

Watford Borough Council

Draft Statement of Accounts 2022/23

31 May 2023

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The Council's Responsibilities

The Council is required to:

- ◆ make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to ensure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In this Council, that officer is the Director of Finance;
- ◆ manage its affairs to ensure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets; and
- ◆ approve the Statement of Accounts.

The Chief Financial Officer's Responsibilities

The Director of Finance is responsible for the preparation of the Council's Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

In preparing the Statement of Accounts, the Director of Finance has:

- ◆ selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- ◆ made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent; and
- ◆ complied with the Code of Practice.

The Director of Finance has also:

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

The Statement of Accounts presents a true and fair view of the financial position of Watford Borough Council as at 31 March 2023 and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2023

Signed

Date

Alison Scott CPFA
Director of Finance

Signed

Date

Councillor Mark Hoffman
Chairman of Audit Committee

As the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer it is my responsibility to ensure that the Council's financial affairs are properly administered, and its financial position remains stable and robust. This is essential to ensure that the Council can continue to provide high quality services to all the residents and businesses within the Watford Borough and to continue to develop it.

The following Statement of Accounts give an overview of the Council's finances for 2022/23. I am pleased to be able to report that the Council has continued to maintain its strong financial position, which shows that there is a high standard of financial management and stewardship of the Council's resources.

The Statement of Accounts are prepared in accordance with the guidance for Local Authorities in the UK. The Statement of Accounts provides information so that members of the public, including electors and residents of Watford, Council Members, partners, stakeholders and other interested parties can have:

- A full and understandable explanation of the overall financial position of the Council.
- Confidence that the Council has been responsible in spending the public money which it has been given and accounted for in an appropriate manner.
- Assurance that the financial position of the Council is sound and secure.

The latest amendment to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Accounts and Audit (Amendment Regulations) 2022 was laid before parliament on 30 June 2022 and came into force on 22 July 2022. This requires local authorities to publish draft accounts by 31 May 2023 and commence the public inspection period on or before the first working day of June 2023. This is a change to the previous three years when the deadline was extended reflecting the impact of COVID-19 on resources within local government finance teams. The deadline for conclusion of the audit is extended to 30 September for years 2022/23 to 2027/28, extended from the original timetable of 31 July. The extension of the deadline for the completion of audits recognises that there are still significant challenges across the sector in England to meet the audit deadlines. Despite this extension it is likely that the deadline for completion of external audits will not be met. This scenario is likely to be repeated widely across the sector.

Due to the delay in concluding the audit of the 2021/22 accounts the balance sheet figures in relation to fixed assets and the pension reserve and liability are likely to change.

These draft accounts were authorised for issue by the Section 151 Officer on 31 May 2023.

Signed

Date: 31 May 2023

Alison Scott, CPFA
Director of Finance

1. Council Plan

During 2022 the Council updated its Council Plan. The new Council Plan, Watford Together – United by possibility, sets out the aspirations for both the council and the town we serve. It is forward-looking, high level and outward facing, with an emphasis on outcome focused commitments. The plan demonstrates our role as leader of place and how we will continue to build on our strategic and operational excellence.

Our Council Plan themes are:

- Be bold
- A greener, brighter future
- An inspiring, thriving and creative town
- A diverse, happy and healthy town

The Council Plan 2022-2026 and Delivery Plan 2022-24 can be found at the following link:
Council strategies and plans – www.watford.gov.uk

2. Overview of the financial underpinning of service delivery

During the year, the Council progressed its vision in the delivery of a bold and progressive future for Watford. The financial underpinning of this was through the approval of the revenue budget in January 2022 for the following activities:

Service Area	Original Approved budget 2022/23 £000
Community and Environmental	8,706
Corporate Strategy and Communications	1,303
Democracy and Governance	1,933
Human Resources	597
Place Shaping	-6,961
Service Transformation	3,648
Strategic Finance	3,265
Total Net Expenditure	12,490

The Council also approved a Capital Programme for 2022/23 to 2025/26 of £105.897m million. Significant schemes and programmes in these three years included:


	£m
Riverwell (Watford Health Campus Partnership)	17.4
Hart Homes	22.7
Watford Business Park redevelopment	14.5
Town Hall and Colosseum	24.7
Surplus Sites Programme	3.6

3. Strategic Resource Allocation and Performance Monitoring

The Council monitors its budget during the year and any changes made are reflected in a revised budget. This was agreed in January 2023, as usual, as part of the MTFS (Medium Term Financial Strategy) for 2023/24. This is supported by regular budget monitoring during the year, including quarterly reporting to Members. The MTFS approved for 2023/24, including a revised budget for 2022/23 and as amended for the decision of Council on 31 January 2023, is on the following page.

The 2022/23 revised budget shown includes approved carry forwards of £1.393m from 2021/22, which were approved by Cabinet in June 2022 and subsequently Council in July 2022. The service structure was also updated to reflect budget management responsibilities following the senior management review which was concluded in the first quarter of 2022/23.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022/23 to 2025/2026:

 WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL	2022/23 Original	2022/23 Revised at Period 8	2023/24 Draft	2024/25 Draft	2025/26 Draft
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Corporate, Housing & Wellbeing Place	5,538	5,139	5,682	5,693	5,693
Democracy & Governance	(51)	2,200	(879)	(876)	(876)
Corporate Strategy & Comms	1,998	2,029	2,017	2,028	2,028
Human Resources	1,438	1,469	1,652	1,655	1,655
Strategic Finance	525	512	481	482	482
	4,287	3,822	4,065	4,312	4,312
Net cost of services	13,734	15,171	13,018	13,293	13,293
Financial Planning					
Growth & Savings and Income Generation			533	(218)	(525)
Specific Grants rolled into Revenue Support Grant			92	92	92
Contingency			65	493	816
Capital Financing Charges			1,254	1,852	1,981
Total Financial Planning			1,944	2,218	2,363
Total Net Expenditure	13,734	15,171	14,962	15,512	15,657
Planned Use of Reserves					
Contributions to reserves	1,288	1,288	200	240	280
Contributions from reserves	(1,248)	(2,685)	(832)	(1,023)	(533)
Total Planned Use of Reserves	40	(1,397)	(632)	(783)	(253)
Funding					
Council Tax	(9,571)	(9,571)	(10,335)	(10,984)	(11,231)
Collection Fund (surplus) or deficit	0	0	15	0	0
Business Rates	(2,473)	(2,473)	(2,724)	(3,002)	(3,002)
New Homes Bonus	(718)	(718)	(1,006)	(450)	(450)
Additional Government Funding	(923)	(923)	(211)	(211)	(211)
Sub-Total	(13,685)	(13,685)	(14,260)	(14,647)	(14,894)
Total Funding & Use of Reserves	(13,645)	(15,082)	(14,892)	(15,431)	(15,147)
Gap	89	89	70	81	510
Reserves - opening balances					
Planned use of reserves	(16,036)	(45,356)	(43,870)	(43,168)	(42,303)
Gap funded from reserves	257	1,397	632	783	253
	513	89	70	81	510
Reserves - closing balances	(15,266)	(43,870)	(43,168)	(42,303)	(41,541)
Council Tax Rate Calculation					
Council tax base	33,891	33,891	35,532	36,669	36,761
Council tax charge for band D	£282.41	£282.41	£290.85	£299.55	£305.51
£'000	9,571	9,571	10,335	10,984	11,231

4. Performance, including outturn for 2022/23

Revenue Outturn 2022/23

The financial performance is presented to Members in the same format as below during the financial year. It reflects spend to be met by district taxpayers and the balance held for working capital. These management account figures differ from the Net Cost of Services in the financial accounts, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES), because the CIES also includes costs relating to depreciation, revenue spend funded from capital under statute and certain pension adjustments. The table below shows the year end position reported to Council:

Service Area	Latest Budget £000	Year End £000	Variance £000
Democracy & Governance	2,047	2,063	16
Place	2,157	3,345	1,188
Corporate Strategy & Comms	1,482	1,603	121
Human Resources	522	598	76
Corporate, Housing and Wellbeing	5,240	4,283	(957)
Strategic Finance	2,326	2,195	(131)
Net Direct Cost of Service	13,774	14,087	313

The variation to budget of £0.313m. Will be funded from the Economic Impact Reserve along with the planned contribution from balances of £0.088m taking the total drawdown at year end to £0.401m.

Capital Outturn 2022/23

Capital expenditure is incurred on assets that benefit the community over a number of years.

Key capital projects included:

- Substantial improvements to the Public Realm including Clarendon Road;
- Progressing various housing related schemes including Hart Homes with our partner Watford Community Housing
- Evolving development of Watford Business Park
- Investment the Town Hall, Colosseum and the Cultural Quarter;

Capital expenditure for 2022/23 is shown below:-

Service Area	Latest Budget £000	Outturn £000	Variance £000
Place	15,463	10,616	(4,849)
Corporate, Housing and Wellbeing	17,760	12,610	(5,150)
Strategic Finance	12,857	10,132	(2,725)
Total	46,080	33,356	(12,724)

The Council invested £33.356m in capital works in 2022/23 (£30.532m in 2021/22).

Borrowing Facilities and Capital Borrowing

The Council borrowed from external sources in 2022/23 and the expectation is for this to continue to fund future capital investment requirements.

Performance Monitoring

The Council has a thorough performance monitoring system for Members fully in the public domain and on the Council's website. There are regular quarterly reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for key performance indicators (KPI's). There is also a regular Financial Monitoring Report to the Finance Scrutiny Committee for financial performance monitoring.

5. Outlook

The Council continues to take a transformational approach to its service and financial challenges, and is well placed to continue with this in the short and medium term.

Working effectively in partnership continues to bring both significant economic and community benefits. The joint venture at Riverwell, which will take over a decade to realise, has already brought gains through improved infrastructure and is scheduled to deliver significant housing for all ages and of all types. The Town Centre upgrade enables the borough to be well placed to retain retail usage and offers the wider package to encourage full town centre use in the day and evening. Having anticipated the change in use of town centres, and coupled with a diverse investment property portfolio, the council is as well placed as is possible given the uncertain wider picture nationally.

6. Future challenges

The future for local government funding remains very uncertain. The conclusion of reviews of Fair Funding, Business Rates and New Homes Bonus, initially expected to come into effect in 2020/21, remain outstanding and are not expected for the 2024/25 planning cycle. The Council has made provision for the expected outcome of these reviews within the MTFS, however, this uncertainty continues to make medium term financial planning far more challenging. Alongside this councils are continuing to manage the ongoing effects associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic which has resulted in longer term income losses, particularly around leisure and parking. The current inflationary environment creates a further challenges as the Council manages the impact of increases in the prices of energy, fuel and contracts which have impacted the budget during 2022/23. Inflation remains pervasively high at the start of 2023/24 and the impact of this will be monitored throughout the year and incorporated into the MTFS through the budget planning process. Proactive financial stewardship has ensured that we are in a strong financial position to enable us to move forward and react to all of these challenges.

Basis of Preparation and Presentation

The Accounts are presented on an International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) basis having been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23. References to material and materiality relates to the significance of transactions, balances and errors. Financial information is material if its omission or misstatement could influence the users of the accounts.

Watford Borough Council

Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

1. Watford Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. The 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.
2. In discharging this overall responsibility, the 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.
3. Watford 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'. It is also in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England & Wales) Regulations 2015.
4. This Governance Statement explains how the Council has maintained sound governance during the 2022/23 financial year and also how the Council meets the requirements of regulation 6(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

5. The governance framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2023 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and statement of accounts. It comprises the systems and processes as well as the culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled, and through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads the community.
6. The governance framework enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate and cost-effective services.
7. The system of internal control is a significant part of this framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. However, it cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and, therefore, can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.
8. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and to manage them efficiently, effectively, and economically.

THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

9. The key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the Council's governance arrangements, as per the CIPFA 'Delivering good governance in local government: Framework – Addendum' include the following:

General

10. Watford Borough Council operates an elected Mayor and Cabinet model of governance under the Local Government Act 2000, and this places total responsibility for those functions designated as Executive Functions into the hands of the directly elected Mayor. However full Council is responsible for setting the Council's budget and agreeing the key policy framework. The Council also has established an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Finance Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the actions of the elected Mayor and Cabinet and assist with policy development. In addition, the Council has further committees that cover non-executive functions, these are Licensing, Development Management, Audit, Functions, Standards and Chief Officer Pay Panel. It also has a number of advisory member groups such as Major Projects Board, Planning Advisory Group, Housing Advisory Group, the Health and Wellbeing Forum, the Sustainability Forum, the Constitution Working Party and Member Development Group.
11. Watford Borough Council has a directly elected Mayor, which means that the community elect that person to lead the council at four yearly intervals. The Mayor is supported by a Cabinet made up of elected councillors that plays a key role in determining the overall budget and policy framework of the Council. Each member of the Cabinet has a portfolio for which they are responsible and can make delegated decisions within their area of responsibility as set out in the Executive Scheme of Delegation, individual officers can also make decisions as set out in both the Executive Scheme of Delegation and the Councils Functions Scheme of Delegation in the Constitution.
12. The Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent, and accountable to the local community. Some of these procedures are required by law, whilst others are adopted by the Council. The Constitution is reviewed annually and is available on the Council's website and intranet.
13. The Council has an approved Local Code of Governance, Code of Conduct for Councillors, and a separate code for Officers, which sets out and describes its commitment to good governance and identifies the arrangements that have been and will continue to be made to ensure its ongoing effective implementation and application in all aspects of the Council's work. The Local Code of Governance is available on the Council's website and intranet.
14. The Council acknowledges its responsibility for internal control, and for ensuring that its systems maintain the integrity of accounting records, and the safeguarding of its assets. These systems provide reasonable assurance as to the reliability of financial information and to maintain proper control over the income, expenditure, assets, and liabilities of the Council. However, no system of internal control can provide absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss.
15. The Corporate Management Team is aware of the financial and other procedures and controls outlined in the Constitution, and senior officers are required to sign a declaration of compliance, in the form of a Management Assurance Statement at the end of each year. This evidences, amongst other things, that their staff are aware of and consistently apply the requirements of the Constitution.
16. Elected Members as decision-makers have to fill in a register of disclosable pecuniary and other interest when they are elected and also declare any disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests as and when they occur.

Strategic Aims and Objectives

17. The governance framework enables the Council's key objectives as outlined in the Council Plan. Our Council Plan 2022–26 sets out our ambitions and our overarching themes for Watford over the next four years – a council working with and for our community and serving our residents, a greener, brighter future, an inspiring, thriving, and creative town, and a diverse, happy and healthy town.

A Council working for our community and serving our residents	A greener brighter future	An Inspiring, thriving, and creative town	A diverse, happy and healthy town
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18. Both the themes and commitments are reflected in a detailed Delivery Plan (2022-24). This Delivery Plan shows how we will focus our work to bring the Council Plan to life over the next two years, making sure we deliver what we said we would achieve. Under each theme, we clearly set out our priority actions, which we are committed to achieving by 2024. These actions cut across and support the delivery of our themes, linking together to shape a bright future for Watford.

The Council is also a partner in the Local Strategic Plan which is made up of key stakeholders such as Hertfordshire County Council, Hertsmere Council, Three Rivers District Council, Dacorum Council and St Albans Council. The Joint Strategic Plan will provide a long-term blueprint for the South West Hertfordshire area to 2050. It will consider and address issues that cross council boundaries and will set out a strategic vision for the area.

Decision Making Structures

19. Watford's Corporate Management Team comprises: the Chief Executive, an Executive Director (Place), two Directors (Partnership / Performance), Group Head of Democracy and Governance, six Associate Directors, Director of Finance (shared with Three Rivers District Council) and Executive Head of HR & OD (also shared with TRDC). The Corporate Management Team meets as the Corporate Management Board fortnightly. Financial control is primarily the responsibility of a shared Director of Finance with neighbouring Three Rivers District Council. The Council also has a Strategic Board chaired by the Chief Executive to consider the overall strategic direction of the Council. In addition, there are a variety of officer boards that look at the council's commercial and property investments.
20. Overall financial control is monitored regularly by the Corporate Management Board and the Finance Scrutiny Committee, and quarterly by Cabinet. Budget preparation is influenced by the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which forecasts budget pressures and available resources over a four-year period. This MTFS is reported quarterly to Cabinet and Finance Scrutiny Committee where variations to the strategy are approved. The Council has the ultimate responsibility for approving the annual budget. The final accounts at the end of a financial year are subject to formal approval by the Audit Committee (but is also reported to Cabinet and Finance Scrutiny Committee).

Constitution

21. The Council has a written constitution which identifies community focus, service delivery arrangements, structures and processes, risk management, internal control arrangements and standards of conduct. This sets out how the council takes decisions, roles and responsibilities of members and officers, codes of conduct, procedure rules, and also sets out the rights of citizens.
22. The Council's Constitution is available to all on the Council's website.
23. There are regular meetings of the Council, Cabinet and other committees. Council, Cabinet and committee / scrutiny meetings are open to the public and written reports are available to the public through the council's website. Information is only treated as confidential when it is necessary to do

so for legal / commercial reasons in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972.

24. The Council's key strategic document, the Council Plan has a four-year focus, supported by a two year Delivery Plan. These set out key service improvement priorities for the medium term, with targets for performance and deadlines for achievement. This has been informed by public consultation on a range of topics. Progress on the Delivery Plan is reported to the public through quarterly reports to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Council's magazine, About Watford, which is distributed to every household in the Borough and is also available online.
25. Councillors are assisted in their policy and decision-making roles by the advice of staff with suitable qualifications and experience, under the leadership of the Chief Executive. All reports requiring a decision from members include comments on financial, legal, equalities, sustainability, community safety (as relevant), risk and other appropriate issues such as potential risks to non-achievement, all of which ensures that comprehensive advice is provided prior to decisions being taken.
26. The Council also has an Officers' Code of Conduct which includes; Disclosure of Information, Political Neutrality, Potential Conflict of Interest Situation, Bribery, Corruption and Fraud, Appointments and Other Employment Matters, Outside Commitments, Personal Interests, Equality Issues, Information Security, Criminal Offences, Whistleblowing and Breaches of the Code of Conduct.
27. The scrutiny function within a local authority provides a necessary check upon the role of Cabinet and is a key component of corporate governance. At Watford it is co-ordinated through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which can review Cabinet decisions and service performance, including those of the Council's outsourced services, it can also set up task and finish groups to look in depth at issues it wishes to scrutinise, and it also scrutinises the Community Safety Partnership. In addition, the Standards Committee considers Member conduct and the Finance Scrutiny Committee considers financial issues. Finally, the Audit Committee reviews the overall governance arrangements, including the service related control and risk management environment. The Audit Committee also considers the response to Freedom of Information requests, the Ombudsman's annual report, risk management, Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act as well as annual accounts and treasury management (investment) policies.
28. The Council's protocols and procedures are reviewed and updated on a regular basis for standing orders, financial regulations, a scheme of delegation and supporting procedure notes/manuals clearly defining how decisions are taken and the process and controls required to manage risks. Compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations, is achieved through a combination of training events, written policy and procedural documentation, authorisation procedures, managerial supervision, review by internal and external audit and use of the disciplinary procedure where appropriate.
29. Codes of Conduct defining the standards of behaviour for members, staff, partners and the community have been developed and communicated. These include:
 - Members Code of Conduct.
 - Code of Conduct for staff.
 - Anti-Fraud and Corruption policy (including Whistleblowing and Anti-bribery).
 - Money Laundering detection guidance.
 - Members and officer protocols.
 - Regular performance appraisals, linked to service and corporate objectives.
 - A Standards Committee which has a key role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct for members.
 - Officers are subject to the standards of any professional bodies to which they belong.

30. The Group Head of Democracy and Governance is the Council's Monitoring Officer and duties include: maintaining the Council's Constitution; reporting on any potential or actual illegality or maladministration; and giving advice to the Mayor and councillors on the Constitution or issues of maladministration, financial impropriety or probity.
31. The Shared Director of Finance is the statutory Chief Finance Officer. Duties include overall responsibility for financial administration, reporting on any actual or potential instances of illegality in expenditure, including unlawful loss or deficiency, or illegal items of account, and giving advice to the council on financial planning.

Data Quality, Risk Management and Fraud

32. The need to develop policies and guidance on data quality and assurance is essential in order to promote consistency and awareness across the organisation. To that end, the Council has a senior member of staff who acts as the Senior Information Risk Officer. Guidance documents include a Data Quality Policy, an Information Security Policy, a Data Asset Register and management training modules, all of which are on the intranet.
33. The governance framework is dependent upon the underlying system of internal control which is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. The Council's approach to risk management is governed by its Risk Management Strategy which is updated annually and approved by the Audit Committee. This Strategy underpins the Corporate Risk Register which was updated and approved by the Audit Committee in March 2023. The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed quarterly at Corporate Management Board, in line with the Risk Management Strategy. All services also retain Service Risk Registers which are also reviewed on a quarterly basis with any significant risks reflected in the Corporate Risk Register.
34. Business continuity and emergency planning are other key aspects within the corporate governance framework.
35. All committee reports contain a 'risk implications' section as an aid to decision taking. There is a continued need to ensure an effective risk identification process occurs where the Council has outsourced the provision of services to a private sector partner.
36. The Council is committed to promoting a strong anti-fraud and corruption culture. The revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy approved in 2022 is the mechanism for achieving this commitment and aims to reduce losses to fraud and corruption to a minimum. Beating fraud is everyone's business, and the Council's internal arrangements are communicated throughout the Council, and publicly, demonstrating a culture and commitment to preventing fraud. The Council has a number of robust procedures and policies in place, which combined with executive support ensure that anti-fraud, bribery and corruption measures are embedded throughout the Council. This acts as an effective deterrent to fraudulent and corrupt activity and provides the means for reporting, detecting and preventing fraud, bribery or corruption. Having a holistic approach to tackling fraud is part of good governance.

Shared Services

37. Watford Borough Council has a shared service for Revenues and Benefits, ICT, Finance, Human Resources, pest control and procurement with Three Rivers District Council. Both councils also share the statutory post of Chief Financial Officer (S151) - the Shared Director of Finance.
38. Watford Borough Council are responsible for providing the services of ICT, Human Resources, pest control and procurement whilst Three Rivers District Council are responsible for providing Finance, and Revenues and Benefits. An Executive Board of senior management from both councils are responsible for these services. The role of the Board covers:

- Monitoring performance and dealing with complaints from either authority.
- Resolving conflicts between competing interests amongst the authorities.
- Reviewing the governance arrangements.
- Dealing with matters referred up to it by the Operations Board.
- Having overall supervision of the Shared Service.
- Receiving annual reports on each service within the shared service.

39. Furthermore, Watford Borough Council has entered into two shared services with St Albans District Council. From November 2022 Watford is the lead authority for Planning Enforcement and Building Control and from February 2023 St Albans DC is the lead authority for Legal Services. The aim is to ensure more resilience in these key service areas through increased capacity of the staff and their greater breadth of knowledge. These changes will result in enhanced quality services.

Major Projects and Joint Ventures

40. The Council is committed to Watford's sustainable economic growth and the Council is committed to a number of major projects and joint ventures that will be delivered over the next 10 to 15 years:

- **Town Hall Quarter** - The 10-year Town Hall Quarter programme brings together seven interconnected projects that will all contribute to revitalising the spaces around the Town Hall.
- **Market Street** - Watford's popular shopping destination Market Street is to benefit from a range of streetscape improvements to improve the look and feel of the area.
- **Watford Business Park** - The 30 hectare Watford Business Park – located by Greenhill Crescent and Faraday Close - is one of the key employment hubs in the town with over 100 businesses employing 1000-1200 people from Watford and beyond.
- **Watford Riverwell** - Watford Borough Council and its development partner, Kier Property, have been working to deliver a masterplan for Watford Riverwell to make sure it's a place that everyone can enjoy.
- **Watford Junction** - The station, which currently welcomes 8 million visitors every year, will be brought into the 21st century by Watford Borough Council alongside its partners: Halkin, Network Rail, London North Western Railways and Hertfordshire County Council.
- **Western Gateway** - The Western Gateway has been identified in the emerging Local Plan as a Special Policy Area where significant new development is being directed.
- **Clarendon Road** - Significant improvements have taken place at the junction of Clarendon Road and Beechen Grove in Watford.

Community Engagement

41. Corporate governance includes informing our community of the plans and aspirations of the council and is primarily communicated through its published Council Plans, quarterly reports to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the regular editions of 'About Watford'. The directly elected Mayor, Peter Taylor, takes the lead in ensuring there is open and effective community leadership and provides a focal point for individuals, communities, business and voluntary organisations to engage with the Council. The Mayor is also the Chair of the Borough's Local Strategic Partnership, One Watford, which continues to lead on the successful delivery of the overall vision and objectives for the town and on effectively integrating partnership working and delivery.

42. The Council has established twelve neighbourhood forums, which mirror the Borough's ward boundaries and each has a devolved budget of £3,000. These are organised and managed by the relevant local councillors as part of their commitment to community leadership and engagement. It can also be used to support local projects.

