



St Albans
City & District Council

Statement of Accounts 2023/24

AUDITED

Contents

Contents	2
Introduction	4
Presentation of the accounts.....	4
Our Priorities.....	5
Summary of the Council's Financial Performance in 2023/24.....	7
General Fund results compared to budget	7
Housing Revenue Account results compared to budget.....	8
Capital	9
Collection Fund.....	11
Pensions.....	12
Risks	12
Introduction to the Statement of Accounts.....	13
Core Financial Statements.....	13
Supplementary Statements.....	13
Other Statements	14
Accounting Policies	14
About this Statement of Accounts	14
Statement of Responsibilities	16
Certification of the Accounts.....	16
Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	17
Balance Sheet at 31 March 2024	18
Cash Flow Statement.....	20
Movements in Reserves Statement.....	21
Notes to the Accounts	23
1. Accounting Policies.....	23
2. Accounting Standards that have been issued but have not yet been adopted.....	40
3. Assumptions about the future and other major sources of estimation uncertainty ..	41
4. Events after the Balance Sheet date	43
5. Expenditure and Funding Analysis.....	43
6. Adjustments Between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis Under Regulations ...	49
7. Transfers To/From Earmarked Reserves	52
8. Other Operating Expenditure	53
9. Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure.....	53
10. Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income.....	54
11. Property, Plant and Equipment	55
12. Heritage Assets	59
13. Investment Properties	60
14. Financial Instruments.....	61
15. Short Term Debtors	63
16. Assets Held for Sale	64
17. Cash and Cash Equivalents.....	64
18. Short Term Creditors	64
19. Other Long Term Liabilities and Short Term and Long Term Provisions	65
20. Unusable reserves	65
21. Members' Allowances	69

22. Officers' Remuneration	70
23. Termination Benefits	71
24. External Audit costs	71
25. Trading Operations	71
26. Grants and Contributions Income.....	72
27. Pension Liabilities	73
28. Cash Flow Statement – Adjustment for Non-cash Movements.....	78
29. Cash Flow Statement – Adjustments for Financing & Investing Activities.....	78
30. Cash Flow Statement – Investing Activities.....	79
31. Cash Flow Statement – Financing Activities.....	79
32. Related Parties	80
33. Capital Expenditure and Capital Financing	83
34. Borrowing Costs	84
35. Leases.....	84
36. Contingent Liabilities.....	85
37. Nature and Extent of Risks Arising from Financial Instruments	86
Housing Revenue Account.....	90
HRA Income and Expenditure Statement.....	90
Movement in the Housing Revenue Account	91
Notes to the Housing Revenue Account.....	92
H1. Analysis and Value of the Housing Stock	92
H2. Major Repairs Reserve.....	93
H3. Capital Expenditure	94
H4. Capital Receipts	95
H5. Depreciation	96
H6. Pension Costs	96
H7. Rent Arrears and Bad Debts	97
H8. Rent Rebates	97
Collection Fund Statement.....	98
C1. Council Tax	99
C2. Income from Business Rates.....	100
C3. Contributions to Previous Year's Estimated Surpluses and Deficits.....	101
Annual governance statement.....	102
Scope of Responsibility.....	103
The Purpose of the Governance Framework	103
The Governance Framework	104
Review of Effectiveness.....	106
Overall opinion of the Council's governance arrangements	106
Governance Issues Identified.....	106
Independent Auditor's Report.....	112
Glossary of Terms.....	116

Introduction

Presentation of the accounts

As the Council's Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) I am pleased to present the audited Statement of Accounts for St Albans City and District Council for 2023/24.

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Linda Parker CIPFA
Assistant Director – Finance
Section 151 Officer
May 2025

Our Priorities

Context

Over the period 2023-24 there was much financial uncertainty. We made tough choices about our spending and how we operate to address the gap in our finances resulting from global, national, and regional challenges; the rise in the cost of energy; the impact of high inflation; rising costs in supply chains; interest rates; the fall in land values; and spending constraints from central government. We paused some of our capital programme work as a result of adverse economic circumstances and are continuing to keep these under review until such time as conditions are more favourable and the property market is more stable.

Council Priorities

Besides our core services for residents and helping local people get through the cost-of-living crisis, our areas of focus in 2023-24, designed to deliver a viable, happy, inclusive and sustainable community, were to:

- Combat the climate emergency,
- Deliver more social housing,
- Support our local economy,
- Enhance the District's cultural offer,
- Promote equality, inclusion and fairness.

Some of our delivery activity is outlined below.

Combat the Climate Emergency

We worked to take forward the Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy and Action Plan. Themes: governance and leadership; energy use; transport and air quality; waste; nature and food; electrical charge points on Council owned land; energy efficiency of Council owned buildings; water and climate change adaptation strategy.

Details can be seen at: <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sustainability-and-climate-crisis-strategy>

We worked to progress the new Local Plan, going out to Regulation 18 public consultation in the Summer of 2023, subsequently using the feedback to refine the plan before the next stage of consultation, and developed a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

We started implementation of our new Energy Strategy for Council housing stock using Government grant from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and funding from the Housing Revenue Account.

We implemented our new Parking Strategy and progressed work to find solutions to improve the River Ver and Verulamium Lakes.

Deliver More Social Housing

We made planned housing upgrades including new windows and doors in 100 properties, new bathrooms and kitchens in 100 properties, and loft insulation, solar panels and cavity wall insulation in 400 properties identified through the Council's stock condition survey and energy pilot studies.

We worked to deliver new social housing including at Woollam Crescent, St Albans and progressed feasibility studies on further sites for future social housing develop. 17 additional units provided in 2023/24 which included 10 temporary accommodation units. We also continued work to decommission our one high rise block, Telford Court for future redevelopment.

Support Our Local Economy and Enhance the District's Cultural Offer

We delivered a range of capital projects set out in the general fund capital programme, including progressing our new development in the city centre (the City Centre Opportunity Site).

We delivered the official food controls and related activities set out in the Food Safety Agency Recovery Plan after covid.

We developed the St Albans museums service through starting to implement its 3-year strategic plan, and effective use of £1 million Arts Council grant funding including targets required under National Portfolio Organisation status.

Promote Equality, Inclusion and Fairness

We implemented the measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022, including voter ID.

We continued the implementation of the Council's Customer Engagement Strategy (2021-2024)

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/performance-vision-policies-strategies-and--plans>

We Implemented the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Action Plan, agreed in 2022 –see:

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/St%20Albans%20City%20and%20District%20EDI%20Strategy%20July%202022.pdf>

Summary of the Council's Financial Performance in 2023/24

General Fund results compared to budget

The General Fund records all income and expenditure relating to the provision of services except amounts that go through the supplementary statements. Supplementary statements include the Housing Revenue Account and the Collection Fund Income and Expenditure Account. The following table shows a comparison between the Council's agreed budget and our actual income and expenditure.

<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Notes</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Variance</u>
Chief Executive and Policy	(i)	1,920	1,734	(186)
Finance, IT, Legal, Customer Services and HR		1,989	2,022	33
Democratic & Election Services		1,447	1,405	(43)
Regulatory Services and Parking		(797)	(727)	70
Public Realm	(ii)	4,790	4,627	(163)
Leisure & Museums	(iii)	1,782	1,203	(579)
Planning	(iv)	2,773	3,289	517
Built Environment	(v)	(1,445)	1,582	3,027
General Fund Housing		779	808	28
MRP and Interest	(vi)	3,881	3,090	(791)
Total General Fund		17,119	19,032	1,913
<u>Funded by</u>				
Council Tax		(12,494)	(12,494)	0
Retained Business Rates	(vii)	(2,869)	(3,214)	(345)
Collection Fund Surplus	(viii)	0	(436)	(436)
New Homes Bonus and Other Grants		(1,756)	(1,764)	(8)
Total Income		(17,119)	(17,907)	(788)
Contribution from General Balances and (Surplus)/Deficit for the Year		0	1,125	1,125

The significant variances were as follows:

- (i) Savings versus budget from vacant Strategic Director post and underspends on staff and non-staff costs across a few areas
- (ii) Lower Waste and Recycling income than budget due to reduced prices on the sale of recycled materials offset by higher market income and lower spend, lower Parks & Green Spaces spend and lower internal recharges than budget
- (iii) Lower Leisure and Museum utility costs than budget due to fall in utility prices
- (iv) Planning Fee Income below budget and unbudgeted cost of Planning Appeals

- (v) Lower commercial rental income and write-off of abortive capital costs from prior years
- (vi) Higher net Interest Receivable and lower provision for MRP (offsetting over payments in previous years)
- (vii) Retained Business Rate surplus higher than budget
- (viii) Collection Fund Surplus higher than budget

Housing Revenue Account results compared to budget

	Note	Budget £'000	Actual £'000	Variance £'000
Income	(i)	(32,871)	(33,405)	(534)
Staff Cost		3,208	3,055	(153)
Other Expenditure	(ii)	22,873	29,932	7,059
Net Interest Paid	(iii)	4,732	3,909	(823)
Contribution from MRR to fund Debt Repayment	(iv)	-	(4,200)	(4,200)
(Surplus) / Deficit for the Year		(2,058)	(709)	1,349

The significant variances were as follows:

- (i) Income: Due to s.106 income received, additional service charge income and higher interest accrued on cash balances
- (ii) Other Expenditure: As a result of increased repairs and maintenance costs, legal costs and central recharges.
- (iii) Net Interest Paid: due to lower borrowing in the period
- (iv) Contribution from Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) to fund debt repayment

Capital

Capital expenditure relates to the acquisition of non-current assets or expenditure that adds to (and not merely maintains) the value of an existing asset. The following table shows the capital outturn results for 2023/24 compared to budget and approved capital spend for the following two years.

SERVICE	Budget £'000	Actual £'000	Variance £'000
Housing Investment Programme (HRA)	17,546	11,491	(6,055)
Housing Investment Programme (Affordable Housing)	20,043	8,858	(11,185)
Customer, Business & Corporate	5,032	5,072	40
Community & Place Delivery	4,300	1,495	(2,805)
Strategy, Policy & Transformation	1,528	86	(1,442)
Total	48,449	27,002	(21,447)
This Capital Programme was financed as follows:			
Capital receipts (General Fund)	17,641	47	(17,594)
Major repairs reserve	9,011	9,125	114
Government grants and third party contributions	10,371	6,257	(4,115)
Revenue contribution to capital expenditure	320	6	(314)
Prudential borrowing	7,859	6,809	(1,051)
Capital receipts (Housing)	3,246	4,759	1,513
Total	48,449	27,002	(21,447)
APPROVED CAPITAL EXPENDITURE FOR THE FOLLOWING YEARS IS:			
	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	
General Fund	11,361	11,358	
Housing investment programme	30,817	37,196	
Total Capital Expenditure	42,178	48,554	
Financed by:			
Borrowing requirements	(10,180)	21,301	
Major repairs reserve	8,776	9,036	
Revenue contribution to capital expenditure	624	-	
Grants and contributions	5,942	12,821	
Capital reserves / receipts	37,016	5,396	
Total	42,178	48,554	

The main General Fund capital projects in 2023/24 were:

- £4.8m on the Civic Centre Opportunity Site (Jubilee Square)
- £0.5m on the refurbishment of Clarence Park Pavilion

The General Fund capital project was underspent by £4.2m, the main reasons being:

- £0.75m relates to the New Mausoleum which has been delayed pending a review of Cemetery requirements
- £1.30m relates to money allocated for Invest to Save Projects / Building our Future Program
- £0.8m relates to Disabled Facilities Grant which was outsourced to the Herts Home Improvement Agency
- £0.24m relates to procurement delays in relation to Car Park Lift Replacement

The main Housing capital projects in 2023/24 were:

- £3.2m Social Housing Decarbonisation scheme
- £7.4m Decent Homes work
- £2.3m The Hedges Development
- £1.9m on New Social Rented properties
- £0.7m Telford Court Decommissioning
- £3.5m Other Housing Association grants

The Housing capital project was underspent by £17.2m, the main reasons being:

- £6.3m delays with the wave 2.1 Project for Social Housing Decarbonisation Scheme
- £3.6m Telford Court decommissioning slower than anticipated
- £3.8m King Offa due to having to retender the project as contractor went into administration
- £1.2m the Hedges development due to delayed start on site

Collection Fund

The Council collects Council Tax for itself and on behalf of a number of other public bodies.

These are Hertfordshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire and Town and Parish Councils. It also collects Business Rates for itself and on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council and Central Government.

The Collection Fund records the income from Council Tax and Business Rates and its distribution.

The Collection Fund had a deficit for the year of £2.9m (2022/23 £13.6m surplus) increasing the cumulative deficit of £2.1m to £5.0m. Under the Business Rates Retention Scheme introduced in 2013/14, amounts are paid to precepting bodies on estimates at the beginning of the year. Any over or under payments are accounted for in subsequent year's estimates.

	Business Rates £'000	Council Tax £'000	Total £'000
Collection Fund Balance as at 31/03/24 of which:	7,120	(2,156)	4,964
St Albans District Council (surplus)/deficit share	2,848	(257)	2,591

The Council received a surplus of £0.87m from the Collection Fund in respect of business rates. This was offset by a contribution to the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve from balances transferred to that reserve in 2023/24 specifically for this purpose.

Another key element of the Collection Fund is the estimation of the Business Rates Appeals' provision. This is explained in the notes to the Collection Fund.

Pensions

The Pensions liability in the Balance Sheet reflects the underlying commitments that the Council has, in the long term, to pay retirement benefits.

Overall, the pension fund deficit has increased by £3.4m during the year to £17.7m (2022/23: decreased by £12.0m* to £14.3m). This is because of the impact of actuarial assumptions. The pension liability has a significant effect on the net worth of the Council. However statutory arrangements for funding the deficit mean the financial position of the Council is not affected. Detailed information on the performance of the Pension Fund is set out in the Core Financial Statements.

The Triennial pension valuation took place in November 2022 and the Council's pension contributions have been adjusted to reflect the changes.

*The decrease for 2022/23 of £12m was disclosed in the previous year. The decrease should be corrected to £38m.

Risks

The Annual Governance Statement provides details about how the Council manages risk. The Council, when it sets the budget, reviews the major risks and the level of reserves that could be used to meet any costs.

Introduction to the Statement of Accounts

The Accounts and Audit Regulations (England) 2015 require the Council to produce a 'Statement of Accounts' each financial year. The Council's accounts have been prepared on an International Financial Reporting Standards basis and may, by necessity, contain technical terminology.

Core Financial Statements

- **Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CI&ES)** – a summary of the resources generated and consumed by the Council in the year in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. The format reflects the way we budget and report to management, which is in accordance with revisions to the code of accounting practice.
- **Balance Sheet (BS)** – shows the Council's balances, reserves and long-term indebtedness at the financial year end, and the non-current and net current assets employed in its operations.
- **Cash Flow Statement (CFS)** – shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents arising from transactions with third parties for revenue and capital purposes.
- **Expenditure and Funding Analysis (EFA)** – shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from core resources (government grants, council tax, rents and business rates) by the Council in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by the Council in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice. It also shows how the expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between the Council's services. Income and expenditure is accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices and is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.
- **Movement in Reserves Statement (MiRS)** – this statement shows the movement in the year on 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 (unusable) reserves.

Supplementary Statements

- **The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Income and Expenditure (I&E) Account** – reflects a statutory obligation to maintain a revenue account for the local authority housing service in accordance with Part 6 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The first part of the statement shows expenditure on Council housing and how this is met by rents, interest and other income.
- **Collection Fund Income and Expenditure Account** – reflects the statutory requirement for the Council as a billing authority to maintain a separate Collection Fund, which shows the transactions of the billing authority in

relation to Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax, and illustrates the way in which these have been distributed to the major precepting bodies, namely the Department for Communities and Local Government, Hertfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire.

Other Statements

- **Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts** – this outlines the responsibilities of the Council and the Strategic Director - Customer, Business and Corporate Support with respect to the Statement of Accounts.
- **The Auditor's Report** – this is the independent Auditor's report to members of the Council including the Conclusion on Arrangements for Securing Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness in the use of resources. Recent Government announcements have been clear that dealing with the backlog of external audits at virtually all councils is a priority, and a process of issuing "disclaimed" opinions is now in place. Once received, a revised set of accounts will be issued.
- **The Annual Governance Statement** – this gives a public assurance that the Council has proper arrangements in place to manage its affairs. It summarises the Council's responsibilities in the conduct of its business, the purpose and key elements of the system of internal control and the processes applied in maintaining, reviewing and developing the effectiveness of those controls.

Accounting Policies

There has been one material change to our accounting policies during the year, which is that we now recognise the commitment to make minimum funding payments to the Pension Fund in future years. This is described in more detail in Note 3.

About this Statement of Accounts

The Statement of Accounts provides information about how the Council has used its financial resources during the year and its financial position at year end. These accounts have been prepared in accordance with two financial codes.

- The first is the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24 (The Code), issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). The Code constitutes a "proper accounting practice" under the terms of Section 21(2) of the Local Government Act 2003.
- The second is the Service Reporting Code of Practice for Local Authorities 2023/24, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards. In

England and Wales, The Code constitutes a “proper accounting practice” under the terms of Section 21(2) of the Local Government Act 2003.

Further information

The Council welcomes the views of local residents, businesses, user groups, and other stakeholders about our performance.

If you would like to receive further information about these accounts, please contact us at contactus@stalbans.gov.uk, telephone 01727 866100.

Statement of Responsibilities

The Authority is required to:

- Make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In this authority, that officer is the Assistant Director – Finance.
- Manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient, and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets.
- Approve the Statement of Accounts.

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Jonathan Flowers

Independent Chair of Audit & Governance Committee

Date: 12 May 2025

The Assistant Director – Finance is responsible for the preparation of the Council's Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Council Accounting in the United Kingdom referred to as 'The Code'.

In preparing this Statement of Accounts, the Assistant Director – Finance has:

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

Certification of the Accounts

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

Signed
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Linda Parker CIPFA

Assistant Director – Finance

Section 151 Officer

Date: 12 May 2025

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

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

2022/2023				2023/2024		
Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure		Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure
£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000
			Directorates			
26,876	(22,542)	4,334	Customer, Business and Corporate	26,673	(23,142)	3,531
36,281	(20,596)	15,685	Community and Place Delivery	36,156	(17,700)	18,456
5,187	(1,618)	3,569	Strategy Policy and Transformation	8,713	(1,752)	6,961
39,876	(30,152)	9,724	Housing Revenue Account (i)	30,964	(33,000)	(2,036)
108,220	(74,907)	33,312	Cost of Services	102,507	(75,594)	26,912
		(1,248)	Other operating expenditure			(313)
		7,731	Financing and investment income and expenditure			4,670
		(22,780)	Taxation and non-specific grant income			(28,668)
		17,015	(Surplus)/deficit on Provision of Services			2,601
		54,429	(Surplus)/Deficit on revaluation of PPE			(61,159)
		(41,599)	Actuarial (gains)/losses on pension assets/liabilities			3,809
		12,830	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			(57,350)
		29,845	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			(54,749)

- i. The Housing Revenue Account is a ring-fenced account for Council tenants, which has a separate section in the Financial Statements.

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2024

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Council.

31 March 2023 £'000		Note	31 March 2024 £'000
900,490	Property Plant and Equipment	11	943,974
7,089	Heritage Assets	12	7,012
6,270	Investment Properties	13	6,521
208	Intangible Assets		106
135	Long term debtors	14	111
914,192	Long Term Assets		957,724
136	Assets Held for Sale	16	10,733
-	Short Term Investments	14	1,907
91	Inventories		93
8,783	Short Term Debtors	15	8,749
12,382	Cash and Cash Equivalents	17	7,604
21,392	Current Assets		29,086
(46,220)	Short Term Borrowing	14	(60,225)
(29,422)	Short Term Creditors	18	(19,780)
(2,906)	Short term provisions	19.2	(221)
(78,548)	Current Liabilities		(80,226)
(14,313)	Pension Liability	28	(17,704)
(181,266)	Long term borrowing	14	(172,842)
(1,562)	Other Long term Liabilities and Provisions	19	(1,353)
(4,135)	Capital Grants Receipts in Advance	26	(4,175)
(201,276)	Long Term Liabilities		(196,074)
655,760	Net Assets		710,510
(33,568)	Usable Reserves		(30,453)
(622,192)	Unusable reserves	20	(680,057)
(655,760)	Total reserves		(710,510)

The net assets of the Council are matched by the reserves held by the Council.

1. Usable reserves – those reserves that the Council may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use (for example the capital receipts reserve that may only be used to fund capital expenditure or repay debt).
2. Unusable reserves – those that the Council is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example the revaluation reserve), where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets were sold; and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement line “Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations”.

