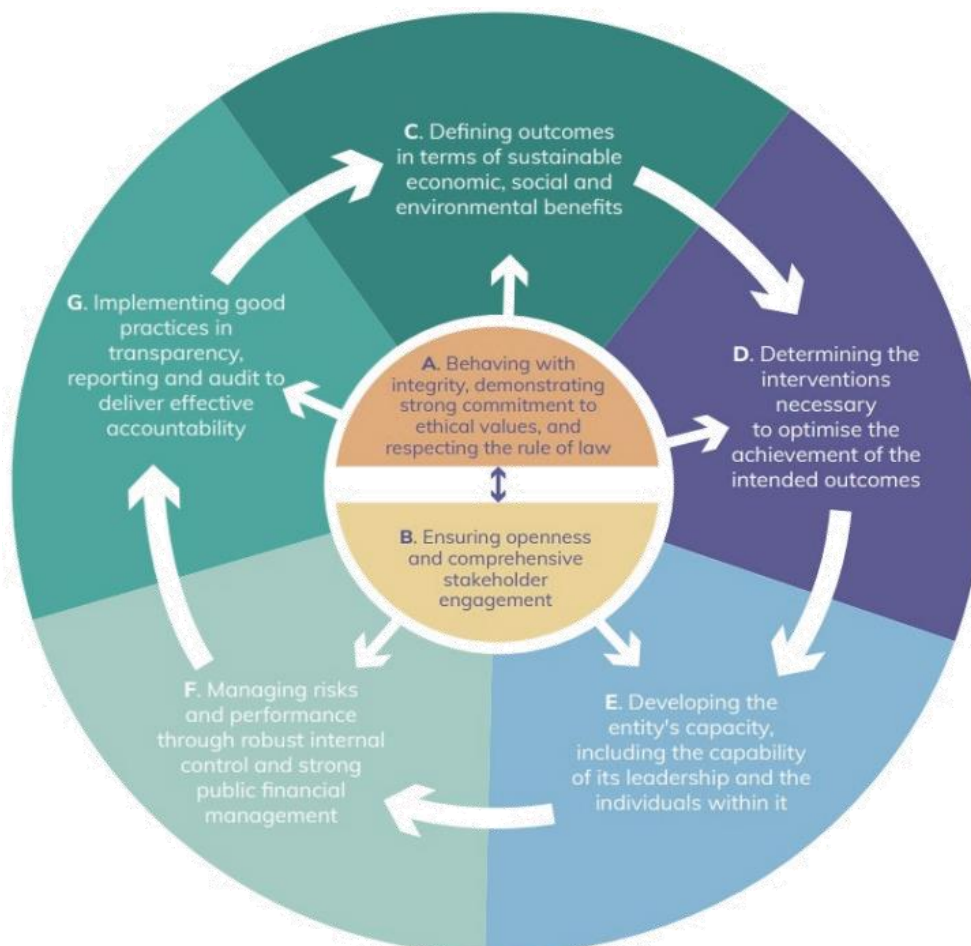
The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The system of internal control is based on an ongoing and embedded process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework has been in place at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2024 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

## The Principles of Good Governance

The Council aims to achieve good standards of governance by adhering to the seven core principles in the diagram below, which form the basis of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance:



The fundamental function of good governance is to ensure that the Council achieves its intended outcomes while acting in the public interest at all times.

The following core, high level, principles in Sections A to G reflect the 7 core principles of good governance in the public sector which are derived from the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (CIPFA/Solace, 2016)'.

The Council operates a number of systems, policies and procedures that constitute or contribute to the operation of the internal control environment and support the principles set out in the Code of Corporate Governance as detailed in the tables below:

| Core Principle A | Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law   |
|------------------|---|
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Behaving with integrity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Council has in place Codes of Conduct for both Members and Officers which set out requirements that support the need to behave with integrity,</li> <li>- The Council has a set of values which are underpinned by a set of expected behaviours,</li> <li>- All new Members and Officers are made aware of the Code of Conduct when they join the Council,</li> <li>- The Council's Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose,</li> <li>- The Constitution is divided into 6 sections which set out the basic rules governing the Council's business. The Constitution is published on the Council's website,</li> <li>- The Monitoring Officer provides advice and can refer complaints to the relevant Committee (Audit and Standards Hearing Panel, Employment Committee).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Council has a framework of policies that incorporate Anti-Fraud and Corruption, Anti-Money Laundering and a Whistleblowing Policy all of which are designed to in the first instance discourage inappropriate behaviour and then secondly encourage both Members and Officers to voice any concerns they have and report any instances found,</li> <li>- Members are required to renew their declaration of interests annually and also declare any relevant interests at meetings. There is also a register of gifts and hospitality,</li> <li>- Employees are required to notify their Service Director about any potential conflict of interest,</li> <li>- A register of gifts and hospitality is maintained by the Corporate Leadership Secretarial Team,</li> <li>- A Corporate complaints procedure exists to receive and respond to any complaints received,</li> <li>- The Council is committed to equality of opportunity for all citizens, in line with the Public Sector Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Respecting the rule of law:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Council has in place a Monitoring Officer who works with Members and Officers to ensure that the law is adhered to,</li> <li>- The constitution sets out; the responsibilities of the Council, the Cabinet, and Scrutiny Committees; the roles, duties and delegated powers of key officers,</li> <li>- The Council has a duty to appoint staff to three specific roles; The Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) who has overall accountability for the governance arrangements operating within the Council; The Chief Finance Officer who is responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs and internal controls; The Monitoring Officer who has a role in ensuring decisions are taken lawfully and that the Council complies with the Constitution.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

| Core Principle B | Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement  |
|------------------|---|
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Openness:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All meetings of the Council are held in public unless the Part II requirements of the local authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2000, are met in terms of confidentiality,</li> <li>- Copies of all minutes and agendas are available on the Councils website. All reports contain details of options considered and the advice provided by Officers regarding legal and financial implications. The minutes include the reasons behind the decisions made,</li> <li>- The Council has a Freedom of Information Scheme in place and seeks to publish information openly on its website wherever possible and practicable to do so,</li> <li>- The Council complies with the code of recommended practice for local authorities on data transparency which acts as a starting point for the information made available.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

## Core Principle B | Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

- **Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders:**
  - The Council has in place a Communications Strategy which sets out how we will communicate with our residents, service users and stakeholders,
  - Since 2019/20 The Council has been part of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Business Rate Pool,
  - The Council is committed to working collaboratively with a range of other partners including the County Council, education, health, housing, business, police, fire and the voluntary and community sector to achieve what is needed for the Borough.
- **Engaging with stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users:**
  - Elected Members are democratically accountable to their local area and provide a clear leadership role in building sustainable communities,
  - The Council has a consultation framework and toolkit in place and provides details of all on-going consultation exercises/surveys on its website,
  - Whenever we seek the views from the community we provide feedback on the information received and let our residents know how it has or will be used to help shape Council decisions,
  - Where appropriate, public consultation is used to seek the views of residents and stakeholders. For example, a public engagement exercise was undertaken with residents and stakeholders on the draft budget proposals. The aim of this engagement exercise was to:
    - Communicate clearly to residents and stakeholders the budget proposals for 2024/25,
    - Ensure any resident, business or stakeholder who wished to comment on the proposals had the opportunity to do so, enabling them to raise any impacts the proposals may have,
    - Allow participants to propose alternative suggestions for consideration which they feel could achieve the objectives in a different way.
  - The Council carried out a consultation with its Officers via its Wellbeing survey. This survey focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the workforce and their families. This gave a good insight as to how some of the staff were feeling and the sort of support needed going forward. A response plan was then developed with the support of the Human Resources department and this was communicated to all staff.

## Core Principle C | Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

- **Defining outcomes:**
  - The Council has a clear vision of what it wants to achieve, which is set out in its Council Plan 2022-2026 and supported by the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The vision and priorities have been informed by an analysis of needs for the Borough and also via consultation with key stakeholders and the public,
  - Each service has a Priority Delivery Plan that outlines outcomes to be achieved and how they link to the Council Plan,
  - The Council priorities are;
    - One Council Delivering for Local People,
    - A Successful and Sustainable Growing Borough,
    - Healthy, Active and Safe Communities,
    - Town Centres for All.
  - Performance Monitoring takes place monthly and is reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny on a quarterly basis,
  - The Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee has an important role in helping to define and monitor outcomes,
  - The Local Government Association Peer Review was used in 2023/24 to provide a 'health check' on core components including financial planning and partnership working.
- **Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits:**
  - A Sustainable Community Strategy is in place which aims to create an environment where local people can articulate their priorities, needs and aspirations,
  - In addition the Capital Strategy sets out the principles and objectives which the Council has identified for its capital investment and how its capital plans link to other strategies and areas of activity of the Council and its partners and covers a 10 year period,
  - The Council's day to day services support the delivery of the Council Plan, performance in delivering the objectives are monitored by the Corporate Leadership Team (Officers), the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees (Members). The Council Plan can be viewed on the Council website at <https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/policies-1/Council-plan-2022-2026/6>,
  - The Council is currently working on the Local Plan which is being designed to encourage sustainable development, including sustainable communities, economic development and homes for the future,
  - The Council's Procurement Strategy includes social value principles (social, economic and environmental) in procurement and contract management.

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| <b>Core Principle D</b> | <b>Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</b> |
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- **Determining and Planning Interventions:**

- The principles of decision making are detailed in the Council's Constitution, however the Council has in place a robust decision-making process with all Cabinet reports being considered by the Corporate Leadership Team to give a view on the strategic implications. Additionally, report authors should seek clearance from all corporate services, including legal and finance, for reports prior to publication. All reports follow a standard template which identifies the decision maker, the decision or action required, why the report is recommended and alternative options considered,
- A calendar of meetings is approved and agreed by Full Council covering the period of the Council Plan 2022-2026,
- The Council's Forward Plan details all the reports relating to key decisions and the timescales within which they will be presented,
- Priority Delivery Plans are produced annually which set out the planned activities for each service area for that year,
- Performance monitoring is undertaken to understand if and how the priorities identified within the Council Plan are being achieved. This is undertaken through service planning and identification of key performance indicators to show how services help to achieve the priorities of the Council. A number of corporate Indicators have been identified and are reported quarterly to the Corporate Leadership Team, Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Committee,
- Additionally, an update on all major projects is reported to the Corporate Leadership Team on a monthly basis to review project progress and identify any key issues and risks, with actions identified and monitored as relevant. This is then reported in summary to Cabinet Members.

- **Optimising the achievement of intended outcomes:**

- The Medium Term Financial Strategy considers any changes that are required to be made to the base budget to ensure that service priorities are affordable and achievable,
- The budget process takes account of the full cost of service delivery over the medium and longer terms,
- The budget setting process ensures that a robust and balanced budget is approved,
- The budget setting process allows for investment which is intended to bring future efficiencies.

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| <b>Core Principle E</b> | <b>Developing capacity, including the capability of leadership and the individuals within it</b> |
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- **Developing the Councils capacity:**

- The Council regularly reviews its activities to ensure continuous improvement of service delivery,
- The Council works closely with its partners to ensure the delivery of agreed outcomes to the community,
- The Council has a Workforce Development Plan which is currently being updated in order to capture the Council's capacity needs.

- **Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals:**

- The roles of Members, Committees, Officers and Statutory Officers are set out in the Council's Constitution, which is available on the Council's website,
- The Council has a scheme of delegation in place which forms part of the Constitution, this sets out the types of decision made by the Council and who can make these,
- The Constitution also contains Financial Regulations and Contract Procedural Rules which provide a framework for Officers to follow when running their services and making decisions,
- An induction programme is in place to provide training and support for all new Members and Officers,
- All Officers have an annual appraisal to review performance and identify any training and development needs,
- A Member development programme is in place in respect of Members to identify all their training needs,
- The Council is committed to supporting the health and well-being of the workforce through appropriate Human Resource policies, working practices and access to an occupational health service.

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| <b>Core Principle F</b> | <b>Managing risks, performance and data through robust internal control and strong public financial management</b> |
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- **Managing Risk:**

- The Council has a risk management policy and strategy in place, which is reviewed and approved annually,
- A strategic risk register is maintained by the Corporate Leadership Team, progress is monitored on a quarterly basis by the Audit and Standards Committee,
- Operational risks are identified and managed by Service Directors; these are reviewed and monitored quarterly,
- The Council's Audit and Standards Committee has responsibility to provide independent assurance on the



adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control and reporting environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance statement process. This committee receives periodic reports regarding risk management and approves the risk management policy. This committee undertakes the core functions of an audit committee and operates in accordance with CIPFA guidance.

- The Financial Procedure Rules form part of the Constitution and set out the financial management framework for ensuring the best use of resources. It outlines the financial roles and responsibilities for staff and Members and provides a framework for financial decision making. The procedure rules ensure statutory powers and duties are complied with and reflect best practice,
- The Council has reviewed and revised its Contract Procedure Rules,
- The Chief Finance Officer provides effective financial management in accordance with the financial procedures and rules set out in the Constitution.

- **Managing Performance:**

- Service Directors and Business Managers are responsible operationally for the performance in delivering day to day services. This in turn is monitored by the Corporate Leadership Team,
- The performance of delivering the Council's priorities is monitored by Cabinet,
- The Council Plan 2022-2026 is monitored by the Council's Scrutiny Committee which reviews performance and financial monitoring information to support the delivery of the Council Plan and budget strategy. The Annual Statement of Accounts contains a review of key achievements and performance made against the Council Plan.

- **Robust internal control:**

- The internal control framework comprises a range of policies and procedures to ensure sound management of the Council's operation and delivery of services,
- Internal Audit undertakes reviews of systems that comprise the internal control and governance framework, it provides assurance and where necessary makes recommendations for improvement,
- The Audit and Standards Committee receives reports with regards to the internal control framework. In addition quarterly reports are presented in respect of the progress and completion of the audit plan and the implementation of outstanding recommendations,
- Fraud is taken very seriously, and the Council has an Anti-Fraud and Corruption, Money Laundering and a Whistleblowing Policy which is reviewed annually and approved by the Audit and Standards Committee.

- **Managing Data:**

- The Council has a suite of Information Security Policies to ensure and maintain the integrity of the data that it holds,
- The Council is committed to complying with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which introduced a requirement for accountability and governance in discharging the Council's obligations as data controller. The Council has established an Information Governance Group. The role of this group is to oversee the effectiveness, compliance and governance of information practice across the Council. The group is led by the Service Director for IT, as the Senior Responsible Officer, with Officers from all service areas across the Council. The group usually meets bi-monthly and reports once a month to the Council's Corporate Leadership Team to monitor compliance,
- Data protection training is mandatory for all employees of the Council and temporary members of staff and an online training module is available for elected Council Members,
- The Council recognises that Cyber Security is a persistent and growing threat to the systems and data that the Council holds and uses. It therefore recognised that reviews of Cyber Security and the associated awareness for Officers and Members is not a one-off exercise. The Council will keep technology, threats and education under constant review to ensure it is meeting with its obligations for all systems regardless of setting.

- **Strong public financial management:**

- The Service Director for Finance as the Councils Section 151 Officer is appropriately qualified and complies with the CIPFA statement on the Role of the Chief Finance Officer. In April 2016, CIPFA/SOLACE issued an updated application note on the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. The Council complies with these requirements. The Chief Financial Officer is:
  - A key member of the Corporate Leadership Team,
  - Actively involved in, and able to bring influence to bear on, all material business decisions to ensure alignment with the Council's financial strategy,
  - The lead for the promotion and delivery, by the whole Council, of good financial management so that public money is safeguarded at all times and used appropriately, economically, efficiently and effectively,
  - Professionally qualified and suitably experienced,
  - Able to lead and direct a finance function that is resourced to be fit for purpose.

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| <b>Core Principle F</b> | <b>Managing risks, performance and data through robust internal control and strong public financial management</b> |
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- The Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer) prepares and advises the Council on its Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Budget,
- Regular budget monitoring reports are provided to Members and Officers,
- Financial Regulations and Contract Procedural Rules provide a framework for the day-to-day management of the Council's financial transactions,
- The CIPFA Financial Management Code has been adopted and is complied with,
- The Council maintains an internal audit function which operates to the standards set out in the 'Public Sector Internal Audit Standards'. An assessment against the standard is carried out each year with the outcome being reported to the Audit and Standards Committee as part of the Chief Internal Auditor's annual report. A Chief Internal Auditor protocol, to ensure that arrangements operated by the Council meet the requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in Public Sector Organisations, has been included in the constitution.

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| <b>Core Principle G</b> | <b>Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and assurance (including audit) to deliver effective accountability</b> |
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- **Implementing good practice in transparency and reporting:**
  - The Council is committed to openness and transparency and publishing as much Council data as it can in order to increase accountability,
  - The following information is reported annually to Members and is available on the Council's website:
    - Performance in delivering the Council's priorities,
    - Statement of Accounts,
    - Annual Governance Statement,
    - Annual Internal Audit Report,
    - Annual External Audit Letter,
  - In addition to the above, the Council has a transparency page on the website which provides public access to information in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code,
  - The Council's Constitution sets out how decisions are made and specific reference to decision making by Council, Cabinet, committees and subcommittees established by the Council and scrutinised by the Scrutiny Committees. The Constitution includes the Officer Scheme of Delegation which sets out the powers and functions that are delegated to named Council Officers. The compilation of a Register of Delegated powers is a statutory requirement and is maintained by the Service Director for Legal and Governance.
- **Assurance and effective accountability**
  - Internal Audit provides assurance throughout the year on the key systems of internal control,
  - The External Auditor provides assurance on the Council's financial statements,
  - The Council's governance arrangements are reviewed on an annual basis,
  - There is a Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy in place,
  - Independent reviews of Council services are undertaken from time to time, any feedback in respect of such reviews are noted and acted upon accordingly,
  - The Statutory Officers Group and Corporate Assurance Group review all corporate complaints, compliments and comments.

A key element of the Council's governance arrangements concerns safeguarding. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council has both a moral and legal obligation to ensure a duty of care for children and vulnerable adults across all its services. As a Council we are committed to ensuring that all children and vulnerable adults are protected and kept safe from harm whilst engaged in services organised and provided by us. We ensure this by:

- Having a Safeguarding Policy in place,
- Mandatory training in place for all Members and Officers,
- Carrying out the appropriate level of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for employees,
- Working closely with the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board & Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership.

## Annual Review of the Effectiveness of the Governance Framework

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Corporate Leadership Team within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance and internal control environment and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The Code of Corporate Governance adopted by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council demonstrates the Council is committed to ensuring that the principles of good governance flow from a shared ethos or culture, as well as from sound management systems, structures, and processes that are transparent to all its stakeholders. By making explicit the high standards of self-governance the Council aims to provide a lead to potential partners, to the public, private or voluntary sectors and to all residents.

The Audit and Standards Committee monitors effectively the system of internal control, this has been demonstrated through the completion of a self-assessment against CIPFA's checklist on 'Measuring the effectiveness of the Audit Committee'. The Committee receives regular reports on both the Audit and Risk issues and has demonstrated effective challenge to senior officers in instances of non-compliance; it can therefore be relied upon when considering the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24.

The Scrutiny function continues to ensure effective monitoring and challenge. There are Scrutiny Committees that reflect each of the Council's Corporate Priorities. The terms of reference for each of these committees ensure that performance is effectively monitored and challenged.

Internal Audit is responsible for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of the systems of internal control. A risk model is used to formulate a twelve month plan which is approved by the Audit and Standards Committee, and from which the annual workload is identified. The reporting process for Internal Audit requires a report of each audit to be submitted to the relevant Service Director. The report includes recommendations for improvements that are included within an action plan and require agreement, or challenge, by Service Directors. The process includes follow ups on a monthly basis, the results of which are reported quarterly to the Audit and Standards Committee in terms of fundamental recommendations and the level of assurance that can be given for that directorate based on the implementation of their recommendations. Internal Audit has continued to receive positive feedback from External Audit with regards to the coverage of their work and high professional standards.

Internal Audit can provide a level of assurance that the Council's systems of internal control are operating adequately, from their work in 2023/24.

An assessment of the role of the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) has been completed by the External Auditors in accordance with the 'CIPFA Statement on the role of the Chief Financial Officer in public service organisations'. The statement produced by CIPFA seeks to strengthen governance and financial management throughout the public sector, in addition it sets out the core responsibilities, personal skills and professional standards that are crucial to the role. It requires that the CFO is professionally qualified, reports directly to the Chief Executive and is a member of the Leadership Team. Having undertaken the assessment of the role of the CFO within the Council it can be confirmed that the Council complies with this statement.

The role of the Head of Internal Audit has been reviewed in accordance with 'CIPFA Statement on the role of the Head of Internal Audit'. The role of the Head of Internal Audit occupies a critical position within any organisation helping it to achieve its objectives by giving assurance on its internal control arrangements and playing a key role on promoting good corporate governance. The main aim of the CIPFA statement is to promote and raise the profile of the Head of Internal Audit within public service organisations. The Council's arrangements during 2023/24 for the provision of Internal Audit were in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council, and ensured that the objectives of this role were achieved.

The Monitoring Officer has a duty to monitor and review the operation of the Constitution to ensure its aims and principles are given full effect. The Council keeps the Constitution under review throughout the year, with a report setting out changes to be consolidated to Council on an annual basis.

Managers Assurance Statements are produced annually by Service Directors. These statements provide a level of assurance with regards to the adequacy of internal controls within their own Service Areas.

There are various specialist working groups, i.e. Statutory Officers' Group, Capital, Assets and Commercial Investment Review Group, Corporate Governance, Information Governance, Procurement, and Corporate Health and Safety, that agree, oversee and review the various disciplines giving assurance that the Council complies with statute, identifies and manages its risks.

The External Auditors, Grant Thornton gave an unqualified opinion on the 2022/23 Accounts, in their Annual Report. In addition their review of the Council's governance arrangements advised that no evidence or indication of significant risks were found.

The Council has a zero tolerance to Fraud and Corruption, the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Framework, Fraud Response Plan and Whistleblowing Policy are in place to help deliver our commitment to protecting public funds and ensuring that all Council activities are carried out in accordance with the principles of openness, honesty and integrity. The commitment to deterring fraud and corruption is actively promoted throughout the organisation. Anyone who has any concerns about any aspect of the Council's work is actively encouraged to come forward and voice those concerns.

## How has the Council addressed the Governance Improvement Actions from 2022/23?

The following matters were identified as improvement areas that need to be addressed in order to further improve the Council's overall governance arrangements:

- To continue to raise the profile and status of information security and governance throughout the Council. Work to ensure that information security and data protection requirements and legislation are complied with, is to be continued. A review will be completed on data retention/storage/disposal to ensure continued compliance.

***A review has been undertaken on data retention/storage/disposal and continues to be updated.***

- To ensure that the Council continues to deliver services that meet the needs of our customers and respond to any issues our customers may have with the current level of service provision. Working with our partners we will ensure that we can deliver effectively and efficiently against residents/customer requirements.

***Service provision is continuously monitored in order to ensure that the needs of our residents and customers are met.***

- Consideration will be given on how to keep partners better informed on the progress of regeneration projects.

***Monthly newsletters are produced and sent to partners in order to update them on progress regarding the regeneration projects.***

- To ensure that our services demonstrate value for money we will continue to review all service areas against best practice and implement actions outlined in Priority Delivery Plans, in addition we will seek to improve efficiencies across all Council services through the One Council Programme and ensure that the savings identified from this process can be realised.

***Following the One Council Programme, regular monitoring of processes takes place with the efficient working behaviour now embedded within service areas.***

- To develop the commercial skill sets of Officers and the Council's investment capacity in order to support the Council's long term financial sustainability. Whilst it is recognised that the Council has strong financial management, it is important to continue to promote joint responsibility and accountability for the financial health of the organisation.

***Joint responsibility and accountability for the Council's financial health has been promoted within the Council and this has been acknowledged by the Corporate Peer Review follow up visit in January 2024.***

- To continue to improve practical guidance to governance in order to provide clearer understanding of processes to be followed throughout the organisation, starting with a review and update of the Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules.

***The Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules have been reviewed, updated and approved by Full Council.***

- A new Digital Strategy is being drafted to highlight areas for future service delivery improvements.

***A new Digital Strategy has now been approved and implemented in order to improve the future of service delivery.***

- A Project Register will be produced detailing all projects the Council is working on (capital and revenue). The Project Register will detail the nature of the project the project delivery service, responsible Officer, details of cost and details of any partners involved.

***A Corporate Project Register has been produced and details all projects currently in operation within the Council.***

## Looking ahead

In 2023/24 no significant weaknesses in Governance/Internal Control were highlighted in the feedback received from senior officers.

We propose over the coming year to further enhance our governance arrangements in order to continually improve our processes and policies in place.

## Conclusion

We consider the Governance Framework and Internal Control environment operating during 2023/24 to provide reasonable and objective assurance that any significant risks impacting on the achievement of the Council's objectives will be identified and actions taken to avoid or mitigate their impact.

The system of Governance (including the system of Internal Control) can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, that transactions are authorised and properly recorded, that value for money is being secured and that significant risks impacting on the achievement of our objectives have been mitigated.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Gordon Mole**

**Chief Executive**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Cllr Simon Tagg**

**Leader of the Council**

# Financial Statements

## Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

This statement shows the accounting cost of providing services in accordance with 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 Movement in Reserves Statement (page 29) and the Expenditure and Funding Analysis (page 45).

| 2022/23                   |                      |                         |  | 2023/24                   |                      |                         |
|---------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--|---------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Gross expenditure<br>£000 | Gross income<br>£000 | Net expenditure<br>£000 |  | Gross expenditure<br>£000 | Gross income<br>£000 | Net expenditure<br>£000 |
| 8,741                     | 1,348                | 7,393                   | Chief Executive  | 7,938                     | 1,115                | 6,823                   |
| 7,626                     | 5,836                | 1,790                   | Growth and Development   | 12,020                    | 6,814                | 5,206                   |
| 39,790                    | 29,227               | 10,563                  | Sustainable Environment & Operations                               | 38,309                    | 27,925               | 10,384                  |
| <b>56,157</b>             | <b>36,411</b>        | <b>19,746</b>           | <b>Cost of services</b>  | <b>58,267</b>             | <b>35,854</b>        | <b>22,413</b>           |
| 3,628                     | 3,322                | 306                     | Other operating expenditure (Note 10-p50)                          | 3,049                     | 2,246                | 803                     |
| 7,733                     | 6,564                | 1,169                   | Financing & investment income/expenditure (Note 11-p50)            | 9,337                     | 10,448               | (1,111)                 |
| 10,726                    | 29,281               | (18,555)                | Taxation & non-specific grant income/expenditure (Note 12-p50)     | 11,071                    | 36,016               | (24,945)                |
|                           |                      | <b>2,666</b>            | <b>(Surplus)/deficit on service provision</b>                      |                           |                      | <b>(2,840)</b>          |
|                           |                      | (1,152)                 | (Surplus)/deficit on revaluation of assets (Note 26-p59)           |                           |                      | (1,504)                 |
|                           |                      | (44,940)                | Remeasurement of the defined benefit liability/asset (Note 30-p63) |                           |                      | (14,540)                |
|                           |                      | <b>(46,092)</b>         | <b>Other income &amp; expenditure</b>                              |                           |                      | <b>(16,044)</b>         |
|                           |                      | <b>(43,426)</b>         | <b>Total income &amp; expenditure</b>                              |                           |                      | <b>(18,884)</b>         |

- Growth and Development includes Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS) amounting to £3.623m for which Capital Grants have been recognised and included in Financing and Investment Income/Expenditure.
- Sustainable Environment and Operations includes housing benefits grant income and expenditure of circa £20m.

## Movement in Reserves Statement

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Council, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and unusable reserves. The movements in the year are broken down between gains and losses incurred in accordance with accounting practices and statutory adjustments required to return to the amounts chargeable to Council Tax for the year. The net increase/decrease line shows the statutory General Fund balance movements in the year following those adjustments.

|  | General Fund balance | Capital receipts reserve | Capital grants unapplied | Total usable reserves | Unusable reserves | Total Council reserves |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 2023/24  | £000                 | £000                     | £000                     | £000                  | £000              | £000                   |
| <b>Balance at 31 March 2023 b/fwd</b>                          | <b>(5,205)</b>       | <b>(377)</b>             | <b>(3,629)</b>           | <b>(9,211)</b>        | <b>(58,747)</b>   | <b>(67,958)</b>        |
| <b>Movement in Reserves 2023/24</b>                            |                      |                          |                          |                       |                   |                        |
| Total comprehensive income & expenditure                       | (2,840)              | -                        | -                        | (2,840)               | (16,044)          | (18,884)               |
| Adjustments between accounting & funding basis<br>(Note 8-p48) | 2,837                | 377                      | (730)                    | 2,484                 | (2,484)           | -                      |
| <b>(Increase)/decrease in year</b>                             | <b>(3)</b>           | <b>377</b>               | <b>(730)</b>             | <b>(356)</b>          | <b>(18,528)</b>   | <b>(18,884)</b>        |
| <b>Balance at 31 March 2024 c/fwd</b>                          | <b>(5,208)</b>       | <b>-</b>                 | <b>(4,359)</b>           | <b>(9,567)</b>        | <b>(77,275)</b>   | <b>(86,842)</b>        |
| <b>2022/23</b>   |                      |                          |                          |                       |                   |                        |
| <b>Balance at 31 March 2022 b/fwd</b>                          | <b>(10,899)</b>      | <b>(264)</b>             | <b>(2,869)</b>           | <b>(14,032)</b>       | <b>(10,500)</b>   | <b>(24,532)</b>        |
| <b>Movement in Reserves 2022/23</b>                            |                      |                          |                          |                       |                   |                        |
| Total comprehensive income & expenditure                       | 2,666                | -                        | -                        | 2,666                 | (46,092)          | (43,426)               |
| Adjustments between accounting & funding basis<br>(Note 8-p48) | 3,028                | (113)                    | (760)                    | 2,155                 | (2,155)           | -                      |
| <b>(Increase)/decrease in year</b>                             | <b>5,694</b>         | <b>(113)</b>             | <b>(760)</b>             | <b>4,821</b>          | <b>(48,247)</b>   | <b>(43,426)</b>        |
| <b>Balance at 31 March 2023 c/fwd</b>                          | <b>(5,205)</b>       | <b>(377)</b>             | <b>(3,629)</b>           | <b>(9,211)</b>        | <b>(58,747)</b>   | <b>(67,958)</b>        |

- The General Fund balance includes £3.051m of earmarked reserves, leaving a general balance of £2.157m.

## Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Council. The net assets of the Council (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Council. The first category of reserves are usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the Council 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 is those that the Council is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses, 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 and funding basis' (page 29).

| 31/03/2023<br>£000 |  | 31/03/2024<br>£000 |
|--------------------|--|--------------------|
| 53,245             | Property, plant & equipment (Note 19-p54)        | 56,973             |
| 2,099              | Surplus assets (Note 19-p54)                     | 1,816              |
| 12,759             | Investment property (Note 20-p56)                | 13,505             |
| 1,218              | Heritage assets (Note 21-p57)                    | 1,218              |
| 243                | Intangible assets                                | 419                |
| 379                | Long term debtors (Note 23-p58)                  | 367                |
| <b>69,943</b>      | <b>Long term assets</b>                          | <b>74,298</b>      |
| 17,000             | Short term investments (Note 32-p67)             | 17,500             |
| 1,925              | Assets held for sale (Note 22-p58)               | -                  |
| 338                | Inventories                                      | 251                |
| 12,287             | Short term debtors (Note 23-p58)                 | 14,080             |
| 4,381              | Cash/cash equivalents (Note 32-p67)              | 593                |
| <b>35,931</b>      | <b>Current assets</b>                            | <b>32,424</b>      |
| (11,681)           | Short term creditors (Note 24-p58)               | (9,949)            |
| (55)               | Short term borrowing (Note 32-p67)               | (54)               |
| (760)              | Revenue grants receipts in advance (Note 18-p53) | (1,422)            |
| (1,301)            | Provisions (Note 25-p58)                         | (1,923)            |
| <b>(13,797)</b>    | <b>Current liabilities</b>                       | <b>(13,348)</b>    |
| (635)              | Provisions (Note 25-p58)                         | (224)              |
| (3,010)            | Net pensions liability (Note 30-p63)             | 13,820             |
| (20,474)           | Capital grants receipts in advance (Note 18-p53) | (20,128)           |
| <b>(24,119)</b>    | <b>Long term liabilities</b>                     | <b>(6,532)</b>     |
| <b>67,958</b>      | <b>Net assets</b>                                | <b>86,842</b>      |
| <b>9,211</b>       | <b>Total usable reserves (MIRS-p29)</b>          | <b>9,567</b>       |
| <b>58,747</b>      | <b>Total unusable reserves (Note 26-p59)</b>     | <b>77,275</b>      |
| <b>67,958</b>      | <b>Total reserves</b>                            | <b>86,842</b>      |



## Cash Flow Statement

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

| 2022/23<br>£000 |   | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| <b>2,666</b>    | <b>Net (surplus)/deficit on the provision of services (CIES-p28)</b>  | <b>(2,840)</b>  |
| 16,512          | (Increase)/decrease In creditors  | (601)           |
| (5,598)         | Increase/(decrease) in debtors  | 890             |
| 15              | Increase/(decrease) in inventories  | (87)            |
| 66              | (Increase)/decrease in provisions   | (211)           |
| (2,147)         | Charges for depreciation/impairment of non-current assets   | (2,588)         |
| 331             | Revaluation losses on property, plant & equipment   | (708)           |
| (6)             | Movements in fair value of investment properties  | (159)           |
| (6)             | Amortisation of intangible assets   | (6)             |
| (2,711)         | Movement in pension liability   | 2,290           |
| (2,977)         | Non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement | (2,347)         |
| <b>3,479</b>    | <b>Adjustments for non-cash movements</b>   | <b>(3,527)</b>  |
| -               | Capital grants & contributions credited to Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement   | 10,067          |
| 3,321           | Transfer of cash sales proceeds credited as part of the gain/loss on disposal to Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement               | 2,247           |
| <b>3,321</b>    | <b>Adjustments for items that are investing/financing activities</b>  | <b>12,314</b>   |
| <b>9,466</b>    | <b>Net cash flows from operating activities</b>   | <b>5,947</b>    |
| 4,781           | Purchase of property, plant & equipment, investment property & intangible assets  | 6,748           |
| 3,000           | Purchase of short & long term investments   | 500             |
| (3,329)         | Proceeds from sale of property, plant & equipment, investment property & intangible assets  | (2,259)         |
| (16,750)        | Other receipts from investing activities  | (9,721)         |
| <b>(12,298)</b> | <b>Net cash flows from investing activities</b>   | <b>(4,732)</b>  |
| 30              | Repayments of borrowing   | 1               |
| 125             | Council Tax and NNDR Adjustments  | 2,572           |
| <b>155</b>      | <b>Net cash flows from financing activities</b>   | <b>2,573</b>    |
| <b>(2,677)</b>  | <b>Net increase or decrease in cash &amp; equivalents</b>   | <b>3,788</b>    |
| (1,704)         | Cash & equivalents brought forward  | (4,381)         |
| <b>(4,381)</b>  | <b>Cash &amp; equivalents carried forward</b>   | <b>(593)</b>    |

The cash flows for operating activities include the following items:

| 2022/23<br>£000 |                   | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| (606)           | Interest received | (1,426)         |
| -               | Interest paid     | -               |

# Notes to the Financial Statements

## 1. Accounting Policies

### i. General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Council's transactions for the 2023/24 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31 March 2024. The Council is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, which is required to be prepared in accordance with accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom, published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

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

Materiality levels throughout the accounts are based upon the relevance to the users of the accounts and notes and the amounts advised to the Council by its external auditors.

### ii. Accruals of Income and Expenditure

Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received. In particular:

- Revenue from contracts with service recipients, whether for services or the provision of goods, is recognised when (or as) the goods or services are transferred to the service recipient in accordance with the performance obligations in the contract,
- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed – where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and used, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet,
- 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 rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract,
- Where revenue and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where debts may not be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.

### iii. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with the financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. In the Cash Flow Statement, cash and cash equivalents are shown net of bank overdrafts that are repayable on demand.

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

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

Changes in accounting policies are made when required by accounting practices or the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events and conditions on the Council's financial position or financial performance. Where a change is made, it is applied retrospectively (unless stated otherwise) by adjusting opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period as if the new policy had always been applied.

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

#### **v. Charges to Revenue for Non-Current Assets**

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

- Depreciation attributable to the assets used by the relevant service,
- Revaluation and impairment losses on assets used by the service where there are no accumulated gains in the Revaluation Reserve against which the losses can be written off,
- Amortisation of intangible fixed assets attributable to the service.

The Council is not required to raise Council Tax to fund depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisation. These are therefore reversed out by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

#### **vi. Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates**

Billing authorities act as agents, collecting Council Tax and non domestic rates (NDR) on behalf of the major preceptors (including government for NDR) and, as principal 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.

#### **Accounting for Council Tax and NDR**

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

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

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

#### **vii. Employee Benefits**

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

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled within 12 months of the year-end. They include benefits such as wages and salaries, annual leave and sick leave and non-monetary benefits for current employees that are recognised as an expense for services in the year in which employees render service to the Council. An accrual is made for the cost of holiday entitlements or other 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 year, being the period in which the employee takes the benefit. The accrual is charged to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services, but then reversed out through the Movement in Reserves Statement so that holiday benefits are charged to revenue in the financial year in which the holiday absence occurs.

## Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Council to terminate an Officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an Officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy and are charged on an accruals basis to the appropriate service at the earlier of when the Council can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or costs for a restructuring are recognised.

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

## Post-Employment Benefits

Employees of the Council (unless they chose to opt out) are members of the Local Government Pensions Scheme, administered by Staffordshire County Council. The scheme provides defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), earned as employees working for the Council.

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

- The liabilities of the Staffordshire Pension Fund attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method – i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates and forecasts of projected earnings for current employees,
- Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate of 4.8%,
- The assets of Staffordshire Pension Fund attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:
  - Quoted securities – current bid price,
  - Unquoted securities – professional estimate,
  - Unitised securities – current bid price,
  - Property – market value.

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

- Service Cost comprising:
  - Current service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year - allocated 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. net interest expense for the Council - the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability/asset that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. This is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability/asset at the beginning of the period, taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability/asset during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments,

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

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Council to the pension fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, this means that there are appropriations to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end. The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

### Discretionary Benefits

The Council also has restricted powers to make discretionary awards of retirement benefits in the event of early retirements. Any liabilities estimated to arise as a result of an award to any member of staff 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.

### viii. Events After the Balance Sheet Date

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

- Those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is adjusted to reflect such events,
- Those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts are not adjusted to reflect such events, but where a category of events would have a material effect, disclosure is made in the notes of the nature of the events and their estimated financial effect.

Events taking place after the date of authorisation for issue are not reflected in the Statement of Accounts.

### ix. Financial Instruments

#### Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Council becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured at fair value and are carried at their amortised cost. Annual charges to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) 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 borrowings that the Council has, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable (plus accrued interest); and interest charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount payable for the year according to the loan agreement.

## Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified based on a classification and measurement approach that reflects the business model for holding the financial assets and their cash flow characteristics. The financial assets that the Council holds are measured at amortised cost.

### Financial Assets Measured at Amortised Cost

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

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

### Short-Term Investments

The Council recognises expected credit losses on all of its financial assets held at amortised cost, either on a 12 month or lifetime basis. Lifetime losses are recognised for trade debtors held by the Council.

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

### Instruments Entered into Before 1 April 2006

The Council has entered into a financial guarantee that is not required to be accounted for as a financial instrument. This guarantee is reflected in the Statement of Accounts to the extent that a contingent liability note is needed under the policies set out in the section on provisions, contingent liabilities and contingent assets.

### x. Foreign Currency Translation

Where the Council has entered into a transaction denominated in a foreign currency, the transaction is converted into sterling at the exchange rate applicable on the date the transaction was effective. Where amounts in foreign currency are outstanding at the year-end, they are reconverted at the spot exchange rate at 31 March. Resulting gains or losses are recognised in the financing and investment income and expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

### xi. Government Grants and Contributions

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

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

Amounts recognised as due to the Council are not credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) until conditions attached to the grant or contribution have been satisfied. Conditions are stipulations that specify that the future

economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset acquired using the grant or contribution are required to be consumed by the recipient as specified, or future economic benefits or service potential must be returned to the transferor.

Monies advanced as grants and contributions for which conditions have not been satisfied are carried in the Balance Sheet as creditors. When conditions are satisfied, the grant or contribution is credited to the relevant service line (attributable revenue grants and contributions) or taxation and non-specific grant income (non-ring fenced revenue grants and all capital grants) in the CIES.

Where capital grants are credited to the CIES, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Where the grant has yet to be used to finance capital expenditure, it is posted to the capital grants unapplied reserve. Where it has been applied, it is posted to the capital adjustment account. Amounts in the capital grants unapplied reserve are transferred to the capital adjustment account once they have been applied to fund capital expenditure.

## **xii. Heritage Assets**

The Council's heritage assets are either held in its Museum or consist of outdoor structures of various kinds. All of these assets are tangible. Heritage assets are recognised and measured (including the treatment of revaluation gains and losses) in accordance with the Council's accounting policies on property, plant and equipment. However, some of the measurement rules are relaxed in relation to heritage assets as detailed below:

### **Museum Collection**

These items are reported in the Balance Sheet at insurance valuation, which is based on market values as assessed by an external valuer. These valuations are updated where necessary by the museum curator in respect of significant items and changes. New items are added at cost, if purchased and at valuation, if donated, where they are significant. No depreciation is charged since the items in the collection are deemed to have indeterminate lives.

### **Outdoor Structures**

There is no reliable cost or valuation information available to enable these items to be valued. Consequently, they are not recognised on the Balance Sheet.

### **General**

The carrying amounts of heritage assets are reviewed where there is evidence of impairment for heritage assets, e.g. where an item has suffered physical deterioration or breakage or where doubts arise as to its authenticity. Any impairment is recognised and measured in accordance with the Council's general policies on impairment. Heritage assets may occasionally be disposed of which have a doubtful provenance or are unsuitable for public display. The proceeds of such items are accounted for in accordance with the Council's general provisions relating to the disposal of property, plant and equipment. Disposal proceeds are disclosed separately in the notes to the financial statements and are accounted for in accordance with statutory accounting requirements relating to capital expenditure and capital receipts (see note 'xviii').

## **xiii. Intangible Assets**

Expenditure on non-monetary assets that do not have physical substance but are controlled by the Council as a result of past events (e.g. software licences) is capitalised when it is expected that future economic benefits or service potential will flow from the intangible asset to the Council.

Intangible assets are measured initially at cost. Amounts are only revalued where the fair value of the assets held by the Council can be determined by reference to an active market. In practice, no intangible asset held by the Council 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(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES). An asset is tested for impairment whenever there is an indication that the asset might be impaired – any losses recognised are posted to the relevant service line(s) in the CIES. Any gain or loss arising on the disposal or abandonment of an intangible asset is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the CIES.

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.

#### **xiv. Inventories**

Inventories are included in the Balance Sheet at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

#### **xv. Investment Property**

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

Investment properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value, being the price that would be received to sell such an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. As a non-financial asset, investment properties are measured at highest and best use. Properties are not depreciated, however their values are considered each year according to market conditions at the year-end (i.e. if any properties or classes of properties, following consideration are thought likely to be subject to a valuation change, they are revalued). In any case every property is revalued once every five years according to a rolling programme of revaluations. Gains and losses on revaluation are posted to the financing and investment income and expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The same treatment is applied to gains and losses on disposal.

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

#### **xvi. Leases**

Leases are classified as finance leases where the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the property, plant or equipment from the lessor to the lessee. All other leases are classified as operating leases. Where a lease covers both land and buildings, the land and buildings elements are considered separately for classification.

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

#### **The Council as Lessee**

##### **Finance Leases**

Property, plant and equipment held under finance leases is recognised on the Balance Sheet at the commencement of the lease at its fair value measured at the lease's inception (or the present value of the minimum lease payments, if lower). The asset recognised is matched by a liability for the obligation to pay the lessor. Initial direct costs of the Council are added to the carrying amount of the asset.

Lease payments are apportioned between a charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property, plant or equipment – applied to write down the lease liability; and a finance charge (debited to the financing and investment income and expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement).

Property, plant and equipment recognised under finance leases is accounted for using the policies applied generally to such assets, subject to depreciation being charged over the lease term if this is shorter than the asset's estimated useful life (where ownership of the asset does not transfer to the Council at the end of the lease period).

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



## Operating Leases

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

## The Council as Lessor

### Finance Leases

Where the Council grants a finance lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the relevant asset is written out of the Balance Sheet as a disposal. At the commencement of the lease, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet (whether property, plant and equipment or assets held for sale) is written off to the other operating expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. A gain, representing the Council's net investment in the lease, is credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal), matched by a lease (long-term debtor) asset in the Balance Sheet.

Lease rentals receivable are apportioned between a charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property – applied to write down the lease debtor (together with any premiums received) and finance income (credited to the financing and investment income and expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement).

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

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

## Operating Leases

Where the Council grants an operating lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the asset is retained in the Balance Sheet. Rental income is credited to the other operating expenditure line in the 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.

## xvii. Overheads and Support Services

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

## xviii. Property, Plant and Equipment

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

## Recognition

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of property, plant and equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the

Council and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. No de-minimis level, below which expenditure is not capitalised, applies. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

## Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

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

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

Donated assets are measured initially at fair value. The difference between fair value and any consideration paid is credited to the taxation and non-specific grant income line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, unless the donation has been made conditionally. Until conditions are satisfied, the gain is held in a 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.

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

- Infrastructure and assets under construction – depreciated historical cost. Where the historical cost is unknown, a nominal value of £1 is attributed to the asset concerned,
- Community assets - depreciated historical cost, or the valuation option as per section 4.10 of the Code of Practice on Local Government Accounting (this permits valuations by any method that is appropriate and relevant),
- All other assets – current value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use (existing use value – EUV).

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

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at current value are revalued sufficiently regularly to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their current value at the year-end, but as a minimum every five years. Assets within each asset class are revalued together to ensure consistency of valuation within class. Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the revaluation reserve to recognise unrealised gains.

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.

The revaluation reserve contains revaluation gains recognised since 1 April 2007 only, the date of its formal implementation. Gains arising before that date have been consolidated into the capital adjustment account.

## Impairment

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

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

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

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

## Depreciation

Depreciation is provided for on all property, plant and equipment assets by the systematic allocation of their depreciable amounts over their useful lives, including the year of acquisition. An exception is made for assets without a determinable finite useful life (i.e. freehold land and certain Community Assets) and assets that are not yet available for use (i.e. assets under construction).

Depreciation is calculated on the following bases:

- Dwellings and other buildings - straight-line allocation over the useful life of the property as estimated by the valuer,
- Vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment – a percentage of the value of each class of assets in the Balance Sheet, as advised by a suitably qualified Officer,
- Infrastructure - straight-line allocation over estimated life of asset.

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. 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 Assets Held for Sale

When it becomes probable that the carrying amount of an asset will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through its continuing use, it is reclassified as an asset held for sale. The asset is revalued immediately before reclassification and then carried at the lower of this amount and fair value less costs to sell. Where there is a subsequent decrease to fair value less costs to sell, the loss is posted to the other operating expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Gains in fair value are recognised only up to the amount of any previous losses recognised in the surplus or deficit on provision of services. Depreciation is not charged on assets held for sale.

If assets no longer meet the criteria to be classified as assets held for sale, they are reclassified back to non-current assets and valued at the lower of their carrying amount before they were classified as held for sale; adjusted for depreciation, amortisation or revaluations that would have been recognised had they not been classified as held for sale and their recoverable amount at the date of the decision not to sell. Assets that are to be abandoned or scrapped are not reclassified as assets held for sale.

When an asset is disposed of or decommissioned, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet (whether property, plant and equipment or assets held for sale) is written off to the other operating expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. Receipts from disposals (if any) are credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off

against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal). Any revaluation gains accumulated for the asset in the revaluation reserve are transferred to the capital adjustment account.

Amounts received for a disposal in excess of £10,000 are categorised as capital receipts. These are required to be credited to the capital receipts reserve and can then only be used for new capital investment or set aside to reduce the Council's underlying need to borrow (the capital financing requirement). Receipts are appropriated to the reserve from the General Fund balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The written-off value of disposals is not a charge against Council Tax, as the cost of fixed assets is fully provided for under separate arrangements for capital financing. Amounts are appropriated to the capital adjustment account from the General Fund balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

## **xix. Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets**

### **Provisions**

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

Provisions are charged as an expense to the appropriate service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year that the Council becomes aware of the obligation and are measured at the best estimate at the balance sheet date of the expenditure required to settle the obligation, taking into account relevant risks and uncertainties.

When payments are eventually made, they are charged to the provision carried in the Balance Sheet. Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year – where it becomes less than probable that a transfer of economic benefits will now be required (or a lower settlement than anticipated is made), the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service. Where some or all of the payment required to settle a provision is expected to be recovered from another party (e.g. from an insurance claim), this is only recognised as income for the relevant service if it is virtually certain that reimbursement will be received if the Council settles the obligation.

### **Contingent Liabilities**

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Council 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 Council. Contingent liabilities also arise in circumstances where a provision would otherwise be made but either it is not probable that an outflow of resources will be required or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured reliably. Contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet.

A contingent asset arises where an event has taken place that gives the Council 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 Council. Contingent assets are not recognised in the Balance Sheet.

## **xx. Reserves**

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

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

## xxi. Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute

Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provisions but that does not result in the creation of a non-current asset has been charged as expenditure to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year. Where the Council has determined to meet the cost of this expenditure (less any grant or contribution received towards it) 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.

## xxii. VAT

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

## xxiii. Fair Value Measurement

Some non-financial assets such as surplus assets and investment properties are measured at fair value at each reporting date. Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. The fair value measurement assumes that the transaction takes place either in the principal market for the asset or liability or in the absence of a principal market, in the most advantageous market. Measurement uses the assumptions that market participants would use when pricing an asset or liability, assuming they are acting in their best economic interest and takes account of their ability to generate economic benefits by using the asset in its highest and best use or by selling it to another market participant that would use the asset in its highest and best use.

Valuation techniques appropriate in the circumstances are used and for which sufficient data is available, maximising the use of relevant observable inputs and minimising the use of unobservable inputs. Inputs to the valuation techniques in respect of assets and liabilities for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the financial statements are categorised within the fair value hierarchy as follows:

Level 1 – quoted prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities that can be accessed at the measurement date,

Level 2 – inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the asset, either directly or indirectly,

Level 3 – unobservable inputs for the asset or liability.

## 2. Accounting Standards That Have Been Issued but Have Not Yet Been Adopted

At the balance sheet date the following new standards and amendments to existing standards that are deemed to have material significance to the Council, have been published but not yet adopted by the Code of Practice of Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom:

- **IFRS 16 Leases** will require local authorities that are lessees to recognise most leases on their balance sheets as right-of-use assets with corresponding lease liabilities (there is recognition for low-value and short-term leases). Implementation for local government has been deferred to 1 April 2024. The impact on the Council's Statement of Accounts is not fully known at the current time.

## 3. Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies

In applying the accounting policies set out in Note 1 the Council has had to make certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events. These are not defined as critical judgements for the purposes of the Statement of Accounts.

## 4. 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 Council 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.

The significant items in the Council's Balance Sheet at 31 March 2024 for which there is a risk of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year are as follows:

- Principal actuarial assumptions used at the balance sheet date in respect of the defined benefit pension scheme. The effects on the net pension liability of changes in the real discount rate, salary increase rate and pension increase rate are shown below:
  - 0.1% decrease in real discount rate gives an increase in liability of £2.632m,
  - 0.1% increase in the salary increase rate gives an increase in liability of £0.112m,
  - 0.1% increase in the pension increase rate gives an increase in liability of £2.566m.
- As at 31 March 2024 the Council had £43.244m of operational land and buildings and £13.505m of investment property on its Balance Sheet that has been valued by the Council's qualified valuer. The Council's Property, Plant and Equipment have been valued on one of the following three bases under IFRS:
  - Fair Value (Existing Use Value (EUV)) – method used to value operational property assets other than specialised property assets,
  - Depreciated Replacement Cost (DRC) - method used to value operational property assets of a specialised nature,
  - Fair Value (Market Value) – method used to value property assets held as investments, surplus or for sale.

Note 20 (page 55) details the valuation techniques utilised for investment property assets.

A 1% movement in values since the last valuation date would change the reported value of operational land and buildings assets by £0.432m (£0.422m in 2022/23) and investment property assets by £0.135m (£0.128m in 2022/23). Buildings are depreciated over useful lives that are dependent on assumptions about the level of repairs and maintenance of those buildings.

It should be noted that neither movements in valuations or depreciation would have an impact on the funds held by the Council.

## 5. Events After the Reporting Period

The Statement of Accounts was authorised for issue by the Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer) on 21 May 2024.

Events taking place after this date are not reflected in the financial statements or notes. There were no material events taking place before this date about conditions existing at 31 March 2024, which required the amendment of figures in the financial statements or notes to the financial statements.

## 6. Expenditure and Funding Analysis

This analysis shows how expenditure is used and funded from resources (government grants, Council Tax and business rates) by the Council compared to resources consumed or earned in accordance with accounting practices. It also shows how expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between the Council's Directorates. Income and expenditure accounted for under accounting practice is presented fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (page 28).

| 2022/23  |  |   |   | 2023/24  |  |   |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| Net expenditure chargeable to the General Fund<br>£000 | Adjustments between funding & accounting basis<br>£000 | Net Expenditure - Comprehensive Inc & Exp Statement<br>£000 |   | Net expenditure chargeable to the General Fund<br>£000 | Adjustments between funding & accounting basis<br>£000 | Net expenditure - Comprehensive Inc & Exp Statement<br>£000 |
| 6,790  | 603  | 7,393   | Chief Executive   | 7,459  | (636)  | 6,823   |
| 1,481  | 309  | 1,790   | Growth and Development  | (3,204)  | 8,410  | 5,206   |
| 8,471  | 2,092  | 10,563  | Sustainable Environment & Operations                                  | 10,543   | (159)  | 10,384  |
| <b>16,742</b>  | <b>3,004</b>   | <b>19,746</b>   | <b>Net cost of services</b>   | <b>14,798</b>  | <b>7,615</b>   | <b>22,413</b>   |
| <b>(11,046)</b>  | <b>(6,034)</b>   | <b>(17,080)</b>   | <b>Other income and expenditure</b>                                   | <b>(17,692)</b>  | <b>(7,561)</b>   | <b>(25,253)</b>   |
| <b>5,696</b>   | <b>(3,030)</b>   | <b>2,666</b>  | <b>(Surplus) or deficit</b>   | <b>(2,894)</b>   | <b>54</b>  | <b>(2,840)</b>  |
| <b>10,899</b>  |  |   | <b>Opening General Fund/other useable reserves balance (MIRS-p29)</b> | <b>5,205</b>   |  |   |
| <b>(5,696)</b>   |  |   | <b>(Less)/plus movement on General Fund balance in year</b>           | <b>2,894</b>   |  |   |
| <b>5,203</b>   |  |   | <b>Closing General Fund/other useable reserves balance (MIRS-p29)</b> | <b>8,099</b>   |  |   |

- The General Fund balance includes £3.051m of earmarked reserves, leaving a general balance of £2.157m.

## 6a. Note to the Expenditure and Funding Analysis

This note provides a reconciliation of the main adjustments to net expenditure chargeable to the General Fund to arrive at the amounts in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

| Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement amounts   | Adjustments for capital purposes (Note 1) | Net change for the pensions adjustments (Note 2) | Other differences (Note 3) | Total adjustments |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 2023/24   | £000                                      | £000   | £000                       | £000              |
| Chief Executive   | 544                                       | (1,148)  | (32)                       | (636)             |
| Growth and Development  | 8,673                                     | (259)  | (4)                        | 8,410             |
| Sustainable Environment & Operations  | 794                                       | (941)  | (12)                       | (159)             |
| <b>Net cost of services</b>   | <b>10,011</b>                             | <b>(2,348)</b>                                   | <b>(48)</b>                | <b>7,615</b>      |
| <b>Other income and expenditure</b>   | <b>(8,822)</b>                            | <b>59</b>  | <b>1,202</b>               | <b>(7,561)</b>    |
| <b>Difference between General Fund surplus / deficit &amp; Comprehensive Income &amp; Expenditure Statement surplus or deficit on the provision of services</b> | <b>1,189</b>                              | <b>(2,289)</b>                                   | <b>1,154</b>               | <b>54</b>         |

| Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement amounts   | Adjustments for capital purposes (Note 1) | Net change for the pensions adjustments (Note 2) | Other differences (Note 3) | Total adjustments |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 2022/23   | £000                                      | £000   | £000                       | £000              |
| Chief Executive   | 733                                       | (7)  | (123)                      | 603               |
| Growth and Development  | 44  | 305  | (40)                       | 309               |
| Sustainable Environment & Operations  | 1,091                                     | 1,140  | (139)                      | 2,092             |
| <b>Net cost of services</b>   | <b>1,868</b>                              | <b>1,438</b>                                     | <b>(302)</b>               | <b>3,004</b>      |
| <b>Other income and expenditure</b>   | <b>(7,306)</b>                            | <b>1,273</b>                                     | <b>(1)</b>                 | <b>(6,034)</b>    |
| <b>Difference between General Fund surplus / deficit &amp; Comprehensive Income &amp; Expenditure Statement surplus or deficit on the provision of services</b> | <b>(5,438)</b>                            | <b>2,711</b>                                     | <b>(303)</b>               | <b>(3,030)</b>    |

### Notes

#### 1. Adjustments for Capital Purposes

This column adds in depreciation and impairment and revaluation gains and losses in the services line, and for:

- **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 i.e. minimum revenue provision and other revenue contributions are deducted from other income and expenditure as these are not chargeable under accounting practices,
- **Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure** – capital grants are adjusted for income not chargeable under accounting practices. Revenue grants are adjusted from those receivable in the year to those receivable without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied. The taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure line is credited with capital grants receivable without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied.



## 2. Net Change for the Pensions Adjustments

This column shows the net change for the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS19 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 Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

## 3. Other Differences

This column shows other differences between amounts debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and amounts payable/receivable recognised under statute. 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 Business Rates that was projected to be received at the start of the year and the income recognised under 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.