43. The Council has established clear channels of communication with all sections of the community and other stakeholders. It provides citizens and business' with information about the Council and its spending through a leaflet that is distributed with Council Tax and Business Rate bills and the publication of a summary of its key financial information through the Council magazine 'About Watford'.
44. A range of consultation and engagement projects are undertaken annually. This includes a regular 'Community Survey', which covers a range of areas relating to the Council's services and activities, including how it spends its money and prioritises areas for focus and improvement. Local residents are also invited to attend a range of Forums (such as the Community Forum, Pensioners Forum, and Sustainability Forum), which help build understanding across a range of areas including Council finances and the implications for future service delivery. The Watford Compact provides an agreement between the statutory and voluntary sectors in Watford to clarify and strengthen their relationship and to achieve better outcomes for individuals and for the Watford community.

REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

45. In accordance with recent external audit guidance, the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework will focus upon significant weaknesses and the 'big picture'. If issues have not been highlighted, it is because current governance arrangements have proved fit for purpose.
46. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the executive managers within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Annual Report of the Head of Assurance for the Shared Internal Audit Service and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. The Mayor and Portfolio Holders maintain a continuous review of the Council's policies, activities and performance of Officers both through regular reviews and on a day to day basis.

The Council

47. Council comprises 36 Members and an Elected Mayor. The main roles are:
- To set Watford Borough Council's Budget and Policy Framework.
 - To receive a report from the Mayor, which Councillors can then ask questions related to the report.
 - To receive questions from the public, which are then debated by the Councillors.
 - To receive petitions from the public, which are debated by the Councillors.
 - To receive questions from Councillors with their response, these are not debated.
 - To receive motions from Councillors, which are then debated.
 - To consider any recommendations from Committees or Working Parties.
48. Council met five times during 2022/23 and agendas, reports and minutes are available on the Council's website.

Cabinet

49. Cabinet comprises the Mayor and five members and makes decisions which are in line with the Council's overall policies and Budget. It is chaired by the Mayor and includes the Portfolio Holders.
50. Each Member of Cabinet has responsibility for a range of Council functions, known as a portfolio and each Portfolio Holder is required to work closely with Group Head/Director/Associate Director and develop an in-depth knowledge of their portfolio area.
51. The dates of all Cabinet meetings are pre-published and all decisions are taken in public apart from a small number of reports which are considered and determined after the press and public have been

lawfully excluded. Agendas, reports and minutes of the meetings are available on the Council's website.

52. Cabinet met six times during 2022/23.

The Review Committees

53. The Council has two review committees, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Finance Scrutiny Committee. Their role is to scrutinise the decisions and performance of Cabinet and the Council as a whole.

54. Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprising nine members, is the over-arching scrutiny committee for Watford Borough Council. Its work includes:

- Reviewing called in Executive decisions made by Cabinet, Portfolio Holders and Officers.
- Reviewing the Council's performance measures.
- Monitoring the Executive decisions taken, and the key decisions to be taken, by Cabinet, Portfolio Holders and Officers.
- Monitoring the progress of recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews.
- Setting up Task Groups to review suggested topics for scrutiny.
- Monitoring the progress of Task Groups and agreeing the final reports.
- Setting a rolling scrutiny work programme.

The committee met ten times in 2022/23.

55. Finance Scrutiny Committee comprises nine members and its work includes:

- To examine the Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- To examine the budget strategy for the relevant financial year.
- To review the service spending priorities for the relevant financial year.
- To challenge, question and test those strategies and plans.
- To examine the draft proposals for the following financial year's budget.
- To challenge if the proposals match the strategy and priorities.
- To forward comments on the budget proposals to Cabinet in time for the January budget meeting.

The Finance Scrutiny Committee met five times in 2022/23.

Member Panels

56. In 2022/23 there was one task group set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – a Sustainability Strategy task group. The task group met three times in November and December 2022. The group was established to ensure that non-executive councillors feed into the revised Sustainability Strategy. A report from the task group was presented and agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2023 and by Cabinet in March 2023, in which the recommendations included increasing the target for the number of households who commit to making one change to live more sustainably were also agreed. The new Environmental Strategy; addressing the climate and ecological emergency 2023-2030 was also agreed by Cabinet at that meeting.

Standards Committee

57. The Standards Committee is set up as and when required to consider matters of Member conduct. There were no meetings of this committee in 2022/23.

Members Remuneration.

58. Watford Borough Council's Independent Remuneration Panel has been in existence since 2000; originally meeting on an annual basis, which later moved to a quadrennial review from 2013. In 2021 it carried out the latest quadrennial review. The report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel was approved by the Full Council as part of the Budget Council meeting, details of which are available on the Council's website.

Senior Management

59. There are three Council Officers who have statutory appointments - the Chief Executive's role as the Head of Paid Service, the Shared Director of Finance's role as the Section 151 Officer and the Group Head of Democracy & Governance as the Monitoring Officer. Watford's Corporate Management Team comprises; the Chief Executive, an Executive Director (Place), two Directors (Partnership / Performance), Group Head of Democracy and Governance, six Associate Directors, Director of Finance (shared with TRDC) and Executive Head of HR & OD (also shared with TRDC). The Corporate Management Team meets as the Corporate Management Board fortnightly.

Performance Management

60. Performance management follows a 'cascade' principle. The Council approves a Council Plan with a medium term – four year focus. The Council plan outlines the Council's high level commitments, linking to themes that have been identified as priority areas for the organisation and the town. The Council Plan is supported by a detailed two year Delivery Plan, which sets out the activities which will deliver the Council's commitments and by which it can be monitored and progress assessed. The Council Plan and Delivery Plan then cascade down to individual service plans, which in turn translates into team and individual work plans. Performance is monitored regularly by Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Management Board.
61. The Council keeps residents and stakeholders informed of its progress through a publication called 'About Watford' which is delivered to every household and covers key issues, events and challenges. This publication is also made available online. It also has a large social media following across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram platforms which are becoming a significant channel for communicating and engaging with residents.

Procurement

62. The Council aims to use its resources efficiently, effectively and economically.
63. The Council has a robust set of documentation to provide guidance and advice to Members and officers to ensure that Procurement is carried out in an effective and ethical manner. This documentation includes Contract Procedure Rules and a Contract Management Toolkit. These documents are regularly reviewed to reflect changes in policy and legislation.

The Audit Committee

64. The Audit Committee comprises five members and met four times during 2022/23.
65. The Audit Committee's terms of reference are consistent with best practice. The Committee approves the annual plan of internal audit and receives the quarterly and annual reports of the Head of Assurance for the Shared Internal Audit Service. It approves the Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement and the review of the effectiveness of the internal audit system. It receives reports on risk management and reviews the operation of treasury management. It also received the annual letter from the Ombudsman and considers regular reports on Freedom of Information requests, risk management and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act.

Internal Audit

66. Internal Audit is an assurance function that provides an independent and objective opinion to the Council on its control environment, this comprises the systems of governance, internal control and risk management, by evaluating its effectiveness in achieving the organisation's objectives.
67. The internal audit function is carried out by the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS), a local internal audit partnership hosted by Hertfordshire County Council. This provides greater independence and resilience and a positive step in improving governance. Internal Audit carry out a programme of reviews during the year which are based upon a risk assessment including fraud risk. The audit plan is approved by Audit Committee in March of the preceding financial year. As part of these audits, any failures to comply with legislation, council policy and practice or best practice guidance issued by a relevant body is identified and reported. Circulation of reports to senior officers, reports to the Audit Committee and follow-up procedures ensure action is taken on priority improvements. Progress on implementing internal audit recommendations is reported in quarterly reviews to Audit Committee.
68. In line with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, an Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Report is compiled and presented to the first Audit Committee of each year, which:
- Includes an opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal control environment.
 - Discloses any qualifications to that opinion, together with any reasons for the qualification.
 - Draws attention to any issues which are judged particularly relevant to the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement.
69. The SIAS Head of Assurance Annual Report May 2023 is a key source document for the Council's Annual Governance Statement. The report concluded the following:
- SIAS has concluded that the corporate governance and risk management frameworks substantially comply with the CIPFA/SOLACE best practice guidance on corporate governance. This conclusion is based on the work undertaken by the Council and reported in its Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23.
 - In respect of financial and non financial systems "Our overall opinion is Reasonable Assurance; meaning there is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited."

The Council's External Auditors

70. External auditors, Ernst & Young LLP (EY LLP), provide an external review function through the audit of the annual accounts, assessment of value for money, certification of grant claims and the periodic inspection of services such as Revenues and Benefits. The Annual Audit and Inspection Letter is circulated to all Members and formally reported to Cabinet and the Audit Committee.
71. The external audit of the draft statement of accounts for the years ended 31 March 2021 and 2022 have not yet been completed by EY LLP. There are a variety of complex factors contributing to audit delays in the current and previous years. A plan is in place with the Council's external auditors to bring the audit timetable back within the statutory framework by April 2024.
72. In 2022, Council agreed to opt into the national procurement for external audit services for the five year period beginning on 1 April 2023, led by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA). The external auditor confirmed in December 2022 by PSAA for Watford Borough Council from 2023/24 is Azets Audit Services.

The Financial Management Code of Practice

73. The CIPFA Financial Management Code of Practice (FM Code) was published in November 2019. It sets out the ‘gold standard’ for financial management arrangements in local government. The FM Code does not have statutory status but brings together best practice and statutory guidance including the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.
74. Appendix 2 is a self-assessment against the FM Code and includes actions for improvement.

SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

75. The ‘normal’ running of Council business has and can be controlled through the governance framework detailed in this report. No outstanding matters were brought forward from 2021/22. For 2022/23 the following significant governance issue has been identified from the Management Assurance Statements. Action proposed to mitigate against and manage the risk is shown in Appendix 1.

- The Council continues to pay out significant sums to householders for the Government’s various energy schemes. Our systems are not designed to make payments but to receive taxation revenue. This put additional pressure on the service and brings in scope for additional fraud and error.

Although not considered to be a significant governance issue, Cyber Security remains a threat (as it does to all organisations). The Council has a number of mitigations and appropriate governance arrangements in place and the associated risks are managed via the ICT risk register and through reporting to the IT Steering Group forum as part of regular reporting.

Certification Statement from the Elected Mayor and the Chief Executive

76. We propose to take steps over the coming financial year to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We will also monitor the implementation of any audit recommendations that arise during the course of the year.
77. It is our opinion that the Council’s governance arrangements in 2022/23 were sound and provide a robust platform for achieving the Council’s priorities and challenges in 2023/24.

Signed _____

Date _____

Peter Taylor - Mayor

Signed _____

Date _____

Donna Nolan - Chief Executive

WBC Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 Action Plan

No.	Issue	Action	Resolved	Updates
1	The Service continues to pay out significant sums to householders for the Government’s various energy schemes. Our systems are not designed to make payments but to receive taxation revenue. This put additional pressure on the service and brings in scope for additional fraud and error.	Additional capacity has been brought in via a third party provider to carry out initial screening checks. Payments are subject to normal fraud and error checks.		

Financial Management Code Compliance Self-Assessment 2022/23

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
1. Responsibilities of the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) and Leadership Team				
A	The leadership team is able to demonstrate that the services provided by the authority provide value for money (VFM)	Services use peer reviews incorporating benchmarking to inform opportunities to improve VFM. All tenders consider VFM by considering the quality of service and not just price.		GREEN
B	The authority complies with the CIPFA "Statement of the Role of the CFO in Local Government"	The CFO is qualified accountant with significant experience working as an active member of the leadership team. The CFO is a member of Leadership Board and has an influential role with members of the Cabinet, Audit Committee and lead opposition members. Role profiles within the finance team have been refreshed to ensure that the team is suitably resourced and fit for purpose.		GREEN
2. Governance and Financial Management Style				
C	The Leadership Team demonstrates in its actions and behaviours responsibility for governance and internal control	The Statutory Officer Group exists to ensure good governance and internal control, including driving the production of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and Action Plan through the completion of Annual Assurance Statements by Leadership Board.	Embedding the Chief Internal Auditor (role fulfilled by Client Audit Manager through SIAS Partnership) into the Statutory Officers Group.	GREEN
D	The authority applies the CIPFA/SOLACE "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)"	Annual Governance Statement (AGS) includes internal audit opinion on effectiveness of internal control environment and systems of internal control. The Council updates the Local Code of Governance annually.		GREEN
E	The Financial Management style of the authority supports financial sustainability	At the core of the Finance Shared Service is a technical accounting team that provides the accounting framework, treasury management function for the organisation. The budget setting process and support for strategic financial matters is delivered by the Director of Finance and Head of Finance. The Finance Business Partner team provides dedicated support to Associate Directors and budget managers with financial planning and monitoring.	During 2023/24, the Finance Business Partnering model will continue to be embedded, further strengthening relationships between finance and services.	GREEN