Signed

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Linda Parker CIPFA
Assistant Director – Finance
Section 151 Officer
Date: 12 May 2025

Cash Flow Statement

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Council during the reporting period.

2022/23 £'000		Notes	2023/24 £'000
(17,016)	Net surplus or (deficit) on the provision of services		(2,601)
21,349	Adjustment to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	28	18,376
(12,688)	Adjustments for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities	29	(12,041)
(8,355)	Net cash flows from Operating Activities		3,734
(7,585)	Investing Activities	30	(9,820)
17,758	Financing Activities	31	1,308
1,818	Net increase or decrease in cash and cash equivalents		(4,778)
10,564	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		12,382
12,382	Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		7,604

Movements in Reserves Statement

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Council, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and other 'unusable reserves'. The statement shows how the movements in year of the Council's reserves are broken down between gains and losses incurred in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and the statutory adjustments required to return to the amounts chargeable to council tax and rents for the year. The 'Net increase/ decrease' line shows the statutory General Fund Balance and Housing Revenue Account Balance following those adjustments and after any discretionary transfers to or from earmarked reserves undertaken by the Council.

2023/2024	General Fund Balance	Earmarked General Fund Reserves	Housing Revenue Account	Earmarked HRA Reserves	Capital Receipts Reserves	Major Repairs Reserve	Capital grants Unapplied	Total Usable Reserves	Unusable Reserves	Total Council Reserves
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance as at 1st April 2023	(3,517)	(4,874)	(3,537)	(5,502)	(9,527)	(6,022)	(589)	(33,567)	(622,192)	(655,759)
Movements in year										
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	3,308		(709)					2,599	(57,349)	(54,750)
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations (note 6)	(3,253)		(2,887)		1,444	4,805	408	517	(517)	-
Earmarked Reserves transfers	1,070	(1,070)	2,885	(2,885)				-		-
Net (Increase)/Decrease	1,125	(1,070)	(711)	(2,885)	1,444	4,805	408	3,115	(57,866)	(54,751)
Balance as at 31 March 2024	(2,392)	(5,944)	(4,248)	(8,387)	(8,083)	(1,217)	(181)	(30,452)	(680,058)	(710,510)

2022/2023	General Fund Balance	Earmarked General Fund Reserves	Housing Revenue Account	Earmarked HRA Reserves	Capital Receipts Reserves	Major Repairs Reserve	Capital grants Unapplied	Total Usable Reserves	Unusable Reserves	Total Council Reserves
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance at 1st April 2022	(4,454)	(10,351)	(2,259)	(425)	(4,890)	(1,573)	(606)	(24,557)	(661,050)	(685,607)
Movement in year								-		
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	6,470	-	10,547	-	-	-	-	17,017	12,830	29,847
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations (note 6)	(56)	-	(16,902)	-	(4,637)	(4,449)	17	(26,027)	26,028	1
Earmarked Reserves transfers (note 7)	(5,477)	5,477	5,077	(5,077)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net (Increase)/Decrease	937	5,477	(1,278)	(5,077)	(4,637)	(4,449)	17	(9,010)	38,858	29,848
Balance at 31 March 2023	(3,517)	(4,874)	(3,537)	(5,502)	(9,527)	(6,022)	(589)	(33,567)	(622,192)	(655,759)

Unusable reserves are not available to fund future expenditure and include, for example, unrealised gains following the revaluation of the Council's property assets.

Notes to the Accounts

1. Accounting Policies

1.1 General Policies

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Council's transactions for the 2023/24 financial year and its position at the year-end 31 March 2024. It is prepared under the going concern basis of accounting. The Council is required to prepare an Annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, which require the Statement of Accounts to be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Council Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and statutory guidance issued under section 12 of the 2003 Act.

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

1.2 Accruals of Income and Expenditure

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

- Interest is receivable on investments and payable on borrowings and 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.

The only exception to this is Housing Benefit Payments, which are recorded on a cash basis.

1.3 Principal and Agent accounting policy

For the majority of transactions, the Council undertakes it is acting entirely on its own behalf and completely owns any risks and rewards of the transactions. This is known as the Council acting as a 'Principal'.

However, there are some situations where the Council is acting as an Agent, that is the Council is acting as an intermediary for all or part of a transaction or service. The two main instances where this occurs are in relation to Council Tax and Business Rates where the Council is collecting Council Tax and Business Rates income on behalf of itself and its precepting bodies (Hertfordshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire and Parish/Town Councils in relation to Council Tax and the Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government, Hertfordshire County Council in relation to Business Rates).

The implications for this is that, at year end, any balance sheet balances in relation to these Agent relationships are split between the Council and its precepting bodies and, therefore, the balances contained in the Balance Sheet for a particular debt are the Council's own proportion of the debt and associated balances. The proportions of transactions that relate to the other parties to the relationship are shown separately as amounts due from/to the precepting bodies.

1.4 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 calendar 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.

1.5 Charges to Revenue for Non-Current Assets

Service revenue accounts, support services and trading accounts are debited with the following amounts to record the real cost of holding Non-Current Assets during the year.

- Depreciation attributable to the assets used by relevant service.
- Revaluation and impairment losses on assets used by services where there are no accumulated gains in the revaluation reserve against which losses can be written off.
- Amortisation of intangible non-Current Assets attributable to the service

The Council is not required to raise Council Tax to fund depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisations. However, it is required to make an annual contribution from revenue towards the reduction of its overall borrowing requirement equal to an amount calculated on a prudent basis determined by the Council in accordance with statutory guidance. Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses and amortisations are therefore replaced by the Minimum Revenue Provision in the General Fund or HRA Balances by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the two. The only exception to this is non-dwelling assets held by the HRA, where the revaluation and impairment losses are not reversed to the Capital Adjustment Account.

1.6 Employee Benefits

1.6a Benefits Payable During Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those expecting to be settled within 12 months of the year-end. They include wages, 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 the employee renders the service to the Council.

Short term employee benefits earned by the employees but not taken before the year-end, which can be carried forward into the next year is mainly untaken leave. The Council has a policy of not carrying forward leave except for exceptional circumstances and therefore the value of untaken leave at year-end is not material to the accounts and no accrual is made.

1.6b 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. They are charged on an accruals basis to the Non-Distributed Costs line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure when the Council can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Council recognises the costs of a restructuring.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Council to the pension fund or 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 Employment 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.

1.6c Post-Employment Benefits

Employees of the Council are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme administered by Hertfordshire County Council. The scheme provides defined benefits to members (retirement lump sum and pensions), earned as employees worked for the Council.

The Local Government Pension Scheme

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

- The liabilities of the pension scheme 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 the retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc, and the projections of projected earnings for current employees.
- Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices using a discount rate.
- The assets of the Hertfordshire pension fund attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet as their fair value:
 - Quoted securities – current bid price
 - Unquoted securities – professional estimate
 - Unitised securities – current bid price
 - Property – market value

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

- Service Cost comprising:
 - Current service costs – increase in liabilities as result of years of service earned this year – allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the revenue accounts of services for which the employee worked.
 - Past service cost – the increase in liabilities arising from current year decisions whose effect relates to years of service in earlier years – debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non-Distributed Costs.
 - Net interest on the net defined benefit liability, i.e. net interest expense for the authority – the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement – this is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability at the beginning of the period – taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments.

- Remeasurements comprising:
 - The return on plan assets – excluding amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset) – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
 - Actuarial gains and losses – changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
 - Changes in the degree to which required past service contributions give rise to an additional liability. This reflects the commitment to the pension fund to make a minimum funding payment in each of the next 18 years, which is consequent to the Triennial valuation in March 2022's analysis, which identified the need for this commitment for years to March 2042
- Contributions paid to the Hertfordshire pension fund – cash paid as employer's contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

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 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 Reserves to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and any amounts payable to the fund 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 able to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

Discretionary Benefits

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

1.7 Events after the Balance Sheet date

Events after the Balance Sheet date are those events, either favourable or unfavourable, that occur between the Balance Sheet date and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue. The two types can be identified:

- **Adjusting events** – those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the Balance Sheet date and materially affect the amounts included. The Statement of Accounts is adjusted to reflect such events.
- **Non-adjusting events** – those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is not adjusted to reflect such events but where a category of events would have a material effect, disclosure is made in the notes of the nature of the events and their estimated financial effect.

1.8 Financial Instruments

1.8a 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 carried at their amortised cost. Annual charges to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure Line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest payable are based on the carrying amount of the liability multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. The effective rate of interest is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash payments over the life of the instrument to the amount at which it was originally recognised. For all of the Council's borrowings, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable (plus accrued interest) and the interest charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount payable for the year according to the loan agreement.

1.8b Financial Assets

In line with IFRS 9, all debtor categories have been classified as being measured at amortised cost, as they are held on a "hold to collect" basis and would not be sold on an open market so have no market value. This also applies to Cash which is the Council's only other type of financial asset.

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 their fair value. They are subsequently measured at their amortised cost. Annual credits to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) for interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. For the financial assets held by the Council, 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 agreement.

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

Impairment loss is recognised for all financial assets where the Expected Credit Loss model can be applied in accordance with IFRS 9. This means only financial assets where the counterparty is Central Government or a local authority (this includes council tax and NNDR) will be exempt.

There are several ways to calculate the Expected Credit Loss Allowance. The simplified approach has been used as there is no significant financing elements in any of the Debtors' figures. This means the credit losses have been calculated over the lifetime of the debt rather than 12 months.

1.9 Government Grants and Contributions

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

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

Conditions are stipulations which specify that the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset acquired using the grant or combination 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 receipts in advance. 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.

1.10 Heritage Assets

A tangible Heritage Asset is a physical asset with historical, artistic, scientific, technological, geophysical or environmental qualities that is held and maintained principally for its contribution to knowledge and culture.

The Council's Heritage Assets can be categorised as follows:

- Land and buildings
- Artefacts
- Sculptures, and war memorials
- Civic regalia and chains of office
- Ancient walls and ruins

There are very few acquisitions or disposals. Acquisitions are initially recognised at cost, and donated assets at insurance valuation.

1.10a Land and Buildings

Heritage Property is often operational. Where this is the case, the asset remains in its operational category and is not separately identified as Heritage Property. These assets are included in the appropriate Property Plant and Equipment or Investing Property category.

Property Heritage Assets that are not operational are identified separately on the face of the Balance Sheet as 'Heritage Assets'. The assets are re-valued every five years on a depreciated replacement cost basis as no market exists for such assets.

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

1.10b Artefacts

Cost information for artefacts is not available and the Council is of the opinion that the cost of obtaining valuations for these assets, due to their unique nature, would be disproportionate to any benefit derived.

1.10c Sculptures and War Memorials

These assets are re-valued at insurance values (replacement cost). They are deemed to have an indeterminate life and high residual values and the Council does not consider it necessary to provide for depreciation.

1.10d Civic Regalia and Chains of Office

The chains of office and general civic regalia are valued on the basis of the insurance replacement cost. The values are reviewed every five years. These assets are deemed to have an indeterminate life and high residual values, and the Council does not consider it necessary to provide for depreciation.

There are very few acquisitions or disposals. Acquisitions are initially recognised at cost, and donated assets at insurance valuation.

1.10e Ancient Walls and Ruins

St Albans is rich with ancient remains, and these include Roman Walls, archaeological gardens and ruins. These have no intrinsic value.

The Council has made appropriate disclosures for these assets not recognised on the Balance Sheet.

1.11 Investment Property

Investment Properties are those that are used solely to earn rentals and/or for capital appreciation such as shops and offices let to other organisations. Where an asset is used for an operational purpose, i.e. to facilitate the delivery of services or production of goods or is held for sale, it will be considered as Property Plant and Equipment. Also, if the asset is only partially used for operational purposes it will still be classified as Property Plant and Equipment and not an Investment Property.

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 where it is considered there has been a material change in value. All Investment Properties are reviewed every year to establish which may have been subject to a material change and those identified as such are re-valued 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 (for any sale proceeds greater than £10k) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

1.12 Leases

Leases are classified as finance leases where the terms of the lease transfers 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 operational leases.

Where a lease covers both land and buildings, the land and building 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 payments are accounted for under this policy where fulfilment of the arrangement is dependent on the use of specific assets.

1.12a The Council as Lessee

Operating Leases

Rentals paid under operational leases are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as an expense of the service benefiting from the use of the leased property plant and 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.

1.12b The Council as Lessor

Operating Leases

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

1.13 Overheads and Support Services

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

1.14 Property, Plant and Equipment

Assets that have physical substance and are held for use in 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. The Council does not capitalise small value items (under £10k) unless the items can be grouped together to create an asset group over £10k, for example computer equipment. Items not capitalised are charged as an expense when incurred.

1.14a 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 them will flow to the Council and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to the potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

1.14b Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising all expenditure that is directly attributable to bringing the asset into working condition for its intended use. Assets are then carried in the Balance Sheet using the following measurement bases:

- Infrastructure and Assets Under Construction – historical cost (for infrastructure this is depreciated). New acquisitions and completed Assets Under Construction are held at historic cost in the year and selected for mandatory valuation in the subsequent financial year.
- Dwellings – current value determined using the basis of existing use value for social housing (EUV-SH).
- Vehicles, plant and equipment – historical cost is used as a proxy for current value in existing use on the grounds of materiality.
- Information regarding the historic cost of Community Assets is limited and of immaterial value. Given their nature, the Council does not consider that a commercial value should be placed upon Community Assets. Any cost to do so would not be commensurate to the benefit to users of the accounts. The Council's policy is therefore to hold all Community Assets at £nil value and not to disclose on the balance sheet,
- All other assets – current value determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use (existing use value – EUV).

Where there is no market-based evidence of current value because of the specialist nature of an asset, depreciated replacement cost (DRC) is used as an estimate of current value.

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at current value are revalued sufficiently regularly to ensure that their carrying value is not materially different from their value at the year-end, but as a minimum every five years. This may be done on a rolling basis (for example 20% per annum) so that all assets are revalued over a five year period. Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains. Gains are credited to the Income and Expenditure Account where they arise from the reversal of an impairment loss previously charged to a service revenue account.

Where decreases in value are identified, they are accounted for by either:

- 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); or
- 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 Component Assets such as kitchens and boilers are installed in the Council's single dwelling council houses these are treated in the same manner as for decreases in value. This is to recognise that such assets are being replaced around the end of their useful lives. Due to this, a dedicated approach to depreciation is used, as described below. This results in the cost of the component about to be replaced being effectively fully depreciated at the time of replacement. Thus, the addition is considered to be value maintaining, rather than value adding, despite accounting rules identifying it as an addition. For many years, the council has therefore taken a cost charge to the HRA Income and Expenditure statement (I&ES) to recognise this. From 2020/21 we offset this cost against any available revaluation reserve for the property, and then charge the HRA I&ES net cost of services when no revaluation reserve is available.

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.

1.14c Impairment

An impairment occurs when the value of an asset is reduced by other than normal market value changes. These include physical damage, obsolescence and deterioration in the expected level of performance. Assets are assessed at each year-end as to whether there is any indication that an asset may be impaired. Where indications exist and any possible differences are estimated to

be material, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated and, where this is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognised for the shortfall.

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

- 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 the balance (up to the amount of the accumulated gains); or
- 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 subsequently reversed, 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.

1.14d 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:

- Council dwellings are depreciated on the basis of their components, where appropriate as follows:
 - Land: no depreciation
 - Structure: 100 years
 - Roof: 70 years
 - Windows: 30 years
 - Internal components: 15 to 40 years
- Other buildings: 30 to 60 years
- Vehicles, plant and equipment: 3 to 35 years
- Infrastructure: 5 to 20 years.

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.

Depreciation is not charged in the year of acquisition.

HRA dwellings are classified into type and size of building. The components were reviewed and updated during 2014/15, they remained unchanged for 2023/24.

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.

1.14e Disposals and Non-Current Assets Held for Sale

When it becomes probable that the carrying amount of an asset will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through its continuing use, it is reclassified as an Asset Held for Sale. Assets that are to be abandoned or scrapped are not reclassified as Asset Held for Sale. The asset is revalued immediately before reclassification and then carried at the lower of this amount and fair value less costs to sell. Where there is a subsequent decrease to fair value less costs to sell, the loss is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Gains in fair value are recognised only up to the amount of any previously recognised losses in the Surplus or Deficit on Provision of Services. Depreciation is not charged on Assets Held for Sale.

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

When an asset or a component of an asset is disposed of, derecognised or decommissioned, the carrying amount of the asset or component 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 also 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 £10k are categorised as capital receipts. A proportion of receipts relating to housing disposals are payable to the Government. The balance of receipts is credited to the Capital Receipts

Reserve and can then only be used for new capital investment or set aside to reduce the Council's underlying need to borrow (the capital financing requirement). Receipts are appropriated to the Reserve from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The written-off value of disposals is not a charge against council tax, as the cost of non-current assets is fully provided for under separate arrangements for capital financing. Amounts are appropriated to the Capital Adjustment Account from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

1.15 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 and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation but where the timing of the transfer is uncertain. For instance, the Council may be involved in a court case that could eventually result in the making of a settlement or payment of compensation.

Provisions are charged to the appropriate service revenue account in the year that the Council becomes aware of the obligation, based on the estimation of likely settlement as at the Balance Sheet date. When payments are eventually made, they are charged to the provision set up in the Balance Sheet. Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year; where it becomes more likely than not that a transfer of economic benefits will not now be required (or a lower settlement than anticipated is made), the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service account.

Provisions for bad or doubtful debts are included within debtors on the Balance Sheet and not in the provisions figure. Known uncollectable debts have been written off.

1.16 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 Note 36.

1.17 Reserves

The Council sets aside specific amounts as reserves for future policy purposes or to cover contingencies. Earmarked Reserves are created by appropriating amounts out of the General Fund and HRA Balances in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate service revenue account in that year in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The Earmarked 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 expenditure.

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

1.18 Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute

Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provisions but does not result in the creation of non-current assets 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 or the Housing Revenue Account Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account then reverses out the amounts charged so that there is no impact on the level of Council Tax.

1.19 Value Added Tax (VAT)

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

1.20 Borrowing Costs

Borrowing costs that are directly attributable to the acquisition, construction or production of a qualifying asset as part of the cost of that asset are capitalised and form part of the cost of that non-current asset. Qualifying assets are defined as schemes which will take at least 18 months to be completed and the scheme costs are at least £0.1m.

Where the Council borrows funds generally and uses them for the purpose of obtaining a qualifying asset, the Council applies a capitalisation rate to the expenditures on that asset. The capitalisation rate is the weighted average of

the borrowing costs that are outstanding during the period. The amount of borrowing costs capitalised will not exceed the amount of borrowing costs incurred during the period. The commencement of capitalisation begins when all the following are met:

- Expenditure in respect of the asset is incurred;
- Finance costs in respect of the asset are incurred; and
- Activities that are necessary to develop an asset are in progress.

Capitalisation ceases when substantially all the activities necessary to prepare the asset for its intended use or sale are complete. Capitalisation is suspended during periods in which active development is interrupted.

1.21 Council Tax and Non-domestic Rates

The Council act as agents, collecting council tax and non-domestic rates (NDR) on behalf of the major preceptors (including government for NDR) and, as principals, collecting council tax and NDR for themselves. The Council is required by statute to maintain a separate fund (ie the collection fund) for the collection and distribution of amounts due in respect of council tax and NDR. Under the legislative framework for the collection fund, the Council, major preceptors and central government (for NDR) share proportionately the risks and rewards that the amount of council tax and NDR collected could be less or more than predicted.

1.21a Accounting for council tax and NDR

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

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

Where debtor balances for the above are identified as impaired because of a likelihood arising from a past event that payments due under the statutory arrangements will not be made, the asset is written down and a charge made to the taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure line in the CIES. The impairment loss is measured as the difference between the carrying amount and the revised future cash flows.

1.22 Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies

Under the Business Rates Retention Scheme the Council is liable for its share of any business rates that are not collected. All business premises can appeal their valuation, set by the Valuation Office, which is used for setting the level of rates payable. Until the appeal is heard and decided a provision is estimated to cover the possibility of successful appeals. Changes to the provision are charged to the Collection Fund.

2. Accounting Standards that have been issued but have not yet been adopted

Paragraph 3.3.2.13 of the Code requires changes in accounting policy to be applied retrospectively unless alternative transitional arrangements are specified in the Code. Paragraph 3.3.4.3 requires an authority to disclose 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 by the Code for the relevant financial year.

Accounting standards issued but not yet adopted are disclosed below. If applicable, these will be introduced in the 2024/25 accounts.