## 7. Segmental Income and Expenditure

The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom requires that where certain items of significant income and expenditure are included in the 'net expenditure chargeable to the general fund' as shown in the Expenditure and Funding Analysis, these must be disclosed in a separate note as shown below:

| 2022/23<br>£000 | Segment                                       | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
|                 | <b><i>Depreciation &amp; amortisation</i></b> |                 |
| 391             | Chief Executive                               | 417             |
| 545             | Growth and Development                        | 831             |
| 1,217           | Sustainable Environment & Operations          | 1,346           |
| <b>2,153</b>    | <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>2,594</b>    |
|                 | <b><i>Impairment</i></b>                      |                 |
| -               | - Growth and Development                      | -               |
| -               | - Sustainable Environment & Operations        | -               |
| -               | <b>Total</b>                                  | -               |
|                 | <b><i>External Income</i></b>                 |                 |
| 884             | Chief Executive                               | 727             |
| 4,110           | Growth and Development                        | 5,268           |
| 6,561           | Sustainable Environment & Operations          | 6,757           |
| <b>11,555</b>   | <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>12,752</b>   |

## 8. Adjustments Between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis

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

| 2023/24   | General Fund balance | Capital receipts reserve | Capital grants unapplied | Unusable reserves |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
|   | £000                 | £000                     | £000                     | £000              |
| <b>Adjustments primarily involving - capital adjustment account</b>   |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| <b>Reversal of items debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income &amp; Expenditure Statement</b>  |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| Charges for depreciation of non-current assets  | (2,588)              | -                        | -                        | 2,588             |
| Revaluation losses on property, plant & equipment   | (708)                | -                        | -                        | 708               |
| Movements in fair value of investment properties  | (159)                | -                        | -                        | 159               |
| Amortisation of intangible assets   | (6)                  | -                        | -                        | 6                 |
| Reversal of REFCUS expenditure  | (4,882)              | -                        | -                        | 4,882             |
| Reversal of REFCUS income   | 4,752                | -                        | -                        | (4,752)           |
| Non-current assets written-off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/(loss) on disposal   | (2,347)              | -                        | -                        | 2,347             |
| Capital element of finance leases where Council is the lessor   | (12)                 | -                        | -                        | 12                |
| Application of capital grants received  | 4,585                | -                        | -                        | (4,585)           |
| Revenue contributions to capital financing  | -                    | -                        | -                        | -                 |
| Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment   | 89                   | -                        | -                        | (89)              |
| <b>Adjustments primarily involving - capital grants unapplied account</b>   |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| Transfer of grant from revenue to the capital grants unapplied account  | 730                  | -                        | (730)                    | -                 |
| <b>Adjustments primarily involving - capital receipts reserve</b>   |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| Transfer of sales proceeds from revenue to the capital receipts reserve   | 2,247                | (2,247)                  | -                        | -                 |
| Use of the capital receipts reserve to finance capital  |                      | 2,624                    | -                        | (2,624)           |
| <b>Adjustments primarily involving - pensions reserve</b>   |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement   | (2,844)              | -                        | -                        | 2,844             |
| Employers pension contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year   | 5,134                | -                        | -                        | (5,134)           |
| <b>Adjustments primarily involving - collection fund adjustment account</b>   |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| Amount that Council Tax & Non-Domestic Rating income credited to the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement differs from Council Tax & Non-Domestic Rating income calculated for the year | (1,202)              | -                        | -                        | 1,202             |
| <b>Adjustments primarily involving - accumulated absences account</b>   |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| Amount by which Officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis differs from remuneration chargeable calculated for the year              | 48                   | -                        | -                        | (48)              |
| <b>Total adjustments</b>  | <b>2,837</b>         | <b>377</b>               | <b>(730)</b>             | <b>(2,484)</b>    |

| 2022/23   | General Fund balance | Capital receipts reserve | Capital grants unapplied | Unusable reserves |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
|   | £000                 | £000                     | £000                     | £000              |
| <b>Adjustments primarily involving - capital adjustment account</b>   |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| <b>Reversal of items debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income &amp; Expenditure Statement</b>  |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| Charges for depreciation & impairment of non-current assets   | (2,147)              | -                        | -                        | 2,147             |
| Revaluation gains on property, plant & equipment  | 331                  | -                        | -                        | (331)             |
| Movements in fair value of investment properties  | (6)                  | -                        | -                        | 6                 |
| Amortisation of intangible assets   | (6)                  | -                        | -                        | 6                 |
| Reversal of REFCUS expenditure  | (2,764)              | -                        | -                        | 2,764             |
| Reversal of REFCUS income   | 1,463                | -                        | -                        | (1,463)           |
| Non-current assets written-off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/(loss) on disposal   | (2,977)              | -                        | -                        | 2,977             |
| Capital element of finance leases where Council is the lessor   | (8)                  | -                        | -                        | 8                 |
| Application of capital grants received in advance   | 2,874                | -                        | -                        | (2,874)           |
| Revenue contributions to capital financing  | -                    | -                        | -                        | -                 |
| Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment   | 44                   | -                        | -                        | (44)              |
| <b>Adjustments primarily involving - capital grants unapplied account</b>   |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| Transfer of grant from revenue to the capital grants unapplied account  | 760                  | -                        | (760)                    | -                 |
| <b>Adjustments primarily involving - capital receipts reserve</b>   |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| Transfer of sales proceeds from revenue to the capital receipts reserve   | 3,321                | (3,321)                  | -                        | -                 |
| Use of the capital receipts reserve to finance capital  | -                    | 3,208                    | -                        | (3,208)           |
| <b>Adjustments primarily involving - pensions reserve</b>   |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement   | (6,824)              | -                        | -                        | 6,824             |
| Employers pension contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year   | 4,113                | -                        | -                        | (4,113)           |
| <b>Adjustments primarily involving - collection fund adjustment account</b>   |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| Amount that Council Tax & Non-Domestic Rating income credited to the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement differs from Council Tax & Non-Domestic Rating income calculated for the year | 4,551                | -                        | -                        | (4,551)           |
| <b>Adjustments primarily involving - accumulated absences account</b>   |                      |                          |                          |                   |
| Amount by which Officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis differs from remuneration chargeable calculated for the year              | 303                  | -                        | -                        | (303)             |
| <b>Total adjustments</b>  | <b>3,028</b>         | <b>(113)</b>             | <b>(760)</b>             | <b>(2,155)</b>    |

## 9. Movements in Earmarked Reserves

| 2022/23               |                      |                      |                                | 2023/24               |                      |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Transfers out<br>£000 | Transfers in<br>£000 | Net movement<br>£000 |                                | Transfers out<br>£000 | Transfers in<br>£000 | Net movement<br>£000 |
| -                     | -                    | -                    | General Fund                   | (250)                 | 247                  | (3)                  |
| -                     | -                    | -                    | Income reserve                 | (100)                 | -                    | (100)                |
| (611)                 | 460                  | (151)                | Walleys Quarry reserve         | (573)                 | 100                  | (473)                |
| (6)                   | 9                    | 3                    | Equipment replacement fund     | (16)                  | 32                   | 16                   |
| (400)                 | 400                  | -                    | Cost of living reserve         | (400)                 | 400                  | -                    |
| (777)                 | 392                  | (385)                | Budget support fund            | (805)                 | 655                  | (150)                |
| (12)                  | 10                   | (2)                  | Conservation and heritage fund | (13)                  | 10                   | (3)                  |
| (26)                  | 4                    | (22)                 | Museum purchases fund          | -                     | 8                    | 8                    |
| -                     | 3                    | 3                    | Mayors charities reserve       | -                     | 21                   | 21                   |
| -                     | 5                    | 5                    | Clayton Community Centre fund  | -                     | 5                    | 5                    |
| (241)                 | 250                  | 9                    | Borough growth fund            | (229)                 | 250                  | 21                   |
| (200)                 | 50                   | (150)                | Elections reserve              | -                     | 50                   | 50                   |
| (5,030)               | 26                   | (5,004)              | Business Rates reserve         | -                     | 611                  | 611                  |
| <b>(7,303)</b>        | <b>1,609</b>         | <b>(5,694)</b>       | <b>Total</b>                   | <b>(2,386)</b>        | <b>2,389</b>         | <b>3</b>             |

## 10. Other Operating Expenditure

| 2022/23<br>£000 |  | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| 651             | Parish precepts                                  | 702             |
| (345)           | (Gains)/losses on disposal of non-current assets | 101             |
| <b>306</b>      | <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>803</b>      |

## 11. Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure

| 2022/23<br>£000 |   | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| 1,241           | Interest on the net defined benefit liability | 81              |
| (606)           | Interest receivable & similar income          | (1,426)         |
| (1,018)         | Investment properties - income                | (1,004)         |
| 498             | Investment properties - revaluations          | 85              |
| 1,054           | Investment properties - expenses              | 1,153           |
| <b>1,169</b>    | <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>(1,111)</b>  |

## 12. Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income and Expenditure

| 2022/23<br>£000 |                                  | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| (8,628)         | Council Tax income               | (8,872)         |
| 9,754           | Non Domestic Rates expenditure   | 11,071          |
| (15,633)        | Non Domestic Rates income        | (17,763)        |
| (1,174)         | Non-ringfenced Government grants | (1,179)         |
| (2,874)         | Capital grants & contributions   | (8,202)         |
| <b>(18,555)</b> | <b>Total</b>                     | <b>(24,945)</b> |

### 13. Expenditure and Income Analysed by Nature

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

| 2022/23<br>£000 |  | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|
|                 | <b>Expenditure</b>                                   |                 |
| 21,703          | Employees  | 18,579          |
| 2,402           | Premises   | 2,632           |
| 1,179           | Transport  | 1,202           |
| 6,956           | Supplies and services                                | 10,400          |
| 1,366           | Grants and contributions                             | 1,276           |
| 594             | Agency and contracted services                       | 660             |
| 20,174          | Housing Benefits payments                            | 20,633          |
| 6,758           | Capital financing                                    | 6,785           |
| -               | Recharges to Investment Properties                   | 323             |
| 11,377          | Sources of finance expenditure                       | 11,774          |
| 5,735           | Pensions interest cost                               | 7,460           |
| <b>78,244</b>   | <b>Total expenditure</b>                             | <b>81,724</b>   |
|                 | <b>Income</b>  |                 |
| 3,323           | Gains/(losses) on disposal of non current assets     | 2,247           |
| 22,698          | Sources of finance income                            | 23,438          |
| 28,452          | Government grants                                    | 34,657          |
| 137             | Transfer from Collection Fund                        | 139             |
| 2,709           | Other grants and contributions                       | 2,240           |
| 1,126           | Reimbursements                                       | 1,803           |
| 8,639           | Customer receipts                                    | 8,872           |
| 1,064           | Rents  | 1,026           |
| 606             | Interest and investment income                       | 1,426           |
| 4,494           | Pensions return on assets                            | 7,378           |
| 2,330           | Other income   | 1,338           |
| <b>75,578</b>   | <b>Total income</b>                                  | <b>84,564</b>   |
| <b>2,666</b>    | <b>(Surplus) or deficit on provision of services</b> | <b>(2,840)</b>  |

### 14. External Audit Costs

The Council has incurred the following costs in relation to the audit of the Statement of Accounts and certification of grant claims by the Council's external auditors (Grant Thornton in 2022/23 and KMPG in 2023/24):

| 2022/23<br>£000 |   | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| 69              | External audit services carried out       | 157             |
| 18              | Certification of grant claims and returns | 32              |
| <b>87</b>       |   | <b>189</b>      |

### 15. Members' Allowances

In 2023/24 a total of £264,252 was paid to Members (including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor) in respect of allowances (£256,676 in 2022/23). There were no expenses paid to Members during 2023/24 (nil in 2022/23).

### 16. Termination Benefits

The Council terminated the contracts of a number of employees in 2023/24, incurring liabilities of £148,498 (£100,563 in 2022/23). The termination benefits related to the mutually agreed resignation scheme.

## 17. Officers' Remuneration

Remuneration between £50,000 and £150,000 per annum was paid to the Council's senior employees as follows:

| 2023/24 - Post holder          | Salary<br>(£) | Benefits in kind<br>(£) | Total exc. employer pension<br>(£) | Employer pension<br>(£) | Total inc. employer pension<br>(£) |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Chief Executive                | 117,627       | -                       | 117,627                            | 25,878                  | 143,505                            |
| Deputy Chief Executive         | 100,380       | -                       | 100,380                            | -                       | 100,380                            |
| <b>Service Directors</b>       |               |                         |                                    |                         |                                    |
| Commercial Delivery *          | 57,546        | -                       | 57,546                             | 12,660                  | 70,206                             |
| Finance                        | 82,192        | -                       | 82,192                             | 16,730                  | 98,922                             |
| IT & Digital                   | 63,272        | -                       | 63,272                             | 13,920                  | 77,191                             |
| Legal and Governance **        | 60,352        | -                       | 60,352                             | 13,228                  | 73,580                             |
| Neighbourhood Delivery         | 73,274        | -                       | 73,274                             | 16,120                  | 89,394                             |
| Planning ***                   | 62,501        | -                       | 62,501                             | 13,750                  | 76,251                             |
| Regulatory Services            | 73,533        | -                       | 73,533                             | 16,177                  | 89,710                             |
| Strategy, People & Performance | 71,932        | -                       | 71,932                             | 15,825                  | 87,758                             |
| Sustainable Environment        | 71,932        | -                       | 71,932                             | 15,825                  | 87,758                             |

| 2022/23 - Post holder            | Salary<br>(£) | Benefits in kind<br>(£) | Total exc. employer pension<br>(£) | Employer pension<br>(£) | Total inc. employer pension<br>(£) |
|----------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Chief Executive                  | 112,818       | -                       | 112,818                            | 20,349                  | 133,167                            |
| <b>Executive Directors</b>       |               |                         |                                    |                         |                                    |
| Sustainable Environment          | 96,986        | -                       | 96,986                             | 16,585                  | 113,571                            |
| Growth and Development           | 97,190        | -                       | 97,190                             | 9,482                   | 106,672                            |
| <b>Heads of Service</b>          |               |                         |                                    |                         |                                    |
| Neighbourhood Delivery           | 64,902        | -                       | 64,902                             | 11,270                  | 76,172                             |
| Sustainable Environment          | 64,254        | -                       | 64,254                             | 10,987                  | 75,241                             |
| Commercial Delivery *            | 51,403        | -                       | 51,403                             | 8,790                   | 60,193                             |
| Regulatory Services              | 64,254        | -                       | 64,254                             | 11,172                  | 75,426                             |
| Strategy, People and Performance | 61,302        | -                       | 61,302                             | 10,498                  | 71,800                             |
| Finance                          | 71,184        | -                       | 71,184                             | 12,164                  | 83,348                             |
| Legal and Governance             | 74,806        | -                       | 74,806                             | 12,742                  | 87,548                             |

\* This post holder is not full-time, their full-time equivalent salary would exceed £50,000 per annum.

\*\* The post has been held by two officers in 2023/24, their full-time equivalent salary would exceed £50,000 per annum.

\*\*\* The post holder commenced during the year, their full-time equivalent salary would exceed £50,000 per annum.

Eleven further employees received remuneration from salary more than £50,000, nine of which are within the banding £50,000 to £54,999. The remaining two employees are within the banding £55,000 to £59,999.

## 18. Grant Income

The Council credited the following grants and contributions to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure:

| 2022/23<br>£000 |  | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|
|                 | <b>Credited to taxation/non specific grant</b> |                 |
| 2,874           | Capital grants                                 | 8,202           |
| 157             | Other Government grants                        | 89              |
| 171             | Lower Tier Services grant                      | 222             |
| 258             | Services grant                                 | 151             |
| 2,535           | Section 31/Business Rates Relief grant         | 3,197           |
| 523             | New Homes Bonus scheme                         | 500             |
| 66              | Revenue Support grant                          | 217             |
| <b>6,584</b>    | <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>12,578</b>   |
|                 | <b>Credited to services</b>                    |                 |
| 19,500          | Housing Benefits subsidy/grants                | 19,727          |
| 427             | Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit admin      | 270             |
| 1,715           | Disabled Facilities grant                      | 1,865           |
| 102             | Future High Street Fund                        | 199             |
| 435             | Town Deals                                     | 223             |
| 32              | Contributions towards Community Safety         | 31              |
| 414             | Homelessness                                   | 527             |
| 166             | UK Shared Prosperity fund                      | 983             |
| 510             | Social Housing Decarbonisation fund            | -               |
| 1,276           | Other grants and contributions                 | 494             |
| <b>24,577</b>   | <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>24,319</b>   |

The Council recognised the following as revenue grants received in advance:

| 31/03/2023<br>£000 |   | 31/03/2024<br>£000 |
|--------------------|---|--------------------|
|                    | <b>Revenue grants received in advance</b> |                    |
| 37                 | Contributions towards Community Safety    | -                  |
| 31                 | Future High Street Fund                   | 266                |
| 399                | Town Deals                                | 629                |
| 293                | UK Shared Prosperity Fund                 | 148                |
| -                  | Health Inequalities Grant                 | 379                |
| <b>760</b>         | <b>Total</b>                              | <b>1,422</b>       |

The Council recognised the following as capital grants received in advance:

| 31/03/2023<br>£000 |   | 31/03/2024<br>£000 |
|--------------------|---|--------------------|
|                    | <b>Capital grants received in advance</b> |                    |
| 3,096              | Future High Street Fund                   | 2,383              |
| 15,912             | Town Deals                                | 15,274             |
| 135                | UK Shared Prosperity Fund                 | 128                |
| 1,331              | Section 106 Agreements                    | 2,343              |
| <b>20,474</b>      | <b>Total</b>                              | <b>20,128</b>      |

## 19. Property, Plant and Equipment

### Movements on Balances

| 2023/24  | Land & buildings | Infrastructure assets | Vehicles, plant, furniture & equipment | Community assets | Surplus assets | Assets under construction | Total          |
|--|------------------|-----------------------|--|------------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------|
|  | £000             | £000                  | £000                                   | £000             | £000           | £000                      | £000           |
| <b>Cost or valuation</b>   |                  |                       |  |                  |                |                           |                |
| <b>At 1 April 2023</b>   | <b>42,173</b>    | <b>1,375</b>          | <b>12,721</b>                          | <b>6,186</b>     | <b>2,099</b>   | -                         | <b>64,554</b>  |
| Additions  | 1,511            | -                     | 1,015                                  | 51               | 194            | 2,890                     | 5,661          |
| Accumulated depreciation/impairment written out                              | (1,420)          | -                     | -                                      | -                | -              | -                         | (1,420)        |
| Revaluation increases/(decreases) - revaluation reserve                      | 1,605            | -                     | -                                      | -                | (105)          | -                         | 1,500          |
| Revaluation increases/(decreases) - surplus/deficit on provision of services | (574)            | -                     | -                                      | -                | (134)          | -                         | (708)          |
| Asset reclassifications  | -                | -                     | -                                      | -                | (238)          | 238                       | -              |
| Derecognition - disposals  | (51)             | -                     | (820)                                  | -                | -              | -                         | (871)          |
| <b>At 31 March 2024</b>  | <b>43,244</b>    | <b>1,375</b>          | <b>12,916</b>                          | <b>6,237</b>     | <b>1,816</b>   | <b>3,128</b>              | <b>68,716</b>  |
| <b>Accumulated depreciation &amp; impairment</b>                             |                  |                       |  |                  |                |                           |                |
| <b>At 1 April 2023</b>   | -                | (628)                 | (7,099)                                | (1,483)          | -              | -                         | (9,210)        |
| Depreciation charge  | (1,420)          | (37)                  | (941)                                  | (190)            | -              | -                         | (2,588)        |
| Accumulated depreciation/impairment written out                              | 1,420            | -                     | 451                                    | -                | -              | -                         | 1,871          |
| <b>At 31 March 2024</b>  | -                | <b>(665)</b>          | <b>(7,589)</b>                         | <b>(1,673)</b>   | -              | -                         | <b>(9,927)</b> |
| <b>Net book value</b>  |                  |                       |  |                  |                |                           |                |
| As at 31 March 2023  | 42,173           | 747                   | 5,622                                  | 4,703            | 2,099          | -                         | 55,344         |
| As at 31 March 2024  | 43,244           | 710                   | 5,327                                  | 4,564            | 1,816          | 3,128                     | 58,789         |

| 2022/23  | Land & buildings | Infrastructure assets | Vehicles, plant, furniture & equipment | Community assets | Surplus assets | Assets under construction | Total          |
|--|------------------|-----------------------|--|------------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------|
|  | £000             | £000                  | £000                                   | £000             | £000           | £000                      | £000           |
| <b>Cost or valuation</b>   |                  |                       |  |                  |                |                           |                |
| <b>At 1 April 2022</b>   | <b>31,309</b>    | <b>1,375</b>          | <b>12,563</b>                          | <b>6,186</b>     | <b>4,033</b>   | <b>5,828</b>              | <b>61,294</b>  |
| Additions  | 917              | -                     | 834                                    | -                | 720            | 1,369                     | 3,840          |
| Accumulated depreciation/impairment written out                              | (1,032)          | -                     | -                                      | -                | (15)           | -                         | (1,047)        |
| Revaluation increases/(decreases) - revaluation reserve                      | 2,805            | -                     | -                                      | (984)            | (669)          | -                         | 1,152          |
| Revaluation increases/(decreases) - surplus/deficit on provision of services | 1,317            | -                     | -                                      | (151)            | (835)          | -                         | 331            |
| Reclassifications (to)/from investment property                              | (340)            | -                     | -                                      | -                | -              | -                         | (340)          |
| Asset reclassifications  | 7,197            | -                     | -                                      | 1,135            | (1,135)        | (7,197)                   | -              |
| Derecognition - disposals  | -                | -                     | (676)                                  | -                | -              | -                         | (676)          |
| <b>At 31 March 2023</b>  | <b>42,173</b>    | <b>1,375</b>          | <b>12,721</b>                          | <b>6,186</b>     | <b>2,099</b>   | -                         | <b>64,554</b>  |
| <b>Accumulated depreciation &amp; impairment</b>                             |                  |                       |  |                  |                |                           |                |
| <b>At 1 April 2022</b>   | -                | (593)                 | (6,745)                                | (1,285)          | -              | -                         | (8,623)        |
| Depreciation charge  | (1,033)          | (35)                  | (866)                                  | (198)            | (15)           | -                         | (2,147)        |
| Accumulated depreciation/impairment written out                              | 1,033            | -                     | 512                                    | -                | 15             | -                         | 1,560          |
| <b>At 31 March 2023</b>  | -                | <b>(628)</b>          | <b>(7,099)</b>                         | <b>(1,483)</b>   | -              | -                         | <b>(9,210)</b> |
| <b>Net book value</b>  |                  |                       |  |                  |                |                           |                |
| As at 31 March 2022  | 31,309           | 782                   | 5,818                                  | 4,901            | 4,033          | 5,828                     | 52,671         |
| As at 31 March 2023  | 42,173           | 747                   | 5,622                                  | 4,703            | 2,099          | -                         | 55,344         |



## Depreciation

Depreciation is applied on a straight line basis. No depreciation is applied to land. Where an asset includes land, the value of this element is excluded before applying depreciation. A 10% residual value is assumed in most cases, which is deducted from the depreciable amount before applying depreciation.

The following useful lives have been used:

- Land and buildings – 60 years, unless the valuation basis is depreciated replacement cost, where individual lives apply to each asset,
- Vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment – between 5 and 15 years dependent upon an assessment of the asset,
- Infrastructure – no specific life. Depreciation is based on a historical composite calculation,
- Community assets – 20 years, which may vary dependent upon an assessment of the individual asset.

## Asset Classes

For the purposes of valuation assets are grouped into classes. Assets within a class are all valued at the same time. The table below shows the different classes with the total valuation of assets within each as at 31 March 2024 and for the prior period.

| 31/03/2023<br>£000 |                                       | 31/03/2024<br>£000 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| -                  | Assets under construction             | 3,128              |
| 2,099              | Surplus assets                        | 1,816              |
|                    | <b>Land and buildings</b>             |                    |
| 3,774              | Community Centres                     | 3,916              |
| 3,542              | Car Parks                             | 3,796              |
| 2,417              | Depot                                 | 3,243              |
| 6,202              | Offices                               | 5,607              |
| 224                | Bus Station                           | 229                |
| 1,446              | Cemeteries                            | 1,263              |
| 813                | Crematorium                           | 814                |
| 18,062             | Leisure Centres                       | 18,366             |
| 3,515              | Parks and Sports grounds              | 3,737              |
| 801                | Museum                                | 840                |
| 40                 | Public toilets                        | 31                 |
| 1,337              | Other land and buildings              | 1,402              |
| 1,375              | Infrastructure assets                 | 1,375              |
| 12,721             | Vehicles, plant, furniture, equipment | 12,916             |
| 6,186              | Community assets                      | 6,237              |
| <b>64,554</b>      | <b>Total</b>                          | <b>68,716</b>      |

## Revaluations

The Council carries out a rolling programme that ensures that all property, plant and equipment required to be measured at fair value is re-valued at least every five years, the vast majority of these assets have been revalued during the financial year 2023/24. All valuations are carried out internally. Valuations of land and buildings are carried out in accordance with the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors using the BCIS indices. Valuations of vehicles, plant, and equipment are based on historic cost. The significant assumptions applied in estimating the fair values are, whether a property asset is a specialised asset, which governs its valuation treatment, whether an asset is being used for operational purposes and whether there is any impairment applicable to the asset.

Valuations over the rolling period were as follows:

|                                | Land & buildings | Infrastructure assets | Vehicles, plant, furniture & equipment | Community assets | Surplus assets | Assets under construction | Total         |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|--|------------------|----------------|---------------------------|---------------|
|                                | £000             | £000                  | £000                                   | £000             | £000           | £000                      | £000          |
| Carried at historical cost     | -                | 1,375                 | 12,916                                 | 6,237            | -              | 3,128                     | 23,656        |
| Valued at fair value at:       |                  |                       |  |                  |                |                           |               |
| 31 March 2024                  | 43,244           | -                     | -                                      | -                | 1,816          | -                         | 45,060        |
| 31 March 2023                  | -                | -                     | -                                      | -                | -              | -                         | -             |
| 31 March 2022                  | -                | -                     | -                                      | -                | -              | -                         | -             |
| <b>Total cost or valuation</b> | <b>43,244</b>    | <b>1,375</b>          | <b>12,916</b>                          | <b>6,237</b>     | <b>1,816</b>   | <b>3,128</b>              | <b>68,716</b> |

### Fair Value Measurement of Surplus Assets

Surplus assets are measured at fair value. Level 3 of the fair value hierarchy applies in estimating the fair values and the valuation technique employed is the investment basis, using the rental value and yield as unobservable inputs. Significant changes in any of these inputs will result in a lower or higher fair value. There have been no changes in any of the valuation techniques employed during the year.

## 20. Investment Properties

There are no restrictions on the Council's ability to realise the value of its investment property or on the Council's right to the receipt of income and the proceeds of disposal. The Council 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 level 3 investment properties over the year:

| 2022/23<br>£000 |   | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| <b>11,554</b>   | <b>Balance at 1 April</b>                       | <b>12,759</b>   |
| 883             | Additions - subsequent expenditure              | 905             |
| (12)            | Disposals                                       | -               |
| (6)             | Net gains/(losses) - fair value adjustments     | (159)           |
| 340             | Transfers (to)/from property, plant & equipment | -               |
| <b>12,759</b>   | <b>Balance at 31 March</b>                      | <b>13,505</b>   |

### Valuation Techniques Used to Determine Level 3 Fair Values for Investment Properties

The fair value for development sites is based on the market approach using current market conditions, sales prices and other relevant information for similar assets in the area. Local market conditions are such that similar land is not extensively purchased and sold and the level of observable inputs are not significant leading to categorisation at level 3 in the fair value hierarchy.

Other investment properties are valued using the investment approach, whereby actual or estimated rental income is capitalised to provide a capital value. The rental income is calculated by reference to actual or estimated values having regard to market evidence. The yield multiplier is based on comparable evidence. These properties are, therefore, categorised as level 3 in the fair value hierarchy as the measurement technique uses significant unobservable inputs to determine the fair value measurements. The following table shows quantitative information relating to fair value measurement of investment properties using significant unobservable inputs.

| Investment property type | 31/03/2024<br>£000 | Valuation technique used to measure fair value | Unobservable Inputs | Sensitivity |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--|---------------------|-------------|
| Shops                    | 2,542              | Investment method                              | Rental values yield | (a)         |
| Offices                  | 902                | Investment method                              | Rental values yield | (a)         |
| Industrial units         | 4,908              | Investment method                              | Rental values yield | (a)         |
| Under construction       | 1,799              | Investment method                              | Rental values yield | (a)         |
| Other                    | 3,354              | Investment method                              | Rental values yield | (a)         |
|                          | <b>13,505</b>      |  |                     |             |

(a) Significant changes in rental value, yield or capital value will result in a varied fair value

In estimating the fair value of investment properties, the highest and best use of the properties is their current use.

The fair value of investment property is measured annually at each reporting date. All valuations are carried out internally, in accordance with the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

## 21. Heritage Assets

### Reconciliation of the Carrying Value of Heritage Assets Held by the Council

The Council's collection of museum artefacts is reported in the Balance Sheet (page 30) at an insurance valuation of £1.218m, which is based on market values as assessed by an external valuer.

New items are added at cost, if purchased and at valuation, if donated, where they are significant. Other Heritage assets, i.e. outdoor structures, are not recognised on the Balance Sheet because there is no reliable cost or valuation information to enable them to be valued.

### Museum Exhibits

The museum holds a collection of around 20,000 objects, falling into the following categories:

| Subject        | Description   | %   |
|----------------|---|-----|
| Social history | Domestic and working life, childhood, civic regalia, industry, crafts in the Borough                              | 28% |
| Decorative art | Ceramics, glass, costume and textiles, furniture, furnishings   | 8%  |
| Militaria      | Costume, medals, weapons, ephemera  | 3%  |
| Fine art       | Oils, watercolours, prints, drawings, sketches of local scenes, local artists                                     | 3%  |
| Archives       | Documents, ephemera, prints, negatives, lantern slides, cine film, video, audio tapes connected to the local area | 55% |
| Archaeology    | Local excavated finds, chance finds   | 2%  |
| Numismatics    | A collection of local coinage/tokens, bank notes, commemorative medals  | 1%  |

In addition, the civic regalia and mayoral robes are kept in a secure location for use on ceremonial occasions.

### Outdoor Structures

This category of heritage assets comprises of the Queen Victoria Statue and Sergeant Fred Kite Memorial, Queens Gardens; Fountains, Nelson Place; Castle Motte, Queen Elizabeth Park; Silverdale Cemetery Gazebo; Ice House, Chesterton Memorial Park; Mining Memorials at Bateswood and Silverdale; Lyme Valley Canal Basin.

## 22. Assets Held for Sale

| 2022/23<br>£000 |  | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| 4,725           | <b>Balance at 1 April (current assets)</b>               | <b>1,925</b>    |
| (2,800)         | Assets newly classified as held for sale:<br>- Disposals | (1,925)         |
| <b>1,925</b>    | <b>Balance at 31 March (current assets)</b>              | <b>-</b>        |

## 23. Debtors

| 31/03/2023<br>£000 | Short term               | 31/03/2024<br>£000 |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 1,609              | Trade receivables        | 2,201              |
| 10,678             | Other receivable amounts | 11,879             |
| <b>12,287</b>      | <b>Total</b>             | <b>14,080</b>      |

| 31/03/2023<br>£000 | Long term                               | 31/03/2024<br>£000 |
|--------------------|---|--------------------|
| 106                | Finance lease balances outstanding      | 94                 |
| 273                | Kickstart loans (re. home improvements) | 273                |
| <b>379</b>         | <b>Total</b>                            | <b>367</b>         |

## 24. Creditors

| 31/03/2023<br>£000 |                | 31/03/2024<br>£000 |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 412                | Trade payables | 234                |
| 11,269             | Other payables | 9,715              |
| <b>11,681</b>      | <b>Total</b>   | <b>9,949</b>       |

## 25. Provisions

|                                 | Short term           | Long term                |             |                      | Total long term |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-----------------|
|                                 | NNDR appeals<br>£000 | Insurance claims<br>£000 | MMI<br>£000 | NNDR appeals<br>£000 | £000            |
| <b>Balance at 1 April 2022</b>  | <b>394</b>           | <b>146</b>               | <b>4</b>    | <b>1,458</b>         | <b>1,608</b>    |
| Additional provisions made      | 907                  | 46                       | -           | -                    | 46              |
| Amounts used                    | -                    | (46)                     | -           | (973)                | (1,019)         |
| <b>Balance at 1 April 2023</b>  | <b>1,301</b>         | <b>146</b>               | <b>4</b>    | <b>485</b>           | <b>635</b>      |
| Additional provisions made      | 622                  | 46                       | -           | -                    | 46              |
| Amounts used                    | -                    | (15)                     | (2)         | (440)                | (457)           |
| <b>Balance at 31 March 2024</b> | <b>1,923</b>         | <b>177</b>               | <b>2</b>    | <b>45</b>            | <b>224</b>      |

The NDR appeals provision provides for the Council's element of refunds payable following successful appeals in relation to the rateable value of business rates payer's properties.