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
3. Long to Medium-Term Financial Management				
F	The authority has carried out a credible and transparent financial resilience assessment	An annual assessment is made for the prudent minimum level of General Balances and this forms the basis of the budget planning process. In addition, the authority holds earmarked reserves to manage specific risks such as the Croxley Business Park Reserve and the Business Rates Reserve. In making this assessment Officers use the CIPFA Financial Resilience index to benchmark against other local authorities.		GREEN
G	The authority understands its prospects for financial sustainability in the longer term and has reported this clearly to members	The budget papers and MTFS outline the financial challenges and opportunities facing the Council. Budget planning reports to Cabinet clearly set out the financial planning environment and any assumptions made.		GREEN
H	The authority complies with the CIPFA "Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities"	An annual Capital and Investment Strategy is set by Council alongside a three-year Capital Investment Programme, Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy. The Capital Programme is monitored monthly with reports produced quarterly for Leadership Board, Finance Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. Mid-term and Outturn Treasury Management reports are taken to Audit Committee and Cabinet, including monitoring of Prudential Indicators.		GREEN
I	The authority has a rolling multi-year medium-term financial plan consistent with sustainable service plans	The Council has an integrated Business and Budget Planning Process with a three-year MTFS supported by Service Plans.		GREEN
4. The Annual Budget				
J	The authority complies with its statutory obligations in respect of the budget setting process	The Council produces an annual balanced budget and supporting documentation within the necessary timeframe.		GREEN

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
K	The budget report includes a statement by the CFO on the robustness of the estimates and a statement on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves	The CFO's Section 25 report forms part of the budget report to Council and includes a commentary of the adequacy of proposed financial reserves.		GREEN
5. Stakeholder Engagement and Business Plans				
L	The authority has engaged where appropriate with key stakeholders in developing its long-term financial strategy, medium-term financial plan and annual budget	The Council's budget priorities are closely linked to the Council's Corporate Plan and Mayoral manifesto pledges which are voted on every four years. The Finance Scrutiny Committee considers and provides comments to Cabinet on the budget proposals. Specific proposals for service changes are taken through a formal public consultation process as part of the decision making process.		GREEN
M	The authority uses an appropriate documented options appraisal methodology to demonstrate the value for money of its decisions	A business case is required for all capital schemes which sets out alternative options, the reasons for discounting them and benefits of progressing with the scheme. All tenders consider VfM by considering the quality of service and not just price – the appraisal process is documented. Cost estimates for capital projects are subject to robust challenge. Projects are managed within the Council's project management framework and supported by the Council's well established Enterprise Programme Management Office (EPMO).		GREEN

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
6. Monitoring Financial Performance				
N	The Leadership Team takes action using reports enabling it to identify and correct emerging risks to its budget strategy and financial sustainability	The quarterly monitoring report to Cabinet enables Leadership Board and Cabinet to respond to emerging risks – the effectiveness was evidenced during 2020/21 and 2021/22 as the Council agreed an in-year budget changes to respond to the financial impact of COVID-19. During 2022/23 the reporting framework was enhanced to provide greater transparency through organising appendices by service area. The report is also considered by Finance Scrutiny Committee.		GREEN
O	The Leadership Team monitors the elements of its balance sheet that pose a significant risk to financial sustainability	The quarterly monitoring report to Cabinet includes monitoring of key balance sheet items including balances, reserves, debtors, and cash (including the performance of Treasury Management).	Increase the visibility of relevant balance sheet items for service managers through improving service level reporting on earmarked reserves and aged debtors.	GREEN
P	The CFO has personal and statutory responsibility for ensuring that the statement of accounts produced by the local authority complies with the reporting requirements of the “Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom” (The Code)	The annual accounts are produced in compliance with The Code. The accounts receive an unqualified audit opinion. The 2019/20 accounts were signed in January 2023 and received an unqualified audit opinion. Issues raised by external audit have been addressed by Officers, including accounting for infrastructure assets which was a national issue raised by the NAO.	The delay to the audit of the 2020/21 and 2021/22 accounts has impacted on the timeliness of financial reporting. However, a plan is in place with the Council’s external auditors to bring the audit timetable back within the statutory framework by April 2024.	AMBER
Q	The presentation of the final outturn figures and variations from budget allows the leadership team to make strategic financial decisions	Leadership Board and Cabinet consider outturn report and year end variances in a timely manner enabling strategic financial decisions to be made as necessary including transfers to reserves and agreed carry forwards for both revenue and capital budgets.		GREEN

**Watford Borough Council
Annual Governance Statement
2022/23
Local Code of Governance**

What do we mean by Governance?

1. The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014) (the 'International Framework') defines governance as follows:

"Governance comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved."
2. The International Framework also states that:

"To deliver good governance in the public sector, both governing bodies and individuals working for public sector entities must try to achieve their entity's objectives while acting in the public interest at all times. Acting in the public interest implies primary consideration of the benefits for society, which should result in positive outcomes for service users and other stakeholders."
3. Governance is about how the Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.
4. Governance comprises the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to, engages with and, where appropriate, leads its communities.
5. Good governance leads to:-
 - good management,
 - good performance,
 - good stewardship of public money,
 - good public engagement,
 - good outcomes for citizens and service users.
6. Good governance enables the Council to pursue its vision effectively as well as underpinning that vision with mechanisms for control and management of risk.
7. The Council, along with each and every other local authority, aims to meet the standards of the best and its governance arrangements should not only be sound but also be seen to be sound.

Governance Framework

8. The Council operates through a governance framework which brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes.
9. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) drew together a Working Group to compile a framework document entitled "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (CIPFA/Solace, 2016) ('the Framework')".
10. This Framework document is intended to be followed as best practice for developing and maintaining a local code of governance and for discharging accountability for the proper conduct of public business, through the publication of an annual governance statement that will make the adopted practice open and explicit.
11. To achieve good governance, each local authority should be able to demonstrate that its governance structures comply with the core and sub-principles contained in this Framework. It should therefore develop and maintain a local code of governance/governance arrangements reflecting the principles set out.

12. It is also crucial that the Framework is applied in a way that demonstrates the spirit and ethos of good governance which cannot be achieved by rules and procedures alone. Shared values that are integrated into the culture of an organisation, and are reflected in behaviour and policy, are hallmarks of good governance.

The Council's Commitment

13. The Council is committed to the principles of good governance and wishes to confirm its ongoing commitment and intentions through this Local Code of Governance.
14. This Code sets out and describes the Council's commitment to governance and identifies the arrangements that have been and will continue to be made to ensure its ongoing effective implementation and application in all aspects of the Council's work.
15. Accordingly, the Council will test its arrangements by:-
- reviewing its existing governance arrangements against this revised Code,
 - maintaining an up-to-date Local Code of Governance including arrangements for ensuring its ongoing application and effectiveness,
 - on an annual basis, prepare a governance statement in order to report publicly on the extent to which the Council complies with this code, including how the effectiveness of its governance arrangements have been monitored in the year and on any planned changes in the coming period.

The Principles of Good Governance

16. The core principles and sub-principles of good governance set out below are taken from the International Framework. In turn they have been interpreted for a local government context.

The Seven Core Principles

17. Principles A and B permeate implementation of principles C to G.

A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

Local government organisations are accountable not only for how much they spend, but also for how they use the resources under their stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative, and for the outcomes they have achieved. In addition, they have an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies. It is essential that, as a whole, they can demonstrate the appropriateness of all their actions across all activities and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law.

The core principle is supported by three supporting principles:

- a) Behaving with integrity,
- b) Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and
- c) Respecting the rule of law.

B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Local government is run for the public good, organisations therefore should ensure openness in their activities. Clear, trusted channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens and service users,

as well as institutional stakeholders.

The core principle is supported by three supporting principles:

- a) Openness,
- b) Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders, and
- c) Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively.

18. In addition to the overarching requirements for acting in the public interest in principles A and B, achieving good governance also requires a commitment to and effective arrangements for principles C to G.

C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits

The long-term nature and impact of many of local government's responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further the organisation's purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes, and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users, and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available.

The core principle is supported by two supporting principles:

- a) Defining outcomes, and
- b) Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.

D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions (courses of action). Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. They need robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations. Decisions made need to be reviewed frequently to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.

The core principle is supported by three supporting principles:

- a) Determining interventions,
- b) Planning interventions, and
- c) Optimising achievement of intended outcomes.

E. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mindset, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve intended outcomes within the specified periods. A local government organisation must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own mandate and to make certain that there are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole. Because both individuals and the environment in which an organisation operates will change over time, there will be a continuous need to develop its capacity as well as the skills

and experience of individual staff members. Leadership in local government is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities.

The core principle is supported by two supporting principles:

- a) Developing the entity's capacity
- b) Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals

F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

Local government needs to ensure that the organisations and governance structures that it oversees have implemented, and can sustain, an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Risk management and internal control are important and integral parts of a performance management system and are crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision making activities.

A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery and accountability.

It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny are in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful service delivery. Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically, it requires repeated public commitment from those in authority.

The core principle is supported by five supporting principles:

- a) Managing risk,
- b) Managing performance,
- c) Robust internal control,
- d) Managing data, and
- e) Strong public financial management.

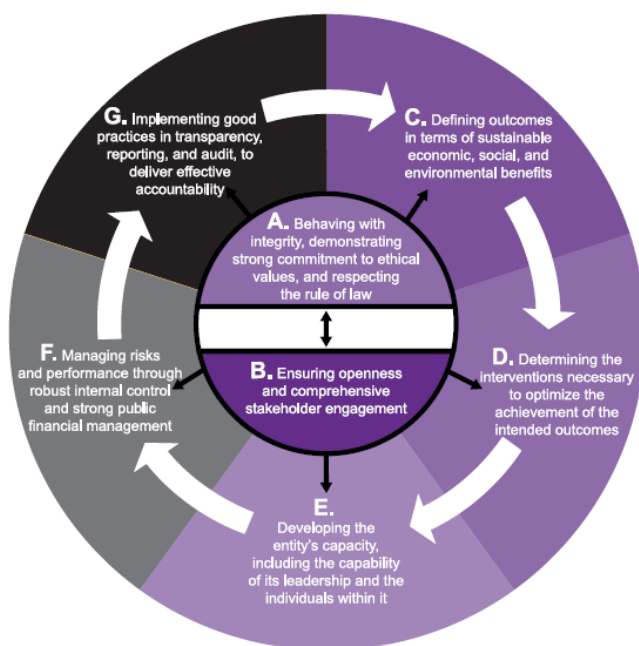
G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed, but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the organisation plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner. Both external and internal audit contribute to effective accountability.

The core principle is supported by three supporting principles:

- a) Implementing good practice in transparency,
- b) Implementing good practices in reporting, and
- c) Assurance and effective accountability.

19. These principles are illustrated in the following diagram: (from CIPFA/SOLACE)



Monitoring and Review

20. The Council will carry out an ongoing review and monitoring of its governance arrangements (see Appendix A) and how these arrangements comply with the Framework document and this Local Code. This review and monitoring will include references to, amongst other things:

- Group Heads/ Directors, Assistant Directors Management Assurance Statements,
- Constitution Review arrangements,
- Ethics arrangements,
- Shared Internal Audit Service's Annual Report,
- Performance management arrangements,
- Risk management arrangements,
- Council's decision making arrangements,
- Freedom of information and data protection arrangements, and
- Council's complaints procedures (3C's).

21. The results of this process will be incorporated into an Annual Governance Statement (AGS), the preparation and publication of which is necessary to meet the statutory requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

22. The purpose of the AGS is to provide an assurance that:

- governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively,
- where the review has revealed gaps, action is planned that will ensure effective governance in future.

23. The AGS will be presented to the Council's Audit Committee and then Cabinet.

24. Once approved, the AGS will be signed by the Elected Mayor and the Chief Executive and will be published with the Annual Statement of Accounts, prior to being reviewed by the Council's External Auditors.