The standards introduced by the 2024/25 Code where disclosures are required in the 2023/24 financial statements, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 3.3.4.3 of the Code, are:

- a) IFRS 16 Leases issued in January 2016 (but only for those local authorities that have not decided to voluntarily implement IFRS 16 in the 2023/24 year).
- b) Classification of Liabilities as Current or Non-current (Amendments to IAS 1) issued in January 2020 regarding an entities right to defer settlement.
- c) Lease Liability in a Sale and Leaseback (Amendments to IFRS 16) issued in September 2022. The amendments to IFRS 16 add subsequent measurement requirements for sale and leaseback transactions.
- d) Non-current Liabilities with Covenants (Amendments to IAS 1) issued in October 2022. The amendments improved the information an entity provides when its right to defer settlement of a liability for at least 12 months is subject to compliance with covenants.
- e) International Tax Reform: Pillar Two Model Rules (Amendments to IAS 12) issued in May 2023. Pillar Two applies to multinational groups with a minimum level of turnover.
- f) Supplier Finance Arrangements (Amendments to IAS 7 and IFRS 7) issued in May 2023. The amendments require an entity to provide additional disclosures about its supplier finance arrangements.

On IFRS 16 on Leases, the impact will apply to leases of printers and some of the vehicles used by the parking team. Total lease payments in 2023/24 were £76k, following the adoption of IFRS the council will start to recognise both an asset and a future liability (eg of the printer and of the stream of future payments). The other new standards are not relevant to the council.

These changes are not expected to have a material effect on the Council's 2024/25 accounts.

3. Assumptions about the future and other major sources of estimation uncertainty

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported for assets and liabilities as at the Balance Sheet date and the amounts reported for the revenue and expenses during the year. However, the nature of estimation means that actual outcomes could differ from those estimates.

The key judgements and estimation uncertainty that have a significant risk of causing material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year are listed below.

Going Concern

The Council's opinion is that application of the going concern principle is correct. Council reserves at year-end affirm we will be able to function as a going concern for at least 12 months from the date of approval. Our accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis.

Property, Plant and Equipment

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 individual assets. The Council has a significant programme of capital on the housing stock and undertakes major repairs and maintenance which will be able to sustain assumptions made regarding the useful lives assigned to assets.

A review of HRA Asset Components during 2014/15 resulted in a categorisation of properties by type before components are assigned and valued. The review included an analysis of components used by the National Housing Federation, St Albans Stock Condition Survey and Local Authority Accounting Panel (LAAP) bulletin 86.

HRA dwellings are categorised as a House, Flat or Bungalow as the first stage of component calculation. The depreciation of each component is then calculated with the main fabric of the building considered to last for 100 years.

Pensions liability

Estimation of the Council's unfunded liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex judgements relating to the discount rate used, the rate at which salaries are projected to increase, changes in retirement ages, mortality rates and expected returns on pension fund assets. Full details are set out in note 27.

The effects on the net pension's liability of changes in individual assumptions cannot be precisely calculated. The assumptions interact in complex ways including the impact of interest rates. During 2023/24, the Council's actuaries advised that the net pensions liability has increased by £3.4m to £17.7m (2022/23 decreased by £38.0m to £14.3m).

£12.5m of this is due to a requirement under IAS19 to make allowance for committed future minimum payments to the Pension fund that were identified during the last Triennial valuation in 2022. The valuation identified a need for additional funding over 20 years and 18 years remain outstanding. The £12.5m adjustment assumes that the secondary contributions of £1,460k mandated in the Rates and Adjustments Certificate for Financial Year will continue to be paid at the same rate.

Future minimum payment requirements exist to improve the security of the post-employment benefit promise made to members of an employee benefit plan. Such requirements normally stipulate a minimum amount or level of contributions that must be made to a plan over a given future period. Therefore, a minimum funding requirement may limit the ability of the entity to reduce future contributions to the extent that the contributions payable will not be available after they are paid into the plan.

Business rates appeals provision

Since the introduction of the Business Rates Retention Scheme effective from 1 April 2013, Local Authorities are liable for successful appeals against business rates charged to businesses in 2023/24 and earlier financial years in their proportionate share. Therefore, a provision has been recognised for the best estimate of the amount that businesses may have been overcharged up to 31 March 2024. It is unknown how many of the outstanding appeals will be successful, though estimation techniques have been applied to the outstanding appeals using historic success rate data and the latest Valuation Office (VAO)

ratings list of appeals. The total provision for appeals is £3.80m (2022/23 £11.0m) and the Council's share held in the Balance Sheet is £1.52m (2022/23 £4.40m). The decrease in total provision from last year is £2.88m.

If business rate appeals were to increase significantly, the provision would have to be reassessed and any increase in liability would be shared between the Council, Central Government and Hertfordshire County Council. The Council has taken independent advice on the level of provision required and believe the provision to be reasonable given the pandemic and associated uncertainty.

Fair Value measurement

When the fair values of financial assets and financial liabilities cannot be measured based on quoted prices in active markets (i.e. Level 1 inputs), their fair value is measured using valuation techniques. Inputs to these valuation techniques are based on observable data when possible, but where Level 1 inputs are not available, the authority employs relevant experts to identify the most appropriate valuation techniques to determine fair value.

The authority uses the discounted cashflow (DCF) and depreciated replacement cost (DRC) models to measure the fair value of some of its investment properties and financial assets. The significant unobservable inputs used in the fair value measurement include management assumptions regarding rent growth, vacancy levels (for investment properties) and discount rates (adjusted for regional factors) for both investment properties and some financial assets. Significant changes in any of the unobservable inputs would result in a significantly lower or higher fair value measurement for the investment properties and financial assets.

4. Events after the Balance Sheet date

This statement of accounts was authorised for issue by the Assistant Director – Finance on the date set out on page 16. Events taking place after this date are not reflected in the financial statements or notes. Where events taking place before this date provided information about conditions existing at 31 March 2024, the figures in the financial statements and notes have been adjusted in all material respects to reflect the impact of this information.

5. Expenditure and Funding Analysis

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources (government grants, rents, council tax and business rates) by the Council in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by the Council in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. It also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes

between the Council's service departments. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CI&ES).

Expenditure and Funding Analysis 2023/24	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund Balance £'000	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the HRA Balance £'000	Adjustments relating to internal management reporting £'000	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000
Customer, Business and Corporate	2,704	-	(733)	(94)	3,531
Community and Place Delivery	10,593	-	-	(7,863)	18,456
Strategy Policy and Transformation	6,126	-	2,582	(3,417)	6,961
Housing Revenue Account	-	3,944	11,109	(5,129)	(2,036)
Net Cost of Services	19,423	3,944	12,958	(16,504)	26,912
All other Income and Expenditure	(19,365)	(7,539)	(12,958)	10,366	(24,311)
Rounding	(2)				(2)
Deficit/(surplus) on Provision of Services	56	(3,595)	-	(6,138)	2,599
	General Fund	HRA	Total		
Opening Reserves Balances at 1st April	(8,391)	(9,040)	(17,431)		
(Surplus)/deficit in year	56	(3,595)	(3,539)		
Closing Reserves Balances at 31 March	(8,335)	(12,635)	(20,970)		

Our 2024/25 Accounts will be presented in Directorates as above. For the benefit of the readers, the Expenditure and Funding Analysis is also presented in the old format below to ease comparison to the previous year.

Expenditure and Funding Analysis 2023/24	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund Balance £'000	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the HRA Balance £'000	Adjustments relating to internal management reporting £'000	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000
Chief Executive and Policy	1,990	-	-	(19)	2,009
Finance and Legal	3,733	-	1,885	66	1,782
Community Services	5,079	-	(61)	(1,514)	6,654
Commercial & Development	3,158	-	25	(7,996)	11,129
Corporate Services	487	-	-	(296)	783
Planning & Building Control	3,313	-	-	75	3,238

Expenditure and Funding Analysis 2023/24	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund Balance £'000	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the HRA Balance £'000	Adjustments relating to internal management reporting £'000	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000
Housing General Fund	1,661	-	-	(1,691)	3,352
Housing Revenue Account	-	3,944	11,109	(5,129)	(2,036)
Net Cost of Services	19,421	3,944	12,958	(16,504)	26,911
All other Income and Expenditure	(19,365)	(7,539)	(12,958)	10,366	(24,311)
Deficit/(surplus) on Provision of Services	56	(3,595)	-	(6,138)	2,600
Opening Reserves Balances at 1st April	General Fund (8,391)	HRA (9,040)	Total (17,431)		
(Surplus)/deficit in year	56	(3,595)	(3,539)		
Closing Reserves Balances at 31 March	(8,335)	(12,635)	(20,970)		

Expenditure and Funding Analysis 2022/23	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund Balance £'000	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the HRA Balance £'000	Adjustments relating to internal management reporting £'000	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehen sive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000
Chief Executive and Policy	1,694	-	-	(12)	1,706
Finance and Legal	6,753	-	2,516	1,968	2,269
Community Services	6,961	-	64	(3,123)	10,020
Commercial & Development	1,738	-	250	(1,909)	3,397
Corporate Services	727	-	-	(143)	870
Planning & Building Control	3,702	-	-	299	3,403
Housing General Fund	1,265	-	-	(658)	1,923
Housing Revenue Account	-	(3,090)	4,119	(16,933)	9,724
Net Cost of Services	22,840	(3,090)	6,949	(20,511)	33,312
All other Income and Expenditure	(16,426)	(3,266)	(6,949)	3,553	(16,297)
Deficit/(surplus) on Provision of Services	6,414	(6,356)	-	(16,958)	17,015
Opening General Fund and HRA Balances	General Fund (14,805)	HRA (2,684)	Total (17,489)		
Less/plus surplus or deficit on General Fund and HRA Balance in year	6,414	(6,356)	58		
Closing General Fund and HRA Balances at 31 March	(8,391)	(9,040)	(17,431)		

Adjustments from General Fund and HRA to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts

Explanation of adjustments

i. Adjustments for Capital Purposes

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

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

ii. Net Change for the Pension Adjustments

Net change for the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS 19 *Employee Benefits* pension related expenditure and income:

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

iii. Other Differences

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

- The charge under **Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure** represents the difference between what is chargeable under statutory regulations for council tax and national non-domestic rates (NNDR) that was projected to be received at the start of the year and the income recognised under generally accepted accounting practices in the Code. This is a timing difference as any difference will be brought forward in future Surpluses or Deficits on the Collection Fund.

Adjustments Relating to Internal Management Reporting

Adjustments Relating to Internal Management Reporting	Interest	MRP	RCCO	Trading Accounts	Total
2023/24	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Customer, Business and Corporate	(697)	-	-	(36)	(733)
Community and Place Delivery	-	-	-	-	-
Strategy Policy and Transformation	-	2,576	6	-	2,582
General Fund Total	(697)	2,576	6	(36)	1,849
HRA Total	3,909	7,200	-	-	11,109

Adjustments Relating to Internal Management Reporting	Interest	MRP	RCCO	Trading Accounts	Total
2022/23	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Finance and Legal	6	2,454	56	-	2,516
Community Services	-	-	-	64	64
Commercial & Development	-	-	-	250	250
General Fund Total	6	2,454	56	314	2,830
HRA Total	4,117	-	2	-	4,119

Note: Information presented to management is in a format to enable a quick and easy assessment of performance against the approved budget. There are a number of items that are reported to management as part of their service income and expenditure that are not included in Service Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (as required by generally accepted accounting practice). These are interest, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO).

Segmental income

2022/23 £'000	Segmental Income	2023/24 £'000
	Directorates	
(28,653)	Customer, Business and Corporate	(31,125)
(22,209)	Community and Place Delivery	(18,575)
(6,106)	Strategy Policy and Transformation	(6,202)
(30,928)	Housing Revenue Account	(33,884)
(87,896)	Total Income analysed on a segmental basis	(89,786)
(23,081)	Non-segmental	(31,221)
(110,977)	Total Income	(121,007)

Expenditure/Income by nature

2022/23 £'000		2023/24 £'000
	Income	
(45,929)	Fees, charges & other service income	(50,501)
(93)	Other capital receipts and income	(1,760)
(11,708)	Support Service recharge income	(12,986)
(600)	Interest and investment income	(1,034)
(15,485)	Income from council tax	(16,152)
1,437	Income from business rates	1,524
(38,599)	Government grants and other contributions	(40,098)
(110,977)	Total Income	(121,007)
	Expenditure	
22,719	Employee benefits expenses	21,161
55,240	Other Service Expenses	56,922
11,635	Support Service recharge expenditure	12,879
31,719	Revaluation gains, depreciation, amortisation and impairment	26,411
4,520	Interest payments	4,128
1,875	Pension adjustment	656
3,253	Precepts and levies	3,457
-	Payments to Housing Capital Receipts Pool	-
(2,969)	Gain or Loss on Disposal of Fixed Assets and derecognition of replaced asset components	(2,007)
127,992	Total expenditure	123,607
17,015	(Gain)/Loss on the Provision of Services	2,600

6. Adjustments Between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis Under Regulations

Combined Reserves Table note

Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	Usable reserves					Movement in Unusable Reserves
	General Fund Balance	Housing Revenue Account	Capital Receipts reserves	Major Repairs Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	
2023/2024	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adjustments to the Revenue Resources						
Amounts by which income and expenditure included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement are different from revenue for the year calculated in accordance with statutory requirements:						
Pension Costs (transferred to/(from) the Pensions Reserve)	352	66				(418)
Council Tax and NDR (transfers to/(from) the Collection Fund Adjustment Account)	(812)					812
Reversal of entries included in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in relation to capital expenditure (these items are charged to the Capital Adjustment Account)	(6,538)	(17,497)			(7,442)	31,477
Total Adjustments to Revenue Resources	(6,998)	(17,431)	-	-	(7,442)	31,871
Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources						
Transfer of non-current asset sales proceeds from revenue to the Capital Receipts Reserve	1,434	3,125	(4,559)			-
Administration costs of non-current asset disposals (funded by a contribution from the Capital Receipts Reserve)	-	-	-			-
Payments to the government of housing receipts pool (funded by a transfer from the Capital Receipts Reserve)	-		-			-
Posting of HRA resources from revenue to Major Repairs Reserve		4,219		(4,219)		-
Statutory provision for the repayment of debt (transfer from the Capital Adjustment Account)	2,576	7,200				(9,776)
Other capital receipts taken to the CI&ES	(270)	-	(8)			278
GF Asset Disposal NBV (transfer to Capital Adjustment Account)	-					-
Capital expenditure financed from revenue balances (transfer to the Capital Adjustment Account)	6	-				(6)
Total Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources	3,746	14,544	(4,567)	(4,219)	-	(9,504)
Adjustments to Capital Resources						
Use of Capital Receipts Reserve to finance capital expenditure			6,011			(6,011)
Use of Major Repairs Reserve to finance capital expenditure				9,024		(9,024)
Application of capital grants to finance capital expenditure					7,850	(7,850)
Cash payments in relation to deferred capital receipts						-
Total Adjustments to Capital Resources	-	-	6,011	9,024	7,850	(22,885)
Total Adjustments	(3,252)	(2,887)	1,444	4,805	408	(518)

Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	Usable reserves					Movement in Unusable Reserves
	General Fund Balance £'000	Housing Revenue Account £'000	Capital Receipts reserves £'000	Major Repairs Reserve £'000	Capital Grants Unapplied £'000	£'000
2022/2023						
Adjustments to the Revenue Resources						
Amounts by which income and expenditure included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement are different from revenue for the year calculated in accordance with statutory requirements:						
Pension Costs (transferred to/(from) the Pensions Reserve)	(3,106)	(518)				3,624
Council Tax and NDR (transfers to/(from) the Collection Fund Adjustment Account)	5,436					(5,436)
Reversal of entries included in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in relation to capital expenditure (these items are charged to the Capital Adjustment Account)	(7,480)	(29,159)			(3,120)	39,759
Total Adjustments to Revenue Resources	(5,150)	(29,677)	-	-	(3,120)	37,947
Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources						
Transfer of non-current asset sales proceeds from revenue to the Capital Receipts Reserve	3,410	6,138	(9,589)			41
Administration costs of non-current asset disposals (funded by a contribution from the Capital Receipts Reserve)	(8)	(39)	29			18
Payments to the government of housing receipts pool (funded by a transfer from the Capital Receipts Reserve)	-		-			-
Posting of HRA resources from revenue to Major Repairs Reserve		6,663		(6,663)		-
Statutory provision for the repayment of debt (transfer from the Capital Adjustment Account)	2,454	-				(2,454)
Other capital receipts taken to the CI&ES	(819)	11	(10)			818
GF Asset Disposal NBV (transfer to Capital Adjustment Account)	-					-
Capital expenditure financed from revenue balances (transfer to the Capital Adjustment Account)	56	2				(58)
Total Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources	5,093	12,775	(9,570)	(6,663)	-	(1,635)
Adjustments to Capital Resources						
Use of Capital Receipts Reserve to finance capital expenditure			4,933			(4,933)
Use of Major Repairs Reserve to finance capital expenditure				2,214		(2,214)
Application of capital grants to finance capital expenditure					3,137	(3,137)
Cash payments in relation to deferred capital receipts	-					-
Total Adjustments to Capital Resources	-	-	4,933	2,214	3,137	(10,284)
Total Adjustments	(57)	(16,902)	(4,637)	(4,449)	17	26,028

This note details the adjustments that are made to the Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure recognised by the Council in the year in accordance with proper accounting practice to the resources that are specified by statutory

provisions as being available to the Council to meet future capital and revenue expenditure.

The following sets out a description of the reserves that the adjustments are made against.

General Fund Balance

The General Fund is the statutory fund into which all the receipts of the Council are required to be paid and out of which all liabilities of the Council are to be met, except to the extent that statutory rules might provide otherwise. These rules can also specify the financial year in which liabilities and payments should impact on the General Fund Balance, which is not necessarily in accordance with proper accounting practice. The General Fund Balance therefore summarises the resources that the Council is statutorily empowered to spend on its services or on capital investment (or the deficit of resources that the Council is required to recover) at the end of the financial year. However, the balance is not available to be applied to funding HRA services.

Housing Revenue Account Balance

The Housing Revenue Account Balance reflects the statutory obligation to maintain a revenue account for local authority council housing provision in accordance with Part VI of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. It contains the balance of income and expenditure as defined by the 1989 Act that is available to fund expenditure in connection with the Council's landlord function or (where is deficit) that is required to be recovered from tenants in future years.

Capital Receipts Reserve

The Capital Receipts Reserve holds the proceeds from the disposal of land or other assets, which are restricted by statute from being used other than to fund new capital expenditure or to be set aside to finance historical capital expenditure. The balance on the reserve shows the resources that have yet to be applied for these purposes at the year-end.

Major Repairs Reserve

The Council is required to maintain the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) for housing purposes. The MRR is restricted to being applied to new capital investment on HRA assets or the financing of historical capital expenditure by the HRA.

Capital Grants Unapplied

The Capital Grants Unapplied Account (Reserve) holds the grants and contributions received towards capital projects for which the Council has met the conditions that would otherwise require repayment of the monies, but which

have yet to be applied to meet expenditure. The balance is restricted by grant terms as to the capital expenditure against which it can be applied and/or the financial year in which this can take place.

7. Transfers To/From Earmarked Reserves

This note sets out the amounts set aside from the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account balances to earmarked reserves to provide financing for future expenditure plans and the amounts posted back from earmarked reserves to meet General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Expenditure in 2023/24.

	Balance at 31 March 2022 £'000	Transfers out 2022/23 £'000	Transfers In 2022/23 £'000	Balance at 31 March 2023 £'000	Transfers out 2023/24 £'000	Transfers In 2023/24 £'000	Balance at 31 March 2024 £'000
General Fund Earmarked Reserves							
Lockey House	220	-	230	450	-60	223	613
Planning Reserves	463	-47	12	428	-80	27	375
Homelessness Reduction (FHSG)	104	-	-	104	-	243	347
Syrian Refugees	418	-21	-	397	-54	-	343
Museum Trust Reserve	277	-	-	277	-	-	277
CNC R&M / Ward Funds	155	-22	-	133	-	34	167
Repairs & Maintenance Reserve	26	-25	-	1	-	158	159
Housing Benefit Grants	108	-	-	108	-	-	108
Apprentices	55	-	15	70	-13	-	57
Verulamium Park Reserve	41	-	2	43	-	14	57
Transformation Fund	50	-	-	50	-	-	50
Refuse collection Reserve	92	-51	-	41	-4	-	37
Climate initiative	68	-32	-	36	-8	-	28
Sustainability Projects	64	-52	-	12	-	-	12
All other reserves (individually less than £50k)	262	-80	41	223	-43	58	238
General Fund sub-total	2,403	-330	300	2,373	-262	757	2,868
Collection Fund (timing difference)	7,947	-5,448	-	2,499	-	577	3,076
General Fund Earmarked Reserves Sub-Total	10,350	-5,778	300	4,872	-262	1,334	5,944
Housing Revenue Account Reserves							
Revenue earmarked reserve	100	-9	5,000	5,091	-	2,800	7,891
Capital expenditure reserve	326	-	85	411	-	85	496
HRA sub-total	426	-9	5,085	5,503	0	2,885	8,388
Total	10,776	-5,787	5,385	10,375	-262	4,219	14,332

8. Other Operating Expenditure

2022/2023		2023/2024
£'000		£'000
3,253	Parish Council Precepts	3,457
-	Payments to the Government Housing Capital Receipts Pool	-
(4,888)	(Gains)/losses on the disposal of non-current assets	(2,963)
481	Write-off of replaced asset components *	(481)
(94)	Other Capital receipts and income	(326)
(1,248)		(313)

*This relates to the derecognition of significant components (for example bathrooms and windows) in housing properties that were replaced during the year.

9. Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure

2022/23		2023/24
£'000		£'000
4,533	Interest payable and similar charges	4,102
1,441	Net interest on the net defined benefit liability	655
(410)	Interest receivable and similar income	(883)
2,110	Changes in fair value of investment properties	729
(257)	Impairments to financial assets incl reversals	103
314	(Surplus)/deficit from trading operations not included in Net Cost of Services	(36)
7,731		4,670

10. Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
	Council Tax	
(15,319)	Council Tax Income	(15,951)
(166)	Transfer from the Collection Fund	(200)
(15,485)	Council Tax net	(16,151)
	Business Rates	
(21,890)	Share of Business Rate income	(26,327)
23,342	Tariff paid to central government	27,877
(21)	Council's share of Business Rates deficit	(21)
-	Safety net payment due to/(from) central government	(4)
1,431	Business Rates net income	1,525
	Non-specific Grants	
-	Revenue support grant	(117)
(4,035)	Small Business Rate relief	(4,738)
(1,225)	New Homes Bonus	(195)
(197)	Funding Guarantee Grant	(1,359)
(93)	Services Grant	(93)
(19)	Coronavirus Grants	(58)
(3,157)	Capital grants and contributions	(7,482)
(8,726)	Non-specific Grants sub-total	(14,042)
(22,780)	Total	(28,668)

11. Property, Plant and Equipment

Property, Plant & Equipment Movements	Council Dwellings £'000	Other Land and Buildings £'000	Vehicles, Furniture & Equipment £'000	Infrastructure £'000	Asset Under Construction £'000	Property, Plant & Equipment Total £'000
Cost or Valuation						
At 1 April 2023	589,843	234,810	18,496	3,438	75,230	921,817
Transfers	163	211	4	166	(442)	102
Additions	11,058	636	421	(292)	8,506	20,329
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	58,983	1,186	-	-	-	60,169
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-
Write off - disposals	(1,423)	(786)	(557)	-	-	(2,766)
Write off - replaced components	-	-	-	-	-	-
Assets reclassified (to)/from	-	1,478	-	-	(8,840)	(7,362)
Assets reclassified (to)/from assets held for sale	(3,136)	4,283	-	-	(4,532)	(3,385)
Impairment (losses)/reversals recognised in the surplus/deficit on the Provision of Services	(380)	(11,519)	-	-	-	(11,899)
Impairment (losses)/reversals recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	(7,715)	(3,266)	-	-	-	(10,981)
At 31 March 2024	647,393	227,033	18,364	3,312	69,922	966,024
Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment						
At 1 April 2023	(112)	(5,204)	(14,195)	(1,816)	-	(21,327)
Update to opening balances	112	-	-	1	-	113
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-
Depreciation charge	(7,734)	(2,913)	(1,672)	(257)	-	(12,576)
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	7,715	3,266	-	-	-	10,981
Depreciation written out to the Surplus/(Deficit) on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-
Write off - disposals	18	9	539	43	-	609
Impairment (losses)/reversals recognised in the Surplus/(Deficit) on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassification Transfers	-	151	-	-	-	151
At 31 March 2024	(1)	(4,691)	(15,328)	(2,029)	-	(22,049)
Net Book Value						
At 31 March 2023	589,732	229,605	4,300	1,623	75,230	900,490
At 31 March 2024	647,392	222,342	3,036	1,283	69,922	943,975

Property, Plant & Equipment Movements 2022/23	Council Dwellings £'000	Other Land and Buildings £'000	Vehicles, Furniture & Equipment £'000	Infrastructure £'000	Asset Under Construction £'000	Property, Plant & Equipment Total £'000
Cost or Valuation						
At 1 April 2022	654,760	245,440	17,815	3,129	62,423	983,567
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-
Additions	7,865	1,329	681	309	18,079	28,263
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	(38,967)	(8,731)	-	-	-	(47,698)
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-
Write off - disposals	(1,831)	(1,964)	-	-	-	(3,795)
Write off - replaced components	(7,864)	-	-	-	-	(7,864)
Assets reclassified (to)/from	-	5,272	-	-	(5,272)	-
Assets reclassified (to)/from assets held for sale	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment (losses)/reversals recognised in the surplus/deficit on the Provision of Services	(15,561)	(2,530)	-	-	-	(18,091)
Impairment (losses)/reversals recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	(8,559)	(4,006)	-	-	-	(12,565)
At 31 March 2023	589,843	234,810	18,496	3,438	75,230	921,817
Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment						
At 1 April 2022	(112)	(5,933)	(13,295)	(1,669)	-	(21,009)
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-
Depreciation charge	(8,582)	(3,277)	(900)	(147)	-	(12,906)
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	8,559	4,006	-	-	-	12,565
Depreciation written out to the Surplus/(Deficit) on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-
Write off - disposals	23	-	-	-	-	23
Impairment (losses)/reversals recognised in the Surplus/(Deficit) on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reclassification Transfers	-	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2023	(112)	(5,204)	(14,195)	(1,816)	-	(21,327)
Net Book Value						
At 31 March 2022	654,648	239,507	4,520	1,460	62,423	962,558
At 31 March 2023	589,731	229,606	4,301	1,622	75,230	900,490

HRA Single Dwellings – Component Asset Replacement

A specific approach is adopted for the replacement of component assets such as kitchens, bathrooms and boilers for single council house dwellings. This is to recognise that such assets are being replaced around the end of their useful lives. Due to this, a dedicated approach to depreciation is used, as described below. This results the cost of the component about to be replaced being

effectively fully depreciated at the time of replacement. The addition is considered to be value maintaining, rather than value adding, despite accounting rules identifying it as an addition.

Depreciation

The following useful lives and depreciation rates have been used in the calculation of depreciation. HRA dwellings are classified into type and size of building. The components were reviewed and updated during 2014/15, they remained unchanged for 2023/24.

- Council dwellings, multi-occupied dwellings and other buildings are depreciated on the basis of their components, where appropriate as follows:
 - Land: no depreciation
 - Structure: 100 years
 - Roof: 70 years
 - Windows: 30 years
 - Internal components: 15 to 40 years
- Other buildings: 30 to 60 years
- Vehicles, plant and equipment: 3 to 35 years
- Infrastructure: 5 to 20 years.

It is estimated that if the annual depreciation charge for assets were to increase by 1% the extra charge would amount to £126k (2022/23: £129k).

Capital Commitments

As at 31 March 2024, the Council has entered into a number of contracts for the construction and enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment at a cost of £5.7m. Similar commitments as at 31 March 2023 were £4.2m.

Revaluations

The Council carries out a rolling programme that ensures that all Property, Plant and Equipment required to be measured at current value is revalued at least every five years. Valuations were carried out internally by qualified surveyors with the exception of certain specialised properties, which were carried out by external firms of Chartered Surveyors. Valuations of land and buildings were carried out in accordance with the methodologies and bases for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Vehicles, plant and furniture are not revalued, and depreciation costs are used as a proxy for current value.

HRA dwellings are valued using the Beacon basis whereby all properties are linked to a set of beacon properties and valued in line with the change in average value of the beacons. Beacon properties were revalued 1 April 2020, and in each subsequent year around 1 in 5 are revalued.

The significant assumptions in estimating the current values are:

- a) For specialised DRC properties, the rebuild cost and functional and physical obsolescence assumptions applied.
- b) For non-specialised operational assets, the expected future rentals and appropriate yields.
- c) For dwellings, the market values of the beacon properties and use of EUV-SH adjustment factor.

The Code prescribes that the classes of Property, Plant and Equipment shown in the following table are revalued at least once every five years. The table shows the carrying value of each class of asset in the accounts by year of valuation. In accordance with the Council's policy, depreciated historic cost is used as a proxy for current value for Vehicles and Plant on the grounds of materiality. In view of the materiality to the accounts and material changes in value from year to year, council dwellings are revalued annually. Assets Held for Sale (AHfS) until sold remain SADC owned council Dwellings or Other Land and Buildings.

Year of valuation of value in accounts	Council Dwellings £'000	Other Land and Buildings £'000	Vehicles and Plant £'000	Total £'000
Valued at historical Cost	-	-	4,318	4,318
Valued at current value in:				
2019/20	-	20,624	-	20,624
2020/21	-	10,272	-	10,272
2021/22	-	33,238	-	33,238
2022/23	-	91,345	-	91,345
2023/24	647,392	66,864	-	714,256
Total	647,392	222,343	4,318	874,053

12. Heritage Assets

31 March 2023	Heritage Assets	31 March 2024
£'000		£'000
5,318	Exhibits	5,355
407	Silver	186
182	Civic Regalia	165
646	Cups and Trophies	771
42	Sculptures	43
494	War Memorials	492
7,089	Carrying Value	7,012

Reconciliation of the Carrying Value of Heritage Assets Held by the Authority	Exhibits	Silver	Civic Regalia	Cups and Trophies	Sculptures	War Memorials	Total Assets
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost or valuation:							
1 April 2022	4,869	370	165	587	38	457	6,486
31 March 2023	5,318	407	182	646	42	494	7,089
Cost or valuation:							
1 April 2023	5,318	407	182	646	42	494	7,089
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation	37	(221)	(17)	125	1	(2)	(77)
31 March 2024	5,355	186	165	771	43	492	7,012

The movement in asset values during the year is exclusively related to revaluation.

A review of Heritage Assets was carried out in April 2013 with the auctioneers Christies completing a valuation. These values have been uplifted each year by an inflation provision.

Acquisitions for Heritage Assets are initially recognised at cost and are adjusted for any changes required for insurance in future years.

Information on the Museums' Collections

The City and District of St Albans is an area of outstanding historical and cultural heritage. The Council provided museum services through two accredited museums and also manages a number of historic properties.

The museum's collections consist of approximately 80,000 objects and specimens which range from fossils and archaeological remains to archives such as maps, prints drawings, photographs and ephemera associated with St Albans and its people.

The Council owns a number of properties of historic interest that are currently in use such as the old Town Hall. These are classified as operational assets and therefore held within Property, Plant and Equipment.

The Council also owns non-operational Heritage Property Assets, including historical earthworks and exposed ruins. These assets have no intrinsic value but are held and maintained principally for their contribution to knowledge and culture.

13. Investment Properties

The following items of income and expense have been accounted for in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

2022/2023		2023/2024
£'000		£'000
(918)	Rental income from investment property	(905)
168	Direct operating expenses arising from investment property	117
(750)	Net (gain)/loss	(788)

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

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

2022/23		2023/24
£'000		£'000
8,355	Balance at start of year:	6,270
	Addition	-
-	Reclassification	-
(2,085)	Revaluation	251
6,270	Balance at end of the year	6,521

Investment Properties are those that are used solely to earn rentals and/or for capital appreciation (Accounting Policies note 1.11).

	2022/23		2023/24	
Recurring fair value measurements using:	Other significant observable inputs (Level 2) £000	Fair value as at 31st March 2023 £000	Other significant observable inputs (Level 2) £000	Fair value as at 31st March 2024 £000
Office Units	482	482	444	444
Retail Units	3,696	3,696	3,125	3,125
Recreational	2,092	2,092	2,952	2,952
Total	6,270	6,270	6,521	6,521

Investment Properties are valued at fair value as at 31 March 2024. Analysis of the relevant valuation techniques classifies these assets as level 2 of the IFRS 13 Fair Value calculation.

Level 2 assets have significant observable inputs. The fair value has been based on the market approach using current market conditions and other relevant information for similar assets in the local authority area.

A fair value measurement of an investment asset 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.

Paragraph 28 of IFRS 13 states that the highest and best use of a non-financial asset takes into account the use of the asset that is physically possible, legally permissible and financially feasible. At the reporting date, one recreational property could achieve greater returns if converted to residential. The property is subject to a lease with 9 years remaining and upon review the Council does not consider it legally and financially sound to terminate the lease before expiry.

14. Financial Instruments

Financial instruments are contracts that give rise to a financial asset in one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument in another entity.

Categories of Financial Instruments

The following categories of financial instruments are carried in the Balance Sheet:

	Long-Term		Current	
	At 31 March 2023 £'000	At 31 March 2024 £'000	At 31 March 2023 £'000	At 31 March 2024 £'000
Investments				
Cash and Cash Equivalents at amortised cost	-	-	-	9,511
Debtors				
Financial assets at amortised cost *	120	111	4,932	5,333
Impairment Loss Allowance	-	-	(1,249)	(899)
Borrowings				
Financial liabilities at amortised cost	(181,266)	(172,842)	(46,220)	(60,225)
Creditors				
Financial liabilities carried at contract amounts	(66)	(56)	(13,139)	(9,728)

* Financial assets at amortised cost (long term) as at 31 March 2023 should be £135k as presented in the Balance Sheet.

Income, Expense, Gains and Losses included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

2022/23			Financial Instruments	2023/24		
Financial Liabilities: measured at amortised cost £'000	Financial Assets: loans and receivables £'000	Total £'000		Financial Liabilities: measured at amortised cost £'000	Financial Assets: loans and receivables £'000	Total £'000
4,533	-	4,533	Total interest expense in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	4,102	-	4,102
-	(410)	(410)	Total interest income in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	(883)	(883)
4,533	(410)	4,123	Net (gain)/loss for the year in Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	4,102	(883)	3,219

Fair Value of Assets and Liabilities

31 March 2023			31 March 2024	
Carrying amount	Fair Value		Carrying amount	Fair Value
£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
12,382	12,382	Cash	7,604	7,604
-	-	Fixed term deposits	1,905	1,907

31 March 2023			31 March 2024	
Carrying amount	Fair Value		Carrying amount	Fair Value
£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
211,486	199,367	Public Works Loan Board loans	223,066	207,328
16,000	16,000	Other Local Authorities	10,000	10,000

15. Short Term Debtors

At 31 March 2023 £'000		At 31 March 2024 £'000
	Amounts falling due within the next year:	
63	Government department National non-domestic rates	195
1,946	Government departments other	1,141
-	Other Local Authorities in Sundry debtors	180
796	Advance payments/bookings	649
643	Council Tax/National NNDR costs	682
2,396	Council Tax and NNDR arrears	2,811
-	Mortgages (repayments within 1 year)	-
1,412	Housing Rents	1,010
-	Rent Allowances and rebates	990
1,233	Leaseholders	1,612
3,765	Sundry Debtors	3,069
12,254		12,339
	Less: Allowance for doubtful debts	
(2,167)	Collection Fund	(2,481)
(1,022)	Housing Rents	(687)
(315)	Sundry Debtors	(461)
33	Leaseholders	39
8,783	Total Short Term Debtors	8,749

16. Assets Held for Sale

These are qualifying assets where the Council considers it highly probable that completion of the sale will be within one year of classification as an asset held for sale.

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Balance at start of year	997	136
Additions	-	2
Revaluation Gains/(Losses) in year	-	-
Assets sold in year	(861)	-
Assets reclassified out as unsold	-	(152)
Assets newly classified as held for sale:		
Property, Plant & Equipment	-	10,747
Balance at Year End	136	10,733

31 March 2024 Assets Held for Sale include £6.7m for Harpenden Public Halls.

Assets Held for Sale are valued at Fair Value at 31 March 2024. Analysis of the relevant valuation techniques classifies these assets as Level 2

17. Cash and Cash Equivalents

At 31 March 2023 £'000		At 31 March 2024 £'000
3	Cash held by the Council	3
4,334	Bank Current Accounts	915
8,045	Short-term deposits	6,686
12,382	Total Cash and Cash equivalents	7,604

18. Short Term Creditors

At 31 March 2023 £'000		At 31 March 2024 £'000
12,168	Collection Fund	5,502
11,921	Trade Creditors	9,029
1,666	Other Creditors	1,170
3,667	Receipts in advance	4,079
29,422	Total	19,780

19. Other Long Term Liabilities and Short Term and Long Term Provisions

19.1 Long Term Liabilities

The Council holds deposits for commercial premises. The long-term portion of the deposits amounts to £0.06m (2022/23 £0.07m).

19.2 Provisions

Under the Business Rates Retention Scheme the Council is liable for its share of any business rates that are not collected. All business premises can appeal their valuation, set by the Valuation Office, which is used for setting the level of rates payable. Until the appeal is heard and decided a provision is estimated to cover the possibility of successful appeals. Changes to the provision are charged to the Collection Fund. The following table shows the movement in the Council's 40% share of the provision.

Provisions: Business Rate Appeals	£'000
Balance at 1 April 2023	4,402
Additional provisions made	(818)
Amounts used	(2,065)
Balance at 31 March 2024	1,519
Made up of:	
Long Term provisions	1,298
Short Term provisions	221

20. Unusable reserves

Unusable reserves arise from accounting entries not involving cash transactions and cannot therefore be used to fund future council activities. They include entries relating to the revaluation of buildings, depreciation, and other timing differences between the accounting requirements of the Code and those of legislation.

2022/23		2023/24
£'000		£'000
(421,874)	Revaluation Reserve	(478,081)
(216,605)	Capital Adjustment Account	(222,474)
14,313	Pensions Reserve	17,704
(33)	Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve	(25)
2,007	Collection Fund Adjustment Account	2,819
(622,192)	Total Unusable Reserves	(680,057)

Revaluation Reserve

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

the provision of services (and the gains are consumed through depreciation), or disposed of and the gains are realised.

The Revaluation Reserve contains revaluation gains recognised since 1 April 2007 only, the date of its formal implementation. Accumulated gains arising before that date are consolidated into the Capital Adjustment Account.

2022/23 £'000		2023/24 £'000
(482,828)	Balance at 1 April	(421,874)
(33,648)	Revaluation (gain)/loss of assets	(68,375)
81,014	Downward revaluation of assets and impairment losses not charged to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	7,219
7,063	Cost of Component Additions in Housing Single Dwellings offset against existing Revaluation Reserve for that property	-
54,429	(Surplus)/deficit on revaluation of non-current assets not posted to the Surplus or deficit on the Provision of Services	(61,156)
5,098	Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account	4,195
1,427	Accumulated (gains)/losses on assets sold or scrapped	754
6,525	Amount written off to the Capital Adjustment Account	4,949
(421,874)	Balance at 31 March	(478,081)

Capital Adjustment account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction or enhancement of those assets under statutory provisions. The Account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or enhancement in line with the depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (with reconciling postings from the Revaluation Reserve to convert fair value figures to a historical cost basis). The Account is credited with the amounts set aside by the Council as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction and enhancement.

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

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

Note 6 provides details of the source of all transactions posted to the Account, apart from those involving the Revaluation Reserve.

The “Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in the year” is the reversal of the amounts charged to the CI&E for the consumption of assets with a life over one year (e.g. depreciation) and the amount transferred to the Revaluation Reserves.