The insurance claims provision has been created to meet the costs of claims that are likely to be settled but the actual settlement date is uncertain.

The MMI provision has been created to provide for possible claw-back (levy) of sums paid out by the administrator of Municipal Mutual Insurance (MMI), in the event of MMI becoming insolvent.

## 26. Unusable Reserves

Balances in relation to the Council's unusable reserves are shown below:

| 31/03/2023<br>£000 |                                    | 31/03/2024<br>£000 |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
|                    | <b>Capital:</b>                    |                    |
| 17,430             | Revaluation reserve                | 16,740             |
| 43,428             | Capital adjustment account         | 46,982             |
| 380                | Deferred capital receipts reserve  | 368                |
|                    | <b>Revenue:</b>                    |                    |
| (3,010)            | Pensions reserve                   | 13,820             |
| 713                | Collection fund adjustment account | (489)              |
| (194)              | Accumulated absences account       | (146)              |
| <b>58,747</b>      | <b>Total unusable reserves</b>     | <b>77,275</b>      |

### Revaluation Reserve

The revaluation reserve records unrealised gains in the value of property, plant and equipment. The reserve increases when assets are revalued upwards, and decreases as assets are depreciated or assets are revalued downwards or disposed of. 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.

| 2022/23<br>£000 |  | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| <b>16,814</b>   | <b>Balance at 1 April</b>  | <b>17,430</b>   |
|                 | - Adjustment re. Asset Held for Sale   | (1,540)         |
| 3,408           | Upward revaluation of assets not charged to the surplus/deficit on the provision of services                       | 2,453           |
| (2,256)         | Downward revaluation of assets & impairment losses not charged to the surplus/deficit on the provision of services | (949)           |
| (536)           | Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation  | (614)           |
|                 | - Accumulated gains on assets sold or scrapped   | (40)            |
| <b>17,430</b>   | <b>Balance at 31 March</b>   | <b>16,740</b>   |

### Capital Adjustment Account

The capital adjustment account is used to reconcile the different rates at which assets are depreciated under proper accounting practice and are financed through the capital controls system. Statute requires that the charge to the General Fund is determined by the capital controls system. 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.

The following table shows the disclosure to the revaluation reserve regarding the amendment between the revaluation reserve and the capital adjustment account.

| 2022/23<br>£000 |   | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| 42,872          | <b>Balance at 1 April</b>   | 43,428          |
|                 | <b>Reversal of items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income &amp; Expenditure Statement:</b> |                 |
| (2,147)         | Charges for depreciation/impairment of non-current assets   | (2,588)         |
| (6)             | Amortisation of intangible Assets   | (6)             |
| (2,764)         | REFCUS expenditure  | (4,882)         |
| 1,463           | REFCUS income   | 4,752           |
| (2,977)         | Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal                                    | (2,347)         |
| (6)             | Movements in the market value of investment properties debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement        | (159)           |
| 331             | Revaluation losses on property, plant and equipment   | (708)           |
| 2,874           | Application of capital grants to capital financing  | 4,585           |
| -               | Revenue contributions to capital financing  | -               |
| (8)             | Capital element of finance leases where Council is the lessor   | (12)            |
| 44              | Minimum revenue provision contribution  | 89              |
| <b>(3,196)</b>  |   | <b>(1,276)</b>  |
|                 | <b>Capital financing applied in the year:</b>   |                 |
| 3,208           | Use of the capital receipts reserve to finance new capital expenditure  | 2,624           |
| -               | Application of grants to capital financing from the capital grants received in advance account  | -               |
| 8               | Capital element of finance leases where Council is the lessor   | 12              |
|                 | <b>Adjusting amounts written out of revaluation reserve</b>   |                 |
| -               | Adjustment re. Asset Held for Sale  | 1,540           |
| 536             | Difference between fair value depreciation/historical cost depreciation   | 614             |
| -               | Accumulated gains on assets sold or scrapped  | 40              |
| <b>556</b>      |   | <b>3,554</b>    |
| <b>43,428</b>   | <b>Balance at 31 March</b>  | <b>46,982</b>   |

### Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve

The deferred capital receipts reserve holds the gains recognised on the disposal of non-current assets but for which cash settlement has yet to take place. Statute requires that the Council does not treat these gains as usable for financing new capital expenditure until they are backed by cash receipts. When the deferred cash settlement takes place, amounts are transferred to the capital receipts reserve.

| 2022/23<br>£000 |   | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| 388             | <b>Balance at 1 April</b>   | 380             |
| (8)             | (8) Capital element of finance leases where Council is the lessor | (12)            |
| <b>380</b>      | <b>Balance at 31 March</b>  | <b>368</b>      |

### Pension Reserve

The pension reserve is used to reconcile payments made for the year to statutory pension schemes in accordance with the schemes requirements, and the net change in the Council's recognised liability under the Code's adoption of IAS19 – *Employee Benefits*. A transfer is made to or from the pensions reserve to ensure that the charge to the General Fund reflects the amount required to be raised in taxation. For example, the debit balance on the reserve shows that the Council has made commitments to fund pensions that the Government has permitted it to fund from contributions to be made in future years.

| 2022/23<br>£000 |  | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| <b>(45,239)</b> | <b>Balance at 1 April</b>  | <b>(3,010)</b>  |
| 44,940          | Remeasurements of the net defined benefit liability/(asset)  | 14,540          |
| (6,824)         | Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the surplus or deficit on the provision of services | (2,844)         |
| 4,113           | Employers pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year                                       | 5,134           |
| <b>(3,010)</b>  | <b>Balance at 31 March</b>   | <b>13,820</b>   |

### Collection Fund Adjustment Account

The collection fund adjustment account is used to reconcile differences arising from the recognition of Council Tax and non domestic rates income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to those amounts required to be charged by statute to the General Fund. For example, the debit balance on the Account shows that less tax has been collected on behalf of the Council and the precepting bodies (and central government in England for non domestic rates income) than an authority is permitted to transfer out of the Collection Fund by 31 March.

| 2022/23<br>£000 |  | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| <b>(3,838)</b>  | <b>Balance at 1 April</b>  | <b>713</b>      |
| 30              | Amount by which council tax income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from council tax income calculated for the year               | (36)            |
| 4,521           | Amount by which non domestic rates income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from non domestic rates income calculated for the year | (1,166)         |
| <b>713</b>      | <b>Balance at 31 March</b>   | <b>(489)</b>    |

### Accumulated Absences Account

The accumulated absences account absorbs the differences that would 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.

| 2022/23<br>£000 |   | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| <b>(497)</b>    | <b>Balance at 1 April</b>   | <b>(194)</b>    |
| 497             | Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year | 194             |
| (194)           | Amounts accrued at the end of the current year                              | (146)           |
| <b>(194)</b>    | <b>Balance at 31 March</b>  | <b>(146)</b>    |

## 27. Capital Expenditure and Capital Financing

The total amount of capital expenditure incurred in the year is shown in the table below (including the value of assets acquired under finance leases), together with the resources that have been used to finance it. Where capital expenditure is to be financed in future years by charges to revenue as assets are used by the Council, the expenditure results in an increase in the capital financing requirement (CFR), a measure of the capital expenditure incurred historically by the Council that has yet to be financed. The CFR is analysed in the table below.

| 2022/23<br>£000 |   | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| 10,726          | <b>Opening capital financing requirement</b>                | 10,682          |
|                 | <b>Capital investment</b>                                   |                 |
| 3,840           | Property, plant & equipment                                 | 5,661           |
| 883             | Investment properties                                       | 905             |
| 58              | Intangible assets   | 182             |
| 2,764           | REFCUS  | 4,882           |
|                 | <b>Sources of finance</b>                                   |                 |
| (3,208)         | Capital receipts  | (2,624)         |
| (4,337)         | Government grants & other contributions                     | (9,337)         |
| -               | Revenue contributions                                       | -               |
| (44)            | Minimum revenue provision                                   | (89)            |
| 10,682          | <b>Closing capital financing requirement</b>                | 10,262          |
|                 | <b>Explanation of movements in year</b>                     |                 |
| -               | Capital expenditure financed from capital receipts          | (331)           |
| (44)            | <b>Increase/(decrease) in capital financing requirement</b> | (420)           |

## 28. Impairment Losses

The Council has undertaken an impairment review of its non-current assets at 31 March 2024, no impairment was chargeable.

## 29. Related Parties

The Council is required to disclose material transactions with related parties - bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Council or to be controlled or influenced by the Council. Disclosure of these transactions allows readers to assess the extent to which the Council might have been constrained in its ability to operate independently or might have secured the ability to limit another party's ability to bargain freely with the Council.

### Central Government

The UK government has effective control over the general operations of the Council – it is responsible for providing the statutory framework, within which the Council operates, provides funding in the form of grants and prescribes the terms of many of the transactions that the Council has (e.g. Council Tax bills, housing benefits).

### Members

Members of the Council have direct control over the Council's financial and operating policies, a number of Members are also Members of Staffordshire County Council. The total of Members' allowances paid is shown in Note 15 (page 51).

During 2023/24 one Member declared involvement with the New Victoria Theatre, that received £36,649 from the Council, of which £25,000 related to an annual cultural grant. This grant was in line with the budget approved by Full Council for 2023/24.

### Officers

A Council Officer has declared that their spouse is a director of the Philip Astley Project CIC that received £50,762 from the Council. The Officer is involved with the Kidsgrove Town Deal, and not the Newcastle Town Deal, and therefore has no direct influence over the project.

No further payments have been made to any entities that have a relationship with Council Officers during 2023/24.



## 30. Defined Benefit Pension Schemes

### Participation in Pension Schemes

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

The Council participates in:

- The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), administered locally by Staffordshire County Council - this has a career average revalue earnings (CARE) benefit design, meaning that the Council and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pensions liabilities with investment assets,
- Arrangements for the award of discretionary post-retirement benefits upon early retirement - this is an unfunded defined benefit arrangement, under which liabilities are recognised when awards are made. However, there are no investment assets built up to meet these pensions liabilities, and cash has to be generated to meet actual pensions payments as they fall due,
- The Staffordshire Pension Scheme is operated under the regulatory framework for the LGPS and the governance of the scheme is the responsibility of the Pensions Committee of Staffordshire County Council. Policy is determined in accordance with the Pension Fund Regulations,
- The principal risks to the Council of the scheme are the longevity assumptions, statutory changes to the scheme, structural changes to the scheme (i.e. large-scale withdrawals from the scheme), changes to inflation, bond yields and the performance of the equity investments held by the scheme. These are mitigated to a certain extent by the statutory requirements to charge to the General Fund the amounts as described in the accounting policies note.

Formal actuarial valuations are carried out every three years, where each employer's assets and liabilities are calculated on a detailed basis, using individual member data, for cash contribution setting purposes. The 31 March 2022 formal valuations for English and Welsh Local Government Pension Scheme Funds were concluded by 31 March 2023.

The reconciliation of the balance sheet from 31 March 2023 to 31 March 2024 can be seen in the 'Transactions relating to post-employment benefits' table below, in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (re-measurement of the defined benefit liability/asset) and in the Balance Sheet (pension liability and pension reserve).

### Transactions Relating to Post-Employment Benefits

The cost of retirement benefits is recognised in the reported cost of services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are paid as pensions. However, the charge that is required to be made against Council Tax is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of post-employment benefits is reversed out of the General Fund via the Movement in Reserves Statement (page 29). 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:

| 2022/23  |                              |   | 2023/24         |                              |
|--|------------------------------|---|-----------------|------------------------------|
| LGPS<br>£000   | Unfunded<br>benefits<br>£000 |   | LGPS<br>£000    | Unfunded<br>benefits<br>£000 |
| <b>Comprehensive Income &amp; Expenditure Statement</b>                    |                              |   |                 |                              |
| <b>Cost of services:</b>   |                              |   |                 |                              |
| 5,583  | -                            | Current service cost  | 2,763           |                              |
| -  | (400)                        | Unfunded benefit contributions  |                 | (430)                        |
| <b>Financing and investment income &amp; expenditure</b>                   |                              |   |                 |                              |
| 1,241  | -                            | Net interest expense  | 81              | -                            |
| <b>6,824</b>   | <b>(400)</b>                 | <b>Total pension benefit charged to the surplus/deficit on provision of services</b>              | <b>2,844</b>    | <b>(430)</b>                 |
| <b>Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability comprising:</b>      |                              |   |                 |                              |
| 7,319  | -                            | (Return)/loss on plan assets  | (11,899)        | -                            |
| (4,364)  | -                            | Changes in demographic assumptions  | (964)           | -                            |
| (67,447)   | -                            | Changes in financial assumptions  | (6,708)         | -                            |
| 19,552   | -                            | Other experience  | 5,031           | -                            |
| <b>(44,940)</b>  | <b>-</b>                     | <b>Total pension benefit charged to Comprehensive Income &amp; Expenditure Statement</b>          | <b>(14,540)</b> | <b>-</b>                     |
| <b>Movement in Reserves Statement</b>                                      |                              |   |                 |                              |
| (6,824)  | 400                          | Reversal of net charges made to the surplus/deficit on provision of services for pension benefits | (2,844)         | 430                          |
| <b>Actual amount charged against the General Fund balance for pensions</b> |                              |   |                 |                              |
| 4,113  | -                            | Employers' contributions payable to scheme  | 5,134           |                              |
| -  | (400)                        | Retirement benefits payable to pensioners   |                 | (430)                        |
| <b>(2,711)</b>   | <b>-</b>                     |   | <b>2,290</b>    | <b>-</b>                     |

### Pensions Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

| 2022/23<br>£000 |  | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| (154,630)       | Present value of defined benefit obligation-funded           | (155,293)       |
| (4,512)         | Present value of defined benefit obligation-unfunded         | (4,373)         |
| 156,132         | Fair value of plan assets                                    | 173,486         |
| <b>(3,010)</b>  | <b>Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation</b> | <b>13,820</b>   |

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

| 2022/23        |                                       | 2023/24        |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| £000           |                                       | £000           |
| 207,352        | Present value of funded liabilities   | 154,630        |
| 5,492          | Present value of unfunded liabilities | 4,512          |
| <b>212,844</b> | <b>Opening position as at 1 April</b> | <b>159,142</b> |
| 5,583          | Current service cost                  | 2,763          |
| 5,735          | Interest cost                         | 7,458          |
| 791            | Contributions by scheme participants  | 820            |
|                | <b>Remeasurements:</b>                |                |
| (67,447)       | Changes in financial assumptions      | (6,708)        |
| (4,364)        | Changes in demographic assumptions    | (964)          |
| 12,973         | Other experience                      | 5,033          |
| (6,573)        | Benefits paid                         | (7,448)        |
| (400)          | Unfunded benefits paid                | (430)          |
| <b>159,142</b> | <b>Closing balance as at 31 March</b> | <b>159,666</b> |
| 154,630        | Present value of funded liabilities   | 155,293        |
| 4,512          | Present value of unfunded liabilities | 4,373          |

## Local Government Pensions Scheme Assets Comprised

| 2022/23                                 |   |                         | 2023/24                                 |   |
|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|
| Quoted Prices in Active Markets<br>£000 | Quoted Prices not in Active Markets<br>£000 |                         | Quoted Prices in Active Markets<br>£000 | Quoted Prices not in Active Markets<br>£000 |
|   |   | <b>Equities:</b>        |   |   |
| 5,256                                   | -   | Consumer                | 4,698                                   | -   |
| 4,290                                   | -   | Manufacturing           | 2,341                                   | -   |
| 1,178                                   | -   | Energy & utilities      | 1,068                                   | -   |
| 5,595                                   | -   | Financial               | 6,374                                   | -   |
| 5,908                                   | -   | Health & care           | 4,804                                   | -   |
| 6,795                                   | -   | Information technology  | 7,673                                   | -   |
| 29,022                                  | -   |                         | 26,958                                  | -   |
|   |   | <b>Bonds</b>            |   |   |
| 9,172                                   | -   | Corporate (investment)  | 12,914                                  | -   |
| 9,172                                   | -   |                         | 12,914                                  | -   |
|   |   | <b>Property</b>         |   |   |
| -                                       | 12,503                                      | UK                      | -                                       | 12,806                                      |
| -                                       | 12,503                                      |                         | -                                       | 12,806                                      |
|   |   | <b>Investment funds</b> |   |   |
| 74,169                                  | -   | Equities                | 78,614                                  | -   |
| 9,772                                   | -   | Bonds                   | 13,615                                  | -   |
| -                                       | 58  | Hedge funds             | -                                       | -   |
| -                                       | 416   | Infrastructure          | -                                       | 7,539                                       |
| -                                       | 7,165                                       | Other                   | -                                       | 9,088                                       |
| 83,941                                  | 7,639                                       |                         | 92,229                                  | 16,627                                      |
| -                                       | 7,736                                       | Private equity          | -                                       | 9,131                                       |
| 6,119                                   | -   | Cash/cash equivalents   | 2,821                                   | -   |
| <b>128,254</b>                          | <b>27,878</b>                               | <b>Total assets</b>     | <b>134,922</b>                          | <b>38,564</b>                               |

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

| 2022/23<br>£000 |   | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| 167,605         | <b>Opening value of scheme assets</b>   | 156,132         |
|                 | <b>Remeasurement gain/(loss):</b>       |                 |
| 4,494           | Interest Income on plan assets          | 7,370           |
| (6,579)         | Other experience                        | 9               |
| (7,319)         | Return on assets excluding net interest | 11,899          |
|                 | <b>Actuarial gains/(losses)</b>         |                 |
| 3,713           | Employer contributions                  | 4,704           |
| 791             | Contributions by scheme participants    | 820             |
| (6,573)         | Benefits paid                           | (7,448)         |
| <b>156,132</b>  | <b>Closing balance at 31 March</b>      | <b>173,486</b>  |

## 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, salary levels, etc. Both the Local Government Pension Scheme and Discretionary Benefits liabilities have been assessed by Hymans Robertson, an independent firm of actuaries, estimates for the County Council Fund being based on the latest valuation of the scheme as at 31 March 2022. The principal assumptions used by the actuary have been:

| 2022/23 |  | 2023/24 |
|---------|--|---------|
| LGPS    |  | LGPS    |
|         | <b>Longevity at 65 - current pensioners (years):</b> |         |
| 20.6    | Men  | 20.6    |
| 23.9    | Women  | 23.6    |
|         | <b>Longevity at 65 - future pensioners (years):</b>  |         |
| 21.3    | Men  | 21.3    |
| 25.7    | Women  | 25.4    |
| 3.50%   | Rate of increase in salaries                         | 3.30%   |
| 3.00%   | Rate of increase in pensions (CPI)                   | 2.80%   |
| 4.75%   | Rate for discounting scheme liabilities              | 4.80%   |

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. The sensitivity analysis below is based on possible changes of the assumptions occurring and assumes for each change that the assumption analysed changes while all the 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.

|  | <u>Increase in defined benefit obligation £000</u> |
|--|--|
| 0.1% decrease in real discount rate              | 2,632  |
| 1 year increase in member life expectancy        | 6,387  |
| 0.1% increase in the salary increase rate        | 112  |
| 0.1% increase in the pension increase rate (CPI) | 2,566  |

## Impact on the Council's Cash Flows

The objectives of the scheme are to keep employers' contributions at as constant a rate as possible. Staffordshire County Council has agreed a strategy with the scheme's actuary to achieve a funding strategy to recoup the past deficit over the next 20 years. Funding levels are monitored on an annual basis.

The total contribution estimated to be made to the Local Government Pension Scheme by the Council in the year to 31 March 2025 is £4.269m.

## 31. Contingent Assets and Liabilities

The Council has recognised a contingent asset in relation to ongoing legal action that is being co-ordinated by the Local Government Association against a vehicle supplier cartel. The claim is for losses suffered as a result of a cartel affecting the prices of medium and heavy-duty trucks purchased between approximately 1997 and 2011. All the major truck manufacturers were found guilty of participation in the cartel. The Council will be seeking to recover the extra amounts that it paid for trucks as a result of the cartel inflating prices. This may amount to £0.150m.

Contingent liabilities as at 31 March 2024 are:

### (a) Municipal Mutual Insurance

In 1992/93 the Council's insurers, Municipal Mutual Insurance, ceased accepting business. The Scheme of Arrangement that was established to ensure an orderly wind up of the company determined that a levy could be made on the Council. The exact amount cannot be quantified, although the maximum is £782,615, of which £183,154 has been paid to the administrator. This leaves a maximum contingent liability of £599,461.

### (b) Housing Stock Transfer Warranty

Liabilities in relation to a 40 year warranty given by the Council in respect of the transfer of its housing stock to a registered social landlord in February 2000 could arise. The amount of the potential liability cannot be quantified but could amount to several million pounds.

## 32. Financial Instruments

### Categories and Fair Values of Financial Instruments

The following categories of financial instruments are carried in the Balance Sheet at amortised cost (page 30); the table below also shows the fair values of these financial instruments:

| 2022/23                 |                    | Measured at amortised cost   | 2023/24                 |                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Carrying amount<br>£000 | Fair value<br>£000 |                              | Carrying amount<br>£000 | Fair value<br>£000 |
| 1,889                   | 1,889              | <b>Financial Liabilities</b> |                         |                    |
| 55                      | 55                 | Creditors                    | 3,446                   | 3,446              |
|                         |                    | Borrowings                   | 54                      | 54                 |
|                         |                    | <b>Financial Assets</b>      |                         |                    |
| 17,000                  | 17,000             | Short term investments       | 17,500                  | 17,500             |
| 4,327                   | 4,327              | Debtors                      | 4,358                   | 4,358              |
| 4,381                   | 4,381              | Cash/cash equivalents        | 593                     | 593                |

Debtors/Creditors vary from the balance sheet as statutory debtors and payments in advance (£9.722m in 2023/24 and £7.960m in 2022/23) and statutory creditors and receipts in advance (£6.503m in 2023/24 and £9.792m in 2022/23) are excluded from the classification of financial instruments.

### Income, Expenses, Gains and Losses

| 2022/23                   |                        |               |  | 2023/24                   |                        |                |
|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------|--|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Expenses & losses<br>£000 | Income & gains<br>£000 | Total<br>£000 |  | Expenses & losses<br>£000 | Income & gains<br>£000 | Total<br>£000  |
| -                         | (606)                  | (606)         | Interest income on financial assets measured at amortised cost | -                         | (1,426)                | (1,426)        |
| -                         | <b>(606)</b>           | <b>(606)</b>  | <b>Total income in provision of services</b>                   | -                         | <b>(1,426)</b>         | <b>(1,426)</b> |

### 33. Nature and Extent of Risks Arising from Financial Instruments

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

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

The Council's overall risk management programme focuses on the unpredictability of financial markets and aims to minimise adverse effects on the resources available. Risk management is carried out under policies approved by the Council in the annual Treasury Management Strategy. The Council 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 risks arise from deposits with banks and financial institutions, as well as credit exposures to the Council's customers. This risk is minimised through the Annual Investment Strategy, which requires that deposits are not made with financial institutions unless they meet identified minimum credit criteria.

The credit criteria in respect of financial assets held by the Council are as summarised below:

- Investment counterparties are assessed as to their suitability in relation to credit ratings supplied by the main ratings agencies, with the additional consideration of credit default swap data. A limit is placed on the amount which can in total be placed with individual counterparties and categories of counterparties,
- Customers for goods and services are assessed, taking into account their financial position, past experience and other factors, with individual credit limits being set where considered necessary. Credit references are obtained where contracts are entered into,
- The Council's policy regarding the write off of debtors is that all possible recovery procedures must have been exhausted, significant resources are committed to the recovery of debtors by the Finance service. Indicators that are considered when write offs are recommended include insolvency or other legal proceedings being commenced and the death of the debtor.

The following significant inputs, assumptions and estimation techniques have been used in calculating the Council's approach to impairment loss allowances:

- Debtors relating to public sector organisations are not impaired,
- A provision matrix is utilised to estimate expected credit losses based on the 'age' of debtors. The matrix identifies the relationship between the age of the Council's debtors and the risk of non-payment based on historical losses,
- Any reasonable and supportable information relating to individual debtors in terms of past events, current conditions and forecasts of future economic conditions that is available without undue cost or effort.

The changes in the lifetime expected credit loss allowance for debtors measured at amortised costs are as follows:

| 2022/23<br>£000 |                                   | 2023/24<br>£000 |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 188             | <b>Balance at 1 April</b>         | <b>122</b>      |
| (99)            | Amounts written (off)/on          | 16              |
| 33              | Changes in models/risk parameters | 59              |
| <b>122</b>      | <b>Balance at 31 March</b>        | <b>197</b>      |

## Liquidity Risk

The Council has a comprehensive cash flow management system that seeks to ensure that cash is available as needed. If unexpected movements happen, the Council has access to borrowing from the money markets and the Public Works Loans Board. There is no significant risk that it will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments. The maturity analysis of borrowing is as follows:

| 31/03/2023<br>£000 |                    | 31/03/2024<br>£000 |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 55                 | Less than one year | 54                 |
| <b>55</b>          |                    | <b>54</b>          |

All trade creditors are due to be paid in less than one year.

## Interest Rate Risk

The Council is exposed to risk in terms of its exposure to interest rate movements on its investments (no long term money market borrowing at present). Movements in interest rates have a complex impact on the Council. For instance, a rise in interest rates would increase interest income.

The Council does not have any investment in equity shares, joint ventures or local industry. Consequently, it is not exposed to losses arising from movements in share prices. The Council has no financial assets or a liability denominated in foreign currencies and has no exposure to loss arising from movements in exchange rates.

## 34. Leases

### Council as Lessee

#### Finance and Operating Leases

As at 31 March 2024 the Council has no requirement to commit to making minimum payments under finance leases. Its commitment to making payments under operating leases is immaterial.

### Council as Lessor

#### Finance Leases

The Council has leased out 3 properties on a finance lease basis, with terms remaining ranging from 25 to 75 years.

The Council has a gross investment in these leases, made up of the minimum lease payments expected to be received over the remaining term and the residual value anticipated for properties when the leases come to an end. The minimum lease payments comprise settlement of the long-term debtor for the interest in the properties acquired by the lessee and finance income that will be earned by the Council whilst the debtor remains outstanding. The gross investment is made up of:

| 31/03/2023<br>£000 |                                      | 31/03/2024<br>£000 |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 12                 | Current                              | 12                 |
| 106                | Non-current                          | 94                 |
| 287                | Unearned finance income              | 263                |
| <b>405</b>         | <b>Gross investment in the lease</b> | <b>369</b>         |

The gross investment in the lease and the minimum lease payments will be received over the following periods:

| 31/03/2023                     |                                   |   | 31/03/2024                     |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Minimum lease payments<br>£000 | Finance lease liabilities<br>£000 |   | Minimum lease payments<br>£000 | Finance lease liabilities<br>£000 |
| 36                             | 24                                | Not later than one year                   | 36                             | 24                                |
| 143                            | 95                                | Later than one year, less than five years | 143                            | 95                                |
| 226                            | 168                               | Later than five years                     | 190                            | 144                               |
| <b>405</b>                     | <b>287</b>                        |   | <b>369</b>                     | <b>263</b>                        |

### Operating Leases

The Council leases out property and equipment under operating leases for the purposes of providing community services, such as sports facilities and community centres; to gain income from its investment properties; and for economic development purposes to provide accommodation for local businesses.