May 2023

Core Principles	A - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	D - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	E - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	F - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	G - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability
Evidence of Good Governance	<p>Constitution</p> <p>Financial Procedure Rules</p> <p>Contract Procedure Rules</p> <p>Responsibility for Executive functions (delegation)</p> <p>Responsibility for Council functions (delegation)</p> <p>Councillor and Officer Codes of Conduct</p> <p>Annual Governance Statement</p> <p>Members Remuneration Scheme</p> <p>Contract Management Toolkit</p> <p>Project Management Toolkit</p>	<p>Constitution</p> <p>Local Strategic Partnership – One Watford</p> <p>Service Level and Partnership Agreements</p> <p>Transparency and Open Data</p> <p>Freedom of Information Act 2000</p> <p>Freedom of Information Publication Scheme</p> <p>Watford Observer</p> <p>Community Survey</p> <p>Communications and Engagement Plan</p> <p>In Touch</p> <p>Ask the MD</p>	<p>Council Plan (2022-26)</p> <p>Delivery Plan (2022-24)</p> <p>Strategic Group</p> <p>Community Safety Plan</p> <p>Local Development Plan</p> <p>Watford Parking Strategy</p> <p>Gambling Policy</p> <p>Economic Growth Strategy</p> <p>Homelessness Review</p> <p>Housing Strategy</p> <p>Waste Management & Recycling Policy</p>	<p>Constitution</p> <p>Council Plan (2022-26)</p> <p>Delivery Plan (2020-24)</p> <p>Medium Term Financial Strategy</p> <p>Service Plans</p> <p>Committee Meetings, Agendas and Minutes</p> <p>Finance Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Local Strategic Partnership – One Watford</p> <p>Communications and Engagement Plan</p> <p>Shared Services Board</p>	<p>Organisational Development Strategy and Delivery Plan</p> <p>HR Policies</p> <p>Performance Development Review (appraisals)</p> <p>Job / Person Specifications</p> <p>Employee Health and wellbeing Strategy</p> <p>Health and Safety Group</p> <p>Safeguarding Policy</p> <p>Members and Staff Induction Programme</p> <p>Sickness Absence Policy</p>	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy</p> <p>Treasury Management Strategy</p> <p>Finance Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Audited Annual Statement of Accounts</p> <p>Revenue and Capital Budgets</p> <p>Risk Management Strategy</p> <p>Corporate and Service Risk Registers</p> <p>Annual Management Assurance Statements</p>	<p>Facility for Council to receive petitions</p> <p>Residents / business owners submit relevant questions in writing for consideration and response at Council meetings</p> <p>Freedom of Information Publication Scheme</p> <p>Notice of Executive Decisions</p> <p>Committee Meetings, Agendas and Minutes</p> <p>Local Government Transparency Code – Transparency and Open Data</p>

Evidence of Good Governance	Whistleblowing Policy	Contracts Register	Cabinet	Corporate Management Board		Annual Governance Statement	Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS)
	Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy	Customer Feedback / Complaints Process		Cabinet		Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS)	Head of Assurance Opinion and SIAS Annual Report
	Bribery Policy	Citizens Panel		Council		Annual Audit Plan Report	Annual Fraud Report
	RIPA Policy	Website		Annual Council		SIAS Progress Reports	Treasury Management Reports
	Equality Impact Assessments	Intranet				Head of Assurance Opinion and SIAS Annual Report	
	Bullying and Harassment Policy	Social Media Channels				External Auditors	
	Register of Members' Interests					External Audit Annual Audit Letter	
	Notification of Gifts & Hospitality (members and officers)					Committee Meetings, Agendas and Minutes	
	Audit Committee					Data sharing protocols	
	Overview and Scrutiny Committee						
	Finance Scrutiny Committee						
	Task Groups and Member Panels						
	Ombudsman Reports						

Core Principles	A - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	D - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	E - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	F - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	G - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability
Evidence of Good Governance	<p>Protocol on Member / Officer Relations</p> <p>Standards Committee</p> <p>Fraud Service and Annual Report</p> <p>Corporate Management Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service) - Shared Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) - Group Head of Democracy and Governance (Monitoring Officer) <p>Executive Director (Place), two Directors (Partnership / Performance), six Associate Directors, Executive Head of HR & OD</p> <p>Data Protection Policy</p> <p>Customer Feedback / Complaints Process</p>					<p>Budget Monitoring</p> <p>Finance Digest</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Audit Committee</p> <p>Financial Procedure Rules</p> <p>Contract Procedure Rules</p>	

Movement in Reserves Statement (MIRS)

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 other reserves (unusable reserves). The (Surplus) or Deficit on the Provision of Services line shows the true and fair cost of providing the Council's services, more details of which are shown in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. These are different from the statutory amounts required to be charged to the General Fund Balance for Council tax setting. The net (increase)/decrease before transfers to Earmarked Reserves line shows the statutory General Fund Balance before any discretionary transfers to or from earmarked reserves undertaken by the Council.

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES)

This statement shows the true and fair view of cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting policies, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Councils raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations, and this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

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. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category 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. The second category of reserves is those that the Council is not able to use to provide services (unusable reserves). This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example the Revaluation Reserve) where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold, and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement line 'Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'.

Cash Flow Statement

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Council during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Council generates and uses the cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the 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 arising from finance activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital to (i.e. borrowing by) the Council.

Movement in Reserves Statement

	Notes	General Fund Balance	Earmarked Reserves	Capital Receipts Unapplied	Capital Grants and Contbns Unapplied	Total Usable Reserves	Total Unusable Reserves	Total Reserves
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance at 31 March 2021		2,000	54,293	28	77,918	134,239	199,042	333,281
Movement in reserves during 2021/22								
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		-415	0	0	0	-415	0	-415
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under statutory provisions		-17,218	0	613	1,843	-14,762	14,762	0
Transfers to / from earmarked reserves		17,633	-17,633	0	0	0	0	0
Increase (+) or Decrease (-) In Year		0	-17,633	613	1,843	-15,177	14,762	-415
Balance at 31 March 2022		2,000	36,660	642	79,761	119,062	213,804	332,865
Movement in reserves during 2022/23								
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		3,804	0	0	0	3,804	0	3,804
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under statutory provisions		-9,334	0	8,952	4,705	4,322	-4,322	0
Transfers to / from earmarked reserves		5,530	-5,530	0	0	0	0	0
Increase (+) or Decrease (-) In Year		0	-5,530	8,952	4,705	8,126	-4,322	3,804
Balance at 31 March 2023		2,000	31,129	9,593	84,466	127,188	209,481	336,669

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

2021/22				2022/23			
Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure	Notes	Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure	
£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	
2,101	-228	1,873	Democracy & Governance	2,114	-80	2,034	
24,092	-27,952	-3,860	Place	34,781	-28,862	5,919	
1,708	-43	1,665	Corporate Strategy & Comms	1,719	-169	1,550	
885	-320	565	Human Resources	939	-352	586	
9,611	-4,784	4,827	Corporate, Housing and Wellbeing	9,918	-5,609	4,309	
37,007	-32,501	4,506	Strategic Finance	31,965	-27,025	4,940	
0	0	0	Other Costs	0	0	0	
75,405	-65,827	9,577	Cost of Services	81,436	-62,098	19,338	
-706	0	-706	Other Operating Expenditure	-1,794	0	-1,794	
5,967	-2,055	3,913	Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	9,333	-4,502	4,831	
0	-12,370	-12,370	Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income	0	-26,179	-26,179	
80,666	-80,252	415	Surplus (-) or Deficit (+) on Provision of Services	88,975	-92,779	-3,804	
			Items that will not be reclassified to the Surplus (-) or Deficit (+) on the Provision of Services				
		0	Surplus or Deficit on revaluation of non-current assets			0	
		0	Impairment losses on non-current assets charges to the revaluation reserve			0	
		0	Remeasurements of the net defined benefit liability (asset)			0	
		0				0	
			Items that may be reclassified to the Surplus (-) or Deficit (+) on the Provision of Services				
		0	Surplus or deficit on revaluation of available for sale financial assets			0	
		0	Other gains or losses			0	
		0				0	
		0	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			0	
		415	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			-3,804	

Balance Sheet

As at 31 March 2022 £'000		Notes	As at 31 March 2023 £'000	£'000
	Long Term Assets			
399,451	Property, Plant and Equipment		432,807	
162,183	Investment Property		162,183	
0	Intangible Assets		0	
2,420	Long Term Investments		2,420	
23,886	Long Term Debtors		6,817	
587,939	Total Long Term Assets			604,227
	Current Assets			
0	Assets Held for Sale		0	
31,893	Debtors		35,633	
15	Stock		15	
97,848	Short Term Investments		101,144	
7,148	Cash and Cash Equivalents		4,120	
136,905	Total Current Assets			140,913
	Current Liabilities			
-44,023	Short Term Borrowing		-65,000	
-43,548	Short Term Creditors and Revenue Receipts in Advance		-21,839	
-6,906	Provisions due within one year		-9,237	
-3,866	Short Term Finance Liability		-3,794	
0	Short Term Capital Grants Receipts in Advance			
-98,343	Total Current Liabilities			-99,869
	Long Term Liabilities			
-1,024	Long Term Creditors and Revenue Receipts in Advance		-1,024	
-3,152	Provisions due over one year		-7,581	
-6,250	Long Term Borrowing		-16,250	
-55,079	Pension Liability		-55,079	
-222,967	Long Term Finance Liability		-222,966	
-188	Deferred Income		-178	
-4,975	Long Term Capital Grants Receipts in Advance		-5,522	
-293,635	Total Long Term Liabilities			-308,601
332,866	Net Assets (+) / Net Liabilities (-)			336,670
	Financed from:			
119,062	Usable Reserves			127,188
213,804	Unusable Reserves			209,481
332,866	Total Reserves			336,670

Alison Scott, Director of Finance

Date: 31 May 2023

1. Expenditure and Funding Analysis

2021/22			Notes	2022/23		
Expenditure chargeable to the General Fund £'000	Adjustments between funding and accounting basis £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000		Expenditure chargeable to the General Fund £'000	Adjustments between funding and accounting basis £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000
1,882	-9	1,873	Democracy & Governance	2,063	-29	2,034
2,047	-5,906	-3,860	Place	3,345	2,574	5,919
1,666	-1	1,665	Corporate Strategy & Comms	1,603	-53	1,550
572	-6	565	Human Resources	598	-11	586
4,547	280	4,827	Corporate, Housing and Wellbeing	4,283	26	4,309
2,611	1,895	4,506	Strategic Finance	4,053	887	4,940
0	0	0	Other Costs	0	0	0
13,325	-3,748	9,577	Service Costs	15,945	3,393	19,338
-13,325	4,163	-9,163	Other Income and Expenditure not charged to services	-15,945	-7,197	-23,142
0	415	415	Surplus (-) or Deficit (+) on Provision of Services	0	-3,804	-3,804
2,000			Opening General Fund Balance at 1 April	2,000		
0			Add surplus (+) or deficit (-) on the General Fund for the year	0		
2,000			Closing General Fund Balance at 31 March	2,000		

2. Accounting Policies

1. General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Council's transactions for the 2022/23 financial year and its position at the year end of 31 March 2023. The Council is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, which require these to be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 (the Code). The Code prescribes guidance on the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) (and statutory guidance issued under section 12 of the 2003 Act). 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. The Statement of Accounts has been prepared on a going concern basis.

2. Turnover (for Group Accounts)

Turnover in respect of property development is recognised on unconditional exchange of contracts on disposals of finished developments.

Where construction of pre-sold developments is under-taken, the revenue and profits are recognised in accordance with IFRIC 15. Revenue is determined by independently certified milestones.

3. 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 the sale of goods is recognised when the Council transfers the significant risks and rewards of ownership to the purchaser and it is probable that economic benefits or service potential associated with the transaction will flow to the Council
- revenue from the provision of services is recognised when the Council can measure reliably the percentage of completion of the transaction and it is probable that economic benefits or service potential associated with the transaction will flow to the Council
- supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed — where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet
- expenses in relation to services received (including services provided by employees) are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made
- interest receivable on investments and payable on borrowings is accounted for respectively as income and expenditure on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instrument, rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract

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.

4. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are investments that mature in three months or less from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

In the Cash Flow Statement, cash and cash equivalents are shown net of bank overdrafts that are repayable on demand and form an integral part of the Council's cash management. The Council has no overdraft facility.

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

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

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

Charges to Revenue for Long Term 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 amortisations. These entries are adjusted through the Movement in Reserves Statement.

6. Employee Benefits

Benefits Payable During Employment

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

Termination Benefits

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

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

Post-Employment Benefits

Employees of the Council are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme, administered by Hertfordshire County Council. The scheme provided defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), earned as employees who worked for the Council. The schemes arrangements are summarised as follows:-

The Local Government Pension Scheme

- the Local Government Scheme is accounted for as a defined benefits scheme
- the liabilities of Hertfordshire County Council Pension Fund attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc. and projections of projected earnings for current employees
- liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate of 3.6%-3.8% (based on the indicative rate of return on high quality corporate bonds);
- the assets of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Pension Fund attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet at their bid value as required by International Accounting Standard (IAS) 19. Full details of the assets held by the Fund are disclosed as part of the Pension scheme disclosure.

The change in the net pensions liability is analysed into seven components:

- 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 which relate 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
- interest cost — the expected increase in the present value of liabilities during the year as they move one year closer to being paid — debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- expected return on assets — the annual investment return on the fund assets attributable to the Council, based on an average of the expected long-term return credited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- gains or losses on settlements and curtailments — the result of actions to relieve the Council of liabilities or events that reduce the expected future service or accrual of benefits of employees — debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non-Distributed Costs
- 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 — credited to the Comprehensive income and expenditure — Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure line and reversed through the Movement in Reserves to the Pensions Reserve;

- contributions paid to the HCC pension fund — cash paid as employer's contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

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 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.