2022/23 £'000	Capital Adjustment Account	2023/24 £'000
(237,911)	Balance as at 1 April	(216,605)
	<i>Reversal of items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:</i>	
12,710	Charges for depreciation and impairment of non current assets	12,531
2,110	Movements in the market value of Investment Properties debited or credited to the comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	729
18,092	Revaluation losses on Property, Plant and Equipment	12,185
50	Amortisation of Intangibles	162
2,503	Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute	4,465
5,113	Amounts of non current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	1,674
40,578	Sub-total charges	31,746
(5,049)	Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation transferred to the Revaluation Reserve	(4,195)
(1,427)	Accumulated gains on assets sold or scrapped	(753)
34,102	Net written out amount of the cost of non -current assets consumed in the year	26,798
	<i>Capital Financing applied in the year:</i>	
(4,933)	Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure	(6,011)
(2,214)	Use of Major Repairs Reserve to finance new capital expenditure	(9,024)
(1,146)	Capital Grants and Contributions credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement that have been applied to capital financing	(2,161)
(1,991)	Application of grants to capital financing from the Capital Grants Unapplied Account	(5,689)
(58)	Direct Revenue Financing	(6)
-	Housing debt repayment provision	(7,200)
(2,454)	Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment charged against the General Fund	(2,576)
(12,796)	Sub-total capital financing	(32,667)
(216,605)	Balance at 31 March	(222,474)

2022/23 £'000		2023/24 £'000
34,102	Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in the year (per the Capital Adjustment Account)	26,798
5,049	Add back amount transferred to the Revaluation Reserve	4,195
1,427	Add back accumulated gains on assets sold or scrapped	753
(1,146)	Less Capital Grants and contributions credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement that have been applied to capital financing	(2,161)
-	Less Other Capital Receipts	(270)
39,432	Reversal of entries included in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in relation to capital expenditure	29,315

Pensions Reserve

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

2022/23 £'000	Pensions Reserve	2023/24 £'000
52,288	Balance at 1 April	14,313
	Cumulative historic actuarial discrepancies now resolved	11
(41,599)	Remeasurements of the net defined benefit liability	3,798
8,047	Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited to the Surplus on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	3,697
(4,423)	Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	(4,115)
14,313	Balance at 31 March	17,704

Collection fund Adjustment Account

2022/23			Collection Fund Adjustment Account	2023/24		
Council Tax £'000	Business Rates £'000	Total £'000		Council Tax £'000	Business Rates £'000	Total £'000
(504)	7,947	7,443	Balance at 1 April	(492)	2,498	2,006
12	(5,449)	(5,437)	Movement on account	235	578	813
(492)	2,498	2,006	Balance at 31 March	(257)	3,076	2,819

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

The movement on the account is the amount by which council tax and non-domestic rates income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from the council tax and non-domestic rates income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements.

A negative amount indicates that tax collected during the year was higher than distributed to the precepting bodies and government and a positive figure that more was paid to the precepting bodies than collected. In both cases adjustments are made in subsequent year to pay or recover the under/over payments.

21. Members' Allowances

The Council paid the following amounts to members of the Council during the year.

2022/23 £000	Members' Allowances	2023/24 £000
426		415
2	Expenses	5
428		420

Payments by Councillor are available here:

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/accounts-budgeting-and-spending>

22. Officers' Remuneration

The remuneration paid to the Councils' Head of Paid Service and non-statutory officers is as follows:

Post Title		Salary, fees and allowances £	Benefits in kind £	Total Remuneration excluding pension contributions £	Employer's pension contribution £	Total Remuneration including pension contributions £
Chief Executive and Head of Policy	2023/24	115,936	-	115,936	22,839	138,775
	2022/23	112,224	-	112,224	20,723	132,947
Strategic Lead - Transformation and Culture (Note 1)	2023/24	56,772	-	56,772	6,587	63,359
	2022/23	92,079	-	92,079	17,035	109,114
Strategic Director - Community & Place Delivery	2023/24	104,457	-	104,457	20,578	125,035
	2022/23	101,099	-	101,099	18,671	119,770
Strategic Director - Customer, Business & Corporate Support	2023/24	104,457	-	104,457	20,578	125,035
	2022/23	100,925	-	100,925	18,671	119,596
Strategy and Policy Manager (Note 2)	2023/24	64,098	-	64,098	12,627	76,725
	2023/24	445,720	-	445,720	83,209	528,929
	2022/23	406,327	-	406,327	75,100	481,427

Note 1: Before July 2023, Strategic Director Strategy, Policy and Transformation (Deputy Chief Executive)

Note 2: Disclosure for 2022/23 was not required as did not directly report to Chief Executive

Remuneration	2022/23		2023/24	
	Number ex. redundancies	Number inc. redundancies	Number ex. redundancies	Number inc. redundancies
£50,000 - £54,999	24	24	29	29
£55,000 - £59,999	6	6	16	16
£60,000 - £64,999	8	8	3	3
£65,000 - £69,999	3	3	5	5
£70,000 - £74,999	-	-	6	6
£75,000 - £79,999	-	-	-	-
£80,000 - £84,999	-	-	-	-
£85,000 - £89,999	-	-	-	-
£90,000 - £94,999	1	1	1	1
£95,000 - £99,999	-	-	-	-
£100,000 - £104,999	2	2	2	2
£105,000 - £109,999	-	-	-	-
£110,000 - £114,999	1	1	-	-
£115,000 - £119,999	-	-	1	1
Total	45	45	63	63

Note: This table includes staff included in the individual disclosures.

Exit package cost (including special payments) In bands of £20,000	Number of compulsory redundancies		Total cost of exit packages in each band	
	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23 £	2023/24 £
0 – 20	1	1	6,741	10,786
20 – 40	-	-	-	-
40 – 60	-	-	-	-
60 – 80	-	-	-	-
80 – 100	2	-	188,183	-
Total	3	1	194,924	10,786

23. Termination Benefits

The authority terminated the contracts of one employee in 2023/24, incurring liabilities of £10,786 (3 employees with liability of £194,924 in 2022/23) – see Note 22 for the number of exit packages and total cost per band. The 2022/23 payments related to the restructure that introduced the Council's current three Directorates. These costs are included in the costs within the Council's Comprehensive Income & Expenditure statement.

24. External Audit costs

The Council has incurred the following costs in relation to the audit of the Statement of Accounts, certification of grant claims and statutory inspections.

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
46	Fees payable with regard to external audit services carried out by the appointed auditor for the current year	165
69	Fees payable for the certification of grant claims and returns	44
115		209

25. Trading Operations

The Council has the following trading operations:

- Markets – the Council operates a street market in St Albans city centre on Wednesdays and Saturdays, with additional market days for Farmers Markets, Continental Markets and Christmas Markets.
- Commercial premises – the Council owns various shops and business premises that are let on a commercial basis.

Trading Operations		2022/2023 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Markets	Turnover	(378)	(491)
	Expenditure	442	430
	Deficit	64	(61)
Commercial Premises	Turnover	(503)	(571)
	Expenditure	753	596
	Deficit	250	25
Net (Surplus)/Deficit on Trading Operations		314	(36)

26. Grants and Contributions Income

The Council credited the following grants, contributions and donations to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in 2023/24.

2022/2023 £'000	Grant Income	2023/2024 £'000
	Credited to Taxation and Non specific grant income	
-	Revenue support grant	117
1,225	New Homes Bonus	195
197	Funding Guarantee Grant	1,359
93	Services Grant	93
4,035	Small Business Rate relief	4,738
19	Coronavirus Grants	58
3,157	Capital grants and contributions	7,482
8,726	Sub-Total	14,042
	Credited to services	
20,506	Rent Allowances & Benefits	20,688
922	Recycling credits	975
325	Benefits Administration Grants	312
180	Contribution to NDR costs	186
111	Council Tax support admin. subsidy	-
212	Reclaimed Benefits	226
978	Grounds maintenance contributions	1,112
612	Homelessness Reduction Grant	830
-	Syrian Refugees Grant	2
1	Heritage Lottery and Museum contributions	-
4,848	Energy Rebate Scheme	-
1,179	Other contributions	1,725
29,874	Sub-Total	26,056
38,600	Total	40,098

The Council has received several grants, contributions and donations that have yet to be recognised as income as they have conditions attached to them that will require the monies or property to be returned to the giver if the conditions are not met. The balances at the year-end are as follows:

31 March 2023 £'000	Capital Grants Received in Advance	31 March 2024 £'000
834	Section 106	841
723	Disabled Facilities Grants	40
1,156	Local Authority Housing Grant	460
986	Greener Homes Grant	2,401
436	Other	432
4,135	Total Grants received in advance	4,175

27. Pension Liabilities

Participation in the Pension Scheme

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

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

The pension scheme is operated under the regulatory framework for the Local Government Pension Scheme and the governance of the scheme is the responsibility of the Pensions Committee of Hertfordshire County Council. Policy is determined in accordance with the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013. The Pensions Committee has appointed various investment fund managers, and their performance is monitored by an Investment Sub-Committee.

Transactions Relating to Post-employment Benefits

We recognise the cost of retirement benefits in the reported cost of services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge we are required to make against council tax is based on the cash payable in the year.

The following transactions have been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the General Fund balance via the Movement in Reserves Statement during the year:

2022/2023 £'000	Transactions Relating to Post Employment Benefits	2023/2024 £'000
	Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	
	Cost of Services:	
6,172	- Current Service Cost	3,042
434	- Past Service Costs (including curtailments)	-
	Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	-
1,441	Net Interest expense	655
8,047	Total Post Employment Benefit Charged/(Credited) to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	3,697
	Other Post Employment Benefit Charged/(Credited) to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	
	Remeasurements of the net defined benefit liability comprising:	
12,632	Return on plan assets (excluding the amount included in the net interest expense)	6,051
(1,278)	Actuarial (gains) and losses arising from changes in demographic assumptions	895
(64,153)	Actuarial (gains) and losses arising from changes in financial assumptions	6,320
11,200	Experience (gain) and losses	(4,589)
	Past service contributions which may give rise to an additional liability	(12,475)
(41,599)	Total Post Employment Benefit Charged/(Credited) to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(3,798)
	Movement in Reserves Statement	
(8,047)	Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or deficit for the Provision of Services for employment benefits in accordance with the Code	(3,697)
4,423	Actual amount charged against the General Fund Balance for pensions in the year: Employers' contributions payable to the scheme	4,115
(3,624)	Pension costs transferred to/(from) the Pensions Reserve	418

Note: The Pensions reserve is part of Unusable Reserves.

Pension Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

The following table shows the pension scheme assets, liabilities & net liability.

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
(140,258)	Present Value of the defined benefit obligation	(154,187)
125,934	Fair values of plan assets	136,483
(14,324)	Net liability arising from the defined benefit obligation	(17,704)

A £11,000 difference between the balance sheet and pensions tables as at 31 March 2023 was corrected during the year

Reconciliation of the Movements in the Fair Value of Scheme Assets

2022/2023 £'000	Pension Scheme Assets	2023/2024 £'000
134,991	Opening fair value of scheme assets at 1 April	125,934
3,641	Interest income	5,948
	Remeasurement gain/(loss):	
(12,632)	Return on plan assets, excluding the amount included in the net interest expense	6,051
4,423	Contributions from employer	4,115
871	Contributions from employees into the scheme	946
(5,360)	Benefits paid	(6,511)
125,934	Closing fair value of scheme assets at 31 March	136,483

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

2022/2023 £'000	Pension Scheme Liabilities	2023/2024 £'000
187,290	Opening balance at 1 April	140,258
6,172	Current Service Cost	3,042
434	Past service costs	-
5,082	Interest Cost	6,603
871	Contributions from scheme participants	946
	Remeasurement (gains)/losses:	-
(64,153)	Actuarial (gains) and losses arising from changes in financial assumptions	(6,320)
(1,278)	Actuarial (gains) and losses arising from changes in demographic assumptions	(895)
11,200	Other experience (gain)/loss	4,589
	Past service contributions which may give rise to an additional liability	12,475
(5,360)	Benefits Paid	(6,511)
140,258	Closing balance at 31 March	154,187

Local Government Pension Scheme Assets Comprised:

As at 31 March 2023			Asset type	As at 31 March 2024		
Fair value of scheme assets				Fair value of scheme assets		
Quoted prices in active markets	Quoted prices not in active markets	Total		Quoted prices in active markets	Quoted prices not in active markets	Total
£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000
8,464	-	8,464	Cash and cash equivalents	9,104	-	9,104
			Equity Instruments by industry type	-	-	
1,936	-	1,936	Consumer	1,732	-	1,732
1,062	-	1,062	Manufacturing	2,133	-	2,133
-	-	-	Energy and utilities	-	-	-
723	-	723	Financial institutions	1,596	-	1,596
1,054	-	1,054	Health and care	1,196	-	1,196
2,336	-	2,336	Information technology	1,748	-	1,748
-	-	-	Other	-	-	-
			Debt Securities	-	-	
-	3,381	3,381	Other	-	3,450	3,450
5,254	-	5,254	UK Government	6,060	-	6,060
-	11,152	11,152	Private Equity	-	11,994	11,994
			Property	-	-	
-	9,315	9,315	UK property	-	9,021	9,021
-	7,196	7,196	Overseas property	-	6,343	6,343
			Investment Funds and Unit Trusts	-	-	
47,455	-	47,455	Equities	53,931	-	53,931
17,647	-	17,647	Bonds	18,985	-	18,985
-	-	-	Commodities	-	-	-
-	145	145	Infrastructure	-	222	222
1,096	7,534	8,630	Other	1,049	8,002	9,051
			Derivatives	-	-	
-	186	186	Foreign exchange	-	(82)	(82)
87,026	38,908	125,934	Totals	97,534	38,949	136,483

Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels etc. The Hertfordshire County Council Fund liabilities have been assessed by Hymans Robertson LLP, an independent firm of actuaries; estimates on the pension fund are based on the latest triennial valuation of the scheme as at 31 March 2022.

The significant assumptions used by the actuary have been:

31 March 2023	Actuarial Assumptions	31 March 2024
	Mortality assumptions	
	Longevity at 65 for current pensioners	-
22.1 years	Men	22.0 years
24.4 years	Women	24.2 years
	Longevity at 65 for future pensioners	
22.8 years	Men	22.6 years
26.1 years	Women	25.9 years

31 March 2023	Actuarial Assumptions	31 March 2024
	Financial assumptions	
3.0%	Pension Increase Rate (CPI)	2.8%
3.5%	Rate of increase in salaries	3.3%
4.8%	Rate for discounting scheme liabilities	4.8%

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. The sensitivity analyses below have been determined based on reasonably possible changes of the assumptions occurring at the end of the reporting period and assumes for each change that the assumption analysed changes whilst all the other assumptions remain constant. The assumptions in longevity, for example, assume that life expectancy increases or decreases for men and women. In practice, this is unlikely to occur, and changes in some of the assumptions may be interrelated. The estimations in the sensitivity analysis have followed the accounting policies for the scheme, i.e. on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method. The methods and types of assumptions used in preparing the sensitivity analysis below did not change from those used in the previous period.

The sensitivities regarding the principal assumptions used to measure the scheme liabilities are set out below:

Impact on the Authority's Cash Flows

Change in assumptions at 31 March 2024	Approximate % increase to employer liability	Approximate monetary amount £'000
0.1% decrease in Real Discount Rate	2%	2,425
1 year increase in member life expectancy	4%	5,668
0.1% increase in the Salary Increase Rate	0%	90
0.1% increase in the Pension Increase/Revaluation Rate (CPI)	2%	2,377

The liabilities show the underlying commitments that the Council has in the long run to pay post-employment (retirement) benefits. The total liability of £17.7m (2022/23 £14.3m) has substantial impact on the net worth of the Council as recorded in the Balance Sheet. However statutory arrangements for funding the deficit mean that the financial position of the Council remains healthy. The deficit on the local government scheme will be made good by increased contributions over the remaining working life of employees (i.e. before payments fall due), as assessed by the scheme actuary. For 2024/25 this will amount to £1.4m and 19.7% of paid salaries. Contributions payable by the Council are set by the Fund Actuary at each triennial actuarial valuation (the triennial review relating to the 2023/24 accounts was the period April 2019 to March 2022). A new triennial valuation will cover the period from April 2022 to March 2025 but can be revised at any other time as instructed to do so by the administering authority.

Implications of Virgin Media Ltd vs NTL Trustees

On 25 July 2024, the Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal in the case of Virgin Media Limited v NTL Pension Trustees II Limited and others. The appeal was brought by Virgin Media Ltd against aspects of the High Court's ruling handed down in June 2023 relating to the validity of certain historical pension changes due to the lack of actuarial confirmation required by law. The Court of Appeal upheld the High Court's ruling. The ruling may have implications for other UK defined benefit plans. It is understood this would apply to the LGPS and HM Treasury is currently assessing the implications for all public service pension schemes. No further information is available at this stage.

28. Cash Flow Statement – Adjustment for Non-cash Movements

2022/23 £'000		2023/24 £'000
	Non Cash Transactions	
30,802	Depreciation, downward revaluations and impairments	24,715
50	Amortisations	162
3,859	Pension fund adjustments	(568)
5,113	Carrying amount of non-current assets sold	1,674
4	(Increase)/decrease in stock	(2)
2	(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(4,823)
2,820	Other non-cash items charged on the provision of services	(2,217)
(21,301)	(Decrease)/increase in creditors	(564)
21,349	Total non-cash movements	18,377

29. Cash Flow Statement – Adjustments for Financing & Investing Activities

2022/23 £'000		2023/24 £'000
(9,450)	Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	(4,537)
(3,238)	Capital grants credited to the surplus or deficit on the provision of services	(7,504)
(12,688)	Net adjustment	(12,041)

The net cash flow from operating activities for 2023/24 includes interest received of £883k (2022/23 £410k) and interest paid of £3,987k (2022/23 £4,511k).

30. Cash Flow Statement – Investing Activities

2022/23 £'000		2023/24 £'000
(29,085)	Purchase of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	(20,317)
(433,202)	Purchase of short-term investments	(346,687)
809	Loans granted	(173)
9,460	Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	4,545
440,202	Proceeds from short-term and long term investments	344,780
4,231	Capital grants received	8,032
(7,585)	Net cash flows from investing activities	(9,820)

31. Cash Flow Statement – Financing Activities

2022/23 £'000	-	2023/24 £'000
26,000	Cash Receipts of Short-Term and Long-Term Borrowing	51,800
(13,214)	Repayment of Short-Term and Long-Term Borrowing	(46,220)
4,973	Council Tax, NNDR & other adjustments	(4,271)
17,758	Total cash flow from financing activities	1,308

Reconciliation of liabilities arising from financing activities

The following table provides more detail on how the cash flows from financing activities reconcile to the balance sheet carrying value of liabilities. It does not include the Council Tax and NNDR adjustments from the table above as these balances can alternate between assets and liabilities depending on the year-end position.

	2023/24						
	1st April 2023 £'000	Opening balance Adjustment £'000	Adjusted 1st April 2023 £'000	Loans Repaid £'000	New Loans £'000	Transfer between Short and Long Term Borrowing £'000	31st March 2024 £'000
Long term borrowings	181,398	(132)	181,266	-	51,800	(60,225)	172,841
Short term borrowings	46,013	207	46,220	(46,220)	-	60,225	60,225
Total liabilities from financing activities	227,411	75	227,486	(46,220)	51,800	-	233,066

Note: The 2022/23 opening balance has been restated to correct for a £75k omission.

	2022/23				
	1st April 2022 £'000	Loans Repaid £'000	New Loans £'000	Transfer between Short and Long Term Borrowing £'000	31st March 2023 £'000
Long term borrowings	201,618	-	26,000	(46,220)	181,398
Short term borrowings	13,007	(13,214)	-	46,220	46,013
Total liabilities from financing activities	214,625	(13,214)	26,000	-	227,411

32. Related Parties

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

The Council has identified 6 scenarios for there to be a related party relationship:

1. Where the Council appoints representatives to outside bodies (see stalbans.moderngov.co.uk/mgListOutsideBodies.aspx?bcr=1). Many of these bodies are not considered to be related parties (eg the East of England Local Government Association) and for other candidates (eg Ellenbrook Park Trust), there were no transactions.
2. Charities where the Council is the Trustee (see below).
3. Companies owned by the Council and joint ventures with other councils (see below).
4. Any specific councillor disclosures (see below).
5. Any disclosures made via our employee declarations of interest (see below).
6. Central Government (see below).

In assessing whether a related party relationship might exist, the value of the transaction to both parties is considered. For instance, several instances where the council has rented space for a Polling Station do not, in the Council's opinion, result in creation of a related party relationship.

Transactions in 2023/24 are disclosed below. Expenditure & income is net of VAT. Further details of these transactions can be provided on request.

Organisation	Type	SADC person	23/24 Exp £000	23/24 Inc £000	Bal 31/3/24 £000 Note 1	Comments
Charity of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough	1	Cllr J Taylor	0	6	5	See note 2
Citizens Advice St Albans	1	Cllr S Howland	193	3	0	See note 3
Lionel Annesley Dorant for Almshouses	1	Cllr S Howland Cllr J Murray	0	3	21	See note 2
St Albans BID	1	Cllr C White (Observer)	22	49	(100)	See note 4
St Albans Cycle Hub CIC	1	Cllr R Everall	5	0	15	
St Albans Council for Refugees	4	Cllr L Needham	0	0	0	See note 5
St Albans Museums & Galleries Trust	1	None	0	11	0	
West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee	1, 3	Cllr A Rowlands	0	50	(1,500)	See note 6

Notes:

1. Balances: () = Monies owed by the Council; otherwise, monies owed to the Council. Where notes 2 or 4 apply, includes these balances.
2. The Council collects rents on behalf of these two Charities, acting as their agent. £207k was remitted to the Charity of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough and £140k was remitted to Lionel Annesley Dorant for Almshouses.
3. Citizen's Advice also uses the Hub in the Civic Centre.
4. The Council collects the Levy on behalf of the BID, acting as their agent. £491k was remitted to the BID. The £100k payable at year end comprised monies due to the BID for collected levy and monies due from the BID for rent.
5. The Council provides 4 garages rent free at an estimated annual cost of £2k.
6. The Joint Committee received a loan from Dacorum Borough Council to build a new Crematorium in Hemel Hempstead. The St Albans share of this loan is £1.5m.