The future minimum lease payments receivable under non-cancellable leases in future years are:

| 31/03/2023<br>£000 |   | 31/03/2024<br>£000 |
|--------------------|---|--------------------|
| 408                | Not later than one year                   | 436                |
| 426                | Later than one year, less than five years | 553                |
| 816                | Later than five years                     | 770                |
| <b>1,650</b>       |   | <b>1,759</b>       |



## Collection Fund

The Collection Fund reflects the statutory obligation for billing authorities to maintain a separate Collection Fund. The statement shows the transactions of the billing authority in relation to the collection from taxpayers and distribution to local authorities and the government of Council Tax and non domestic rates.

| 2022/23<br>Council<br>Tax<br>£000 | 2022/23<br>Business<br>Rates<br>£000 | 2022/23<br>Total<br>£000 |  | 2023/24<br>Council<br>Tax<br>£000 | 2023/24<br>Business<br>Rates<br>£000 | 2023/24<br>Total<br>£000 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| (74,430)                          | -                                    | (74,430)                 | <b>Income</b>                                |                                   |                                      |                          |
| -                                 | -                                    | -                        | Council Tax Payers                           | (78,052)                          |                                      | (78,052)                 |
| -                                 | -                                    | -                        | Household Support Fund                       | (212)                             |                                      | (212)                    |
| -                                 | (32,710)                             | (32,710)                 | Business Rates Payers                        |                                   | (34,452)                             | (34,452)                 |
| -                                 | (50)                                 | (50)                     | Transitional Protection                      |                                   | (2,736)                              | (2,736)                  |
|                                   |                                      |                          | <b>Transfer of previous years deficit</b>    |                                   |                                      |                          |
| -                                 | (4,810)                              | (4,810)                  | - Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council       |                                   |                                      | -                        |
| -                                 | (1,082)                              | (1,082)                  | - Staffordshire County Council               |                                   |                                      | -                        |
| -                                 | -                                    | -                        | - Office of Police & Crime Commissioner      |                                   |                                      | -                        |
| -                                 | (120)                                | (120)                    | - Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority    |                                   |                                      | -                        |
| -                                 | (6,012)                              | (6,012)                  | - Central Government                         |                                   |                                      | -                        |
| <b>(74,430)</b>                   | <b>(44,784)</b>                      | <b>(119,214)</b>         | <b>Total income</b>                          | <b>(78,264)</b>                   | <b>(37,188)</b>                      | <b>(115,452)</b>         |
|                                   |                                      |                          | <b>Expenditure</b>                           |                                   |                                      |                          |
|                                   |                                      |                          | <b>Council Tax precepts</b>                  |                                   |                                      |                          |
| 8,570                             | -                                    | 8,570                    | - Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council       | 8,871                             |                                      | 8,871                    |
| 52,784                            | -                                    | 52,784                   | - Staffordshire County Council               | 56,053                            |                                      | 56,053                   |
| 9,363                             | -                                    | 9,363                    | - Office of Police & Crime Commissioner      | 9,927                             |                                      | 9,927                    |
| 3,027                             | -                                    | 3,027                    | - Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority    | 3,210                             |                                      | 3,210                    |
|                                   |                                      |                          | <b>Business Rates apportionment</b>          |                                   |                                      |                          |
| -                                 | 13,386                               | 13,386                   | - Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council       |                                   | 15,159                               | 15,159                   |
| -                                 | 3,012                                | 3,012                    | - Staffordshire County Council               |                                   | 3,411                                | 3,411                    |
| -                                 | 334                                  | 334                      | - Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority    |                                   | 379                                  | 379                      |
| -                                 | 16,733                               | 16,733                   | - Central Government                         |                                   | 18,949                               | 18,949                   |
|                                   |                                      |                          | <b>Other expenditure</b>                     |                                   |                                      |                          |
| -                                 | 137                                  | 137                      | Cost of Collection                           |                                   | 139                                  | 139                      |
| 191                               | 44                                   | 235                      | Provision for Bad Debts                      | 202                               | 179                                  | 381                      |
| -                                 | (166)                                | (166)                    | Provision for Appeals                        |                                   | 454                                  | 454                      |
|                                   |                                      |                          | <b>Transfer of previous years surplus</b>    |                                   |                                      |                          |
| 27                                | -                                    | 27                       | - Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council       | 37                                | 574                                  | 611                      |
| 201                               | -                                    | 201                      | - Staffordshire County Council               | 237                               | 129                                  | 366                      |
| 36                                | -                                    | 36                       | - Office of Police & Crime Commissioner      | 43                                |                                      | 43                       |
| 11                                | -                                    | 11                       | - Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority    | 13                                | 14                                   | 27                       |
| -                                 | -                                    | -                        | - Central Government                         | -                                 | 717                                  | 717                      |
| <b>74,210</b>                     | <b>33,480</b>                        | <b>107,690</b>           | <b>Total expenditure</b>                     | <b>78,593</b>                     | <b>40,104</b>                        | <b>118,697</b>           |
| <b>(220)</b>                      | <b>(11,304)</b>                      | <b>(11,524)</b>          | <b>Deficit/(surplus) for the year</b>        | <b>329</b>                        | <b>2,916</b>                         | <b>3,245</b>             |
| <b>(53)</b>                       | <b>9,595</b>                         | <b>9,542</b>             | <b>Balance brought forward at 1 April</b>    | <b>(273)</b>                      | <b>(1,709)</b>                       | <b>(1,982)</b>           |
| <b>(220)</b>                      | <b>(11,304)</b>                      | <b>(11,524)</b>          | <b>Deficit/(surplus) for the year</b>        | <b>329</b>                        | <b>2,916</b>                         | <b>3,245</b>             |
| <b>(273)</b>                      | <b>(1,709)</b>                       | <b>(1,982)</b>           | <b>Balance carried forward at 31 March</b>   | <b>56</b>                         | <b>1,207</b>                         | <b>1,263</b>             |
|                                   |                                      |                          | <b>Allocation of Collection Fund balance</b> |                                   |                                      |                          |
| (30)                              | (683)                                | (713)                    | - Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council       | 6                                 | 483                                  | 489                      |
| (196)                             | (154)                                | (350)                    | - Staffordshire County Council               | 41                                | 109                                  | 150                      |
| (11)                              | (17)                                 | (28)                     | - Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority    | 2                                 | 12                                   | 14                       |
| -                                 | (855)                                | (855)                    | - Central Government                         | -                                 | 603                                  | 603                      |
| (36)                              | -                                    | (36)                     | - Office of Police & Crime Commissioner      | 7                                 | -                                    | 7                        |
| <b>(273)</b>                      | <b>(1,709)</b>                       | <b>(1,982)</b>           |  | <b>56</b>                         | <b>1,207</b>                         | <b>1,263</b>             |

## Notes

### 1. Business Rates

The Council collects business rates in its area based on non domestic rateable values (£101.912m at 31 March 2024 and £90.595m at 31 March 2023) multiplied by a uniform business rate. The rate is specified by the Government, in 2023/24 the rate was 51.2p, with a reduction for “small businesses” to 49.9p on application (unchanged from 2022/23).

The administration of business rates aims to give Councils a greater incentive to grow businesses but also results in financial risks relating to volatility in appeals and non-collection of rates. Local authorities retain a proportion of the total collectable rates due, in the case of Newcastle-under-Lyme the local share is 40%. The remainder is distributed to preceptors, these are Central Government (50%), Staffordshire County Council (9%) and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority (1% share).

The business rates shares payable for 2023/24 were estimated, via the NNDR1 return, before the start of the financial year as £18.949m to Central Government, £3.411m to Staffordshire County Council, £0.379m to Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and £15.159m to Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

The total of these sums (£37.898m) has been paid in 2023/24 and charged to the collection fund in year.

The actual business rates payable for 2023/24, as per the NNDR3 return, when taking into account the cost of collection, provisions for appeals and bad debts and transitional protection was calculated to be £36.416m.

The variance between the estimated business rates shared between Central Government, Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council as per the NNDR1 return (£37.898m) and the actual business rates payable per the NNDR3 return (£36.416m) is £1.482m - a deficit to the collection fund for 2023/24 due to a number of revaluations downwards in terms of rateable value.

In addition to the business rates shares payable for 2023/24, the estimated 2022/23 surplus declared in January 2023 regarding business rates of £1.434m was repaid to the Council, Central Government, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority from the collection fund.

The actual 2022/23 surplus was calculated to be £1.709m, therefore there remains £0.275m in the collection fund balance carried forward which is payable from the Collection Fund to the Council, Central Government, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority in relation to 2022/23.

Taking into account the remaining 2022/23 amount to be paid back to the preceptors and the 2023/24 deficit, the business rates collection fund has a deficit of £1.207m as at 31 March 2024.

Of the deficit, the Council's share amounts to £0.483m.

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 their baseline amount. Tariffs due from authorities payable to Central Government are used to finance the top ups to those authorities who do not achieve their targeted baseline funding. In this respect Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council paid a tariff in 2023/24 to the value of £10.663m.

### 2. Council Tax

Council Tax Income is derived from charges raised, in eight valuation bands, according to the value of residential properties. Individual charges are calculated by estimating the amount of income required to be taken from the Collection Fund by Staffordshire County Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council for the forthcoming year and dividing this by the Council Tax base. The average Band D tax in 2023/24 of £2,030.47 compared with £1,940.46 in 2022/23. Multiplication of this amount by the proportions set out in the Council Tax Base table below gives the amount due for a property in each band.

The Council Tax base for 2023/24 was 38,099 (37,668 in 2022/23), this was derived as follows:

| Band & value range              | Number of dwellings | After discounts/ exemptions | Ratio to band D | Band D equivalents |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Band A-                         | -                   | 66                          | 5/9             | 37                 |
| Band A (Up to £40,000)          | 24,738              | 16,483                      | 6/9             | 10,989             |
| Band B (£40,001 - £52,000)      | 10,734              | 8,845                       | 7/9             | 6,879              |
| Band C (£52,001 - £ 68,000)     | 11,554              | 1,047                       | 8/9             | 8,931              |
| Band D (£68,001 - £88,000)      | 5,358               | 4,869                       | 9/9             | 4,869              |
| Band E (£88,001 - £120,000)     | 2,826               | 2,562                       | 11/9            | 3,131              |
| Band F (£120,001 - £160,000)    | 1,831               | 1,695                       | 13/9            | 2,449              |
| Band G (£160,001 - £320,000)    | 984                 | 911                         | 15/9            | 1,518              |
| Band H (Over £320,000)          | 52                  | 37                          | 18/9            | 74                 |
|                                 |                     |                             |                 | <b>38,877</b>      |
| Less non collection rate (2%)   |                     |                             |                 | (778)              |
| <b>Borough Council Tax base</b> |                     |                             |                 | <b>38,099</b>      |

The Council Tax precepts payable for 2023/24 were £56.053m to Staffordshire County Council, £9.927m to Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire, £3.210m to Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and £8.871m to Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

The total of these sums (£78.061m) has been paid in 2023/24 and charged to the collection fund in year.

The actual Council Tax payable for 2023/24, when taking into account bad debts was calculated to be £78.062m.

The variance between the Council Tax shared between Staffordshire County Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council as per the precepts (£78.061m) and the actual Council Tax payable (£78.062m) is £0.001m - a surplus to the collection fund.

In addition to the Council Tax payable for 2023/24, the estimated 2022/23 surplus declared in January 2023 regarding Council Tax of £0.330m was repaid to preceptors (Staffordshire County Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council).

The actual 2022/23 surplus was calculated to be £0.273m, therefore £0.057m is repayable to the Collection Fund by Staffordshire County Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council in relation to 2022/23.

Taking into account the remaining 2022/23 amount to be repaid and the 2023/24 surplus, the Council Tax collection fund has a deficit of £0.056m as at 31 March 2024.

## Glossary

To assist readers of the Statement of Accounts to understand its contents the following definitions are provided of terms used in the text.

### Accounting Policies

Accounting policies are the principles, bases, conventions, rules and practices applied by the Council that specify how the effects of transactions and other events are to be reflected in its financial statements through recognising, selecting measurement bases for and presenting assets, liabilities, gains, losses, and changes to reserves.

### Accruals

The concept that items of income and 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:

- Events have not coincided with the actuarial assumptions made for the last valuation (experience gains and losses),
- The actuarial assumptions have changed.

### Amortisation

An annual charge to a revenue account to reduce the value of an asset to zero over a period of years.

### Assets Register

A register of the Council's fixed assets which records their essential details, including their description and location, valuation, basis of valuation, life and service chargeable for their use.

### Balance Sheet

This shows a summary of the overall financial position of the Council at the end of the financial year.

### Business Improvement District (BID)

A BID is a defined area within which businesses are required to pay an additional business rates levy (a business rates supplement) in order to fund projects within the BID's boundaries. A completely separate body from the Council is responsible for operating the BID scheme. The BID is often funded primarily through the levy but can also draw on other public and private funding streams. The Council as billing authority collects the supplement and pays it over to the BID body, whose income it is, charging the body for the costs of collection.

### Capital Expenditure

Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed assets or expenditure, which adds to and does not merely maintain existing assets.

### Capital Grants Receipts in Advance Account

An account which holds the balances of capital grants received where conditions apply and have not been satisfied meaning that the grants are not yet available for use to finance expenditure.

### Capital Grants Unapplied Account

A usable reserve holding the balances of capital grants received or due to the Council at the year-end where conditions do not apply to those grants or conditions have been satisfied meaning that the grant is available for use to finance expenditure.

## Capital Receipts

Income received from the sale of capital assets which may be used to finance new capital expenditure.

## CIPFA

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) is one of the leading accountancy bodies in the United Kingdom and specialises in public services.

## Collection Fund

A fund accounting for Council Tax and non domestic rates received by the Council and the payments which are made from the fund including precepts to other authorities, the Council's own demand and shares of business rates receipts.

## Community Assets

Assets which the 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 Asset

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 future events not wholly within the Council's control.

## Contingent Liability

A contingent liability is either: -

- A possible obligation arising from past events whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the Council's control,
- A present obligation arising from past events where it is not probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

## Creditors

Amounts owed by the Council for goods and services, where payments have not been made at the end of the financial year.

## Current Service Cost

The increase in the present value of a defined benefit pension scheme's liabilities expected to arise from employee service in the current period.

## Curtailment

For a defined benefit scheme, an event that reduces the expected years of future service of present employees or reduces for a number of employees the accrual of defined benefits for some or all of their future service. Curtailments include termination of employees' services earlier than expected, for example as a result of discontinuing a segment of the business and termination of, or amendment to the terms of, a defined benefit scheme so that some or all future service by current employees will no longer qualify for benefits or will qualify only for reduced benefits.

## **Debtors**

Amounts owed to the Council for goods and services, where the income has not been received at the end of the financial year.

## **Deferred Liabilities**

These are liabilities which by arrangement are payable beyond the next year at some point in the future or are paid off by an annual sum over a period of time, specifically for this Council amounts outstanding in respect of finance leases.

## **Defined Benefit Pension 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 benefits of the fixed asset that have been consumed during the period. Consumption includes wearing out, using up or other reduction in the useful life of a fixed asset whether arising from use, the passing of time or obsolescence through either changes in technology or demand for the goods and services produced by the asset.

## **Discretionary Benefits**

Retirement benefits which the employer has no legal, contractual, or constructive obligation to award and are awarded under the Council's discretionary powers, such as The Local Government (Discretionary Payments) Regulations 1996.

## **Expected Rate of Return on Pension Assets**

For a funded defined benefit pension 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.

## **Experience Gains and Losses**

See actuarial gains and losses.

## **Fair Value**

The price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. The fair value measurement assumes that the transaction takes place either in the principal market for the asset or liability or in the absence of a principal market, in the most advantageous market.

## **Fair Value Hierarchy**

A three level classification of techniques used in order to measure the fair value of financial assets and liabilities. The highest level (level 1) uses quoted prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities that can be accessed at the measurement date, level 2 uses inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the asset, either directly or indirectly and level 3 uses unobservable inputs for the asset or liability. Techniques employed should aim to maximise the use of observable inputs and minimise the use of unobservable inputs.

## **Financial Instrument**

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. Typical financial instruments are: liabilities - trade creditors, borrowings, financial guarantees; assets - bank deposits, trade debtors, investments; derivatives - forward investment deals.

## Financial Reporting Standards (FRSs)

Statements prepared by the Accounting Standards Committee. Many of the Financial Reporting Standards (FRSs) and the earlier Statements of Standard Accounting Practice (SSAPs) apply to local authorities and any departure from these must be disclosed in the published accounts.

## Financial Year

The period of time to which the Statement of Accounts relates. The financial year of the Council runs from 1 April to 31 March.

## Fixed Assets

Tangible assets that yield benefits to the Council and the services it provides for a period of more than one year.

The classes of fixed assets required to be included in the accounting statements are:

Operational assets:

- Other land and buildings (excluding Council Dwellings),
- Vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment,
- Infrastructure assets,
- Community assets.

Non-operational assets:

- Investment Properties,
- Assets Held for Sale.

Assets under construction are not shown separately. They are included in the balance relating to the category of operational asset where they will be included when completed.

## Formula Grant

A formula grant is paid by central government to local authorities. Formula grant is largely funded by local business rates income (which is ultimately collected for central government). Revenue Support Grant and business rates are added together to make up the formula grant, which is then distributed to local authorities using a complex formula.

## General Fund Revenue Account

This account records the expenditure and income incurred by the Council in operating its services during the year. It does not record any capital expenditure or income but does include the costs associated with capital expenditure in the form of capital financing costs (mostly related to interest, capital charges for the use of assets by services and depreciation charges).

## Government Grants

Assistance by government and inter-government agencies and similar bodies, whether local, national or international, in the form of cash or transfer of assets to an authority in return for past or future compliance with certain conditions relating to the activities of the Council.

## Heritage Assets

Tangible assets with historical, artistic, scientific, technological, geophysical or environmental qualities which are held and maintained primarily for their contribution to knowledge and culture.

## Historical Cost

Actual cost of acquiring or constructing an asset.

## Impairment

A reduction in the value of a fixed asset below its carrying amount on the balance sheet.

## Infrastructure Assets

Fixed assets that are not able to be taken away, expenditure on which is recoverable only by continued use of the asset created. Examples of infrastructure are highways and sewers.

## Interest Cost

For a defined benefit pension scheme, the expected increase during the period in the present value of the scheme liabilities because the benefits are one period closer to settlement.

## Insurance Value

The value placed upon an asset for insurance purposes.

## Intangible Assets

Non-financial fixed assets that do not have physical substance but are identifiable and are controlled by the Council through custody or legal rights. Specifically purchased software licenses are included in this category of asset.

## Inventories

The amount of unused or unconsumed stocks 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. Inventories comprise the following categories:

- Finished goods and 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.

## Investments

A long-term investment is an investment that is intended to be held for use on a continuing basis in the activities of the Council. Investments should be 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 which do not meet the above criteria should be qualified as current assets.

## Investment Properties

Interest in land and/or buildings:

- In respect of which construction work and development have been completed,
- Which is held for its investment potential, any rental income being negotiated at arm's length,
- Which do not support the service or strategic objectives of the Council.



## Leasing

Method of financing the provision of capital assets which does not provide for the title to the asset to pass to the authority. In return for the use of the asset the Council pays rental charges over a specified period of time. There are two basic types of leasing arrangement:

- Finance leases which transfer the risks and rewards of ownership of an asset to the lessee (the Council) and such assets are included within the fixed assets in the Balance Sheet,
- Operating leases where the ownership of the asset remains with the lessor and annual rental is charged direct to the revenue account.

## Liquid Resources

Current asset investments that are readily disposable by the Council without disrupting its business and are either readily convertible to known amounts of cash at or close to the carrying amount or are traded in an active market.

## Long Term Debtors

Comprises amounts which are owed to the Council which are not investments and which are not expected to be realised within the next financial year. The main items included in this heading are outstanding loans from the Council to other bodies and outstanding amounts in respect of finance leases of Council properties to other bodies.

## Material Items

An item is material if its omission, non-disclosure or misstatement could be expected to lead to a distortion of the view given by the financial statements.

## National Non Domestic Rate (NDR)

Amounts payable to local authorities from non domestic properties. The rate poundage is set nationally. The amount collected is distributed via the business rates retention scheme to Central Government, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority. The remainder is retained by the Council but is subject to a tariff payment and pool levy.

## Non-Distributed Costs

Overheads from which no user now benefits and which are not apportioned to services.

## Past Service Cost

For a defined benefit pension 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.

## Precept

Demands made upon the Collection Fund by other authorities (Staffordshire County Council, Police and Fire Authorities and Parish Councils) for the services that they provide.

## Prior Period Adjustments

Those material adjustments applicable to prior years arising from changes in accounting policies or from the correction of fundamental errors. They do not include normal recurring conditions or adjustments of accounting estimates made in prior years.

## Provisions

Amounts set aside to meet liabilities or losses which are likely to be incurred but where the amount remains uncertain.

## Quoted Securities

Assets such as shares that are traded on financial exchanges.

## Realisable Value

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.

## Related Parties

Two or more parties are related when at any time during the financial period:

- One party has direct or indirect control over 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 the 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.

For individuals identified as related parties, the following are also presumed to be related parties:

- Members of the close family or the same household,
- Partnerships, companies, trusts or other entities in which the individual, or a member of their close family or same household, has a controlling interest.

## Related Party Transaction

A related party transaction is the transfer of assets or liabilities or the performance of services by, to or for a related party irrespective of whether a charge is made.

## Reserves

Reserves fall into two different categories:

- Usable Reserves representing sums set aside to meet future expenditure for specific purposes and which the Council is able to utilise to provide services.
- Unusable Reserves which the Council is not able to utilise to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves which hold unrealisable gains and losses, such as the Revaluation Reserve and reserves which are adjustment accounts which deal with situations where income and expenditure are recognised statutorily against the General Fund balance on a different basis from that expected by accounting standards, for example the capital adjustment account.

## Retirement Benefits

All forms of consideration given by an employer in exchange for services rendered by employees that are payable after the completion of employment. Retirement benefits do not include termination benefits payable as a result of either (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.

## Revenue Expenditure

Expenditure on day-to-day running of the Council, including employee costs, running expenses and capital financing costs.

### **Revenue Expenditure Funded From Capital Under Statute (REFCUS)**

Expenditure which does not result in the creation of a fixed asset and which is classified as capital for funding purposes but is chargeable to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account (revenue account) as revenue expenditure. Any grants or contributions towards such expenditure are also chargeable to the revenue account. An appropriation is made to the revenue account from the capital adjustment account of the amount of expenditure financed from capital resources. Such expenditure was formerly referred to as deferred charges.

### **Revenue Support Grant (RSG)**

Grant paid to local authorities by Central Government to help finance its general expenditure.

### **Scheme Liabilities**

The liabilities of a defined benefit pension scheme for outgoings due after the valuation date. Scheme liabilities are measured using the projected unit method. Reflect the benefits that the employer is committed to provide for service up to the valuation date.

### **Settlement**

An irrevocable action that relieves the employer (or the defined benefit scheme) of the primary responsibility for a pension obligation and eliminates significant risks relating to the obligation and the assets used to effect the settlement. Settlements include a lump-sum cash payment to scheme members in exchange for their rights to receive specified pension benefits, the purchase of an irrevocable annuity contract sufficient to cover vested benefits and the transfer of scheme assets and liabilities relating to a group of employees leaving the scheme.

### **Useful Life**

Period over which the local authority will derive benefits from the use of a fixed asset.

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# Year End Report to the Audit & Standards Committee

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Year end report for the year ended 31 March 2024

—

23 September 2024

**DRAFT**

# Important notice

**This report is presented under the terms of our audit under Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) contract.**

The content of this report is based solely on the procedures necessary for our audit.

## Purpose of this report

This Report has been prepared in connection with our audit of the financial statements of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council (the 'Council') prepared in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards ('IFRSs') as adapted Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24, as at and for the year ended 31 March 2024.

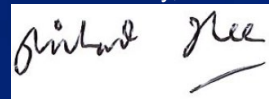
This Report has been prepared for the Councils Audit and Standards Committee, a sub-group of those charged with governance, in order to communicate matters that are significant to the responsibility of those charged with oversight of the financial reporting process as required by ISAs (UK), and other matters coming to our attention during our audit work that we consider might be of interest, and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone (beyond that which we may have as auditors) for this Report, or for the opinions we have formed in respect of this Report.

This report summarises the key issues identified during our audit but does not repeat matters we have previously communicated to you by written communication on 9 April 2024.

## Limitations on work performed

This Report is separate from our audit report and does not provide an additional opinion on the Council's financial statements, nor does it add to or extend or alter our duties and responsibilities as auditors.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Lee  
Director KPMG LLP  
23 September 2024

We have not designed or performed procedures outside those required of us as auditors for the purpose of identifying or communicating any of the matters covered by this Report.

The matters reported are based on the knowledge gained as a result of being your auditors. We have not verified the accuracy or completeness of any such information other than in connection with and to the extent required for the purposes of our audit.

## Status of our audit

Our audit is not yet complete and matters communicated in this Report may change pending signature of our audit report. We will provide an oral update on the status. Page 3 'Our Audit Findings' outlines the outstanding matters in relation to the audit. Our conclusions will be discussed with you before our audit report is signed.

## Restrictions on distribution

The report is provided for the information of the Audit and Standards Committee of the Council; that it will not be quoted or referred to, in whole or in part, without our prior written consent; and that we accept no responsibility to any third party in relation to it.



# Our audit findings

| Significant audit risks                          | Page 4 - 12   |
|--|---|
| <b>Significant audit risks</b>                   | <b>Our findings</b>   |
| Valuation of land and buildings                  | Based on our work <b>to date</b> , the valuation of land and buildings is fairly stated in the financial statements. The assumptions used by management were appropriate. |
| Management override of controls                  | <b>Our work in this area is ongoing</b>   |
| Valuation of post retirement benefit obligations | <b>Our work in this area is ongoing</b>   |
| Key accounting estimates                         | Page 15   |
| Valuation of land and building                   | We assessed as reasonable the assumptions underpinning the valuation  |
| Valuation of Investment properties               | We assessed as reasonable the assumptions underpinning the valuation  |
| Valuation of gross pension liabilities           | <b>Our work over this is estimate is ongoing</b>  |

| Uncorrected Audit Misstatements | Page 25 |     |
|---------------------------------|---------|-----|
| Understatement/ (overstatement) | £m      | %   |
| Net expenditure                 | 0.0     | -   |
| Surplus/(deficit) for the year  | 0.0     | -   |
| Total assets                    | (0.3)   | 0.3 |
| Reserves                        | 0.3     | 0.4 |

| Number of Control deficiencies             | Page 27 |
|--|---------|
| Significant control deficiencies           | 0       |
| Other control deficiencies                 | 4       |
| Prior year control deficiencies remediated | 1       |

## Outstanding matters

Our audit is **in progress**. The following areas are outstanding at the time of drafting this report:

- Finalising work over Land and Building valuation, valuation of post retirement benefit obligations, Journals testing, Reserve statement disclosure, Housing benefit expenditure testing, payroll, IT Understanding, review of non-significant disclosures and Whole of Government Accounts reporting
- Review of narrative statement and Annual Governance Statement for consistency with the CIPFA Code of Practice.
- Internal quality review
- Management representation letter
- Finalise audit report and sign

We will provide a finalised year end report at the next Audit & Standards Committee in November.

# Significant risks and Other audit risks

**We discussed the significant risks which had the greatest impact on our audit with you when we were planning our audit.**

Our risk assessment draws upon our knowledge of the business, the industry and the wider economic environment in which Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council operates.

We also use our regular meetings with senior management to update our understanding and take input from local audit teams and internal audit reports.

See the following slides for the cross-referenced risks identified on this slide.

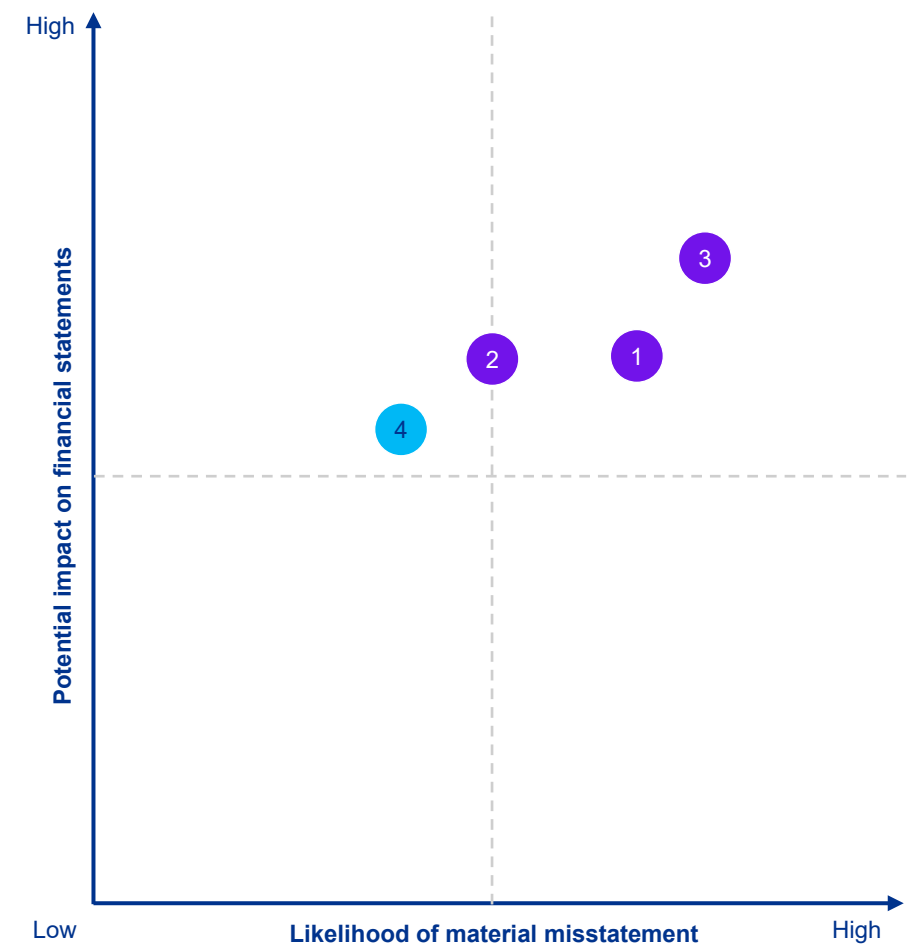
## Significant risks

1. Valuation of land and buildings
2. Management override of controls
3. Valuation of post retirement benefit obligations

## Other audit risks

4. Investment Property

**Key:** # Significant financial statement audit risks    # Other audit risk





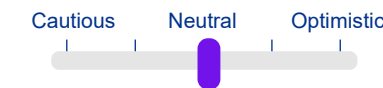


# Audit risks and our audit approach

1

## Valuation of land and buildings

The carrying amount of revalued Land & Buildings differs materially from the fair value



### Significant audit risk

- The Code requires that where assets are subject to revaluation, their year end carrying value should reflect the appropriate fair value at that date. Assets are revalued sufficiently regularly to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their current value at the year-end, but as a minimum every five years.
- This creates a risk that the carrying value of assets not revalued in year differs materially from the year end fair value.
- A further risk is presented for those assets that are revalued in the year, which involves significant judgement and estimation on behalf of the internal valuer with regard to the assumptions adopted for example around obsolescence and remaining useful life of assets.
- The value of the Council's land and buildings at 31 March 2024 was £49,862m, of which £45,298m (£43.2m Land and Buildings and £2.1m Surplus assets) are subject to valuation (community assets are excluded).



### Our response

We have performed the following procedures designed to specifically address the significant risk associated with the valuation:

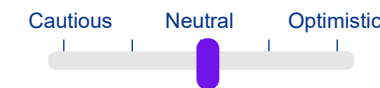
- We critically assessed the independence, objectivity and expertise of the internal valuer used in developing the valuation of the Council's properties at 31 March 2024;
- We inspected the instructions issued to the valuers for the valuation of land and buildings to verify they are appropriate to produce a valuation consistent with the requirements of the CIPFA Code.
- We compared the accuracy of the data provided to the valuers for the development of the valuation to underlying information;
- We evaluated the design and implementation of controls in place for management to review the valuation and the appropriateness of assumptions used;
- We challenged the appropriateness of the valuation of land and buildings; including any material movements from the previous revaluations. We challenged key assumptions within the valuation as part of our judgement;
- We agreed the calculations performed of the movements in value of land and buildings and verified that these have been accurately accounted for in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Code; and
- Disclosures: We considered the adequacy of the disclosures concerning the key judgements and degree of estimation involved in arriving at the valuation.

# Audit risks and our audit approach (cont.)



## 1 Valuation of land and buildings (cont.)

[The carrying amount of revalued Land & Buildings differs materially from the fair value]



### ! Significant audit risk

- The Code requires that where assets are subject to revaluation, their year end carrying value should reflect the appropriate fair value at that date. Assets are revalued sufficiently regularly to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their current value at the year-end, but as a minimum every five years.
- This creates a risk that the carrying value of assets not revalued in year differs materially from the year end fair value.
- A further risk is presented for those assets that are revalued in the year, which involves significant judgement and estimation on behalf of the internal valuer with regard to the assumptions adopted for example around obsolescence and remaining useful life of assets.
- The value of the Council's land and buildings at 31 March 2024 was £49,862m, of which £45,298m (£43.2m Land and Buildings and £2.1m Surplus assets) are subject to valuation (community assets are excluded).