7. 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. The Council currently has no long-term external debt.

Financial Assets - Loans and Receivables

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 authority's business model is to hold investments to collect contractual cash flows. Financial assets are therefore classified as amortised cost, except for those whose contractual payments are not solely payment of principal and interest (i.e. where the cash flows do not take the form of a basic debt instrument)

Financial Assets Measured at Amortised Cost

Financial assets measured at amortised cost are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured at fair value. They are subsequently measured at their amortised cost. Annual credits to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) 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 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.

Any gains and losses that arise on the de-recognition of an asset are credited or debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the CIES.

Expected Credit Loss Model

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

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

The Expected Credit Loss Model is not applied to debts related to Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates.

Financial Assets Measured at Fair Value through Profit of Loss (FVPL)

Financial assets that are measured at FVPL are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured and carried at fair value. Fair value gains and losses are recognised as they arrive in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services.

The fair value measurements of the financial assets are based on the following techniques:

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

8. 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 of the payment
- the grants or contributions will be received.

Amounts recognised as due to the Council are not credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement until conditions attached to the grant or contribution have been satisfied. Conditions are stipulations that specify that the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset acquired using the grant or contribution are required to be consumed by the recipient as specified, or future economic benefits or service potential must be returned to the transferor.

Monies advanced as grants and contributions for which conditions have not been satisfied are carried in the Balance Sheet as creditors. When conditions are satisfied, the grant or contribution is credited to the relevant service line (attributable revenue grants and contributions) or Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income (non-ringfenced revenue grants and all capital grants) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

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

9. 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.

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

Expenditure on the development of websites is not capitalised if the website is solely or primarily intended to promote or advertise the Council's goods or services.

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. An asset is tested for impairment whenever there is an indication that the asset might be impaired - any losses recognised are posted to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Any gain or loss arising on the disposal or abandonment of an intangible asset is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where expenditure on intangible assets qualifies as capital expenditure for statutory purposes, amortisation, impairment losses and disposal gains and losses are not permitted to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of 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.

Where there is intangible asset expenditure of an immaterial nature, the Council's policy is that these be capitalised and then written off in-year.

10. Inventories and Long Term Contracts

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

Long term contracts are accounted for on the basis of charging the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services with the value of works and services received under the contract during the financial year.

11. 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, for the provision of community benefit, for the purpose of economic development and regeneration, production of goods, or is held for sale.

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

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

12. 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). 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. Premiums paid on entry into a lease are applied to writing down the lease liability. Contingent rents are charged as expenses in the periods in which they are incurred.

Lease payments are apportioned between:-

- a charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property, plant or equipment — applied to write down the lease liability; and
- a finance charge (debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement).

Property, Plant and Equipment recognised under finance leases 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 in accordance with statutory requirements. Depreciation and revaluation and impairment losses are therefore substituted by a revenue contribution in the General Fund Balance, by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Operating Leases

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as an expense of the services benefiting from use of the leased property, plant or equipment.

Charges are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments (e.g. there is a rent-free period at the commencement of the lease).

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.

13. Overheads and Support Services

The costs of overheads and support services are not charged to those service segments that benefit from the supply or service in accordance with the costing principles of the SERCOP.

But the costs of overheads and support services are accounted for as separate headings in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

14. 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. 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 Council does not capitalise borrowing costs incurred whilst assets are under construction.

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

Donated assets are measured initially at fair value. The difference between fair value and any consideration paid is credited to the Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, unless the donation has been made conditionally. Until conditions are satisfied, the gain is held in the Donated Assets Account. Where gains are credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

It should be noted that at present the Council has no donated assets.

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

- Infrastructure, community assets and assets under construction — depreciated historical
- All other assets — fair 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 fair value because of the specialist nature of an asset, depreciated replacement cost (DRC) is used as an estimate of fair value.

Where non-property assets that have short useful lives or low values (or both), depreciated historical cost basis is used as a proxy for fair value.

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at fair value are revalued sufficiently regularly to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their fair value at the year-end, but as a minimum every five years. In addition, should current valuations of a similar class of asset suggest material differences in valuations, the entire class to which the asset belongs would be revalued. The current valuers have

undertaken a market review of individual asset types within the Council's portfolio at year end to identify any material changes to the fair value of assets. Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains. Exceptionally, gains might be credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement where they arise from the reversal of a loss previously charged to a service.

When decreases in value are identified:

- 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.

When impairment losses are identified:

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

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

Depreciation

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

Depreciation is calculated on the following bases:-

- Buildings — straight-line allocation over the useful life of the asset as estimated by the valuer - up to 70 years
- Vehicles — straight-line over the estimated life of the asset - up to 20 years
- Plant, furniture and equipment — straight-line over the estimated life of the asset - up to 20 years
- Infrastructure — straight-line over the estimated life of the asset - up to 25 years

- Finance leases — over the life on the underlying asset or over the life of the lease where there is no option to acquire the asset at the end of the lease.

Please note, to ensure consistency across the Councils policies, the previous accounting policy of depreciating some plant, furniture and equipment has been changed from reducing balance to straight-line. This now means all Councils assets if depreciated are depreciated based on a straight-line basis. The impact was immaterial.

Depreciation commences in the year following acquisition.

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, in order to ensure the depreciation charge is realistic.

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 of Non-current Assets

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.

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.

Construction Contracts

Where the outcome of a construction contract can be estimated reliably, revenue and costs are recognised by reference to the stage of completion of the contract activity at the balance sheet date. This is normally measured by the proportion that contract costs incurred for work performed to date bear to the estimated total contract costs, except where this would not be representative of the stage of completion. Variations in contract work, claims and incentive payments are included to the extent that the amount can be measured reliably and its receipt is considered probable.

Where the outcome of a construction contract cannot be estimated reliably, contract revenue is recognised to the extent of contract costs incurred where it is probable they will be recoverable. Contract costs are recognised as expenses in the period in which they are incurred. When it is probable that total contract costs will exceed total contract revenue, the expected loss is recognised as an expense immediately.

15. Heritage Assets

Heritage Assets are held with the objective of increasing knowledge, understanding and the appreciation of the Council's history and local area. 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 have been simplified in relation to heritage assets as detailed below.

The Heritage Assets are relatively static and acquisitions, donations and disposals are rare. Where acquisitions do occur, they are initially recognised at cost and donations are recognised at valuation ascertained by insurance officers, museum curators or external valuers. Proceeds from the disposal of Heritage Assets are accounted for in accordance with the Council's general policies relating to the disposals of property, plant and equipment. The Council has a rolling programme of major repair and restoration of its heritage assets and therefore the assets are deemed to have indefinite lives and the Council does not consider it necessary to charge depreciation.

The Council's collection of Heritage Assets, which includes works of art, musical equipment, sculptures, statues, war memorials and civic regalia, are reported at insurance valuations, which are based on market values, internal or external valuations. These insurance valuations are reviewed and updated on an annual basis. The carrying amounts of heritage assets are reviewed where there is evidence of impairment or where an item has suffered physical deterioration or breakage. Any impairment is recognised and measured in accordance with the Council's general policy on impairment.

16. 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.

The level of provisions are reviewed annually by the Council.

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 but disclosed in a note to the accounts.

Contingent Assets

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 but disclosed in a note to the accounts where it is probable that there will be an inflow of economic benefits or service potential.

17. 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 in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate service in that year to score against the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The reserve is then appropriated back into the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement so that there is no net charge against council tax for the expenditure.

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

18. 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 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.

19. 1.20 Value Added Tax (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.

20. Jointly Controlled Operations and Jointly Controlled Assets

Jointly controlled operations are activities undertaken by the Council in conjunction with other organisations, that involve the use of assets and resources of the Council and organisations without the establishment of a separate legal entity.

The Council recognises the assets and liabilities it controls on the Council's balance sheet. Expenditure incurred by the Council and income it earns from the operation is included in the Council's CI&E.

Jointly controlled assets are items of property, plant or equipment that are jointly controlled by the Council and other organisations. The assets being used to obtain benefit to the Council and organisations. The arrangement does not involve the formation of a legal entity.

The Council accounts for only its share of jointly controlled assets, liabilities and expenses incurred in respect of its interest in the arrangement.

An agreement exists between Dacorum Borough Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, St Albans City & District Council, Three Rivers District Council and Watford Borough Council to constitute a West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee under the Local Government Act 2000.

The Joint Committee has one member from each of the constituent Councils. One Watford Councillor represents the Council on the Joint Committee. The Council's Managing Director is the Clerk to the Joint Committee. Three Rivers District Council provide the Treasurer.

21. Single Entity Financial Statements

The financial statements presented by a parent, an investor in an associate or a venturer in a joint venture (jointly controlled entity) in which the investments are accounted for on the basis of the direct equity interest (i.e. at cost) rather than on the basis of the reported results and net assets of the investees. In the context of the Code, an Authority's single entity financial statements are deemed to be separate financial statements.

22. Group Accounts - Recognition of Group Entities and Basis of Consolidation

Group Accounts are the financial statements of an entity together with:-

- its subsidiary undertakings,
- its investments in associates, and
- its interests in joint ventures (jointly controlled entities); presented as a single economic entity.

Subsidiary undertakings are accounted for in accordance with the implementation of IAS27 (International Accounting Standard 27) in the 2019/20 Code. The 2019/20 Code requires consolidation of subsidiaries. Consolidation is a method of accounting whereby an entity combines the financial statements of the parent and its subsidiaries line by line by adding together like items of assets, liabilities, reserves, income and expenses. In order that the consolidated financial statements present financial information about the group as that of a single economic entity, the following steps are then taken:-

- the carrying amount of the parent's investment in each subsidiary and the parent's portion of reserves of each subsidiary are eliminated;
- any non-controlling interest is identified and separately disclosed;
- intragroup balances and transactions, including income, expenses and dividends, are eliminated in full.

Investments in associates are accounted for in accordance with the implementation of IAS28 in the Code. The Code requires the consolidation of an entity's interest in associates. Joint ventures are accounted for in accordance with the implementation of IFRS 11 in the Code. The Code requires use of the "equity method" of accounting whereby the investment is initially recognised at cost and adjusted thereafter for the post acquisition change in the investor's share of the net assets of the investee. The profit or loss of the investor includes the investor's share of the profit or loss of the investee.

Taxation (for Group Accounts)

Taxation on all profits is solely the personal liability of individual members. Consequently neither taxation nor related deferred taxation arising in respect of Watford Health Campus Partnership LLP are accounted for in these financial statements.

Subscription and Repayment of Members' Capital (for Group Accounts)

The capital requirements of the LLP are reviewed from time to time by the Board and further capital contributions may be made at the discretion of the members. No interest is charged on capital except pursuant to a dissolution, no capital can be withdrawn by a member unless agreed by all members.

Allocation of Profits and Drawings (for Group Accounts)

The allocation of profits to those who were members during the financial period occurs following the finalisation of the annual financial statements.

The allocation of profits between members is determined by entitlements outlined in the Members' Agreement and is dependent on certain profit criteria being achieved. In accordance with the SORP as a consequence of the LLPs profits being automatically divided in line with the entitlements outlined in the Members' Agreement these profits are treated as an expense in the profit and loss account.

Work in progress (for Group Accounts)

Development land and work in progress is included at cost less any losses foreseen in completing and disposing of the development less any amounts received or receivable as progress payments or part disposals. Where a property is being developed, cost includes cost of acquisition and development to date, including directly attributable fees, expenses and finance charges net of rental or other income attributable to the development. Where development property is not being actively developed, net rental income and finance costs are taken to the profit and loss account.

23. Fair Value

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

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

The Council measures the fair value of an asset or liability on the same basis that market participants would use when pricing the asset or liability (assuming those market participants were acting in their economic best interest).

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

The Council uses appropriate valuation techniques for each circumstance, maximising the use of relevant known data and minimising the use of estimates or unknowns. This takes into account the three levels of categories for inputs to valuations for fair value assets:

- Level 1 – quoted prices,
- Level 2 – inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly or indirectly,
- Level 3 – unobservable inputs for the asset or liability.

3. Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies

In applying the accounting policies set out in Note 2, the Council has to make certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events.

The assumptions within the accounts are arrived at in a number of ways:

- a) Estimates for accrued expenditure/income - based on service managers' and accountants' calculations at year end.
- b) Bad debt provision - based on historic trends and adjusted for any material movements during 2022/23.
- c) Asset lives for the calculation of depreciation charges - based on service managers' experience of previously used assets.