Owned companies and corporate trusteeships

1. St Albans City and District Estates Limited: this company is being reinstated to the Companies House Register to allow us to recover residual funds from the company's bank account.

2. West Herts Crematorium: the Council has an agreement with five other Hertfordshire authorities for the running of the West Hertfordshire Crematoriums through a Joint Committee. The Agreement provides for deficits to be met by the constituent councils, but in practice the Crematoriums meets its running costs from its own income and builds up reserves where possible to meet future capital improvement costs. The Council's share of the activity is considered to be immaterial and therefore Group Accounts are not prepared. The Council does not control the assets and therefore they are not included in the Balance Sheet (Three Rivers District Council employ the crematorium staff and operate the crematoria).
3. The Council is trustee for 4 local charities and provides benefits in kind (eg grass cutting) when appropriate. These are the Clarence Park Recreation Ground Trust (charity number 1047751), the Public Recreation Ground Trust (commonly known as the New England Street Playing Field) (charity number 302456), the Museum of St Albans (charity number 312128), and the Annesley Bequest (charity number 311082).

Members and Senior Officers of the Council

Members and Senior Officers of the Council have direct control over the Council's financial and operating policies. The total Member allowances paid in 2023/24 is shown in note 21. Where grants were given, they were made with proper consideration of the declaration of interests and the relevant Members did not take part in any discussion or decision relating to the grants.

The Register of Members' Interests shows both potential financial and other interests, including involvement with voluntary organisations, public authorities, and various other bodies. It is available on the Council's website (as part of each Councillor's profile). At 1 October 2024 there were 5 declarations outstanding from current councillors and 14 from former councillors.

A number of Members / Staff / their families are Council Tenants or Leaseholders within Council owned blocks. These are managed on standard terms. Some Members and Staff and / or their families receive Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax discounts in accordance with the normal qualifying criteria. We do not disclose amounts in this case; for the situation of any Member, refer to <https://stalbans.moderngov.co.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx>.

Officers are widely involved in voluntary roles within the community; as with any local organisation, these organisations may qualify for grants and, when needed, seek Council approvals (e.g. planning permission). These organisations may also receive money from the Council (e.g. for Polling Station hire). These are handled in the normal manner by an Officer not involved with the organisation.

Central Government

This has significant influence over the general operations of the Council – it is responsible for providing the statutory framework within which the Council operates, provides substantial funding in the form of grants and prescribes the terms of many of the transactions that the Council has with other parties (eg council tax bills, housing benefits).

33. Capital Expenditure and Capital Financing

The total amount of capital expenditure incurred in the year is shown in the table below together with the resources that have been used to finance it. Where capital expenditure is to be financed in future years by charges to revenue as assets are used by the Council, the expenditure results in an increase in the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), a measure of the capital expenditure incurred historically by the Council that has yet to be financed. The CFR is analysed in the second part of this note.

2022/23 £'000	Capital financing Requirement	2023/24 £'000
258,107	Opening Capital Financing Requirement	275,538
	Capital investment	
28,288	Property, Plant and Equipment	20,331
-	Heritage Assets	-
6	Intangible Assets	1
2,503	Revenue Expenditure funded from Capital under Statute	4,465
30,797		24,797
	Less Sources of Finance	
(4,933)	Capital Receipts	(6,011)
(1,244)	Other Government Grants and other contributions	(6,323)
(747)	Disabled Facilities Grant	(1,366)
(570)	Other Government Capital Grants	
-	Heritage Lottery funding for New Museums and Galleries	-
(1,146)	Leaseholders Recharge	(161)
(2,214)	Major Repairs Reserve	(9,024)
(58)	Revenue contribution to capital	(6)
-	Voluntary revenue provision HRA	(7,200)
(2,454)	Minimum revenue provision General Fund	(2,576)
(13,366)		(32,667)
275,538	Closing Capital Financing Requirement	267,668

2022/23 £'000	Explanation of movements in year	2023/24 £'000
17,431	Increase/(decrease) in underlying need to borrow (unsupported by government financial assistance)	(7,870)
17,431	Increase/(decrease) in Capital Financing Requirement	(7,870)

34. Borrowing Costs

Since 2019/20 the Council has adopted an accounting policy to capitalise borrowing costs for qualifying assets. Prior to 2019/20 all borrowing costs had been charged to the financing and investment income and expenditure line in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement in the financial year in which they were incurred. Since 2019/20 the approach is to capitalise borrowing costs for qualifying assets and is set out in the council's accounting policies (see Notes to the Accounts 1.20).

The Council has capitalised borrowing costs of £2.025m during the financial period 2023-24 (£1.4m 2022/23). The capitalisation rate used to determine the amount of borrowing costs eligible for capitalisation for the 2023-24 financial period, calculated using the weighted average interest rate on the Council's loan payments, was 3.34% (2.05% in 2022/23) for General Fund borrowing. A qualifying asset will be that which takes more than 18 months to get ready for intended use and has forecast spend of at least £100,000.

35. Leases

Council as a Lessor

The Council leases out property and equipment under operating leases for the following purposes:

- For the provision of community services such as sports facilities, tourism services and community centres
- For economic development purposes to provide suitable affordable accommodation for local businesses

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

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
49	Not later than one year	1,460
1,567	Later than one year and not later than five years	4,789
3,156	Later than five years	9,000
4,772		15,249

The lease payment receivable over five years have increased mainly due to extended lease term for contracts due for renewal in the current year.

The minimum lease payments receivable do not include rents that are contingent on events taking place after the lease was entered into, such as adjustments following rent reviews.

Council as a Lessee

The Council leases in property and equipment under operating leases for the following purposes:

- Photocopying & printing
- Electric moped bikes for parking enforcement

The future minimum lease payment payable under non-cancellable lease in future years are:

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
50	Not later than one year	81
279	Later than one year and not later than five years	252
330		333

36. Contingent Liabilities

In 1992, Municipal Mutual Insurance (MMI), one of our insurers at the time, stopped accepting new business. MMI and its policy holders, including local authorities, as members of the mutual have organised how the company can be closed if necessary. How much MMI owes to insurers cannot be worked out until all current and future claims have been settled. MMI may not have enough money to pay its debts in the future. If that is the case, MMI can claim back from its major policy holders as members of the mutual, including the Council, part of the claims paid from 1 October 1993. The balance of un-provided claims MMI could ask for as of 31 March 2024 is £0.50m (31 March 2023 £0.50m).

A company that previously carried out contractual work on the Council's housing stock went into liquidation and the liquidator has demanded payment of outstanding unpaid invoices issued by the company. The Council is challenging the claim on the basis that the work has either not been completed or not completed to a satisfactory standard.

The Council has received a claim from the operator of one of its theatre facilities as a result of the closure of the facility by the Council in connection with an asbestos contamination incident; this is being dealt with by the Council's Solicitors. The Council has submitted a counter claim to the leisure services

operator for dilapidation costs following the ending of the leisure contract in 2022.

37. Nature and Extent of Risks Arising from Financial Instruments

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

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

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

Credit Risk

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

The Council regards a prime objective of its treasury management activities to be the security of the principal sums it invests. Accordingly, it will ensure that its counterparty lists and limits reflect a prudent attitude towards organisations with which funds may be deposited, and will limit its investment activities to the instruments, methods and techniques referred to in the Treasury Management Practices adopted by the Council. It also maintains a formal counterparty policy in respect of those organisations from which it may borrow, or with whom it may enter into other financing arrangements.

The Council's maximum exposure to credit risk in relation to its investments in banks and building societies of £8.4m cannot be assessed generally as the risk of any institution failing to make interest payments or repay the principal sum will be specific to each individual institution. Recent experience has shown that it is rare for such entities to be unable to meet their commitments. A risk of irrecoverability applies to all the Council's deposits, but there was no evidence on 31 March 2024 that this was likely to crystallise.

Customers for goods and services are assessed, taking into account their financial position, past experience, and other factors, with individual credit limits being set in accordance with internal ratings in accordance with parameters set by the Council.

The Council generally allows its debtors 14 days credit. Of the £3,094k (2022/23 £2,694k) outstanding from debtors, £2,300k (2022/23 £2,048k) is past due and this is analysed by age as follows:

31 March 2023 £'000	Trade Debtors Ageing	31 March 2024 £'000
646	Debtors not yet due	794
133	Less than 3 months overdue	339
138	3 to 6 months overdue	128
172	7 months to 1 year overdue	147
1,605	More than 1 year overdue	1,686
2,694		3,094

Receipts after 31 March relating to the balances above lead the Council to the opinion that adequate provision has been made for the impairment of trade debtors.

Amounts arising from expected credit losses

The following table shows the movement in the impairment loss allowance from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

Loss allowance by Asset Class 2023/24	
Asset Class (amortised cost): Trade Debtors	Lifetime expected credit losses – simplified approach (for Trade Debtors only) £'000
Opening balance as at 1 April 2023	316
New financial assets originated or purchased	-
Amounts written off	-
Financial assets that have been derecognised (Repayment of debtors provided for in general & specific provision)	114
Changes due to modifications that did not result in derecognition (New Debtors)	9
Changes in models/risk parameters	22
Other changes	-
As at 31 March 2024	461

Loss allowance by Asset Class 2022/23	
Asset Class (amortised cost): Trade Debtors	Lifetime expected credit losses – simplified approach (for Trade Debtors only) £'000
Opening balance as at 1 April 2022	223
New financial assets originated or purchased	-
Amounts written off	-
Financial assets that have been derecognised (Repayment of debtors provided for in general & specific provision)	37
Changes due to modifications that did not result in derecognition (New Debtors)	26
Changes in models/risk parameters	30
Other changes	
As at 31 March 2023	316

If collection rates were to deteriorate an increase in the impairment of doubtful debts would be required. To provide in full for overdue trade debtors over two months old would require an additional £0.57m to be set aside as an allowance.

Liquidity Risk

The Council has a comprehensive cash flow management system that seeks to ensure that cash is available as needed. If unexpected movements happen, the Council has ready access to borrowings from the money markets and the Public Works Loans Board.

The Council borrowed £189.6m in 2011/12 in order to provide the funds to pay for the Housing Self Financing debt, and existing Housing debt, taking the total housing debt to £191.1m. Housing Self Financing was the system for financing council housing introduced in April 2012 that replaced the Housing Revenue Account subsidy system. In order to take account of low interest rates and favourable terms, all borrowings were taken at fixed interest rates. The total HRA borrowing as at 31 March 2024 was £139.2m (£115.2m loans over 12 months and £24.0m loans 12 months and under).

During 2023/24 the Council borrowed £33m for the General Fund capital programme. There were five loans, the first and second totalling £10.0m from other Local Authorities with a loan term of 0.5-0.75 year and the other three totalling £23.0m with a loan terms of 1 or 2 years from PWLB. The Council borrowed a further £18.8m for the Housing Revenue Account with a loan term

of 1 year also from PWLB. The loan terms varied to either match forecast capital receipts or spread repayment dates over a number of years.

There is no significant risk that the Council will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments under financial instruments.

The maturity analysis of financial liabilities is as follows:

31 March 2023 £'000	Maturity Analysis of Financial Liabilities	31 March 2024 £'000
46,220	Less than one year	60,225
24,000	Between one and two years	30,800
55,000	Between two and five years	64,500
63,915	Between five and ten years	39,415
1,500	Between ten and fifteen years	1,500
0	Between fifteen and twenty years	0
36,850	Greater than twenty years	36,626
227,485*		233,066

*The amount is consistent with the adjusted opening balance as disclosed in note 31.

All trade and other payables are due to be paid in less than one year. Liabilities have not been discounted for net present value.

Market Risk > Interest Rate Risk

The Council has several strategies for managing market risk, including interest rate risk. These include investing only with institutions having a high credit rating, limiting the amount of investment with any one institution, and limiting investment periods to less than one year.

The average interest rate earned on investments during the year was 4.92% and if interest rates throughout the year had been 0.5% higher this would have increased the amount of interest earned by £236k.

As mentioned above, all debt is at fixed interest rates ranging from 1.22% to 5.8%, with a weighted average of 3.31%.

The Council does not invest in quoted companies, and it has no assets or liabilities in foreign currencies. Therefore, the Council has no exposure arising from movements in share prices or exchange rates.

Housing Revenue Account

HRA Income and Expenditure Statement

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Income and Expenditure Statement shows the economic cost in the year of providing housing services in accordance with generally accepted practices, rather than the amount to be funded from rents and government grants.

2022/2023 £'000	Housing Revenue Account Income and Expenditure Statement	2023/2024 £'000
	Expenditure	
5,891	Repairs and Maintenance	9,656
7,686	Supervision and Management	8,198
299	Rents, Rates, Taxes and other charges	156
26,614	Depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	15,042
(1,094)	Revaluation gains reversing prior year losses charged to the HRA	(2,127)
34	Debt Management costs	37
194	Movement in the allowance for bad debts	(260)
251	HRA services' share of Corporate and Democratic Core	262
39,875	Total Expenditure	30,964
	Income	
(28,643)	Dwelling rents	(30,859)
(1,097)	Non-Dwelling rents	(1,123)
(411)	Charges for services and facilities	(1,018)
(30,151)	Total Income	(33,000)
9,724	Net (Income)/Cost of HRA Services as included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(2,036)
9,724	Net (Income)/Cost of HRA Services	(2,036)
	HRA share of the operating income and expenditure included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	
(3,450)	Gain on sale of HRA non-current assets	(1,529)
481	Write-off of replaced asset components	(481)
4,307	Interest payable and similar charges	4,068
(190)	Interest and investment income	(152)
(235)	Net interest on the net defined benefit liability	104
(561)	Capital grants, contributions and other receipts	(682)
10,076	(Surplus)/Deficit for the year on HRA services	(708)

Movement in the Housing Revenue Account

The HRA Income and Expenditure Account shows the actual financial performance for the year, measured in terms of the resources consumed and generated over the last twelve months. However, the Council is required to account for its statutory housing activity on a different accounting basis, the main differences being:

- The gain or loss on the disposal of HRA assets has to be reversed; and
- Any impairment on HRA dwellings, either due to economic consumption or valuation, has to be reversed from the account before a statutory balance can be finalised.

This reconciliation statement summarises the difference between the outturn on the Income and Expenditure Account and the Housing Revenue Account Balance.

2022/2023 £'000	Movement on the Housing Revenue Account	2023/2024 £'000
(2,261)	Balance on the HRA at the end of the previous year	(3,541)
	Rounding adjustment from prior year	4
10,076	(Surplus)/Deficit for the year on the HRA Income and Expenditure Statement	(708)
-	Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under statute	
(16,641)	Transfer (from)/to the Capital Adjustment Account for the impairment of dwellings	(4,457)
-	Transfer to the Capital Adjustment Account for debt repayment provision*	7,200
(2,200)	Loan repayment funded by MRR	(4,200)
(936)	Transfer from the Capital Adjustment Account for Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute	(4,054)
(39)	Contribution from the Capital Receipts Reserve towards the administrative costs of non-current asset disposals	-
2	Revenue contribution to capital	-
3,470	Gain on sale of HRA non-current assets	1,721
(481)	Write-off of replaced asset components	481
430	Capital grants and Contributions	356
11	Other Capital Receipts	-
(48)	HRA share of contributions to or from the Pensions Reserve	66
(6,356)	Net (increase)/decrease before transfers to or from reserves	(3,595)
5,076	Transfers to/(from) reserves	2,885
(1,280)	(Increase)/decrease in year on the HRA	(710)
(3,541)	Balance on the HRA at the end of the current year	(4,247)

* This amount comprises £3m relating to 22/23 and £4.2m relating to 23/24

Notes to the Housing Revenue Account

H1. Analysis and Value of the Housing Stock

a) Number and Types of Dwelling in the Housing Stock

The Council was responsible for managing 4,914 dwellings on 31 March 2022:

31 March 2023	Number of Dwellings by Type	31 March 2024
	One bedroom dwellings	
326	- Houses and Bungalows	326
1,081	- Flats	1,077
	Two bedroom dwellings	
504	- Houses and Bungalows	499
919	- Flats	918
	Three bedroom dwellings	
1,874	- Houses and Bungalows	1,876
31	- Flats	31
	Four or more bedroom dwellings	
89	- Houses and Bungalows	92
69	Multi-occupied dwellings	80
4,893		4,899

On 31 March 2024 0.92% (2023: 1.78%) of lettable properties were vacant.
The change in stock can be summarised as follows:

2022/23	Dwelling Stock Reconciliation	2023/24
4,914	Stock at 1 April	4,893
(14)	Less: Right to buy sales	(6)
-	Less: Market sales	(4)
-	Purchases	3
-	Newly constructed	4
(7)	Reclassified, disposed, demolished	9
4,893	Stock at 31 March	4,899

Balance Sheet Value

HRA dwellings are valued using the Beacon basis whereby all properties are linked to a set of 'beacon' properties and valued in line with the change in average value of the 'beacons'. Beacon properties were revalued 31 March 2024. The valuation is at 'Existing Use Value – Social Housing' reduced to a factor to reflect social housing tenancies. The factors for surrounding regions

are set by central government each year, and 35% for 2023/24 (35% in 2022/23) has been deemed by a Registered Valuer and Local Property Expert as appropriate for St Albans.

31 March 2023	Housing land, dwellings and other property	31 March 2024
£'000		£'000
589,732	Dwellings	647,392
8,348	Other land and buildings	8,312
10,941	Garages	11,278
4,500	HRA shops	4,283
1	Vehicles, Plant and Equipment	-
5,900	Assets under construction	5,574
619,422	Total property plant and equipment	676,839
136	Assets Held for Sale	3,523
619,558	Total land, dwellings and other property	680,362

Vacant Possession Value

The Vacant Possession Value is the Council's estimate of the total sum that it would receive if all dwellings were sold on the open market, whereas the Balance Sheet Value is calculated on the basis of rents receivable on existing tenancies. Rents receivable are less than the rent that would be obtainable on the open market and therefore the Balance Sheet Value is lower than the Vacant Possession Valuation. The difference between the two values shows the economic cost of providing housing at less than market value.

At 31 March 2023	Vacant Possession Value	At 31 March 2024
£'000		£'000
1,684,261	HRA Dwellings	1,859,365

H2. Major Repairs Reserve

Authorities are required by the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulation 2011 to maintain the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR), which controls an element of the capital resources required to be used on HRA assets or for capital financing purposes. The movement in the reserve was as follows:

2022/23 £'000	Major Repairs Reserve	2023/24 £'000
(1,573)	Opening Balance 1 April	(6,022)
	Transfer to Reserve in year	
(8,674)	Depreciation Dwellings	(7,782)
(189)	Depreciation Non-Dwellings	(654)
-	Impairment of Non-Dwellings	(1)
(8,863)	Sub-total	(8,437)
2,214	Used to fund capital expenditure in year	9,023
2,200	Used to fund loan repayment in year	4,219
(6,022)	Closing Balance at 31 March	(1,217)

H3. Capital Expenditure

a) HRA Capital Expenditure consists mainly of expenditure on the improvement of Council dwellings as shown in the following table:

2022/23 £'000	Categories of Capital Expenditure	2023/24 £'000
917	Kitchens and bathrooms	526
1,042	External walls and roofing	1,117
1,132	Windows and doors	803
2,272	Heating, wiring and plumbing	1,472
1,599	Others	1,615
-	Property Purchases	1,883
6,962	Council Dwellings Additions	7,416
181	Other land and buildings	633
2,100	Social Housing Development	4,061
901	Disabled Adaptations	869
-	Social Housing Decarbonisation*	2,777
1,712	Other capital expenditure	4,890
11,856	Total Capital Expenditure	20,646

* In 2022/23, £602k of Social Housing Decarbonisation costs were included within the 'Others' row. For this year, the project accelerated and we have separately classified the expenditure.

2022/23 £'000	Categories of Capital Expenditure	2023/24 £'000
917	Kitchens and bathrooms	526
1,042	External walls and roofing	1,117
1,132	Windows and doors	803
2,272	Heating, wiring and plumbing	1,472
997	Others	1,615
-	Property Purchases	1,883
6,360	Council Dwellings Additions	7,416
181	Other land and buildings	633
2,100	Social Housing Development	4,061
901	Disabled Adaptations	869
602	Social Housing Decarbonisation	2,777
1,712	Other capital expenditure	4,890
11,856	Total Capital Expenditure	20,646

b) This was financed as follows:

2022/23 £'000	Financing of Capital Expenditure	2023/24 £'000
2,112	Major Repairs Reserve	9,125
1,531	Capital Receipts Reserve	4,759
2,173	Grants and contributions	4,798
6,038	Borrowing	1,964
2	Revenue Contribution to Capital	-
11,856	Total Capital Funding	20,646

c) The Council has capital contract commitments as at 31 March 2024 of £5.6m relating to Housing Investment Programme schemes (the Housing capital programme).