### ⚙️ Our findings

- Our findings have not identified any significant issues in relation to the valuation of land and buildings
- In our assessment of design and implementation of controls we note the absence of a formal control with respect of reviewing the assumptions adopted by the Valuer. This does not meet the requirements of a management review control as defined by Auditing Standards. We have reported a control recommendation with respect of this on page 28.
- Through our enquiries with both management and the Valuer, we are satisfied that the valuer has used up-to-date information (e.g. Buildings Cost Information Service (BCIS) indices, detail of capital spend) to inform the valuation as at 31 March 2024.
- We are satisfied that the assumptions such as the BCIS indices and obsolescence factors adopted by management are appropriate and we are satisfied the population of assets not formally revalued could not be material misstated.
- We identified one misstatement relating to the classification of one asset. A piece of development land had been valued as a surplus asset as at 31 March 2024. However, significant capital work had been undertaken (£3m) in year to prepare the land for future development. Consequently we assessed the cost incurred to date should be recognised as an asset under construction. This resulted in an adjustment to the Property, Plant and Equipment balance.
- Overall, following the completion of our procedures, we are satisfied that the valuation of the Council's Land and Building assets is free from material misstatement and the disclosure of estimation uncertainty is adequate.



# Audit risks and our audit approach (cont.)

2

## Management override of controls<sup>(a)</sup>

Fraud risk related to unpredictable way management override of controls may occur



### Significant audit risk

- Professional standards require us to communicate the fraud risk from management override of controls as significant.
- Management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.
- We have not identified any specific additional risks of management override relating to this audit.



### Our response

- Our audit methodology incorporates the risk of management override as a default significant risk. We have performed the following procedures:
- Assessed accounting estimates for biases by evaluating whether judgements and decisions in making accounting estimates, even if individually reasonable, indicate a possible bias.
- Evaluated the selection and application of accounting policies.
- Evaluated the design and implementation of controls over journal entries and post closing adjustments.
- Assessed the appropriateness of changes compared to the prior year to the methods and underlying assumptions used to prepare accounting estimates.
- Analysed all journals through the year using screening analysis and focus our testing on those with a higher risk, such as journals with unusual combination to cash or revenue.

Note: (a) Significant risk that professional standards require us to assess in all cases.

# Audit risks and our audit approach (cont.)



2

## Management override of controls<sup>(a)</sup> (cont.)

Fraud risk related to unpredictable way management override of controls may occur



### Significant audit risk

- Professional standards require us to communicate the fraud risk from management override of controls as significant.
- Management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.
- We have not identified any specific additional risks of management override relating to this audit.



### Our findings

- Under the requirements of ISA315r, we conduct a detailed evaluation of the design and implementation of controls around journal entries. This identified that the ledger system permits approval of journals by team members that are more junior than the poster. In addition, the level of precision of the journals review prior to approval is not documented sufficiently to enable us to place reliance as a manual control over journal entries.
- We are therefore unable to rely on controls around segregation of duties in journal entry processing and have not tested the operating effectiveness.
- In response to the deficiency in journal controls we have followed up on prior year recommendations on page 27.
- We identified 13 journal entries and other adjustments meeting our high-risk criteria – **this testing is still in progress**
- We evaluated accounting estimates, including the consideration of the valuation of land and buildings and did not identify any indicators of management bias. See page 16 for further discussion.
- We have not identified any significant unusual transactions.

Note: (a) Significant risk that professional standards require us to assess in all cases.

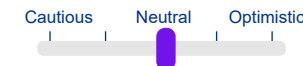


# Audit risks and our audit approach

3

## Valuation of post retirement benefit obligations

An inappropriate amount is estimated and recorded for the defined benefit obligation



### Significant audit risk

- The valuation of the post retirement benefit obligations involves the selection of appropriate actuarial assumptions, most notably the discount rate applied to the scheme liabilities, inflation rates and mortality rates. The selection of these assumptions is inherently subjective and small changes in the assumptions and estimates used to value the Council's pension liability could have a significant effect on the financial position of the Council.
- The effect of these matters is that, as part of our risk assessment, we determined that post retirement benefits obligation has a high degree of estimation uncertainty. The financial statements disclose the assumptions used by the Council in completing the year end valuation of the pension surplus and the year on year movements.
- We have identified this in relation to the Local Government Pension Scheme membership.
- Also, recent changes to market conditions have meant that more Councils are finding themselves moving into surplus in their Local Government Pension Scheme (or surpluses have grown and have become material). The requirements of the accounting standards on recognition of these surplus are complicated and requires actuarial involvement.

### Our response

We have performed the following procedures:

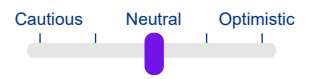
- We obtained an understanding of the pensions process for setting and approving the assumptions used in the DBO valuation.
- Auditing standards require auditors to identify a management control where there is a significant audit risk. We assessed Management's controls that ensure the appropriateness of actuarial assumptions for the preparation of the DBO accounting estimate.
- Evaluated the competency, objectivity of the Fund actuaries and confirmed their qualifications and the basis for their calculations.
- Performed inquiries of the Fund actuaries to assess the methodology and key assumptions used.
- Challenged, with the support of KPMG pensions actuarial specialists, the key assumptions applied, the discount rate, inflation rate and mortality/life expectancy against externally derived data.
- Vouched data provided by the audited entity to the Fund Administrator for use within the DBO accounting estimate calculation.
- Confirmed that the pensions disclosures adopted by the Authority are in line with IAS19 and the SORP.
- Assessed the level of surplus that should be recognised by the entity.
- Assessed the impact of any special events, where applicable.

# Audit risks and our audit approach (cont.)



## 3 Valuation of post retirement benefit obligations (cont.)

An inappropriate amount is estimated and recorded for the defined benefit obligation



### Significant audit risk

- The valuation of the post retirement benefit obligations involves the selection of appropriate actuarial assumptions, most notably the discount rate applied to the scheme liabilities, inflation rates and mortality rates. The selection of these assumptions is inherently subjective and small changes in the assumptions and estimates used to value the Council’s pension liability could have a significant effect on the financial position of the Council.
- The effect of these matters is that, as part of our risk assessment, we determined that post retirement benefits obligation has a high degree of estimation uncertainty. The financial statements disclose the assumptions used by the Council in completing the year end valuation of the pension surplus and the year on year movements.
- We have identified this in relation to the Local Government Pension Scheme membership.
- Also, recent changes to market conditions have meant that more Councils are finding themselves moving into surplus in their Local Government Pension Scheme (or surpluses have grown and have become material). The requirements of the accounting standards on recognition of these surplus are complicated and requires actuarial involvement.

### Our findings

- We acknowledge that there is a review of key assumptions by management but we do not place reliance on this control due to the lack of precision and documentation. Whilst this Management Review Control may be achieving the control objective set by management (we have not confirmed this), it does not meet the control requirements as defined by auditing standards. We have reported a control recommendation with respect of this on page 28.
- The Fund actuaries (individual and entity) are professionally qualified to perform actuarial valuations and prepare IAS19 disclosure reports being Fellow of the Institute of Actuaries in the UK;
- The actuarial assumptions methodology is consistent with the prior year for mortality base tables, but with updated future improvements to use CMI 2022 tables. Our actuaries view this change in approach as reasonable. They are also compliant with the Council’s reporting framework. The actuarial assumptions adopted by the Council compared to KPMG Central Rates, are considered to be balanced overall. All individual assumptions are balanced except mortality future improvements which is cautious compared to KPMG Central Rates
- Based on our review of pension disclosure, we have noted following differences between first draft of pension disclosures and the latest available IAS 19 report above our misstatement posting threshold. We recommended management update the pension disclosure so that they are in line with the latest IAS 19 report: For corrected audit misstatement proposed, refer page 26.

|                        | As per draft accounts | As per latest IAS 19 report | Difference  |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Current service cost   | 2,890,000             | 2,793,000                   | - 97,000    |
| Employer contributions | 4,831,000             | 4,730,000                   | - 101,000   |
| Return on assets       | 13,649,000            | 12,146,000                  | - 1,503,000 |



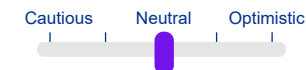


# Audit risks and our audit approach (cont.)

3

## Valuation of post retirement benefit obligations (cont.)

An inappropriate amount is estimated and recorded for the defined benefit obligation



### Significant audit risk

- The valuation of the post retirement benefit obligations involves the selection of appropriate actuarial assumptions, most notably the discount rate applied to the scheme liabilities, inflation rates and mortality rates. The selection of these assumptions is inherently subjective and small changes in the assumptions and estimates used to value the Council's pension liability could have a significant effect on the financial position of the Council.
- The effect of these matters is that, as part of our risk assessment, we determined that post retirement benefits obligation has a high degree of estimation uncertainty. The financial statements disclose the assumptions used by the Council in completing the year end valuation of the pension surplus and the year on year movements.
- We have identified this in relation to the Local Government Pension Scheme membership.
- Also, recent changes to market conditions have meant that more Councils are finding themselves moving into surplus in their Local Government Pension Scheme (or surpluses have grown and have become material). The requirements of the accounting standards on recognition of these surplus are complicated and requires actuarial involvement.



### Our findings

- We have performed further testing over benefits paid, contributions & return on assets by comparing the latest IAS 19 report (corrected adjustments) to the actuals from the third party administrator and noted variances which are above our Audit Misstatement Posting Threshold (AMPT). We have reported unadjusted audit misstatements to this effect please refer to page 25.
- We have also noted that management has recognised net defined benefit surplus in their draft financial statements whereas the asset ceiling paper prepared by Hymans dated 22 April 2024 confirms that the entity has no unconditional right to a refund from the Fund and that there is no economic benefit available as a refund, as the contributions payable are greater than the service cost.
- The asset ceiling paper also calculated a minimum funding requirement based on the assumption that past service contributions are equal to Employer's funding valuation secondary rate and will continue in payment at the level payable in 2025/26 for the remainder of the Employer's funding valuation time horizon (£1,517k a year). After taking account of these assumptions, an additional liability is required to be recognised amounting to c. £39.6m at 31 March 2024, plus a liability of c. £4.4m in respect of unfunded pensions – resulting in the net defined benefit surplus becoming a net defined benefit obligation of c. £24.0m. We have therefore recommended management to account for asset ceiling restrictions and the minimum funding obligation in their financial statements. **This is still under discussion with management.** See overleaf for further detail..

# Audit risks and our audit approach (cont.)



3

## Valuation of post retirement benefit obligations (cont.)

An inappropriate amount is estimated and recorded for the defined benefit obligation



### Significant audit risk

- The valuation of the post retirement benefit obligations involves the selection of appropriate actuarial assumptions, most notably the discount rate applied to the scheme liabilities, inflation rates and mortality rates. The selection of these assumptions is inherently subjective and small changes in the assumptions and estimates used to value the Council's pension liability could have a significant effect on the financial position of the Council.
- The effect of these matters is that, as part of our risk assessment, we determined that post retirement benefits obligation has a high degree of estimation uncertainty. The financial statements disclose the assumptions used by the Council in completing the year end valuation of the pension surplus and the year on year movements.
- We have identified this in relation to the Local Government Pension Scheme membership.
- Also, recent changes to market conditions have meant that more Councils are finding themselves moving into surplus in their Local Government Pension Scheme (or surpluses have grown and have become material). The requirements of the accounting standards on recognition of these surplus are complicated and requires actuarial involvement.



### Our findings

#### Surplus recognition:

- At 31 March 2024, the Fund has a material surplus under IAS 19. It has been determined the need to limit the surplus to nil in line with the advice received from the Actuary. We have tested the calculation of this asset ceiling, and agree that there is no economic benefit recognisable by the entity at 31 March 2024.
- However, the Employer is currently committed to pay secondary contributions to fund the deficit identified under the 2022 triennial funding valuation. These contributions are clearly specified in the rates and adjustments certificate until 31 March 2026. However, the remaining payments required over the funding time horizon of 20 years is less clear as this is not set out in any of the fund documentation. The actuary has valued the minimum funding obligation arising from this contributions on the assumption that the payment made in 2025/26 will continue without adjustment for the remaining period of the funding time horizon. We have recommended management to include this as an assumption in their disclosure at 31 March 2024.
- In the prior year the Employer did not consider the impact of a minimum funding obligation. We have tested this and based on the approach used this year, we believe that an equivalent minimum funding obligation was required in the prior period, as the value would clearly have been greater than the deficit in the fund at that time. In response to our challenge, management has confirmed that they do not intend to restate the prior year to correct this error – and do not intend to obtain a value of the minimum funding obligation that would have applied. We are currently in the process of assessing whether a prior period adjustment is required and will ask management to provide a detailed rationale to support their proposed treatment, in order to assess whether this approach would be reasonable.





| Overall assessment of assumptions for audit consideration |  |  |   |   |   |   | Balanced               |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|---|---|------------------------|---|
| Underlying assessment of individual assumptions           | Methodology  | Consistent methodology to prior year?                                    | Compliant methodology with accounting standard? | Employer  | KPMG central  | Assessment  | Significant assumption |   |
| Discount rate   | AA yield curve   | ✓  | ✓   | 4.80%   | 4.81%   | Balanced  | ✓                      |   |
| CPI inflation   | Quoted CPI inflation assumption, including adjustment for emerging inflation | ✓  | See next page                                   | 2.80%   | See next page   |   |                        |   |
|   | - Unadjusted CPI   | Underlying CPI assumption before adjustments for emerging inflation      | ✓   | ✓   | 2.85%   | 2.85%   | Balanced               | ✓ |
|   | - Adjustment for emerging inflation  | Adjustment for emerging inflation  | ✓   | See next page   | 0.05% deduction   | See next page   |                        |   |
| Pension increases   | In line with CPI   | ✓  | ✓   | In line with CPI                                      | 2.88%   | Balanced  |                        |   |
| Salary increases  | Employer best estimate   | ✓  | ✓   | CPI plus 0.5%   | In line with long-term remuneration policy  | Balanced  |                        |   |
| Mortality   | Base tables  | In line with most recent Fund valuation                                  | See page 10                                     | ✓   | Fund-specific based on Club Vita curves   | In line with Fund best-estimate                                   | Balanced               | ✓ |
|   | Future improvements  | In line with most recent Fund valuation, updated to use latest CMI model | See page 10                                     | ✓   | CMI 2022 projections model, 1.5% long-term trend rate, initial addition parameter of 0.25% and default other parameters | CMI 2022, 1.25% long-term trend rate and default other parameters | Cautious               | ✓ |
| Other demographics  | In line with most recent Fund valuation                                      | ✓  | ✓   | Fund-specific in line with most recent Fund valuation | In line with Fund experience  | Balanced  |                        |   |

Employer's assumptions are balanced except for mortality future improvements which is cautious when compared to KPMG central rates but within KPMG tolerance levels. The Council used a long-term trend rate which is 1.5% higher than KPMG central rate which falls in the Cautious range when compared to KPMG central rates

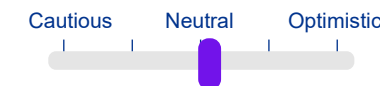


# Audit risks and our audit approach (cont.)



## 4 Valuation of investment property

The carrying amount of revalued investment property differs materially from the fair value



### ! Other audit risk

- The Code defines an investment property as one that is used solely to earn rentals or for capital appreciation or both. Property that is used to facilitate the delivery of services or production of goods as well as to earn rentals or for capital appreciation does not meet the definition of an investment property.
- There is a risk that investment properties are not being held at fair value, as is required by the Code. At each reporting period, the valuation of the investment property must reflect market conditions. Significant judgement is required to assess fair value and management experts are often engaged to undertake the valuations.
- The Council's investment property portfolio is £13.5m. This is made up of a small number of assets, and whilst some are individually material, we do not consider there to be a significant risk of material misstatement given their nature.



### Our response

We have performed the following procedures designed to specifically address the risk associated with the valuation:

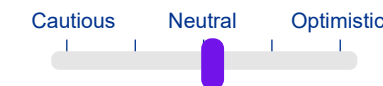
- We critically assessed the independence, objectivity and expertise of internal valuer, the valuers used in developing the valuation of the Council's investment property at 31 March 2024;
- We inspected the instructions issued to the valuers to verify they are appropriate to produce a valuation consistent with the requirements of the CIPFA Code.
- We compared the accuracy of the data provided to the valuers for the development of the valuation to underlying information;
- We challenged the appropriateness of the valuation; including any material movements from the previous revaluations. We challenge key assumptions within the valuation as part of our judgement;
- We agreed the calculations performed of the movements and verify that these have been accurately accounted for in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Code; and
- Disclosures: We considered the adequacy of the disclosures concerning the key judgements and degree of estimation involved in arriving at the valuation.



# Audit risks and our audit approach (cont.)

## 4 Valuation of investment property (cont.)

The carrying amount of revalued investment property differs materially from the fair value



### ! Other audit risk

- The Code defines an investment property as one that is used solely to earn rentals or for capital appreciation or both. Property that is used to facilitate the delivery of services or production of goods as well as to earn rentals or for capital appreciation does not meet the definition of an investment property.
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- The Council's investment property portfolio is £13.5m. This is made up of a small number of assets, and whilst some are individually material, we do not consider there to be a significant risk of material misstatement given their nature.

### 📄 Our findings

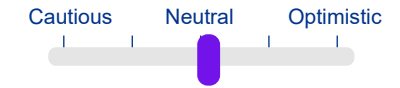
- Our findings have not identified any significant issues in relation to the valuation of investment property.
- Through our enquiries with both management and the Valuer, we are satisfied that the valuer has used up-to-date information (e.g. rental income and detail of capital spend) to inform the interim valuation as at 31 March 2024.
- We are satisfied that the assumptions such as the yields adopted by management are appropriate.
- We identified one presentational adjustment. One of the investment properties (York Place) is recognised as an investment property under construction (AUC), and is therefore valued at cost in line IAS 40. This differs to the operational investment properties which are measured at fair value at the year end. Given York Place is material in value, we have requested management disclose AUC separately in the Investment Property note. This has no impact on the balance sheet or CIES.
- Overall, following the completion of our procedures, we are satisfied that the valuation of the investment property assets is free from material misstatement and disclosure of estimation uncertainty is adequate.

# Key accounting estimates and management judgements – Overview



## Our view of management judgement

Our views on management judgments with respect to accounting estimates are based solely on the work performed in the context of our audit of the financial statements as a whole. We express no assurance on individual financial statement captions.



| Asset/liability class                         | Our view of management judgement      | Balance (£m) | YoY change (£m) | Our view of disclosure of judgements & estimates  | Further comments  |
|---|---------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|---|---|
| <b>PPE</b><br>Land and Buildings              | Cautious    Neutral    Optimistic<br> | 45.3         | 1.0             | Needs improvement    Neutral    Best practice<br> | There has been no significant change in the valuation of land and buildings, the £1m movement comprises a predominantly upward movement to reflect building cost indices increases.   |
| <b>Investment Property</b>                    |                                       | 13.5         | 0.7             |   | The overall movements reflects additions to investment properties (investment properties under construction), the overall fair value movement is a reduction of £159k which is not significant and is driven by market assumptions adopted by the valuer that we have assessed as reasonable. |
| <b>Pensions</b><br>Gross pension obligation   |                                       | (159,666)    | 0.5             |   | The pension liabilities balance has remained consistent with the prior year. Based on our actuaries review, the overall assumptions adopted by the Council are considered to be balanced, and within reasonable range.  |
| <b>Pensions</b><br>Valuation of Pension Asset |                                       | 173,486      | 17.2            |   | The pension assets balance has increase by 10% in comparison to the prior year as a result of the increase in return on assets excluding interest from (£14,137k) in prior year to £12,146k in current year The valuation basis is considered to be balanced.                                 |



# Other matters

## Narrative report

We will read the contents of the Narrative Report and checked compliance with the requirements of the Annual Report and financial statements with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24 ('the Code'). **This work is in progress.**

## Annual Governance Statement

We will review the Council's 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement to ensure consistency with our understanding of the entity. **This work is in progress.**

## Whole of Government Accounts

As required by the National Audit Office (NAO) we carry out specified procedures on the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) consolidation pack.

**This work is in progress.**

We will submit an updated assurance statement on completion of the audit and following review the final financial statements.

## Independence and Objectivity

ISA 260 also requires us to make an annual declaration that we are in a position of sufficient independence and objectivity to act as your auditors, which we completed at planning and no further work or matters have arisen since then.

## Audit Fees

Our PSAA prescribed 2023/24 audit scale fee for the audit was £157,000 plus VAT (£69,000 in 2022/23). As per PSAA's Scale Fees Consultation, the scale fees did not include new requirements of ISA315 revised and ISA 240. We propose charging an additional £11,600 to cover this work.

We have also completed non audit work at the Council during the year on Housing Benefit certification and have included on page 23 confirmation of safeguards that have been put in place to preserve our independence.

## Value for Money

Our risk assessment work is still in progress. We will share a copy of the VFM risk assessment at the next Audit & Standards Committee. We cannot certify the audit until the value for money work is complete.



# 03 Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Appendices

Year ended 31 March 2024

# Appendices

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| ISA (UK) 315 Revised: changes embedded in our practices | 31          |
| KPMG's Audit quality framework                          | 32          |

# Required communications

| Type   | Response   |
|--|--|
| <b>Our draft management representation letter</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK We have not requested any specific representations in addition to those areas normally covered by our standard representation letter for the year ended 31 March 2024.  |
| <b>Adjusted audit differences</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK There were three adjusted audit differences with a £1.6m surplus impact. See page 26.   |
| <b>Unadjusted audit differences</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK The aggregated surplus impact of unadjusted audit differences would be £0.3m. In line with ISA 450 we request that you adjust for these items. However, they will have no effect on the opinion in the auditor's report, individually or in aggregate. See page 25. |
| <b>Related parties</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK There were no significant matters that arose during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties.  |
| <b>Other matters warranting attention by the Audit Committee</b>                         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK There were no matters to report arising from the audit that, in our professional judgment, are significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process.   |
| <b>Control deficiencies</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK We have communicated to management in writing all deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting of a lesser magnitude than significant deficiencies identified during the audit.  |
| <b>Actual or suspected fraud, noncompliance with laws or regulations or illegal acts</b> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK No actual or suspected fraud involving Council management, employees with significant roles in internal control, or where fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements identified during the audit.   |
| <b>Make a referral to the regulator</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK If we identify that potential unlawful expenditure might be incurred then we are required to make a referral to your regulator. We have not identified any such matters.  |
| <b>Issue a report in the public interest</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK We are required to consider if we should issue a public interest report on any matters which come to our attention during the audit. We have not identified any such matters.   |

| Type  | Response   |
|---|--|
| <b>Significant difficulties</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK No significant difficulties were encountered during the audit   |
| <b>Modifications to auditor's report</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK None  |
| <b>Disagreements with management or scope limitations</b>                         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK The engagement team had no disagreements with management and no scope limitations were imposed by management during the audit.  |
| <b>Other information</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK No material inconsistencies were identified related to other information in the annual report, Strategic and Directors' reports. The Strategic report is fair, balanced and comprehensive, and complies with the law. |
| <b>Breaches of independence</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK No matters to report. The engagement team have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence.  |
| <b>Accounting practices</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK Over the course of our audit, we have evaluated the appropriateness of the Council's accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures. In general, we believe these are appropriate.     |
| <b>Significant matters discussed or subject to correspondence with management</b> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK No significant matters arising from the audit.  |
| <b>Certify the audit as complete</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X OK Due to the Auditor's Annual Report being issued later in the year we have not yet certified the audit as complete. There are no other issues delaying this being issued.  |
| <b>Provide a statement to the NAO on your consolidation schedule</b>              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OK We will issue our report to the National Audit Office following the signing of the annual report and accounts.  |





# Fees

## Audit fee

Our fees for the year ending 31 March 2024 are set out in the PSAA Scale Fees communication and are shown below.

| Entity           | 2023/24 (£'000) | 2022/23 (£'000)   |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Statutory audit  | 157             | 69 <sup>(a)</sup> |
| ISA315r          | 10              | -                 |
| ISA240           | 2               | -                 |
| Additional scope | tbc             |                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>169</b>      | <b>69</b>         |

Note: (a) Fee charged by XX – your predecessor auditor.

## Billing arrangements

- Fees have been billed in accordance with the milestone completion phasing that has been communicated by the PSAA.
- As per PSAA's Scale Fees Consultation, the scale fees did not include new requirements of ISA315 revised (risk of material misstatement); or ISA 240 (auditor's responsibilities relating to fraud).
- We will also charge additional fees for the work undertaken to identify and quantify errors in the prior year and current year accounts relating to pension asset recognition. Management are aware an additional fee will be charged for this work.
- Additional fees will be subject to the fees variation process as outlined by the PSAA.

# Confirmation of Independence



**We confirm that, in our professional judgement, KPMG LLP is independent within the meaning of regulatory and professional requirements and that the objectivity of the Partner and audit staff is not impaired.**

## To the Audit and Risk Committee members

### Assessment of our objectivity and independence as auditor of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Professional ethical standards require us to provide to you at the planning stage of the audit a written disclosure of relationships (including the provision of non-audit services) that bear on KPMG LLP's objectivity and independence, the threats to KPMG LLP's independence that these create, any safeguards that have been put in place and why they address such threats, together with any other information necessary to enable KPMG LLP's objectivity and independence to be assessed.

This letter is intended to comply with this requirement and facilitate a subsequent discussion with you on audit independence and addresses:

- General procedures to safeguard independence and objectivity;
- Independence and objectivity considerations relating to the provision of non-audit services; and
- Independence and objectivity considerations relating to other matters.

### General procedures to safeguard independence and objectivity

KPMG LLP is committed to being and being seen to be independent. As part of our ethics and independence policies, all KPMG LLP partners/directors and staff annually confirm their compliance with our ethics and independence policies and procedures including in particular that they have no prohibited shareholdings. Our ethics and independence policies and procedures are fully consistent with the requirements of the FRC Ethical Standard. As a result we have underlying safeguards in place to maintain independence through:

- Instilling professional values.
- Communications.
- Internal accountability.
- Risk management.
- Independent reviews.

We are satisfied that our general procedures support our independence and objectivity.

### Independence and objectivity considerations relating to the provision of non-audit services

#### Summary of non-audit services

Facts and matters related to the provision of non-audit services and the safeguards put in place that bear upon our independence and objectivity, are set out on the table overleaf.



# Confirmation of Independence (cont.)

| Disclosure | Description of scope of services    | Principal threats to Independence          | Safeguards Applied   | Basis of fee | Value of Services Delivered in the year ended 31 March 2024<br>£ | Value of Services Committed but not yet delivered<br>£                |
|------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--------------|--|---|
| 1          | Housing benefit grant certification | Management<br>Self review<br>Self interest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standard language on non-assumption of management responsibilities is included in our engagement letter.</li> <li>The engagement contract makes clear that we will not perform any management functions.</li> <li>The work is performed after the audit is completed and the work is not relied on within the audit file.</li> <li>Our work does not involve judgement and are statements of fact based on agreed upon procedures.</li> </ul> | Fixed        | -  | 19,250 plus £1,925 per additional workbook tested (extending testing) |

# Confirmation of Independence (cont.)

## Summary of fees

We have considered the fees charged by us to the Group and its affiliates for professional services provided by us during the reporting period.

## Fee ratio

The ratio of non-audit fees to audit fees for the year is anticipated to be 0.12: 1. We do not consider that the total non-audit fees create a self-interest threat since the absolute level of fees is not significant to our firm as a whole.

|                          | 2023/24    |
|--------------------------|------------|
|                          | £'000      |
| Statutory audit          | 169        |
| Other Assurance Services | 20         |
| <b>Total Fees</b>        | <b>189</b> |

## Application of the FRC Ethical Standard 2019

Your previous auditors will have communicated to you the effect of the application of the FRC Ethical Standard 2019. That standard became effective for the first period commencing on or after 15 March 2020, except for the restrictions on non-audit and additional services that became effective immediately at that date, subject to grandfathering provisions.

AGN 01 states that when the auditor provides non-audit services, the total fees for such services to the audited entity and its controlled entities in any one year should not exceed 70% of the total fee for all audit work carried out in respect of the audited entity and its controlled entities for that year.

We confirm that as at 15 March 2020 we were not providing any non-audit or additional services that required to be grandfathered.

## Independence and objectivity considerations relating to other matters

There are no other matters that, in our professional judgment, bear on our independence which need to be disclosed to the Audit and Risk Committee.

## Confirmation of audit independence

We confirm that as of the date of this letter, in our professional judgment, KPMG LLP is independent within the meaning of regulatory and professional requirements and the objectivity of the partner and audit staff is not impaired.

This report is intended solely for the information of the Audit and Risk Committee of the Group and should not be used for any other purposes.

We would be very happy to discuss the matters identified above (or any other matters relating to our objectivity and independence) should you wish to do so.