4. Assumptions Made About the Future and Other Major Sources of Uncertainty

The Statements of Accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Council about the future that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking in to 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 Items in the Council's Balance Sheet at 31 March 2023 for which there is significant risk of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year are as follows:

Item	Uncertainties	Impact
Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE)	Assets are depreciated over useful lives that are dependent on assumptions about the level of repairs and maintenance that will be incurred in relation to the individual assets. The current economic climate makes it possible that the Council will be unable to sustain its current spending on repairs and maintenance, bringing in to doubt the useful lives assigned to assets.	If the useful life of assets is reduced, depreciation increases and the carrying amount of the assets falls.
Arrears	At 31 March 2023, the Council had a short term sundry debtor balance of £16,135k. A review of significant balances suggested a provision for bad debts of £5,494k was appropriate. However, in the current economic climate it is not certain that such an allowance would be sufficient. See Note 23.	If collection rates were to deteriorate an increasing level of doubtful debts would require an additional amount to be put aside as a bad debt provision for additional bad debt write offs.

5. Adjustments in the Expenditure and Funding Analysis

2021/22				2022/23			
Adjustments for Capital Purposes (Note A)	Net Charge for the Pensions Adjustments (Note B)	Other Differences (Note C)	Total Adjustments	Adjustments for Capital Purposes (Note A)	Net Charge for the Pensions Adjustments (Note B)	Other Differences (Note C)	Total Adjustments
£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
0	0	0	0	Democracy & Governance	0	0	0
0	0	-9	-9	Place	0	0	-29
-3,948	0	-1,958	-5,906	Corporate Strategy & Comms	0	0	2,574
0	0	-1	-1	Human Resources	0	0	-53
0	0	-6	-6	Corporate, Housing and Wellbeing	0	0	-11
0	0	280	280	Strategic Finance	0	0	26
-830	0	2,725	1,895	Other Costs	-1,243	0	2,130
-4,778	0	1,030	-3,748	Service Costs	-1,243	0	4,636
				Other Income and expenditure not charged to services			
-3,149	0	7,312	4,163		-6,499	0	-698
-7,927	0	8,342	415	Surplus (-) or Deficit (+)	-7,742	0	3,939
							-3,804

6. Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations

General Fund Balance	Ear-marked Reserves	Capital Receipts Unapplied	Capital Grants & Contbns Unapplied	Unusable Reserves		General Fund Balance	Ear-marked Reserves	Capital Receipts Unapplied	Capital Grants & Contbns Unapplied	Unusable Reserves
£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
					Adjustments to Revenue Resources					
0	0	0	0	0	Pension Costs transferred to (or from) the Pensions Reserve	0				0
0	0	0	0	0	Financial instruments transferred to the Financial Instrument Adjustment Account	0				0
0	0	0	0	0	Gain or Loss on the valuation of pooled investment funds	6,804				-6,804
-9,246	0	0	0	9,246	Council Tax and Business Rates transferred to the Collection Fund Adjustment Account	-8,105				8,105
-45	0	0	0	45	Holiday pay transferred to the Accumulated Balances Account	-290				290
0	0	0	0	0	Reversal of entries included in the Surplus of Deficit on the Provision of Services in relation to capital expenditure to the Capital Adjustment Account	0				0
0	0	0	0	0	Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources					
-706	0	706	0	0	Transfer of non-current asset sale proceeds to the Capital Receipts Unapplied Reserve	-1,794		1,794		
-4,778	0	0	0	4,778	Statutory provision for the repayment of debt transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account	-1,243				1,243
0	0	0	0	0	Capital expenditure financed from revenue balances transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account	0				0
0	0	0	0	0	Capital grants and contributions applied	0			0	0
-2,443	0	600	1,843	0	Capital gains and contributions receivable not applied to finance capital expenditure	-4,705		0	4,705	
0	0	0	0	0	Adjustments to Capital Resources					
0	0	-693	0	693	Adjustments relating to Deferred Capital Receipts			693		-693
0	0	0	0	0	Repayment of loans			6,465		-6,465
-17,218	0	613	1,843	14,762	Total	-9,333	0	8,952	4,705	-4,324

7. Analysis of Income and Expenditure by Nature

2021/22 £'000	Income and Expenditure	2022/23 £'000
-29,898	Fees, charges and other service income	-31,792
-42,444	Government grants and contributions	-38,672
-2,055	Interest and investment income	-4,502
-5,855	Income from council tax and non-domestic rates	-17,813
0	Proceeds from the disposal of non-current assets	0
-80,252	Total Income	-92,779
16,896	Employee benefits expenses	17,883
58,508	Other service expenses	63,553
0	Depreciation, amortisation, impairments and revaluations	0
5,967	Interest payable and similar charges	9,333
0	Net interest expense on the pension defined liability	0
-706	Costs from the disposal of non-current assets	-1,794
80,666	Total Expenditure	88,975
414	Surplus (-) or Deficit (+) on the Provision of Services	-3,804

£'000	Fees and Charges by Service	£'000
-59	Democracy & Governance	-54
-26,613	Place	-27,676
-56	Corporate Strategy & Comms	-58
-320	Human Resources	-352
-1,985	Corporate, Housing and Wellbeing	-2,624
-866	Strategic Finance	-1,027
0	Other Costs	0
-29,899	Total Fees and Charges	-31,792

8. Other Operating Expenditure

	2021/22	2022/23
Other Operating Expenditure	£'000	£'000
Capital Receipts		-1,794
Disposal costs charged against capital receipts		0
Net Capital Receipts		-1,794
Other Receipts		0
Total Receipts		0
Carrying value of non-current assets derecognised		0
Disposal costs charged to the General Fund		0
Total Disposal costs		0
Other Operating Expenditure		0
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis		1,794
Net Charge to the General Fund		1,794

9. Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure

	2021/22	2022/23
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	£'000	£'000
Interest payable and similar charges		726
Gain or Loss on the valuation of pooled investment funds		6,804
Interest receivable and similar income		-2,199
Income and Expenditure in relation to investment properties and change in their fair value		0
Net pensions interest expense		0
Net fire-fighters Pension Fund Top-Up Grant		-500
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure		4,831
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis		-6,804
Net Charge to the General Fund		-1,973

10. Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income

	2021/22	2022/23
Taxation & Non Specific Grant Income	£'000	£'000
Council Tax Income		9,694
Non Domestic Rates		8,120
Non Ringfenced Government Grants		3,661
Capital Grants and Contributions		4,705
Total		26,179

11. Members Allowances

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 provide for the circumstances in which allowances are payable to members and the maximum amounts payable in respect of certain allowances.

Further information on Members' Allowances can be obtained from the Council's Democratic Services section.

	2021/22	2022/23
Members' Allowances	£'000	£'000
Allowances	502	543
Travel and Subsistence	6	6
Total	508	549

12. Senior Officer Remuneration

Table 12a:

Band	2021/22	2022/23
£		
50,000-54,999	10	24
55,000-59,999	8	15
60,000-64,999	2	4
65,000-69,999	8	2
70,000-74,999	3	1
75,000-79,999	3	2
80,000-84,999	2	2
85,000-89,999	2	4
90,000-94,999	1	3
95,000-99,999	1	0
100,000-104,999	2	1
105,000-109,999	0	3
110,000-114,999	0	1
115,000-119,999	1	0
120,000-124,999	0	0
125,000-129,999	0	0
130,000-134,999	0	0
135,000-139,999	0	0
140,000-144,999	1	1
Total	44	63

The Council is required to disclose the number of employees in the accounting period whose remuneration fell in each bracket of a scale in multiples of £5,000, starting with £50,000.

For completeness, the Council has included the senior officers' remuneration (excluding pensions), disclosed in table 12b in table 12a.

The Director of Finance is the statutory Chief Finance Officer (S151) and is a shared post with Three Rivers District Council who under the lead authority model pick up the costs of this post which is recharged to Watford Borough Council on a 50:50 basis. The full cost is shown in the Three Rivers District Council accounts.

Table12b:**2022/23**

Post Holder Information	Salary (Including Fees & Allowances)	Employers Pension Contribution	Cost to Watford Borough Council
	£	£	£
Chief Executive	142,719	25,975	168,694
Group Head of Place Shaping	113,080	20,578	133,658
Group Head of Democracy and Governance	92,056	16,754	108,811
Executive Head of HR and Organisational Development *	20,316	3,198	23,514
Director of Partnerships	91,640	16,678	108,318
Executive Head of Commercial Finance and Innovation **	56,938	9,688	66,627
Director of Performance	89,995	16,379	106,374
Total	606,744	109,251	715,995

*Incumbent retired and was replaced by an agency worker from August 2022

** Post was made redundant in September 2022

2021/22

Post Holder Information	Salary (Including Fees & Allowances)	Employers Pension Contribution	Cost to Watford Borough Council
	£	£	£
Group Head of Democracy & Governance	86,729	15,785	102,514
Group Head of Community & Environmental Services	82,979	15,102	98,081
Executive Head of Strategy and Communications	79,770	14,518	94,288
Group Head of Transformation	76,064	13,844	89,908
Executive Head of HR and Organisational Development	84,717	15,418	100,135
Managing Director	140,794	25,625	166,419
Group Head of Place Shaping	103,401	18,819	122,220
Group Head of Commercial	91,213	16,601	107,814
Total	745,667	135,711	881,378

13. Exit Packages

Exit packages Band (£)	2021/22			2022/23								
	Compulsory	Other	Total	Compulsory	Other	Total	Compulsory	Other	Total	Compulsory	Other	Total
	No.	£'000	No.	£'000	No.	£'000	No.	£'000	No.	£'000	No.	£'000
0 - 19,999	0	0	1	19	1	19	2	25	2	14	4	39
20,000 - 39,999	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	27	0	0	1	27
40,000 - 59,999	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
60,000 - 79,999	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	64	0	0	1	64
Total	0	0	1	19	1	19	4	116	2	14	6	130
Add new provisions created						0						0
Less amounts provided for in previous year						0						0
Add unused amount of previous year's provision						0						0
Adjust for differences between payments and accruals						0						0
Total cost of exit packages in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement						19						130

14. Grants

Grant issuing body	Credited to Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income	2021/22	2022/23	Credited to Services	2021/22	2022/23
		£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	Business Rate - Section 31 Grant		2,486	Local Council Tax Scheme Admin Grant		100
	Lower Tier Support Grant		130	Homelessness		1,329
	New Homes Bonus		718			
	Services Grant		196			
<hr/>						
Department for Work and Pensions				Housing Benefit Grant		24,725
				Rent Rebate Subsidy		52
				Non HRA Rebate		446
				Benefit Admin Grant		322
<hr/>						
Various	Other Revenue Grants		131	Other Revenue Grants		788
Various	Capital Grants		85	Capital Grants		
Various	Developer Contributions		4,620			
All Grants	Total		8,366	Total		27,762

15. Disclosure of Nature and Extent of Risk Arising from Financial Instruments

Financial Instruments – Carrying Values

Financial liabilities and financial assets represented by loans and receivables are carried in the Balance Sheet at Amortised Cost. Their Fair Value can be assessed by calculating the Present Value of the cashflows that will take place over the remaining term of the instruments using the following assumptions.

- Where an instrument will mature in the next 12 months, the carrying amount is assumed to be the approximate Fair Value.
- The 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 Balance Sheet includes the following financial instruments:

- Creditors
- Debtors
- Cash and Cash Equivalent Investments
- Investments carried at Amortised Cost
- Investments Carried at Fair Value through Profit and Loss
- Finance Leases

Disclosure of Nature and Extent of Risks arising from Financial Instruments

Long term debtors comprise loans and finance leases. Short term creditors and debtors arise from charges to and from the Council for goods and services, and short term investments are those made in cash for less than twelve months. These instruments are carried on the balance sheet at amortised cost, which represents their fair value.

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

- 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 movements
- Credit risk: the possibility that other parties might fail to pay amounts due to the Council

Liquidity Risk

This is the possibility that the Council might not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments. The Council manages its liquidity position through stringent risk management procedures (the setting and approval of Prudential Indicators and the approval of Treasury and Investment Strategy reports), as well as through a comprehensive cash flow management system, as required by the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. This seeks to ensure that cash is available when needed.

The Council is also required to provide a balanced budget through the Local Government Finance Act 1992, which ensures sufficient monies are raised to cover annual expenditure. There is therefore no significant risk that it will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments under financial instruments.

Market Risk

This is 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 seeks to minimise potential adverse effects on the resources available to fund services. A Treasury Management Strategy is formally approved annually by the Council. This identifies all treasury risks and forms the basis of the day-to-day operating guidance applied by the Treasury Accountant when making decisions on placing any surplus funds (i.e. to whom, for how long, for how much, etc.).