H4. Capital Receipts

The number of Council property sales was 10 (2022/23: 14). The following table is a summary of the capital receipts from disposals of land, houses and other property within the Council's HRA during the financial year.

2022/23 £'000	Capital Receipts	2023/24 £'000
6,019	Dwelling sales (subject to pooling)	1,360
79	Non-poolable receipts	1,765
6,098	Gross capital receipts	3,125
(20)	Less Costs	-
	Payable to National Pool	
-	For current year	-
6,078	Retained Capital Receipts	3,125

H5. Depreciation

For Council dwellings land and buildings are split on a 33:67 basis. Land is not depreciated. Depreciation is on a straight-line basis over the following periods:

Structure: 100 years Roof: 70 years
Windows: 30 years Internal Components: 15-40 years

2022/23 £'000	Depreciation	2023/24 £'000
8,582	Dwellings	7,738
108	Multi Occupancy Properties	64
-	Equipment, Vehicles and Intangibles	1
189	Garages	654
8,879	Total Depreciation Charged to the HRA	8,457

H6. Pension Costs

The following table shows the charges to the HRA, in accordance with IAS 19, to give the 'Net Charge to the HRA' required by the Code. The adjustment in the 'Movement in HRA Reserve Statement' is shown to arrive at the amount charged against the HRA balance as required by statute, which is the employer's contributions actually paid into the scheme.

Full details of the pension costs for the whole Council are included within Note 27 to the Core Financial Statements.

2022/23 £'000	Pension Costs	2023/24 £'000
725	Net Cost of Services: - Current Service Cost	652
235	Net Operating Expenditure: - Net Interest expense	104
960	Net charge to the HRA	756
(518)	Amounts to be met from Government Grants and Local taxation: - Movement on pensions reserve	66
442	Actual amount charged against Council tax for pensions in the year: Employer's contributions payable to the scheme	822

H7. Rent Arrears and Bad Debts

a) Arrears – amounts outstanding from Council Tenants

2022/23 £'000	Council Tenant Rent Arrears	2023/24 £'000
1,412	Arrears at 31 March	1,010
5.0%	Rent arrears as a percentage of gross rent income	3.3%

b) Bad Debts – provision for non-payment of rents

2022/23 £'000	Bad Debt Provision Includes HRA non-dwelling rent arrears	2023/24 £'000
798	Bad debts provision at 1 April	1,021
(2)	Debts written off in the year	(67)
224	Increase/(decrease) in provision	(268)
1,021	Bad debt provision at 31 March	686

H8. Rent Rebates

Assistance with rents for those on low incomes is available under the Housing Benefits Scheme. In 2023/24 28.5% (2022/23: 27.8%) of the Council's rents receivable were by way of benefits. Rent rebates are chargeable to the General Fund and reclaimed from Central Government by way of a Housing Benefit grant.

Collection Fund Statement

The Collection Fund is an agent's statement that reflects the statutory obligation for billing authorities to maintain a separate Collection Fund. The statement shows the transactions of the Council in relation to the collection from taxpayers and distribution to local authorities and the Government of the Council Tax and Business Rates.

2022/23 (£'000)			Collection Fund Income and Expenditure Account					2023/24 (£'000)		
Business Rates	Council Tax	Total	Income				Business Rates	Council Tax	Total	
-	(128,322)	(128,322)					C1	-	(135,402)	(135,402)
	-								(167)	(167)
(52,868)	-	(52,868)					C2	(49,748)	-	(49,748)
82	-	82						(9,882)	-	(9,882)
(52,786)	(128,322)	(181,108)	Total Income			(59,630)	(135,569)	(195,199)		
5,253	96,909	102,162	Expenditure	Precepts, Demands	and shares:	Hertfordshire County Council	6,467	102,300	108,767	
-	14,131	14,131				Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire	-	15,164	15,164	
21,012	15,319	36,331		St Albans District Council (including Parishes)	25,866	15,951	41,817			
26,265	-	26,265		Central Government	32,333	-	32,333			
180	-	180		Costs of collection	186	-	186			
4	-	4		Write-offs of uncollectable amounts	(36)	-	(36)			
229	588	817		Allowance for impairment	622	470	1,092			
1,777	-	1,777		Provision for appeals	(7,206)	-	(7,206)			
105	-	105		Enterprise Zone	211	-	211			
(15,722)	1,461	(14,261)		Contributions towards previous year's estimated Collection Fund surplus/(deficit)			C3	2,167	3,607	5,774
39,103	128,408	167,511	Total Expenditure			60,610	137,492	198,102		
(13,682)	85	(13,596)	Movement on Fund balance			980	1,923	2,903		
19,822	(4,164)	15,658	Balance at 1 April brought forward			6,140	(4,079)	2,062		
6,140	(4,079)	2,062	Balance at 31 March carried forward			7,120	(2,156)	4,965		
614	(3,126)	(2,512)	Shares of balance	Hertfordshire County Council			712	(1,653)	(941)	
-	(460)	(460)		Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire			-	(246)	(246)	
2,456	(492)	1,964		St Albans District Council (included in reserves)			2,848	(257)	2,591	
3,070	-	3,070		Central Government			3,560	-	3,560	
6,140	(4,078)	2,062		Total carried forward			7,120	(2,156)	4,964	

C1. Council Tax

Council Tax income derives from charges raised according to the value of residential properties, which have been classified into 8 valuation bands.

The amount of Council Tax is estimated by calculating the amount of income required to be taken from the Collection Fund by the precepting authorities (Hertfordshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, Parish Councils, and the Council) for the forthcoming year to meet their service requirements. Individual charges are calculated by dividing this total by the Council Tax base (the total number of properties in each band adjusted by a ratio to convert the number to a band D equivalent and adjusted for discounts).

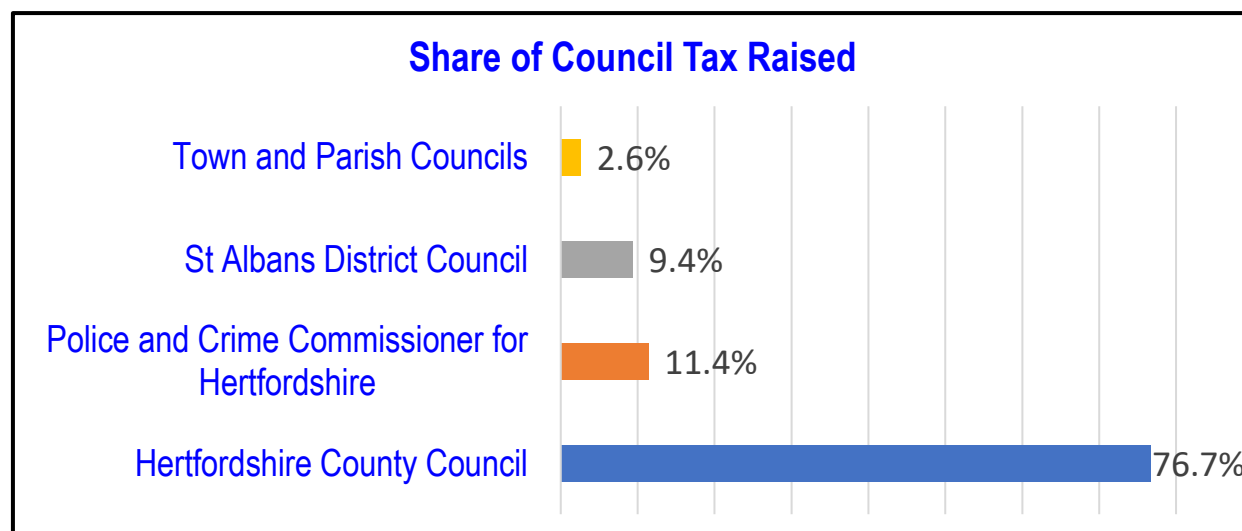
Taxes for other bands are derived by applying the ratios in the following table to the band D tax.

Band	Property Value	Number of dwellings	Ratios	Band D equivalents
A	up to £40,000	599	0.67	402
B	between £40,001 and £52,000	1,901	0.78	1,483
C	between £52,001 and £68,000	7,370	0.89	6,559
D	between £68,001 and £88,000	13,786	1.00	13,786
E	between £88,001 and £120,000	11,825	1.22	14,426
F	between £120,001 and £160,000	8,806	1.44	12,680
G	between £160,001 and £320,000	7,631	1.67	12,744
H	over £320,000	1,302	2.00	2,604
		53,220		64,684
	Less adjustment for non-collection (1.5%)			(970)
	Council Tax Base for 2023/24			63,714
	Council Tax Base for 2022/23			63,368

Council Tax Levy at Band D by Precepting Council:

2022/23	Council Tax Levy at Band D	2023/24
£1,529.31	- Hertfordshire County Council	£1,605.63
£223.00	- Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire	£238.00
£190.41	- St Albans District Council	£196.10
£51.34	- Town and Parish Councils	£54.26
£1,994.06	Average Council tax Levy at Band D	£2,093.99

The following graph shows how the council tax collected is distributed between the various precepting bodies with Hertfordshire County Council receiving over three quarters of the total.



C2. Income from Business Rates

The Council collects business rates for its area based on rateable values (as determined by the Valuation Office Agency) and multipliers set by central government.

This following table shows information required to be disclosed relating to Business Rates:

2022/23	Business Rate Factors	2023/24
177,986,078	Rateable value at 31 March as notified by the Valuation Office Agency	171,960,105
51.2	Business Rate multiplier	51.2
49.9	Small business rate multiplier	49.9

Business rate surpluses or deficits are distributed in accordance with the relevant proportions set out in the localised business rate regulations. From 2013/14 to 2018/19 and from 2020/21 50% of business rates collected in the area were/are retained locally (the Council retained 40% and Hertfordshire County Council 10%) and 50% returned to central government. From 1 April 2019-31 March 2020, the Council took part in the Hertfordshire Business Rates Pilot Scheme. The Council joined with all the other councils in Hertfordshire, including Hertfordshire County Council, to retain 75% of business rates within the area with the remaining 25% paid to central government.

C3. Contributions to Previous Year's Estimated Surpluses and Deficits

The following table shows the distribution of the prior year's estimated surplus.

2022/23			Precepting Authorities	2023/24		
Business Rates	Council Tax	Total		Business Rates	Council Tax	Total
£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000
(1,572)	1,118	(454)	Hertfordshire County Council	217	2,765	2,982
-	164	164	Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire	-	406	406
(6,289)	178	(6,111)	St Albans District Council	867	436	1,303
(7,861)	-	(7,861)	Central Government	1,083	-	1,083
(15,722)	1,460	(14,261)	Total surplus/(deficit)	2,167	3,607	5,774

The surplus/deficit arising on the Collection Fund will be distributed/recovered in accordance with legislation.

St Albans City and District Council

Annual governance statement

2023-24

July 2024

Scope of Responsibility

1. St Albans City and District Council (the Council) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council 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 duty, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper governance of its affairs, the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for managing risk.
3. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) describes the extent to which the Council has, for the year ended 31 March 2024, complied with its corporate code of governance and the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, regulation 6(1). It also describes how the effectiveness of the governance arrangements has been monitored and evaluated during the year and sets out any changes planned for 2024/25.
4. The AGS has been prepared in accordance with guidance produced in 2016 by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) – The ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework’. It embraces the elements of internal control required by the ‘Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom’. Also supporting the AGS is the Council’s Code of Corporate Governance, which too is consistent with the principles of the SOLACE framework.

The Purpose of the Governance Framework

5. The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled. This includes the activities through which it engages with, leads and accounts to its communities. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives if appropriate, cost effective services and activities in line with its policy and budget framework.
6. The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage the Council’s risks to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and corporate objectives and can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is a process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council’s policies and priorities. It evaluates the likelihood of those risks being realised, and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them economically, efficiently and effectively.
7. The Council’s financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016).

8. The Council's Code of Governance recognises that effective governance is achieved through the following seven CIPFA/SOLACE principles:
- (i) Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
 - (ii) Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
 - (iii) Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.
 - (iv) Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes.
 - (v) Developing the Council's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
 - (vi) Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
 - (vii) Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability.
9. The governance framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The Governance Framework

10. Key features of the Council's governance framework during 2023/24 included:

- i. **The Council Plan** – identifies and communicates the Council's vision, objectives and priorities.
- ii. **The Corporate Risk Register** – reflects the objectives of the Council Plan and identifies the implications for the Council's governance arrangements.
- iii. **The Constitution** – sets out the Council's decision-making framework and is regularly updated.
 - gives a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of councillors, committees, and the statutory officers (Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer);
 - includes a scheme of delegation of responsibility, financial regulations and contract standing orders; and
 - defines codes of conduct for Councillors and officers, and a protocol for how the two work together.
- iv. **Council** – is the ultimate decision-making body for all matters other than those delegated to the Planning, Licensing and Standards Committees, and operational decision making to specific officers.
- v. **Service Committees** – (Strategy and Resources Committee, Planning Policy and Climate Committee, Public Realm Committee, and Housing & Inclusion Committee) are responsible for all decisions within their areas of responsibility, which are not otherwise delegated, or which can only be taken by Council. The committees also perform scrutiny on areas within the respective remits where appropriate.
- vi. **Audit and Governance Committee** – this and the Standards Committee are Regulatory Committees. The Audit and Governance Committee reviews the effectiveness of the internal control, risk and governance environment, receives reports from the Internal and External Auditors and approves the Council's

statutory accounts and the Annual Governance Statement. The Committee has an independent Chair.

- vii. Standards Committee** – promotes high standards of conduct and has responsibility for overseeing investigations of complaints against Councillors.
- viii. Regulatory Committees** – ensure compliance to regulations:
 - Licensing and Regulatory Committee
 - Licensing Sub Committee
 - Planning (Development Management) Committee
- ix. City Neighbourhoods Committee** – advances the localism agenda and encourages local groups to take a greater role in relation to the strategic oversight or management of assets. The councillor representation is drawn from the unparished wards in the City Centre. As these wards have no parish council, the City Neighbourhoods Committee considers matters which might otherwise normally fall within the remit of a parish council.
- x. The Chief Executive** – (Head of Paid Service) as part of the Senior Leadership Team has delegated authority to take operational decisions within policies and budgets set by Council.
- xi. The Director of Customer, Business and Corporate Support** is the Council's Section 151 Officer leading a finance service, as part of a wider directorate, which promotes effective financial management so that public money is safeguarded and used economically, efficiently and effectively.
- xii. The Monitoring Officer** is responsible for maintaining and advising on the Constitution. This officer ensures that the Council's decision-making is lawful and fair and supports the promotion of high ethical standards and compliance with the Codes of Conduct.
- xiii. Senior Leadership Team (SLT)** comprises the Chief Executive and the two Strategic Directors and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Council. The Senior Leadership Team is supported by the Monitoring Officer.
- xiv. Corporate Property Board** was introduced November 2022 to facilitate closer review of the capital programme delivery and the property asset portfolio. The Board comprises Senior Leadership Team Members, the Assistant Director (Built Environment), relevant project managers and lead councillors. The Board does not have constitutional decision-making powers; these remain with the relevant service committee.
- xv. Risk Management** – a Corporate Risk Strategy overseen by the Senior Leadership Team and Audit and Governance Committee. Risk registers (strategic and operational) are reviewed and updated throughout the year.
- xvi. Standard committee report format** – that includes specific consideration of all legal, financial, professional, technical, risk management and equalities implications.
- xvii. Medium Term Financial Strategy** – which informs service planning and budget setting.
- xviii. A complaints procedure** – the Council's complaints policy is readily accessible on the Council's website
- xix. Internal Audit** - a risk-based approach to internal audit, emphasising the need for sound control, governance and risk management arrangements. Internal Audit is shared service hosted by Broxbourne Borough Council and includes Harlow and Epping Forest District Councils.
- xx. Whistle blowing policy and process** – sits alongside the anti-fraud, bribery and corruption strategy (last updated September 2023) outlining the Council's zero tolerance approach to fraud, bribery and corruption. The whistleblowing policy was reviewed and updated in June 2023 and disseminated to all staff.

Review of Effectiveness

11. The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal audit. The review of effectiveness is informed by the various sources noted below as well as the work of officers within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment:

- Annual reporting to Council on the work of the Audit and Governance Committee;
- Assurance checklists from managers and assurance statements from the Strategic Directors and Chief Executive provide evidence that the key elements of the system of internal control are operating effectively;
- The work of Internal Audit including the Annual Report of the Head of Internal Audit which provides assurance in this regard is overseen by the Audit and Governance Committee;
- The work of the Council's external auditor – including the annual Audit Results Report and other reports in relation to financial and other aspects of the Council's governance;
- A comprehensive risk management process ensures that key operational and strategic risks across the Council are captured and reported to senior managers and the Audit and Governance Committee;
- Consideration of this document by the Senior Leadership Team with reference to the wider aspects of governance; and
- Significant governance issues from previous years and from 2023/24.

Overall opinion of the Council's governance arrangements

12. This AGS demonstrates that the Council's governance arrangements have remained fit for purpose during 2023/24.

13. The Senior Leadership Team has undertaken an assessment of the arrangements for governance during 2023/24 including a review of the assurance checklists and statements submitted by managers. It has concluded that arrangements are fit for purpose and working effectively. As a result of this assessment, a small number of other governance issues have been identified in order to further strengthen arrangements. These are set out in Table 2.

14. The Council invited an independent team of peers from the Local Government Association to conduct a review of the Council's operations. The review took place 28 February to 3 March 2023 and the review team met with senior management, councillors, officers and external partners. The Council produced a Peer Challenge Action Plan which is available on the Council's website. On 15 December 2023 the Peer Challenge Team returned and concluded "the Council had taken the recommendations of peers seriously and had made significant progress on all of them". Their report is on the Council's website.