Yours faithfully



KPMG LLP



# Uncorrected audit misstatements

Under UK auditing standards (ISA (UK) 260) we are required to provide the Audit and Standards Committee with a summary of uncorrected audit differences (including disclosure misstatements) identified during the course of our audit, other than those which are 'clearly trivial', which are not reflected in the financial statements. In line with ISA (UK) 450 we request that you correct uncorrected misstatements. However, they will have no effect on the opinion in our auditor's report, individually or in aggregate. As communicated previously with the Audit and Standards Committee, details of all adjustments greater than £55k (AMPT) are shown below:

| Uncorrected audit differences (£'000s) |  |              |                       |   |
|--|--|--------------|-----------------------|---|
| No.                                    | Detail   | CIES Dr/(cr) | Balance Sheet Dr/(cr) | Comments  |
| 1                                      | Dr Remeasurement of Defined Benefit Liability/(Asset)<br>Cr Defined Benefit Assets | £293<br>-    | £[293]                | - Rate of return in the latest available IAS 19 report is higher than the actual rate confirmed by third party administrator resulting in a variance of £293k above AMPT, hence an uncorrected audit misstatement   |
| 2                                      | Dr Remeasurement of Defined Benefit Liability/(Asset)<br>Cr Defined Benefit Assets | £68<br>-     | £[68]                 | - Employer Contributions in the latest available IAS 19 report are higher than the actual contributions confirmed by management resulting in a variance of £68k above AMPT, hence an uncorrected audit misstatement |
| 3                                      | Dr Defined Benefit Assets<br>Cr Defined Benefit Liabilities                        | -<br>-       | £135<br>£[135]        | Benefits paid in the latest available IAS 19 report are higher than the actual benefits confirmed by third party administrator resulting in a variance of £135k above AMPT, hence an uncorrected audit misstatement |
| <b>Total</b>                           |  | <b>£361</b>  | <b>(£361)</b>         |   |

# Corrected audit misstatements

Under UK auditing standards (ISA (UK) 260) we are required to provide the Audit and Standards Committee with a summary of corrected audit differences (including disclosures) identified during the course of our audit. The adjustments below have been included in the financial statements.

| Corrected audit differences (£'000s) |   |                     |                             |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| No.                                  | Detail  | SOCI Dr/(cr)        | SOFP Dr/(cr)                | Comments   |
| 1                                    | Dr Asset Under Construction<br>Cr Impairment  | -<br>(£3,024)       | £3,024<br>-                 | A piece of development land had been valued as a surplus asset as at 31 March 2024. However, significant capital work had been undertaken (£3m) in year to prepare the land for future development. Consequently we assessed the cost incurred to date should be recognised as an asset under construction. This resulted in an adjustment to Property, Plant and Equipment.                             |
| 2                                    | Dr Current service cost (P&L)<br>Dr Contribution / cash settlement account<br>Dr Return on assets excluding interest (OCI)<br>Cr Gross Defined Benefit Obligation<br>Cr Fair value of plan assets | (£97)<br><br>£1,503 | £101<br><br>£97<br>(£1,604) | When the draft accounts were compared with the latest available IAS 19 report, we noted variances in the current service cost & employer contributions above AMPT and in return on assets excluding interest income above PM. As management agreed to update their accounts based on latest available IAS 19 report, we proposed a corrected audit misstatement to the effect of £1,507k (£1,604 – £97). |
| <b>Total</b>                         |   | <b>(£1,618)</b>     | <b>£1,618</b>               |  |

## Presentational adjustments

**Investment Property** - One of the investment properties (York Place) is recognised as an investment property under construction (AUC), and is therefore valued at cost in line IAS 40. This differs to the operational investment properties which are measured at fair value at the year end. Given York Place is material in value, we have requested management disclose AUC separately in the Investment Property note. This has no impact on the balance sheet or CIES.



# Control Deficiencies

The recommendations raised as a result of our work in the current year are as follows:

## Priority rating for recommendations

- 1** **Priority one:** issues that are fundamental and material to your system of internal control. We believe that these issues might mean that you do not meet a system objective or reduce (mitigate) a risk.
- 2** **Priority two:** issues that have an important effect on internal controls but do not need immediate action. You may still meet a system objective in full or in part or reduce (mitigate) a risk adequately but the weakness remains in the system.
- 3** **Priority three:** issues that would, if corrected, improve the internal control in general but are not vital to the overall system. These are generally issues of best practice that we feel would benefit you if you introduced them.

| # | Risk | Issue, Impact and Recommendation  | Management Response/Officer/Due Date   |
|---|------|---|--|
| 1 | 2    | <p><b>Journal controls</b></p> <p>Segregation of duties are in place for the approval of manual journals which means journals require a separate preparer and approver before posting to the ledger. However, best practice would be to ensure the approver is always more senior than the preparer, and the system does not currently enforce this. In addition, the level of precision of the journals review prior to approval is not documented sufficiently to the level required by auditing standards as a manual control over journal entries</p> <p><i>Recommendation</i></p> <p>We recommend management should ensure the approver is always more senior that the preparer. To meet the high threshold set by auditing standards, we recommend management fully document the journals review process. This should include clearly defined criteria for selection of journals, confirmation that each journal selected has been reviewed along with the supporting documentation and that the posting is accurate and appropriate, and formal documentation of the review conclusions.</p> | <p>Due to the size of the Service this is not logistical, only 4 Officers can approve journals, those below a qualified Accountant level cannot. All journals contain a full description and the approver obtains clarification before approving a journal if required. The high threshold of the auditing standard is considered to be excessive.</p> |

# Control Deficiencies

The recommendations raised as a result of our work in the current year are as follows:

| # | Risk | Issue, Impact and Recommendation  | Management Response/Officer/Due Date  |
|---|------|---|---|
| 2 | 2    | <p><b>Review of internal valuer assumptions</b></p> <p>Management does not complete a formal review of the assumptions proposed by the internal valuer used in the valuation of land and buildings and investment property. This increases the risk of errors being unidentified, leading to misstatements within the financial statements. A formal review and challenge of the valuer constitutes a management review control to address a significant risk. In order to make this review compliant with international auditing standards this process must be documented and evidenced with a sufficient level of precision.</p> <p><i>Recommendation</i></p> <p>In order to meet the high threshold set by auditing standards, management should document a formal review of the valuers assumptions used on an annual basis, such as indices and yields adopted, with numbers tied through to supporting information. Any challenges raised with the valuer would need to be clearly documented.</p> | <p>A review of the assumptions is undertaken and regular meetings are held with the Valuer to discuss and challenge both these and the actual valuations – these will be minuted in future periods. The valuer is a qualified Officer and a reliance is placed on this role in terms of the provision of reasonable assumptions</p>   |
| 3 | 2    | <p><b>Review of actuarial assumptions</b></p> <p>We acknowledge that there is a review of key assumptions by management but we do not place reliance on this control due to the lack of precision and documentation. Whilst this management review control may be achieving the control objective set by management (we have not confirmed this), it does not meet the control requirements as defined by international auditing standards.</p> <p><i>Recommendation</i></p> <p>In order to meet the high threshold set by auditing standards, management should document a formal review of the actuaries assumptions used on an annual basis, including the setting of expectations and tolerances.</p>   | <p>A review of the assumptions is undertaken and a further report is commissioned from the actuary after the production of the unaudited Statement of Accounts, the final Statement of Accounts are amended to reflect any changes in assumptions and actual experience at this point. The actuary is appointed on a professional basis and a reliance is placed on this role in terms of the provision of reasonable assumptions</p> |





# Control Deficiencies

The recommendations raised as a result of our work in the current year are as follows:

| # | Risk | Issue, Impact and Recommendation  | Management Response/Officer/Due Date   |
|---|------|---|--|
| 4 | 3    | <p><b>Approval of significant related party transactions</b></p> <p>Auditing standards require us to obtain an understanding of related party processes and controls that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify all related parties, relationships and transactions</li> <li>• authorize and approve significant related party transactions and arrangements; and</li> <li>• account for and disclose all related party relationships and transactions in the financial statements.</li> </ul> <p>We are satisfied management have a process in place to identify related parties and related party transactions retrospectively through receipt of declarations of interest (DoI) from all members, and then an exercise is carried out where by finance search all AP/AR ledgers to identify transactions with said related parties at the year end. The process and control in place to collate and ensure receipt of Dols from individuals is a proportionate control to have in place.</p> <p>However, there is no formal, documented control in place to authorise or approve significant related party transactions before they are entered into. Many of the related party transactions are through the normal course of business, however audited entities are required to have identified controls in place to which formally authorise significant transactions.</p> <p><i>Recommendation</i></p> <p>We recommend management establish a control to authorise significant related party transactions.</p> | <p>This will be reviewed to identify whether a flag can be introduced that notifies the approver of orders or invoices whereby the supplier has an Officer or Member that has declared a related party in relation to them. It should be noted that these are few and far between and the risk facing the Council, especially given its current controls, is very low.</p> |

# ISA (UK) 240 Revised: changes embedded in our practices



## Ongoing impact of the revisions to ISA (UK) 240

ISA (UK) 240 (revised May 2021, effective for periods commencing on or after 15 December 2021) The auditor's responsibilities relating to fraud in an audit of financial statements included revisions introduced to clarify the auditor's obligations with respect to fraud and enhance the quality of audit work performed in this area. These changes are embedded into our practices and we will continue to maintain an increased focus on applying professional scepticism in our audit approach and to plan and perform the audit in a manner that is not biased towards obtaining evidence that may be corroborative, or towards excluding evidence that may be contradictory.

We will communicate, unless prohibited by law or regulation, with those charged with governance any matters related to fraud that are, in our judgment, relevant to their responsibilities. In doing so, we will consider the matters, if any, to communicate regarding management's process for identifying and responding to the risks of fraud in the entity and our assessment of the risks of material misstatement due to fraud.

## Matters related to fraud that are, in our judgement, relevant to the responsibilities of Those Charged with Governance

Our assessment of the risks of material misstatement due to fraud may be found on page 7. We also considered the following matters required by ISA (UK) 240 (revised May 2021, effective for periods commencing on or after 15 December 2021) *The auditor's responsibilities relating to fraud in an audit of financial statements*, to communicate regarding management's process for identifying and responding to the risks of fraud in the entity and our assessment of the risks of material misstatement due to fraud:

- Concerns about the nature, extent and frequency of management's assessments of the controls in place to prevent and detect fraud and of the risk that the financial statements may be misstated.
- A failure by management to address appropriately the identified significant deficiencies in internal control, or to respond appropriately to an identified fraud.
- Our evaluation of the entity's control environment, including questions regarding the competence and integrity of management.
- Actions by management that may be indicative of fraudulent financial reporting, such as management's selection and application of accounting policies that may be indicative of management's effort to manage earnings in order to deceive financial statement users by influencing their perceptions as to the entity's performance and profitability.
- Concerns about the adequacy and completeness of the authorization of transactions that appear to be outside the normal course of business.

Based on our assessment, we have no matters to report to Those Charged with Governance.



# ISA (UK) 315 Revised: changes embedded in our practices

## Summary

**In the prior period, ISA (UK) 315 Revised “Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement” was introduced and incorporated significant changes from the previous version of the ISA.**

These were introduced to achieve a more rigorous risk identification and assessment process and thereby promote more specificity in the response to the identified risks. The revised ISA was effective for periods commencing on or after **15 December 2021**.

The revised standard expanded on concepts in the existing standards but also introduced new risk assessment process requirements – the changes had a significant impact on our audit methodology and therefore audit approach.

### What impact did the revision have on audited entities?

With the changes in the environment, including financial reporting frameworks becoming more complex, technology being used to a greater extent and entities (and their governance structures) becoming more complicated, standard setters recognised that audits need to have a more robust and comprehensive risk identification and assessment mechanism.

The changes result in additional audit awareness and therefore clear and impactful communication to those charged with governance in relation to (i) promoting consistency in effective risk identification and assessment, (ii) modernising the standard by increasing the focus on IT, (iii) enhancing the standard’s scalability through a principle based approach, and (iv) focusing auditor attention on exercising professional scepticism throughout risk assessment procedures.

### Implementing year 1 findings into the subsequent audit plan

Whilst this is second year of implementation, this is KPMG’s first year auditing the Council so we will be required to enhance our understanding of your wider control environment, notably within the area of IT, for the first time.

A key area of focus for the auditor will be understanding how the entity responded to the observations, if any, communicated to those charged with governance in the prior period.

Where an entity has responded to those observations a re-evaluation of the control environment will establish if the responses by entity management have been proportionate and successful in their implementation.

Where no response to the observations has been applied by entity, or the auditor deems the remediation has not been effective, the audit team will understand the context and respond with proportionate application of professional scepticism in planning and performance of the subsequent audit procedures.

### What will this mean for our on-going audits?

To meet the on-going requirements of the standard, auditors will each year continue to focus on risk assessment process, including the detailed consideration of the IT environment.

Subsequent year auditor observations on whether entity actions to address any control observations are proportionate and have been successfully implemented will represent an on-going audit deliverable.

Each year the impact of the on-going standard on your audit will be dependent on a combination of prior period observations, changes in the entity control environment and developments during the period. This on-going focus is likely to result in the continuation of enhanced risk assessment procedures and appropriate involvement of technical specialists (particularly IT Audit professionals) in our audits which will, in turn, influence auditor remuneration.

# KPMG's Audit quality framework



**Audit quality is at the core of everything we do at KPMG and we believe that it is not just about reaching the right opinion, but how we reach that opinion.**

To ensure that every engagement lead and employee concentrates on the fundamental skills and behaviours required to deliver an appropriate and independent opinion, we have developed our global Audit Quality Framework. Responsibility for quality starts at the top through our governance structures as the UK Board is supported by the Audit Oversight Committee, and accountability is reinforced through the complete chain of command in all our teams.

**■ Commitment to continuous improvement**

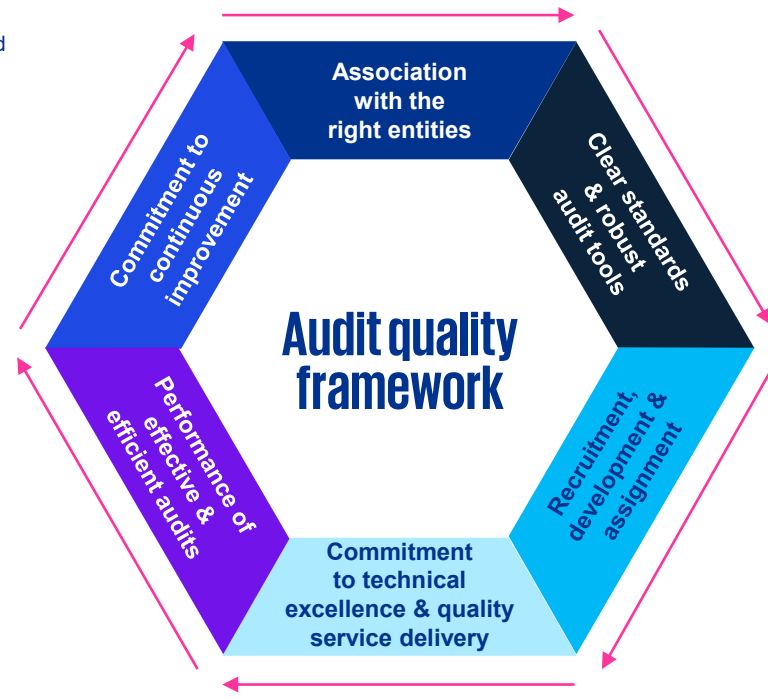
- Comprehensive effective monitoring processes
- Significant investment in technology to achieve consistency and enhance audits
- Obtain feedback from key stakeholders
- Evaluate and appropriately respond to feedback and findings

**■ Performance of effective & efficient audits**

- Professional judgement and scepticism
- Direction, supervision and review
- Ongoing mentoring and on the job coaching, including the second line of defence model
- Critical assessment of audit evidence
- Appropriately supported and documented conclusions
- Insightful, open and honest two way communications

**■ Commitment to technical excellence & quality service delivery**

- Technical training and support
- Accreditation and licensing
- Access to specialist networks
- Consultation processes
- Business understanding and industry knowledge
- Capacity to deliver valued insights



**■ Association with the right entities**

- Select clients within risk tolerance
- Manage audit responses to risk
- Robust client and engagement acceptance and continuance processes
- Client portfolio management

**■ Clear standards & robust audit tools**

- KPMG Audit and Risk Management Manuals
- Audit technology tools, templates and guidance
- KPMG Clara incorporating monitoring capabilities at engagement level
- Independence policies

**■ Recruitment, development & assignment of appropriately qualified personnel**

- Recruitment, promotion, retention
- Development of core competencies, skills and personal qualities
- Recognition and reward for quality work
- Capacity and resource management
- Assignment of team members employed KPMG specialists and specific team members



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The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to address the circumstances of any particular individual or entity. Although we endeavour to provide accurate and timely information, there can be no guarantee that such information is accurate as of the date it is received or that it will continue to be accurate in the future. No one should act on such information without appropriate professional advice after a thorough examination of the particular situation.

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**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S  
REPORT TO**

**Audit and Standards Committee  
30 September 2024**

**Report Title:** Health and Safety Annual Report 2023-24

**Submitted by:** Chief Executive

**Portfolios:** One Council, People and Partnerships

**Ward(s) affected:** All

| <b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b>   | <b><u>Key Decision</u></b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--|
| To inform Members of issues and trends regarding health and safety matters at the council.  |  |
| <b><u>Recommendation</u></b>  |  |
| That Committee note the content of the report in Appendix 1   |  |
| <b><u>Reasons</u></b>   |  |
| To facilitate understanding and appreciation of regular updates in relation to health and safety service delivery, information and trends ensures effective review of service delivery. |  |

**1. Background**

1.1 Attached as an Appendix is the Health and Safety report submitted to the council. It covers the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

**2. Issues**

- 2.1 Further to the Corporate Health and Safety Officer reducing working hours in April 23 a new post of a part time Technical Assistant was introduced. This post will aid continued delivery of a Corporate Health and Safety function over the course of the working week
- 2.2 A selection of policies and procedures were devised and / or reviewed to ensure relevancy and compliance.
- 2.3 Staff training in health and safety has been further enhanced with a corporate review and delivery of manual handling training package. First aid training has also been refreshed and new first aiders recruited to vacant posts.
- 2.4 Accidents have slightly increased on the previous year; improved reporting is thought to be a factor with minor road traffic accidents previously not reported now being reported and recorded more efficiently. An increase in road traffic

accidents beyond this factor was however noted in certain sectors and work has been undertaken to re-assess drivers' competency where serious or repeat accidents occur. It is anticipated this will reduce the number of incidents moving forward

- 2.5 Health and safety inspections of our sites have continued. A new report format was introduced in the latter section of the year which enables a quantitative assessment in addition to qualitative. Though still subjective in nature it will allow comparison to previous quarterly reports more easily. The photographic element also improves the ease of comprehension of the document and has been well-received by the business managers
- 2.6 Regular committee meetings have continued within the Knutton Lane Depot, Castle House Tenants' Liaison and Corporate Health and Safety providing key reporting routes for anyone to raise specific health and safety concerns.
- 2.7 Fire drills were undertaken in line with statutory requirements, any failures have been addressed and improvements implemented within each site
- 2.8 The re-opening of Kidsgrove Customer Service Centre in conjunction with Aspire as new tenants alongside existing tenants, the Police and Town Hall has led to co-operative working to obtain cohesive fire, first aid and emergency procedures fit for all occupants
- 2.9 Major refurbishment works at Knutton Lane Depot has commenced and continues to be reviewed at each stage to ensure safety is paramount.

### 3. **Recommendation**

- 3.1 That the report be noted

### 4. **Reasons**

- 4.1 To acknowledge that there is assurance of the quality and compliance regarding health and safety service delivery, information and trends.

### 5. **Options Considered**

- 5.1 N/A

### 6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 The council is required to comply with all relevant Health and Safety legislation
- 6.2 Failure to ensure suitable and sufficient arrangements for Health and Safety may lead to investigation and /or enforcement action by the Health and Safety Executive as the enforcing authority for the council's activities.

### 7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 The health and safety policy and procedures apply equally to all employees. Training is available to all employees as required.

### 8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 The majority of health and safety service delivery is carried out in-house from existing resources, this also includes training courses. On occasions, external



providers are required to conduct specialist training courses i.e. first aid. The cost of this is met from within the existing Corporate Training budget.

- 8.2 Good health and safety management also ensures that insurance claims can be effectively managed.

## 9. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 9.1 Failure to adopt best practice health and safety standards could result in wastage of council resources and the provision of an inefficient service.

## 10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)



## 11. Key Decision Information

- 11.1 This is not a key decision

## 12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

- 12.1 n/a

## 13. List of Appendices

- 13.1 Appendix 1 – Annual Health and Safety Report 2023-24

## 14. Background Papers

- 14.1 none

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## Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

### **ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2024**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report outlines the health and safety activity, progress and incidents during the twelve months from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

#### **2. POLICIES AND GUIDANCE**

- 2.1 The Corporate Health and Safety Policy was reviewed and updated in light of further alterations to the organisational structure and to reflect changes to other documents.
- 2.2 The Driving for Work Policy has also been reviewed and re-issued with corresponding significant alterations to driver documentation checks.

#### **3. TARGET 100**

- 3.1 T100 was updated to the latest version in January 24, training was subsequently provided to key employees who utilise the system regularly. Further cascade training for those who utilise on a lower frequency remains ongoing as required, delivered by the Corporate Health and Safety Officer or Technical Assistant.
- 3.2 Some problems were encountered after the initial transfer but additional actions appear to have remedied these.

#### **4. HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING**

- 4.1 The following Health and Safety Training has been undertaken –

First aid – the three yearly re-qualifications were completed in December 23 by those staff who wished to continue. Due to alterations in staffing levels some alterations in provision were identified and addressed. Four new staff were trained in first aid to counteract these moves and loss of existing trained staff. Staff were also offered training in the use of a defibrillator to cover sites where we have appointed persons rather than full first aid trained staff.

Evac chair – Jubilee 2 kindly assisted with training staff in the use of evac chairs across the council with a heavy focus on the Customer Hub team who work across a variety of sites

Manual handling – a corporate wide approach to manual handling was developed and a number of sessions held to cover all those staff who undertake regular manual handling as part of their role beyond a general office type level.

Controlling officer training – further to staff movements training in controlling officer role in case of fire / emergency was refreshed where necessary and new staff trained in locations as applicable.

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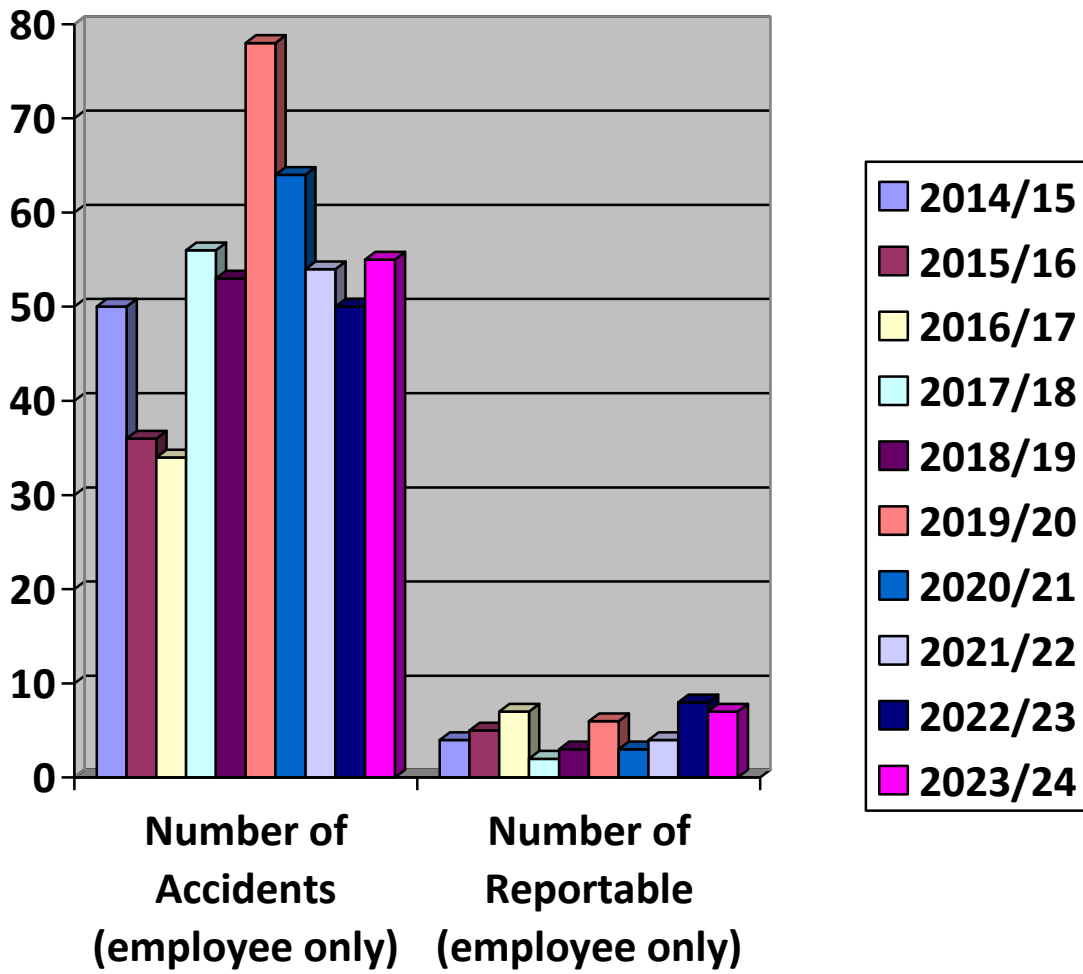
Online risk assessment and lone worker training – this remains available for new starters and for any staff member changing role

**5. ACCIDENT REPORTS –**

5.1 Please see table and graph below for a summary of employee accidents. The number of accidents excludes road traffic accidents, near misses, ill health incidents and accidents involving contractors including agency staff.

| Year    | Number of Accidents (employee only) | Number of Reportable (employee only) |
|---------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2014/15 | 50                                  | 4                                    |
| 2015/16 | 36                                  | 5                                    |
| 2016/17 | 34                                  | 7                                    |
| 2017/18 | 56                                  | 2                                    |
| 2018/19 | 53                                  | 3                                    |
| 2019/20 | 78                                  | 6                                    |
| 2020/21 | 64                                  | 3                                    |
| 2021/22 | 54                                  | 4                                    |
| 2022/23 | 50                                  | 8                                    |
| 2023/24 | 55                                  | 7                                    |

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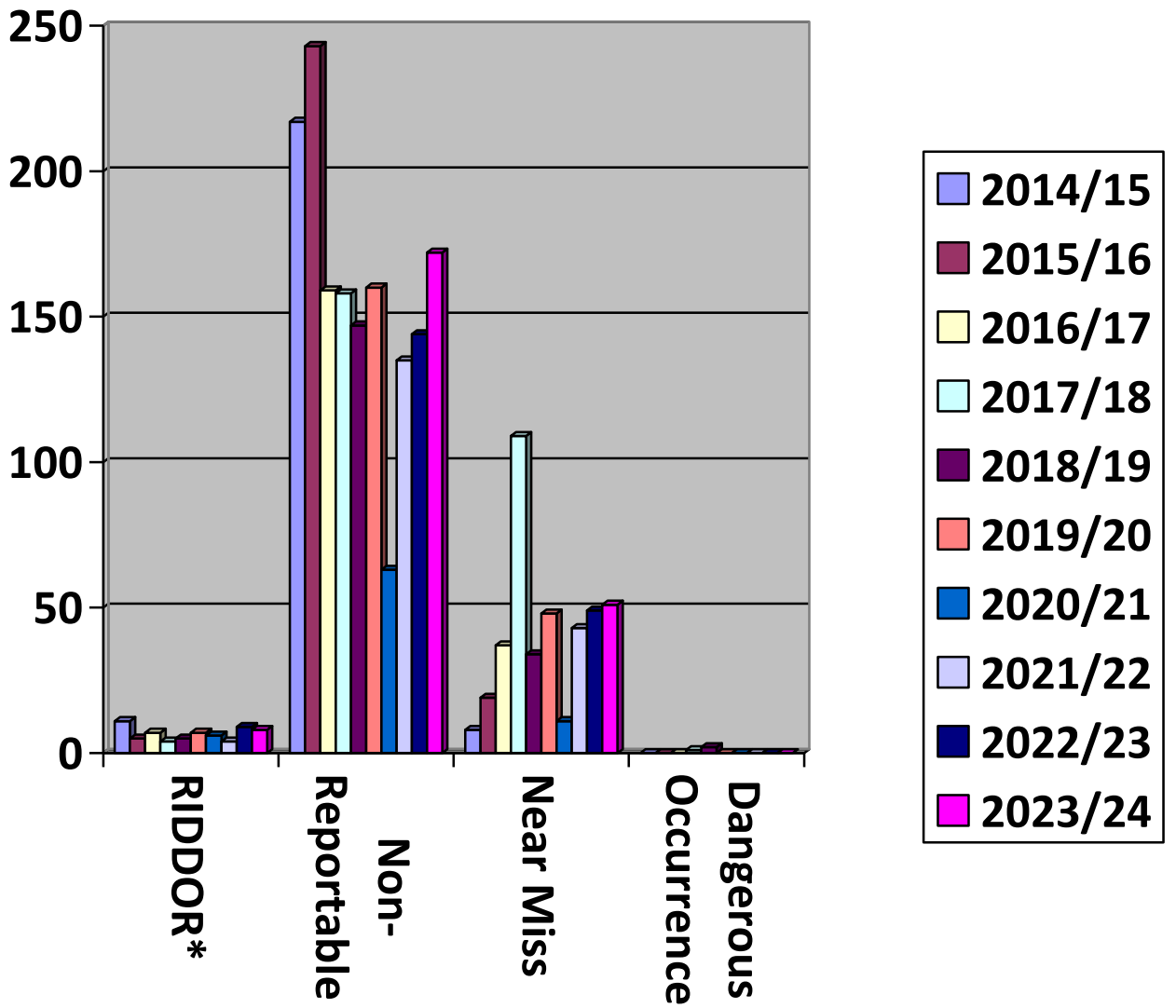


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5.2 The table and graph below shows trends in all accidents (staff & members of public)

| <b>Year</b> | <b>RIDDOR*</b> | <b>Non-Reportable</b> | <b>Near Miss</b> | <b>Dangerous Occurrence</b> |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2014/15     | 11             | 217                   | 8                | 0                           |
| 2015/16     | 5              | 243                   | 19               | 0                           |
| 2016/17     | 7              | 159                   | 37               | 0                           |
| 2017/18     | 4              | 158                   | 109              | 1                           |
| 2018/19     | 5              | 147                   | 34               | 2                           |
| 2019/20     | 7              | 160                   | 48               | 0                           |
| 2020/21     | 6              | 63                    | 11               | 0                           |
| 2021/22     | 4              | 135                   | 43               | 0                           |
| 2022/23     | 9              | 144                   | 49               | 0                           |
| 2023/24     | 8              | 172                   | 51               | 0                           |



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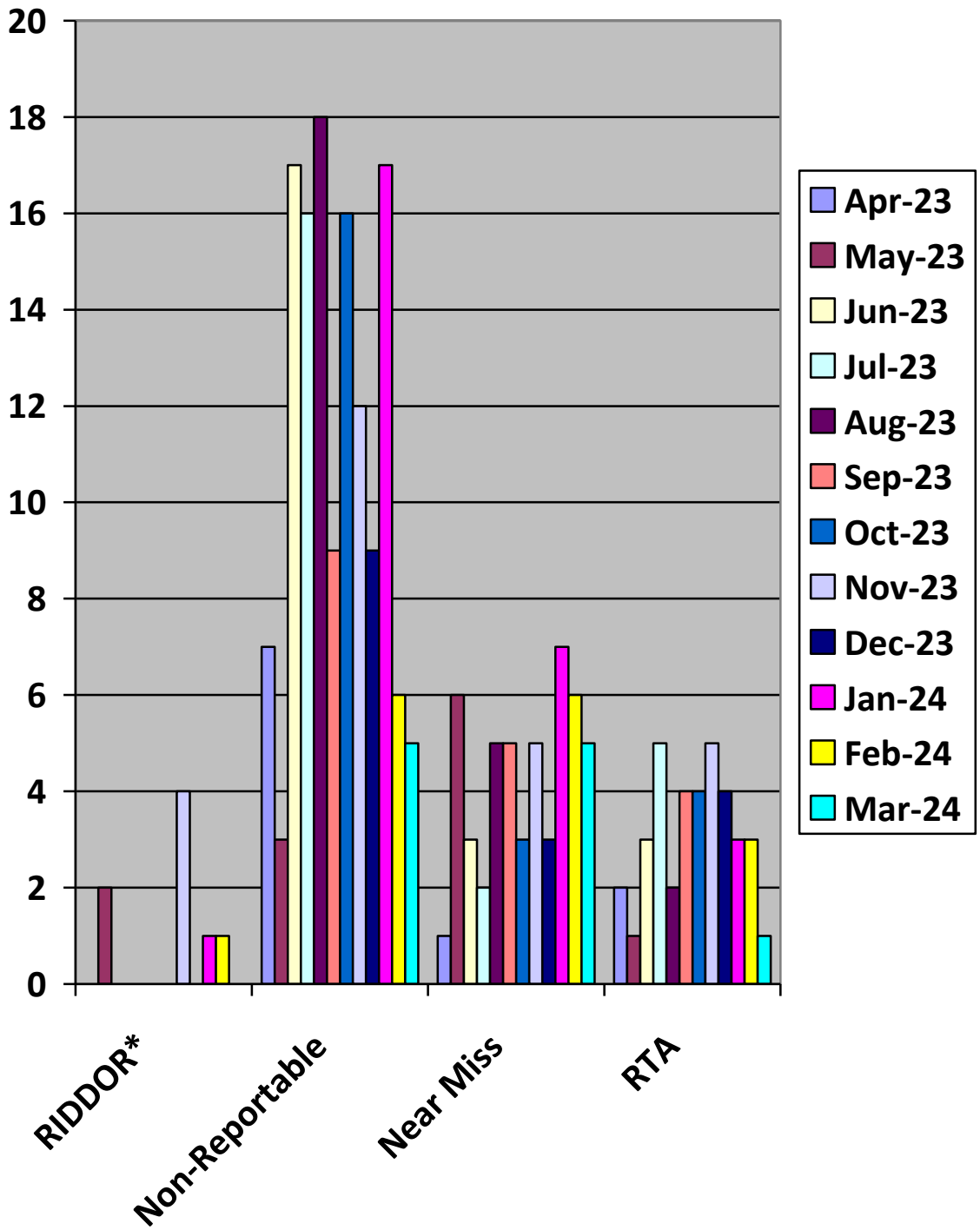
5.3 The table and graph below shows a monthly breakdown of all accidents in 2023/24.

| <b>Month</b>  | <b>RIDDOR</b> | <b>Non-Reportable</b> | <b>Near Miss</b> | <b>RTA</b> | <b>Dangerous Occurrence</b> | <b>Totals</b> |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| April         | 0             | 7                     | 1                | 2          | 0                           | 10            |
| May           | 2             | 3                     | 6                | 1          | 0                           | 12            |
| June          | 0             | 17                    | 3                | 3          | 0                           | 23            |
| July          | 0             | 16                    | 2                | 5          | 0                           | 23            |
| August        | 0             | 18                    | 5                | 2          | 0                           | 25            |
| September     | 0             | 9                     | 5                | 4          | 0                           | 18            |
| October       | 0             | 16                    | 3                | 4          | 0                           | 23            |
| November      | 4             | 12                    | 5                | 5          | 0                           | 26            |
| December      | 0             | 9                     | 3                | 4          | 0                           | 16            |
| January       | 1             | 17                    | 7                | 3          | 0                           | 28            |
| February      | 1             | 6                     | 6                | 3          | 0                           | 16            |
| March         | 0             | 5                     | 5                | 1          | 0                           | 11            |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>8</b>      | <b>135</b>            | <b>51</b>        | <b>37</b>  | <b>0</b>                    | <b>231</b>    |

\* RIDDOR - Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (Accidents which result in over a 7 day absence from work of an employee; a member of the public taken from the premises by ambulance and specified injuries (broken bones etc) would all be reportable to the Health & Safety Executive by the Local Authority.