Credit Risk

Credit risk arises from deposits with banks and building societies as well as credit exposure to the Council's customers. The treasury policy at present allows the Council to invest with the main UK Banks and Building Societies, with a FITCH rating of F1 or higher, up to a maximum value of £5m with any one institution. Once again this evidences our prudent approach to lending of surplus funds.

16. Accounting standards issued but not yet adopted

Paragraph 3.3.4.3 of the Code of Practice requires that the Council discloses information relating to the impact of an accounting change that will be required by a new standard that has been issued but not yet adopted. The requirement applies to accounting standards that come into effect for financial years commencing on or before 1 January of the financial year in question (i.e. on or before 1 January 2023 for 2022/23).

The standards introduced by the 2023/24 Code where disclosures are required in the 2022/23 financial statements, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 3.3.4.3 of the Code, are:

- Definition of Accounting Estimates (Amendments to IAS 8) issued in February 2021.
- Disclosure of Accounting Policies (Amendments to IAS 1 and IFRS Practice Statement 2) issued in February 2021.
- Deferred Tax related to Assets and Liabilities arising from a Single Transaction (Amendments to IAS 12) issued in May 2021.
- Updating a Reference to the Conceptual Framework (Amendments to IFRS 3) issued in May 2020.

In compiling the 2022/23 accounts there are no material effects in relation to these standards.

17. Events after the Balance Sheet date

There are no known events that would have material impact on the Council's position as at 31 March 2023.

18. Joint Operations

The Council is party to the West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee under the Local Government Act 2000.

19. Contingent Assets

There are no contingent assets to disclose at 31 March 2023.

20. Contingent Liabilities

At 31 March 2023, the Council had two material contingent liabilities

Cherry Tree Road Allotment Reinstatement

The Council owns land which was formerly part of the Cherry Tree Road allotments. The land has been let for use as a car park. The use of the land as a car park is subject to a covenant that requires that it to be returned to use as allotments should the lease not be renewed. In the event that this covenant comes into effect, the council will incur costs for reinstatement of the land for allotment use.

At present there are no indications of when the lease will come to an end, and the reinstatement costs are unknown. Consequently, no provision has been made for this contingent liability.

Planning Appeals Costs

Planning Applicants have the right to appeal decisions by the Council to refuse planning applications with the Planning Inspectorate.

In the event of an appeal the Council may incur additional costs for obtaining Legal Counsel and expert witnesses to defend the appeal. In the event of a successful appeal the applicant may submit a claim for costs to be awarded against the Council. For costs to be awarded the Council must be found to have acted in a way that is not fair, reasonable or robust.

The applicant in a development at Clarendon Road has lodged an appeal which will be heard in Summer 2023. Costs will be incurred in preparation for the Public Inquiry and potential claim if the appeal is successful. It is not possible at this stage to reliably determine the costs nor the likelihood of a claim.

Because the probability and extent of costs is unknown no provision has been made for Planning Appeal contingencies.

21. Going Concern

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

22. Related Parties

The authority 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 authority.

Central Government

Central government has significant influence over the general operations of the authority – it is responsible

for providing the statutory framework within which the authority operates, provides the majority of its funding in the form of grants and prescribes the terms of many of the transactions that the authority has with other parties (eg council tax bills, housing benefits).

Senior Officers

The Chief Executive and Director of Performance are board members for Watford BID which is a business led initiative supported by government legislation which gives local businesses the power to raise and spend funds locally with the aim of improving their own business environment. It is an investment scheme where local businesses agree how their money should be invested to benefit themselves, their employees, customers, clients and their town. The money is raised via a levy which businesses in the BID area pay. This money is then reinvested back into the town on projects which have been identified as being important to the town.

In 2022/23 the council paid £193k to Watford BID, £157k of which related to BID levy collected. The council received £20k.

Elected Members

Councillors are given a small locality budget with which to support projects within their local area. One councillor gave money to a charity, The Official Minds at War, and subsequently became a Director. The amount of funding given was £1,442.

Elected Mayor Peter Taylor is a board member for Watford BID which is a business led initiative supported by government legislation which gives local businesses the power to raise and spend funds locally with the aim of improving their own business environment. It is an investment scheme where local businesses agree how their money should be invested to benefit themselves, their employees, customers, clients and their town. The money is raised via a levy which businesses in the BID area pay. This money is then reinvested back into the town on projects which have been identified as being important to the town. In 2022/23 the council paid £193k to Watford BID, £157k of which related to BID levy collected. The council received £20k.

Councillor Jenny Jattinson and one other councillor are both Trustees for Watford Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The Council paid Watford CAB four grants totalling £204k in 2022/23.

Councillor Aga Dychton is a Director for Watford Palace Theatre and one other councillor was previously a council representative. In 2022/23 Watford Palace Theatre received a total of £314k from the council, £278k of which relates to a Service Level Agreement.

One councillor is a local authority appointed board member for Watford Community Housing Trust. The council received £437k during 2022/23, £390k of which was rent payments. The council paid a total of £242k to Watford Community Housing Trust.

Entities Controlled or Significantly Influenced by the Authority

Watford Commercial Services Ltd (WCS) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Watford Borough Council. No transactions took place in 2022/23.

WCS is a 50% joint venture partner in Hart Homes Watford Development Ltd (HHWDLLP). The council made loan advancements of £4.5 million to HHWDLLP during 2022/23 and received £17.92 million in loan repayments.

The Council owns 50% of Hart Homes Watford Ltd. The council made loan advancements of £4.5 million to Hart Homes Watford Ltd during 2022/23 and received £17.92 million in loan repayments.

Watford Health Campus Partnership LLP is a 50:50 joint venture between Watford Borough Council and Kier Property. In 2022/23, the council has received interest of £687k.

The Chief Executive is a clerk for West Herts Crematorium. There is an agreement existing between neighbouring authorities (Hertsmere, St Albans, Dacorum, Three Rivers & Watford) to constitute a Joint Committee under the Local Government Act 2000. In 2022/23, Watford received a contribution of £50,000 (2021/22 £50,000)

Key Management – Agency Staff

The post of Head of Human Resources was undertaken by an agency worker starting from August 2022. Fees of £107,565 were paid to the agency for their services.

23. Short-Term Debtors

	At 31 March 2022 £'000	At 31 March 2023 £'000
Government Departments	33,808	45,845
Other Local Authorities	-12,380	26,143
Health Authorities	0	0
Payments in Advance	507	384
Other Entities & Individuals	11,601	-36,739
	33,536	35,633
Less Impairment Allowance Account	0	0
Total	33,536	35,633

24. Creditors

	At 31 March 2022 £'000	At 31 March 2023 £'000
Receipts in Advance		
Government Departments	2,359	0
Other Local Authorities	1,121	0
Health Authorities	44	0
Other Entities & Individuals	5,456	-11,575
	8,980	-11,575
Creditors		
Government Departments	7,277	-2,085
Other Local Authorities	3,334	-211
Health Authorities	2,650	0
Other Entities & Individuals	70,006	-7,968
	83,268	-10,264
Short Term Creditors and RIA	92,248	-21,839
Long Term Receipts in Advance	13,348	0
Total	105,596	-21,839

This account reflects the statutory requirement for the Council, as the billing authority, to establish and maintain a separate fund for the collection and distribution of amounts due in respect of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates).

Group accounts are not available at 31 May 2023 as single entity accounts for the Council's joint ventures have not yet been finalised.

Accounting Period

The period of time covered by the accounts, normally a period of 12 months commencing on 1 April. The end of the accounting period is the Balance Sheet date.

Accruals

These are sums included in the final accounts to recognise revenue and capital income and expenditure attributable to the accounting period, but for which payment has not been received or made by 31 March.

Accumulated Compensated Absences Adjustment Account

This account represents the value of any unused holiday, time off in lieu or flexi hours which have not been taken by officers as at the 31 March.

Actuary

An expert on rates of death and insurance statistics who assesses whether we have enough money in our pension fund.

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); or
- The actuarial assumptions have changed.

Amortisation

The term used to refer to the charging of the value of a transaction or asset (usually related to intangible Long Term Assets) to the Income and Expenditure Account over a period of time, reflecting the value to the Council; similar to the depreciation charge for tangible Long Term Assets.

Billing Authority

A local authority responsible for collecting Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates.

Capital Adjustment Account

This records the timing difference between the costs of fixed assets used and the capital financing set aside to pay for them.

Capital Expenditure

Expenditure on assets which have a long term value. Includes the purchase of land, purchase or cost of construction of buildings and the acquisition of plant, equipment and vehicles.

Capital Receipts

The proceeds from the sale of Long Term Assets such as land and buildings. Capital receipts can be used to repay any outstanding debt on Long Term Assets or to finance new capital expenditure, within rules set down by government. Capital receipts cannot, however, be used to finance revenue expenditure.

Capital Charges

This is a general term used for the notional charges made to service revenue accounts for the use of fixed assets. The term covers the following:

Depreciation, Impairment charges and Amortisation of Deferred Charges (included in gross expenditure) offset by the Amortisation of government grants deferred (included in income).

Capital Financing Costs

These are costs, such as interest, which we charge because we have spent money on non-current assets.

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)

The professional accountancy body concerned with local authorities and the public sector.

Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code)

The annual Code of Practice, produced by CIPFA, which specifies the principles and practices of accounting required to give a 'true and fair' view of the financial position and transactions of a Local Authority.

Collection Fund

A separate fund that records the income and expenditure relating to Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates.

Contingent Assets/Liabilities

These are amounts potentially due to or from individuals or organisations which may arise in the future but which at this time cannot be determined accurately, and for which provision has not yet been made in the Council's accounts.

Creditor

Amounts owed by the Council for work done, goods received or services rendered but for which payment has not been made at 31 March.

Current Assets

These are the short-term assets we have at date of the balance sheet which we can use in the following year.

Current Liabilities

These are the short-term liabilities we have at date of the balance sheet which we will pay in the following year.

Current Service Cost

Current Service Cost is the increase in the present value of a defined benefit pension scheme's liabilities expected to arise from employee service in the current period i.e. the ultimate pension benefits "earned" by employees in the current year's employment.

Curtailment

Curtailments will show the cost of the early payment of pension benefits if any employee has been made redundant in the previous financial year.

Debtor

Sums of money due to the authority but unpaid at the balance sheet date.

Defined Benefit Scheme

This is 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.

Depreciation

The measure of the wearing out, consumption or other reduction in the useful life of a Long Term Asset.

Earmarked Reserves

These are funds set aside for a specific purpose, or a particular service, or type of expenditure.

Finance Lease

Arrangement whereby the lessee is treated as the owner of the leased asset, and is required to include such assets within Long Term Assets on the balance sheet.

Group Accounts

Group Accounts are prepared using consistent accounting policies which will require authorities to align their financial statements more closely with International Financial Reporting Standards.

Heritage Assets

Heritage Assets are held with the objective of increasing knowledge, understanding and the appreciation of the Council's history and local area.

International Financial reporting Standard (IFRS)

Defined accounting standards that must be applied by all reporting entities to all financial statements in order to provide a true and fair view of the entity's financial position, and a standardised method of comparison with financial statements of other entities.

Impairment

A reduction in the value of a fixed asset to below its carrying amount on the balance sheet due to damage, obsolescence or a general decrease in market value.

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.

Investments

Deposits for with approved institutions.

Infrastructure Assets

Expenditure on works of construction or improvement but which have no tangible value, such as construction of, or improvement to, highways.

Long Term Assets – Tangible

Tangible assets (i.e. land and buildings) that yield benefits to the Council and the services it provides for a period of more than one year.

Long Term Assets – Intangible

Assets which are of benefit to the organisation, but have no physical presence such as software licences.

Long Term Debtors

Amounts due to the Council more than one year after the Balance Sheet date.

National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR or NDR)

NNDR or NDR is the levy on business property, based upon a national rate in the pound applied to the 'rateable value' of the property. The Government determines a national rate poundage each year, which is applicable to all Local Authorities.

Operational Assets

Long Term Assets held by the Council and used or consumed in the delivery of its services.

Operating Lease

An arrangement whereby the risks and rewards of ownership of the leased asset remain with the lessor.

Pension Fund

An employees' pension fund maintained by an authority, or a group of authorities, in order primarily to make pension payments on retirement of participants. It is financed from contributions from the employing authority, the employee and investment income.

Precept

The amount levied by one authority which is collected by another. e.g.: the County Council is the Precepting Authority and the District Council is the collecting authority, also known as the Billing Authority.

Provision

This is an amount which is put aside to cover future liabilities or losses which are considered to be certain or very likely to occur, but the amounts and timing are uncertain.

Revenue Expenditure Funded From Capital Under Statute

Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provision but that does not result in the creation of an asset that belongs to the Authority.

Surplus Assets

Long Term Assets held by an organisation but not directly occupied, used or consumed in the delivery of services, or held as an investment.