Governance Issues Identified

15. This final part of the AGS outlines the actions taken, or proposed, to deal with significant governance issues identified. The Council's Senior Leadership Team,

which monitors and reviews the corporate governance framework, has ensured that the issues raised in the previous AGS have been or are going to be addressed as detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Progress on significant governance issues identified in the 2022/23 AGS

Key improvement/review area identified in the 2022/23 AGS	Action taken in 2023/24 to address the issue
<p>Economic issues</p> <p>Economic volatility, both nationally and globally, continues. This along with supply chain issues and high inflation has a direct impact on the Council in terms of potential cost increases especially for major works and projects.</p> <p>The 2022/23 economic situation is also proving challenging for the local community and is increasing the demand for Council services in some areas (e.g., Housing Benefit) as well as exerting pressure on core Council funding streams such as Council Tax and Business Rates.</p>	<p>The implications have been closely monitored by the Senior Leadership Team. Mitigating strategies formed part of the key considerations in the reports presented to the Strategy and Resource Committee and in the development of the MTFS (Medium Term Financial Strategy) for 2024/25 and future years. Work started early in the year to prepare for the budget setting for 2024/25 to allow for appropriate consideration and scrutiny by the service committee of the options available to arrive at a balanced budget.</p> <p>Frontline services, especially Revenues and Benefits, continue to prioritise and resource the delivery of the various support packages offered by the Government in response to public need (e.g., through various energy schemes and rebates).</p>
<p>Statement of Accounts</p> <p>The delays with the audit of Accounts reported in the 2021/22 AGS have worsened (nationally) in 2022/23 with the Government now actively considering a range of concerns raised from within the Local Government sector.</p>	<p>At its March 2024 meeting the Audit and Governance Committee received details of the Government's proposals to clear the backlog of outstanding local audits, this will impact on the audit of the Council's 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial statements. Government proposals include drop dead dates for audits to be completed. It is recognised that nationally many audits cannot be completed by this deadline date and therefore alternative arrangements will allow the External Auditor to issue a disclaimer to the accounts.</p> <p>For the 2023/24 accounts, and beyond, the Council has a new auditor (KPMG), who are already carrying out work on the accounts.</p>

Key improvement/review area identified in the 2022/23 AGS	Action taken in 2023/24 to address the issue
<p>Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan</p> <p>The Peer Challenge report has identified a number of strengths and weaknesses regarding St Albans under the following headings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local priorities and outcomes 2. Organisational and place leadership 3. Governance and culture 4. Financial planning and management 5. Capacity for improvement 	<p>The Council published an action plan within six weeks of receipt of the final report in response to the Corporate Peer Challenge report publication.</p> <p>A six-month check-in (follow up) took place in December 2023 to see how the Council was progressing with the implementation of recommendations, producing a follow up report afterwards, which too is on the Council's website.</p> <p>The Council's progress against its Corporate Peer Challenge action plan is being actively monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and the Strategy and Resources Committee.</p>
<p>Financial Management Code review</p> <p>Carried over from last year's AGS action plan</p>	<p>The Finance Team has been focused on the budget setting process. Work has started on the Financial Management Code review with an aim for completion during 2024/25. This is to ensure the Council can demonstrate compliance with the Code, or if there are deficiencies, develop an action plan to address these.</p> <p>In addition, the financial planning process, and the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy in particular is being kept under review as the Council seeks to restore financial stability and maintain sustainability in the longer term.</p>
<p>Common themes from the Service Assurance Statements were:</p>	
<p>Risk Management and business/service planning</p> <p>More work is required to ensure risk management is embedded within services, and within service/business planning processes</p>	<p>Work continued in 2023/24 to improve risk management processes especially regarding operational and directorate risk management.</p> <p>Further work is required to ensure greater alignment with service and business plans processes.</p>
<p>Equality Impact Statements</p> <p>There were pockets where staff needed more guidance and training around the use of Equality Impact</p>	<p>Building on the strong foundation, recognised as exemplar practice in the Corporate Peer Review, several Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</p>

Key improvement/review area identified in the 2022/23 AGS	Action taken in 2023/24 to address the issue
Statements	<p>champions have been identified from within the Council. They are being trained to support staff.</p> <p>The issue was also recognised as part of the 2022/23 Equality and Diversity Internal Audit. Implementation of the agreed recommendations in that report have helped strengthen the overall framework.</p>

16. In preparing this statement and reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements, the following areas have been identified for improvement. These are set out in the table below, together with the steps to be taken to address them. They include those relevant ones carried over from last year's AGS:

Table 2: Areas for improvement or monitoring during 2024/25

Key improvement/review area identified in the 2023/24 AGS	Action to be taken in 2024/25 to address the issue
<p>Financial stewardship</p> <p>The Council has developed a well-defined budget challenge process and a clear road map towards setting a balanced budget. In 2023/24 this has helped the Council to make savings of £2.3m, and in 2024/25 further savings of £2.4m. It is important the Council does not become complacent about ensuring a year on year balanced budget.</p>	<p>Continue to develop the RAG approach to budget proposals indicating the extent to which proposals are achievable and providing early insight into whether savings are on track to be delivered.</p> <p>Continue with the staff awareness campaign to remind officers we all have a role in managing the Council's finances and in achieving savings targets. Coupled with more regular and wider reporting on in year budget performance.</p>
<p>Procurement</p> <p>The Procurement Act 2023, due to go live on 28 October 2024, represents a big change for all public bodies, including St Albans.</p> <p>The Act consolidates the different regimes currently governing procurement into one Act, thereby creating a simpler and more flexible system. The existing overarching principles have been replaced with these new objectives which authorities must consider in all procurement activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value for money 	<p>Work has commenced to review internal processes, update procurement related policies, procedures and guidance and identify training and awareness needs for both officers and councillors</p>

Key improvement/review area identified in the 2023/24 AGS	Action to be taken in 2024/25 to address the issue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting with (and being seen to act with) integrity • Maximising public benefit • Treating suppliers the same (unless otherwise justified) 	
Common themes from the Service Assurance Statements were:	
<p>Data to support decision making</p> <p>It was recognised that there was scope for the Council and services to make better use of data.</p>	<p>This has already been identified as an area for improvement by the Senior Leadership Team. There is currently a fundamental review of corporate and service performance indicators. The newly formed Digital Strategy and Transformation Team also have a key role and is developing an action plan in how it will support the Council Plan. The team's mission statement is about providing first class services to residents and businesses, by providing best-in-class transformation, digital services, and data insight.</p>
<p>Succession planning</p> <p>On the whole smaller teams can ensure emergency cover for key roles, but developing an effective succession plan with so few staff can be challenging.</p>	<p>All service areas produce a cover plan setting out key roles in each team and the plan for short and medium term cover arrangements for unforeseen absences. These plans are reviewed and updated regularly.</p> <p>HR Business Partners (HRBP) work with Service Managers to review their workforce profiles on request and flag risks around key roles. HRBPs also provide advice on succession planning options including creation of apprenticeship posts, use of interns or graduates to create a talent pipeline. They also discuss options with retirees for casual work in the future to help with peak workloads of projects.</p> <p>In 2023/24 all Service Managers conducted a Talent Review for their areas to identify succession opportunities and threats within their teams. They are encouraged to review this thinking on an annual basis to plan for individual and team development.</p>

Key improvement/review area identified in the 2023/24 AGS	Action to be taken in 2024/25 to address the issue
<p>Financial awareness</p> <p>Although well supported by their Finance Business Partners some managers would benefit from additional training or awareness around financial forecasting and budget monitoring.</p>	<p>The in-year budget performance and forecast outturn report, which is produced monthly for the Senior Leadership Team, is also circulated to the Wider Leadership Team (WLT). Increased awareness will be achieved through briefings at WLT meetings as well as directorate and service area management meetings.</p>
<p>Contract Management</p> <p>A series of contract management workshops was delivered to relevant officers during 2023/24. This exercise needs repeating.</p>	<p>The Procurement Team is working on this, identifying who requires this training and reviewing the outcomes from the previous workshops.</p>

17. The Senior Leadership Team will oversee this action plan over the coming year and report on progress to the Audit and Governance Committee. The Senior Leadership Team will ensure that governance issues continue to be promoted, addressed and monitored in a co-ordinated manner throughout the next financial year.

We, the undersigned, are satisfied that appropriate governance arrangements are in place. We propose over the coming year to continue to review and where appropriate improve matters to further enhance our governance arrangements.

Signed: *Paul De Kort* Date: 5 August 2024

Councillor Paul De Kort (Leader of the Council)

Signed: *Amanda Foley* Date: 5 August 2024

Amanda Foley (Chief Executive)

Independent Auditor's Report

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF ST ALBANS CITY & DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT ON THE AUDIT OF THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Disclaimer of opinion

We were engaged to audit the financial statements of St Albans City & District Council ("the Council") for the year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement, the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Housing Revenue Account Statement, the Collection Fund Statement, and the related notes, including the Expenditure and Funding Analysis and the accounting policies in note 1.

We do not express an opinion on the financial statements. Due to the significance of the matters described in the Basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we have not been able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion.

Basis for disclaimer of opinion

The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (the "Amendment Regulations") require the Council to publish its financial statements and our opinion thereon for the year ended 31 March 2024 by 28 February 2025 (the "Backstop Date") or as soon as reasonably practicable after the Backstop Date.

We have been unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence over a number of areas of the financial statements as we have been unable to perform the procedures that we consider necessary to form our opinion on the financial statements by the publication date of the financial statements. These areas include, but were not limited to: the carrying amount of Property, Plant and Equipment, Heritage assets and Investment properties; short term debtors; short term creditors; income from business rates; employee benefits expenses; housing revenue account income; related party disclosures; and the balance of, and movements in, usable and unusable reserves for the year ended 31 March 2024.

In addition, we have been unable to obtain sufficient appropriate evidence over the disclosed comparative figures for the year ended 31 March 2023 by the publication date of the financial statements. Therefore, we were unable to determine whether any adjustments were necessary to the opening balances as at 1 April 2023 or whether there were any consequential effects on the Council's income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Any adjustments from the above matters would have a consequential effect on the Council's net assets and the split between usable reserves, including the Housing Revenue Account, and unusable reserves as at 31 March 2024 and 31 March 2023, the Collection Fund, and on its income and expenditure and cash flows for the years then ended.

Fraud and breaches of laws and regulations – ability to detect

As stated in the Disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we do not express an opinion on the financial statements due to the reasons described in the *Basis for disclaimer of opinion* section of our report.

Other information

The Assistant Director—Finance is responsible for the other information, which comprises the information included in the Statement of Accounts, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Any opinion on the financial statements would not cover the other information and we do not express an opinion or, except as explicitly stated below, any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether, based on our financial statements audit work, the information therein is materially misstated or inconsistent with the financial statements or our audit knowledge. Due to the significance of the matters described in the *Basis for disclaimer of opinion* section of our report, and the possible consequential effect on the related disclosures in the other information, whilst in our opinion the other information included in the Statement of Accounts for the financial year is consistent with the financial statements, we are unable to determine whether there are material misstatements in the other information.

Assistant Director—Finance's and Audit & Governance Committee's responsibilities

As explained more fully in the statement set out on page 16, the Assistant Director—Finance is responsible for the preparation of financial statements in accordance with CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24 and that give a true and fair view. They are also responsible for: such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; assessing the Council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern; and using the going concern basis of accounting unless they have been informed by the government of the intention to either cease the services provided by the Council or dissolve the Council without the transfer of its services to another public sector entity.

The Audit & Governance Committee of the Council is responsible for overseeing the Council's financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities

Our responsibility is to conduct an audit of the financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), and to issue an auditor's report. However, due to the significance of the matter described in the *Basis for disclaimer of opinion* section of our report, we were not able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on the financial statements. We have fulfilled our ethical responsibilities under, and are independent of the Council in accordance with, UK ethical requirements including the FRC Ethical Standard.

REPORT ON OTHER LEGAL AND REGULATORY MATTERS

Report on the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

Under the Code of Audit Practice published by the National Audit Office in November 2024 on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General (the "NAO Code of Audit Practice"), we are required to report to you if we identify any significant weaknesses in the arrangements that have been made by the Council to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Except for the matters detailed below, we have nothing else to report in this respect.

Identified significant weakness – Governance

The Council published its initial draft Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 on 2 October 2024, which was late compared to the statutory deadline of 31 May 2024.

These initial draft accounts presented for public scrutiny contained casting errors throughout and were substantially incomplete, leading to the Council publishing an updated draft on 26 February 2025 and re-advertising the inspection period. As a result, the Statement of Accounts were not published by the Backstop Date.

These matters are evidence of weaknesses in proper arrangements for reliable and timely financial reporting that supports the delivery of strategic priorities and ensures compliance with statutory deadlines.

We recommend that the Council develops, and then monitors, a detailed action plan outlining how they expect to return to a financial reporting timetable which ensures a good quality set of draft accounts are published in line with the statutory deadline. Where required, the Council should invest in additional resources within the finance team to ensure future compliance with statutory reporting deadlines.

Respective responsibilities in respect of our review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

The Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We are required under section 20(1) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to be satisfied that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively. We are also not required to satisfy ourselves that the Council has achieved value for money during the year.

We planned our work and undertook our review in accordance with the NAO Code of Audit Practice and related statutory guidance, having regard to whether the Council had proper arrangements in place to ensure financial sustainability, proper governance and to use information about costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary.

Statutory reporting matters

We are required by Schedule 2 to the NAO Code of Audit Practice to report to you if:

- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 and Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; or
- we make written recommendations to the Council under Section 24 and Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; or
- we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; or
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; or
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

We have nothing to report in this respect.

THE PURPOSE OF OUR AUDIT WORK AND TO WHOM WE OWE OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

This report is made solely to the members of the Council, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members of the Council, as a body, those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Council and the members of the Council, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

DELAY IN CERTIFICATION OF COMPLETION OF THE AUDIT

As at the date of this audit report, we have not yet completed our work in respect of the Council's Whole of Government Accounts consolidation pack for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Until we have completed this work, we are unable to certify that we have completed the audit of the financial statements of St Albans City & District Council for the year ended 31 March 2024 in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the NAO Code of Audit Practice.



Christopher Paisley
for and on behalf of KPMG LLP
Chartered Accountants
1 St Peter's Square
Manchester
M2 3AE
12 May 2025

Glossary of Terms

While the Council makes every effort to make the Statement of Accounts as simple as possible, it is necessary to comply with accounting regulations and standards and as such terms and phrases not in ordinary usage are necessary. This glossary explains some of the main accounting terms and phrases used in the Statement of Accounts.

Accounting Policies

The principles, bases, conventions, rules and practices the Council applies that specify how the effects of transactions and other events are to be reflected in the financial statements.

Accounting Period

The period of time covered by the statements/reports/accounts (*e.g. financial year*).

Accounts

Statements setting out records of income and expenditure.

Accrual

A sum included in the accounts to cover spending on goods or services received during the accounting period for which payment has not been made by the year end.

Actual Expenditure and Income

Costs incurred/income attributable to an accounting period, as opposed to budgeted expenditure and income.

Actuarial Gains and Losses

A pension fund actuary is a business professional who deals with the financial impact of risk and uncertainty relating to, for example, assumptions on mortality rates and future investment growths. The actuary calculates changes in gains and losses, which, for a defined benefit pension scheme, arise because:

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

Asset

Anything owned which can be given a monetary value, for example, building, land, vehicles, machinery, cash, investments etc. It is always considered in comparison with liabilities in an organisation's accounts.

Budget

The representation in financial terms of an organisation's policy for a specified period of time.

Business Rates

Sometimes referred to as National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) these are rates charged on properties other than domestic properties. The business rate 'multiplier' or 'poundage' is set annually by Central Government and is a flat rate throughout England.

Capital Expenditure

Expenditure on the acquisition of assets such as land, buildings and equipment which will benefit more than one accounting period and expenditure on refurbishment of existing assets that will increase the value of an extend the life of those assets.

CFR – Capital Financing Requirement

This was introduced in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003 and associated regulations. It measures the net capital indebtedness of a Council. It increases when capital expenditure is financed by borrowing (*whether internal or external*) and reduces by the amount of Minimum Revenue Provision applied. It is split into Housing and other (General Fund) elements.

Capital Receipts

Income derived from the disposal of capital assets. In accordance with legislation a proportion of the value of the disposal of housing assets must be paid into the Government's National Pool. The balance can be used for re-investment in capital programmes.

Cash Equivalent

Short-term, highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value. The Council has defined 'short term' as being under 3 months.

Central Services Charges (Support Services)

Charges made to reflect the support provided to service departments by the central departments. This includes financial, legal, estates, audit, purchasing, human resources, information technology, corporate policy and general administrative support. Also called Central Establishment Charges.

CIPFA

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy – the professional body for accountants in the public sector.

(The) Code

This is the code of practice on Local Authority accounting in the United Kingdom issued by the professional accounting body for the Public Sector – CIPFA. It sets out the rules on how to prepare the Statement of Accounts and the disclosure requirements.

Contingency

A sum set aside in the budget to provide for foreseen, but unquantifiable future commitments, or for unforeseen expenditure which may become necessary.

Collection Fund

A fund administered by charging authorities into which Council Tax income and Business Rates collected locally is paid. Precepts, demands and shares are paid from the fund and allowable costs charged. The balance on the fund is shared between the precepting bodies and taken into account in distribution in future years.

Collection Fund Adjustment Account

This account holds the difference between the income included in the Consolidated Income and Expenditure Account and the amount required by regulation to be credited to the General Fund.

Community Assets

Assets that a local Council intends to hold in perpetuity and for the benefit of the whole community that have no determinable useful life, and that may have restrictions on their disposal. Examples of community assets are parks, cemeteries and allotments. The value of the assets in the Balance Sheet is usually nil.

Council Tax

This is a local tax set by local Councils to help pay for local services.

Counterparty Lists and Limits

The Counterparty list of institutions that the Council will place excess funds with and limit is the monetary limit to be placed with either a specific institution or a class of institutions. The list and limits is based on criteria in the Treasury Management System approved at least annually by full Council.

Creditor

An amount owed by the Council for work done, goods received, or services rendered to the Council within the accounting period and for which payment has not been made at Balance Sheet Date.

Debtor

Sums of money due to the Council but not received at the Balance Sheet Date.

Depreciation

Depreciation is a measure of the wearing out, consumption or other reduction in the useful economic life of assets, whether from use, passage of time or obsolescence through technology and market changes.

Exceptional Items

Material items which derive from events or transactions that fall within the ordinary activities of the Council and which need to be disclosed separately by virtue of their size or incidence to give fair presentation of the accounts.

Expenditure

Amounts paid for goods and services received.

External Auditors

Auditors appointed to carry out independent examinations of the activities and accounts of local authorities.

Fees and Charges

Income arising from direct charges made to users of services (e.g. car parks, building control, markets, etc).

Final Accounts

Accounts prepared relating to an accounting period.

Financial Year (also referred to as Fiscal Year)

The annual period of accounting (1 April to 31 March for local authorities).

Financial Regulations

A written code approved by a Council to provide a framework within which its financial affairs are conducted.

FRS – Financing Reporting Standard

A statement of accounting practice issued by the Accounting Standards Board.

General Fund

An account showing the cost of carrying out the Council's functions/activities other than housing.

Going Concern

The concept that the authority will remain in operational existence for the foreseeable future, in particular that the income and expenditure accounts and Balance Sheet assume no intention to curtail significantly the scale of operations.

Government Grants

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

Gross (Expenditure/Income)

The term gross indicates that there has been no setting off income against expenditure or vice-versa. They are the total amounts received or spent.

Housing Benefits

A system of financial assistance to individuals towards certain housing costs, which is administered by Local Authorities. Assistance takes the form of rent rebates, rent allowances and council tax rebates towards which central government pays a subsidy.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

An account showing expenditure incurred and income received in connection with managing and maintaining the Council's housing stock.

IFRS – International Financial Reporting Standards

A combination of authoritative standards (set by policy boards and the accepted methods of accountancy). The idea behind IFRS is to ensure that financial accounting information is assembled and reported objectively to a certain standard, so ensuring that data is accurate and comparable between organisations.

Impairment

The diminution in value of an asset due to 'consumption of economic value' (e.g. physical damage or wearing out).

Income

Amounts due to the Council which have been, or are expected to be, received.

Infrastructure Assets

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

Inventories

Comprise the following categories

- Goods or other assets purchased for resale;
- Consumable stores;
- Raw materials and components purchased for incorporation into products for sale;
- Products and services in intermediate stages of completion;
- Long term contract balances; and
- Products for sale; finished goods

Investments

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

Liabilities

Amounts owed by the Council for goods or services received.

Liquid Resources

Liquid Resources are current asset investments held as cash or that are quickly and easily convertible into cash.

Local Authority Business Growth Initiative (LABGI)

The Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI) is a government grant designed to give local authorities an incentive to encourage local economic and business growth.

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

This is the amount prescribed by legislation, that local authorities have to set aside annually to repay their capital debt. There is no statutory requirement to provide for the repayment of HRA debt but the Council makes voluntary contributions equivalent to the debt repayment schedule.

Net (Expenditure/Income)

The term 'net' indicates that expenditure has been set off against or combined with income to give a combined result. If income is greater than expenditure then netting the two will give a net income.

Non-Current Assets

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

Operational Assets

Non-Current Assets held and occupied, used or consumed by the Council in the direct delivery of those services for which it has either a statutory or discretionary responsibility.

Outturn

Actual expenditure and income for the whole financial year.

Performance Plan

An annual report outlining the Council's performance against targets and performance indicators.

Post Balance Sheet Events

Those events, both favourable and unfavourable, which occur between Balance Sheet date and the date on which the Statement of Accounts is signed by the responsible officer.

Precepts

The levy made by one Council on another. Hertfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, who do not administer the council tax system, each levy an amount on the Council, which collects the required income from local taxpayers on their behalf.

Provisions

An amount set aside to provide for a liability that is likely to be incurred, but the exact amount and date on which it will arise is uncertain.

Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)

A government agency established to provide long-term loans to local authorities to finance part of their capital expenditure.

REFCUS – Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute

This is expenditure that does not fall within the Code's definition of Non-Current Assets, but is classified as expenditure for capital purposes with respect to the prudential framework. Examples are home improvement grants, and grants to housing associations to build or buy houses.

Related Party Transactions

The objective is to identify any transactions which may have taken place as a result of the control or influence exercised by one party over another. The concern is that such transactions may not be, or may not be perceived to be, in the best interest of the Council.

Rent Allowances

Subsidies payable by local authorities to tenants in private rented accommodation (either furnished or unfurnished) whose incomes fall below prescribed amounts.

Rent Rebates

Subsidies payable by local authorities to their own housing tenants whose incomes fall below prescribed amounts.

Reserve

A reserve can be established by contributions with a view to defraying expenditure in future years. Reserves may be established for specific purposes (*for example repairs and renewals*) or for general purposes.

Revenue Expenditure

Spending on day-to-day items including salaries and wages, premises costs and running costs (*e.g. supplies and services*).

Revenue Support Grant

Central Government Grant towards the cost of Local Council Services.

Specific Grant

A grant paid by central government or other bodies towards the cost of a specific service. The grant is only received if the money is spent on the services specified.

Total Cost

The total cost of a service or activity reflects all associated costs and exists in both gross and net terms.

Trading Account

A statement detailing expenditure and income for a discrete activity.

Variance

A difference between the amount budgeted for an item or service and the actual income or expenditure on that item or service.