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5.4 RIDDOR Summary

| <b>Month</b> | <b>Injured Person</b>        | <b>Location</b> | <b>Incident Type</b>                           | <b>Remedial Action</b>  |
|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| May 23       | Member of staff              | Streetscene     | Hit fixed object<br>Over seven day absence     | Replacement equipment purchased   |
| May 23       | Member of public             | Bathpool Park   | Trip<br>Fracture                               | Line marking fluid no longer to include additional weed-killer  |
| Nov 23       | Member of staff              | Streetscene     | Manual handling<br>Over seven day absence      | All training and assessments were in place. No further actions required   |
| Nov 23       | Member of staff              | Streetscene     | Manual handling<br>Over seven day absence      | Training in place and correct PPE in use<br>Specific risk assessment required<br>Lifting equipment to be considered for any similar activities.         |
| Nov 23       | Member of staff / apprentice | Waste           | Hit by moving vehicle<br>Specified injury      | All induction / training in place<br>Correct PPE in use<br>All warning beacons / lights an signage in place on vehicles<br>Incident reported to Police  |
| Nov 23       | Member of staff              | Waste           | Trip<br>Over seven day absence                 | Training in place<br>Safety footwear in use<br>Pre-existing medical condition identified as one casual factor   |
| Jan 24       | Member of staff              | Waste           | Slip<br>Over seven day absence                 | Safety footwear was in use<br>Training in place<br>Reminder not to run during collections issued to staff   |
| Feb 24       | Member of staff              | Streetscene     | Hit by moving object<br>Over seven day absence | Training in place<br>Improvements to safe working procedure and toolbox talk completed, this will also extend to a review of all departmental documents |

All RIDDOR Accidents have been reported to the HSE and investigations have been completed with remedial actions undertaken where necessary as detailed above.

## 6. HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDITS & INSPECTIONS

- 6.1 The Corporate Health and Safety Officer / Technical Assistant has completed inspections of the following properties –
- Jubilee 2
  - Kidsgrove Customer Service Centre
  - Keele Cemetery
  - Bradwell Crematorium
  - Waste Transfer Sections, Knutton Depot
  - Streetscene Areas of the Knutton Depot
  - Brampton Museum
  - Knutton Lane Garage Workshop
- 6.2 Knutton Lane Depot was also inspected as part of the quarterly Knutton Depot Committee walk-round regime. This programme was altered with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 to include a full six-monthly site inspection with the quarterly walk-round altered to a simple hazard spotting exercise.
- 6.3 The inspection report format was updated to include relevant pictorial evidence of the hazards observed and aid the process of remediation by managers.
- 6.4 All recommendations as a result of the inspection were directed to relevant parties for action.

## 7. KNUTTON DEPOT

- 7.1 The Knutton Lane Health and Safety Committee held meetings on:
- 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023
  - 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023
  - 12<sup>th</sup> October 2023
  - 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024
- 7.2 Matters arising from the meetings included:-
- Depot walk around findings
  - Depot alterations – including department movements and proposed alterations to site infrastructure
  - Accidents, incidents and near misses
  - Target 100
  - Training
  - Site rules
  - Buildings, utilities and infrastructure
  - External yard, waste transfer station, salt yard

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### 8. Leisure, Culture and Bereavement Services (SHE) Safety, Health and Environment Meetings –

8.1 The meetings have been established to oversee and monitor the implementation of British Standards for the management of Quality (ISO 9001), Environment (ISO 14001) and ISO 45001 (Health & Safety).

Meetings held on:

- 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023
- 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023
- 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023
- 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023
- 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023
- 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024

8.2 During the Meetings the following points (regarding health and safety) are discussed:

- Hazards or incidents that have occurred in the organisation
- Inspections – internal and external e.g. climbing wall and memorials
- New/revised legislation and guidelines.
- Risk Assessments/COSHH/Method Statements/Safe systems of work
- Financial provision for health and safety and staff welfare (including PPE)
- Fire evacuations
- Instructions and training for staff
- Corporate Health and Safety Committee
- Any other business

Minutes/Action logs from the meetings are provided for review at Corporate Health and Safety Committee meetings.

### 9. CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

9.1 The Corporate Health and Safety Committee held the following meetings during the period

- 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023
- 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023
- 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023
- 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024

9.2 The committee discussed the following items at the last meeting:

- Insurance reports
- Accidents, incidents and near misses
- Accident & insurance claims
- Target 100
- Castle House Tenants Liaison Meetings – invacuation, water provision, first aid provision, signage
- Facilities Management updates
- Leisure and Cultural SHE / Leisure and Bereavement SHE
- Knutton Lane Depot Committee – College traffic concerns, site management and contractor works, driving for work policy, alcohol, drugs and substance misuse policy and establishing a flood management working group

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- Trade Unions
- Staff wellbeing survey
- Insurance renewal commencement

### 10. FIRE

- 10.1 Fire evacuations were last undertaken across corporate sites in March / April 24. Overall compliance was obtained but some areas for development included:
- Include café staff as marshals at the museum and cascade training to detail the expectations of this role
  - Consideration to re-instate fire marshals with designated zones at the Depot to be raised at Knutton lane Health and Safety Committee for further discussion following staff location alterations
- 10.2 Kidsgrove Customer Service Centre has been re-developed to include additional tenants (Aspire). The fire procedures have been reviewed and controlling officer training delivered across the tenants with a drill scheduled for May, shortly after occupation, to assess the procedure. Should any shortfalls be identified the procedure will be amended and further training communicated to relevant parties. Details on Evac chair training provision have also been offered to the tenants should they not have competent trainers in-house.

### 11. EVENT SAFETY

- 11.1 Events that have been held on Council owned land by external organisations and therefore subject to review by health and safety include:
- Hatha Bliss Yoga (Brampton)
  - Picnic in Paradise (Clough Hall)
  - Bath Pool Pop Up
  - Keele Eliminator Running Event
  - Castle Artisan Events
  - Goose Street Easter Fun Fair
  - Brampton Forest School
  - It's a Knock Out (Lyme valley)
  - Bradwell lodge Fun Day
  - Space 2023
  - Lantern Parade (town Centre)
  - Christmas Lights switch on
  - Mayors Charity Fireworks (Lyme valley)
  - Kidsgrove Charity Bonfire
  - Clayton 10k
  - Whammy Park Run
  - Keele Run
  - Dougie Mac Duck Race

## UNCLASSIFIED

### 12. CASTLE HOUSE

- 12.1 There have been persistent issues in obtaining some form of shrouds for the invacuation alarms. Attempts have been made with numerous providers to investigate the possibility of custom made units to reduce the sound levels but so far solutions have proven elusive. Facilities management continue to attempt to locate suitable providers and in the interim the “run, hide tell” approach remains in place.
- 12.2 The provision of a constant water supply became an issue on a few occasions in 2024. The issue was raised with the landlord for rectification, bottled water was provided to our staff but there was also the proviso that staff should work from home or alternative locations should the problem persist to prevent health and safety complications in the provision of hygienic facilities.
- 12.3 Further to an incident with one of the main lifts it became apparent that the lifts had missed a statutory inspection. The landlord was asked to ensure this was rectified and both lifts were taken out of service until the relevant inspections had been completed. Staff who required the lift for access were advised they could work on the first floor utilising the lift via Libraries but working above the first floor would not be possible, using other work locations or to work from home were advised.

### 13. FIRST AID

- 13.1 First aid provision was reviewed as part of the Depot department moves and staff changes in other areas such as Bereavement Services.
- 13.2 The existing first aiders who wished to continue undertook the two day re-qualification in December and were all successful. The existing emergency first aiders plus another additional couple of staff from Bereavement Services attended and passed the one day course in November. Four new first aiders were recruited to replace those staff who had decided to step down or had moved sites, all four successfully gained a pass in December.
- 13.3 To help encourage all staff to feel more confident in the use of a defibrillator if required an online course provided by the British Heart Foundation was circulated for any staff member to complete. This remains available on Connexus. Additionally a course was provided by our Jubilee 2 manager to key members of the Museum where no full first aid is deemed necessary and Customer Hub staff who rotate sites, in particular focussing on those at Kidsgrove Customer Service Centre which again has no first aid due to low staff number and risk level.

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S  
REPORT TO THE  
AUDIT & STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**30 September 2024**

**Report Title:** Corporate Risk Management Report

**Submitted by:** Corporate Leadership Team

**Portfolios:** Finance, Town Centres and Growth

**Ward(s) affected:** All

| <b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b>   | <b><u>Key Decision</u></b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--|
| To update Members on the current position in respect of risk management controls and identified corporate risks.  |  |
| <b><u>Recommendation</u></b>  |  |
| That the Audit & Standards Committee:   |  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note that there are currently 3 risks that are more than 6 months overdue for a review up to end of Q1 2024/25.</li> <li>2. Note that there have been no risk level increases.</li> <li>3. Note no changes to the Corporate Risk Register.</li> <li>4. Advise officers of any individual risk profiles that the Committee would like to scrutinise in more details at its next meeting.</li> <li>5. Note that whilst the likelihood of a risk materialising may be mitigated, the likely impacts may not change.</li> </ol> |  |
| <b><u>Reasons</u></b>   |  |
| To comply with Audit and Risk Management Strategy requirements to report to committee: risk reviews that are more than 6 months overdue; the Corporate Risk Register; and any risks that have been increased in rating to a medium D or high E, or are new risks.   |  |

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Council's Risk Management Strategy (RMS) sets out how it identifies, records, manages and reports on risk. It uses the GRACE software (Governance Risk and Control Environment) to monitor and manage all of its risks by creating individual risk profiles which rank risk based on likely occurrence and impact, after applying relevant mitigation measures. The system allows for the creation and monitoring of mitigation action plans and the assignment of risk owners.
- 1.2 The system allows risks to be managed in this way at service and directorate level and, where warranted, corporately through the Corporate Leadership Team and this committee. The RMS describes how risks are escalated and reported through that hierarchy depending on the nature of the risk, and in light of any delays in reviewing risk profiles or applying mitigation measures.
- 1.3 The Council currently reviews its high (red) risks at least monthly and its medium (amber) risks at least quarterly. The RMS and good audit practice requires that amber and red risks are reported to this committee where escalation is required, along with any risk profiles that are overdue for review by 6 months or more. This set of measures was last reported to this Committee on 15 July 2024.
- 1.4 GRACE automatically prompts Risk Owners to review their risk profiles at the required intervals, and will escalate overdue reviews. The review process involves the Council's Risk Champion challenging Risk Owners in respect of the controls, further actions, ratings and emerging risks related to their risk profiles. They are also challenged on the reasons for inclusion or non-inclusion of risks and amendments made to profiles. The Risk Champion has a direct reporting line to the Monitoring Officer and into the Corporate Leadership Team.
- 1.5 Project specific risks are managed to a high level in project specific risk registers, and are reviewed in accordance with the RMS at least monthly. Any specific projects can, where required, also have their risks monitored, maintained and managed in the Project Board meetings, but remain subject to the escalation requirements in the RMS.

## 2. Issues

- 2.1 There are currently 3 risk reviews 6 months overdue, up to the end of Q1 2024/25.
  - 2.1.1 All 3 risks were due for review by 31 March 2024.
  - 2.1.2 The first two risks are in the profile of facilities management, and are in relation to failing to implement requirements of the stock condition survey of parks and playground railings, and of engineering structures.
  - 2.1.3 The final risk is in relation the Depot Establishment Audit profile, and if there is a failure of a major structural element of the depot building, e.g. a wall collapsing.
- 2.2 During the last quarter (Q1), no risks rose in priority to a Medium D or High E.



- 2.3 The Corporate Risk Register has been reviewed, and there are no particular changes.

### 3. **Recommendation**

- 3.1 That Members note that there are currently 3 risks more than 6 months overdue for a review up to end of Q1 2024/25.
- 3.2 That Members note that there have been no risk level increases to either a Medium D or a High E.
- 3.3 That Members note no particular changes in the Corporate Risk register. Appendix A shows the status as at 16 August 2024.
- 3.4 That Members advise officers of any individual risk profiles that the Committee would like to scrutinise in more details at its next meeting.
- 3.5 Note that whilst the likelihood of a risk materialising may be mitigated, the likely impacts may not change.

### 4. **Reasons**

- 4.1 To comply with Audit and Risk Management Strategy requirements to report to committee: risk reviews that are more than 6 months overdue; the Corporate Risk Register; and any risks that have been increased in rating to a medium D or high E, or are new risks.

### 5. **Options Considered**

- 5.1 N/A. Reporting is undertaken in accordance with the RMS.

### 6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 It is considered that the RMS and the procedures it sets out, including the escalation of risks and reporting to this committee satisfies the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 which state that:

*“The relevant body **is** responsible for ensuring that it has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and the achievement of its aims and objectives; ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective, and includes effective arrangements for the management of risk”.*

### 7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 There are no differential equality impact issues in relation to this report.

## 8. Financial and Resource Implications

8.1 There are no resource implications in respect of the management and reporting of risk, outside of usual establishment provision for the costs of delivering that service. Finance and resource implications arising from particular risks are identified and managed as part of the risk profile in question.

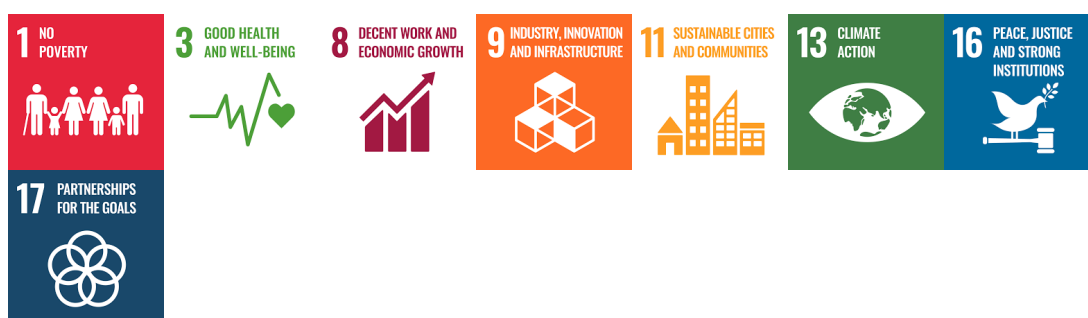
## 9. Major Risks & Mitigation

9.1 Limited resource to ensure timely compliance with the processes in the RMS leaves the council unable to appropriately identify and manage a potentially significant wide range of risks.

9.2 That could lead to a wide range of organisational governance and service or project delivery failures. Impacts could be profound in financial and health and wellbeing terms for the organisation, its employees and partners and the people and organisations it delivers services to. It could mean the Council may be unable to comply with the legal requirements set out above in respect of the management of risk.

## 10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

10.1 Good risk management is a key part of the overall delivery of the Council's four corporate priorities of; Local Services that Work for Local People, Growing our People and Places, a Healthy, Active and Safe Borough, a Town Centre for all. Officers assess sustainability and climate change implications as part of their local services.



## 11. Key Decision Information

11.1 N/A

## 12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

12.1 Previous Minutes from Committee meeting held on 15 July 2024.

13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 Appendix A – Corporate Risk register @ 16 August 2024.

14. **Background Papers**

14.1 None.

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**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S  
REPORT TO**

**Audit and Standards Committee  
30 September 2024**

**Report Title:** Internal Audit Update 2024/25

**Submitted by:** Chief Internal Auditor

**Portfolios:** All

**Ward(s) affected:** All

| <b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b>  | <b><u>Key Decision</u></b> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| To report on the position regarding Internal Audit during the period 1 April 2024 to 31 August 2024.   |                            |                              |  |
| <b><u>Recommendation</u></b>   |                            |                              |  |
| That Committee:  |                            |                              |  |
| 1. Note progress against the 2024/25 Strategic Internal Audit Plan.  |                            |                              |  |
| <b><u>Reasons</u></b>  |                            |                              |  |
| The role of Internal Audit is to ensure that the Council has assurance that controls are in place and operating effectively across all Council Services and Departments. |                            |                              |  |

**1. Background**

**1.1** This first progress report is submitted to the Audit and Standards Committee as part of our ongoing commitment to providing robust and transparent oversight of internal control, risk management, and governance processes within the Council. The internal audit function plays a critical role in ensuring that the Council operates in compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and internal policies, while also seeking to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations.

**1.2** This progress report provides an overview of the activities undertaken by Internal Audit from 1 April 2024 to 31 August 2024. The purpose of the progress report is to outline the progress made against the approved Internal Audit Plan for the year, highlight any significant findings and emerging risks identified during the audits conducted, and provide an update on the

implementation of management actions in response to previous audit recommendations.

- 1.3** During this period, Internal Audit has focused on meeting all key stakeholders and scheduling and conducting initial scoping meetings for all audits. This included a ‘Meet and Greet’ between Internal Audit, Service Directors and the Deputy Chief Executive, to discuss the role and expectations of Internal Audit, as well as the Council. The ICT Audit Manager held meetings during the months of June and July with all key contacts for each audit included in the Strategic Internal Audit Plan 2024/25, to introduce ourselves, and to discuss indicative scopes and start dates.
- 1.4** This report is intended to support the Audit and Standards Committee in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities by providing assurance that appropriate controls are in place, that risks are being managed effectively, and that the Council is continuously improving its governance practices. The report also seeks to identify areas where further attention or action may be required to address emerging issues or gaps in control.

## 2. Issues

### Completed Audit Reviews

**2.1** No audits have been completed during this period.

### Progress of the Internal Audit Plan

**2.2** Delivery against the 2024/25 audit plan is summarised below.

| Directorate                         | Audit                                   | Status  |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Office of the Chief Executive       | Asset Management Capital                | Cancelled   |
|                                     | Treasury Management                     | Not Started   |
|                                     | Council Tax                             | Fieldwork Ongoing                                       |
|                                     | NNDR                                    | Preparation   |
|                                     | Housing Benefits                        | Not Started   |
| Operational Services                | Bereavement Services                    | Not Started   |
|                                     | Tree Management                         | Not Started   |
|                                     | Waste Services                          | Not Started   |
|                                     | Jubilee 2                               | Not Started   |
|                                     | Disabled Facilities Grant               | Fieldwork Ongoing                                       |
| Regeneration & Development          | Planning                                | Preparation   |
|                                     | Future High Street Fund                 | Preparation   |
|                                     | Newcastle and Kidsgrove Town Deal Funds | Preparation   |
|                                     | UK Shared prosperity Fund               | Not Started   |
|                                     | Corporate                               | Civil Contingencies & Business Continuity (Consultancy) |
| Communications                      |   | Not Started   |
| Procurement and Contract Management |   | Not Started   |
| Safeguarding                        |   | Preparation   |
| Health and Safety                   |   | Not Started   |
| ICT                                 |   | Cyber Security  |
|                                     | Disaster Recovery                       | Not Started   |
|                                     | ICT Backups                             | Not Started   |
|                                     | PSN Compliance                          | Not Started   |

### Counter Fraud

- 2.3** The 2024/25 Audit Plan also includes 40 days allocated to counter fraud activities. This work is managed by Staffordshire County Council's Audit Manager – Fraud.
- 2.4** The County Council has received a total of 12 referrals from members of the public reporting potential frauds. These predominately revolve around the fraudulent claiming of benefits. These reports are carefully triaged in line with our established fraud response processes and through liaising with the Council's Customer Hub Manager and other external agencies where relevant.
- 2.5** There are currently no fraud concerns that require formal reporting to the Audit and Standards Committee. Internal Audit will continue to triage each report it receives and will continue to consider and evaluate fraud related risks in each audit review. Any significant developments will be promptly reported to the Audit and Standards Committee in future updates.

### Cancelled Audits

- 2.6** During this period, it became necessary to cancel the Asset Management - Capital audit. This had been included in the 2024/25 Strategic Audit Plan as a carry forward from 2023/24. However, since the approval of the Internal Audit Plan on 22 April 2024, this audit has been completed by the previous Internal Auditors and is no longer required.
- 2.7** In accordance with our commitment to maintaining a flexible and responsive audit plan, Internal Audit, in consultation with the Service Director for Finance (S151 Officer), will determine an appropriate replacement audit. This process will ensure that the substitute audit aligns with the Council's strategic objectives and risk landscape and will be reported back to this committee.

### Recommendations

- 2.8** Recommendations made by the previous Internal Auditors are being reviewed by the Service Director for Finance (S151 Officer). Once this review has been completed, Internal Audit will then track and follow-up any outstanding recommendations and report progress in future progress reports.

## **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1** The internal audit plan for 2024/25 remains under review to ensure best use of available resources.

## **4. Reasons**

- 4.1** The audit plan is monitored on a regular basis to ensure that it is achievable and reflects the key risks affecting the council.

## 5. Options Considered

5.1 None.

## 6. Legal and Statutory Implications

6.1 Whilst there are no direct implications arising from this report, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 specifically require that a relevant body must “maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal control in accordance with the proper internal audit practices”.

## 7. Equality Impact Assessment

7.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

## 8. Financial and Resource Implications

8.1 The service is currently on target to be provided within budget. The financial implications resulting from the recommendations made within audit reports will be highlighted within individual reports wherever possible. It is the responsibility of managers receiving audit reports to take account of these financial implications, and to take the appropriate action.

## 9. Major Risks & Mitigation

9.1 Internal Audit objectively examines, evaluates and reports on the adequacy of the control environment as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources. Where relevant, the results of individual reviews will link into the Annual Governance Statement, providing assurance on the operation of key controls. Internal Audit will continue to align its work with the Corporate Risk Register.

9.2 Continual review of the work contained within the audit plan ensures that where necessary adjustments are made to provide the most appropriate coverage.

## 10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

10.1 The Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Arrangement via Staffordshire County Council and the Fraud Hub supports UNSG and Climate Change objectives in a number of ways. Principally, through partnership working and supporting sustainable cities and communities via the correct use of public monies. The following UNSGs are supported.





11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 Not Applicable.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 Approval of the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25 (Audit and Standards Committee April 2024).

13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 None.

14. **Background Papers**

14.1 Internal Audit Plan 2024/25.

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## AUDIT & STANDARDS COMMITTEE



### Work Programme 2024/25

**Chair**

Cllr P. Waring

**Vice-Chair**

Cllr B. Panter

**Members**

Cllrs M. Holland, J. Whieldon, W. Brockie, M. Stubbs

**Officer Champions**

Sarah Wilkes / Anthony Harold

The Audit & Standards Committee is responsible for overseeing the Council's audit and assurance arrangements. Its role is to provide independent assurance to members of the adequacy of the Council's corporate governance arrangements including risk management and its systems of internal control. More information is available in Section B2 of the Council's constitution.

For more information on the Committee or its work Programme please contact the Democratic Services:

- ✚ Geoff Durham at [geoff.durham@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:geoff.durham@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk) or on (01782) 742222
- ✚ Alexandra Bond at [alexandra.bond@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:alexandra.bond@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk) or on (01782) 742211

**Planned Items**

| <b>DATE OF MEETING</b> | <b>ITEM</b>  | <b>NOTES</b> |
|------------------------|--|--------------|
| 30/09/2024             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q1 Corporate Risk Management Report 2024/25</li> <li>• Q1 Internal Audit Progress Report 2024/25</li> <li>• Health and Safety Report 2023/24</li> <li>• Audited Statement of Accounts 2023/24</li> <li>• Committee Work Plan 2024/25</li> </ul> |              |
| 04/11/2024             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treasury Management Half Yearly Report 2024/25</li> <li>• Q2 Corporate Risk Management Report 2024/25</li> <li>• Q2 Internal Audit progress Report 2024/25</li> <li>• Committee Work Plan 2024/25</li> </ul>                                    |              |

**Previous Items**

| <b>DATE OF MEETING</b> | <b>ITEM</b>   | <b>NOTES</b> |
|------------------------|---|--------------|
| 17/04/2023             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Audit Charter 2023/24</li> <li>• Internal Audit Plan 2023/24</li> <li>• Corporate Fraud Arrangements 2023/24</li> <li>• Committee Work Plan 2023/24</li> <li>• Risk Management Policy &amp; Strategy 2023/24</li> <li>• External Audit</li> </ul> |              |
| 30/05/2023             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed Accounting Policies</li> <li>• Annual Governance Statement</li> </ul>   |              |

|            |  |  |
|------------|--|--|
|            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Statement of Accounts 2022/23</li> <li>• Revised Finance and Contract Procedure Rules</li> </ul>  |  |
| 17/07/2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and Safety Report 2022/23</li> <li>• Treasury Management Annual Report 2022/23</li> <li>• Q4 Corporate Risk Management Report 2022/23</li> <li>• Annual Internal Audit Report and Annual Opinion</li> </ul>  |  |
| 28/09/2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q1 Corporate Risk Management Report 2023/24</li> <li>• Q1 Internal Audit Progress Report 2023/24</li> <li>• Audited Statement of Accounts 2022/23</li> </ul>  |  |
| 13/11/2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treasury Management Half Yearly Report 2023/24</li> <li>• Q2 Corporate Risk Management Report 2023/24</li> <li>• Q2 Internal Audit progress Report 2023/24</li> </ul>   |  |
| 05/02/2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q3 Corporate Risk Management Report 2023/24</li> <li>• Q3 Internal Audit Progress Report 2023/24</li> <li>• Procurement of Internal Audit Service 2024/25</li> <li>• Grant Thornton – Value for Money Audit Report 2022/23</li> </ul>                                   |  |
| 22/04/2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Audit Charter 2024/25</li> <li>• Internal Audit Plan 2024/25</li> <li>• Corporate Fraud Arrangements 2024/25</li> <li>• Risk Management Policy &amp; Strategy 2024/25</li> <li>• External Audit Plan 2023-24</li> <li>• Committee Work Plan 2024/25</li> </ul> |  |
| 28/05/2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External Audit Report 2022-23</li> <li>• Accounting Policies 2023-24</li> <li>• Annual Governance Statement 2023-24</li> </ul>  |  |

|            |  |  |
|------------|--|--|
|            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Statements of Accounts 2023-24</li></ul>   |  |
| 15/07/2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Treasury Management Annual Report 2023/24</li><li>• Q4 Corporate Risk Management Report 2023/24</li><li>• Annual Internal Audit Report and Opinion 2023/24</li><li>• Committee Work Plan 2024/25</li></ul> |  |

Last updated on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2024