

Public Document Pack



Audit and Governance Board

Wednesday, 23 November 2022 at 6.30
p.m.

Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

S. Young

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Rob Polhill (Chair)	Labour
Councillor Alan Lowe (Vice-Chair)	Labour
Councillor John Bradshaw	Conservative
Councillor Ellen Cargill	Labour
Councillor Emma Garner	Labour
Councillor Phil Harris	Labour
Councillor Eddie Jones	Labour
Councillor Tony McDermott	Labour
Councillor Louise Nolan	Labour
Councillor Ged Philbin	Labour
Councillor Pamela Wallace	Labour

*Please contact Gill Ferguson on 0151 511 8059 or e-mail gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Board is on Wednesday, 22 March 2023*

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

Item No.	Page No.
1. MINUTES	1 - 4
2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item.	
3. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER BIENNIAL UPDATE 2022/23	5 - 46
4. 2021/22 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT	47 - 81
5. 2021/22 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS, AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT AND LETTER OF REPRESENTATION	82 - 275
6. SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985	

PART II

In this case the Board has a discretion to exclude the press and public and, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, it is **RECOMMENDED** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, having been satisfied that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT	276 - 343
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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Audit and Governance Board held on Wednesday, 28 September 2022 at the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Polhill (Chair), A. Lowe (Vice-Chair), E. Cargill, Garner, Harris, Jones, McDermott, Nolan, Philbin and Wallace

Apologies for Absence: Councillor J. Bradshaw

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: E. Dawson, M. Murphy, A. Jones and K. Keane

Also in attendance: Stephen Nixon – Grant Thornton

**ITEMS DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

	<i>Action</i>
<p>AGB9 MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2022 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
<p>AGB10 2021-22 EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE</p> <p>The Board received a progress update regarding the audit of the Council's 2021/22 year-end accounts from Grant Thornton UK LLP.</p> <p>It was reported that the audit was close to completion and the Auditor's findings would be reported to the Board in November 2022 alongside the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts prior to their publication by 30 November 2022.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the verbal progress update by the Council's external auditor Grant Thornton UK LLP be received.</p>	Operational Director - Finance
<p>AGB11 PROCUREMENT UPDATE REPORT</p> <p>The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which provided an update on:</p>	

- procurement activity in 2021/22, with an outline of the key actions taken during the year – Members were referred to Appendix A, which presented a total of 116 contracts awarded with their values; and Appendix B which presented details of 78 contract extensions supported and their values;
- the progress achieved in delivering the Council's Procurement Strategy – Appendix C provided updates on progress against the planned actions and demonstrated strong progress against all four themes of the Strategy; and
- the Procurement Bill – this was currently at the Committee Stage in the House of Lords and some refinement of its key provisions were expected. The report outlined some of the key points within the document.

Further to Members questions the following was noted:

- Only contracts above £25,000 are required to be advertised and procured through the Chest;
- For contracts below £25,000 best value is sought by obtaining three quotes from different suppliers. Managers within service areas are usually best placed to understand the local market and which suppliers to approach for quotations. This also helped to make the procurement process more efficient for low value spend;
- The reason for the length of the recent Highways contract award was discussed; and
- Individual service areas of the Council were responsible for determining the specification requirements for the type and nature of products required.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

AGB12 ANTI-FRAUD & CORRUPTION UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which provided an annual update on developments in regard to the Council's anti-fraud and anti-corruption activity.

It was reported that the Board was responsible for the monitoring and reviewing the adequacy of the Council's anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements, which was a key

aspect of the Council's risk management, control and governance framework.

The Board considered information relating to the following activities:

- The fraud risk landscape;
- Reported fraud investigations from 2021/22;
- HR related investigations from 2021/22;
- Whistleblowing complaints received and action taken;
- An update on the National Fraud Initiative;
- Details of fraud investigation related information reported under the Transparency Code;
- Details of ongoing and planned anti-fraud work; and
- Details of the Council's suite of anti-fraud and anti-corruption related policies.

Appended to the report was the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's *Internal Audit Report – Grant Auditing Arrangements at Local Authorities*, for Halton Borough Council and the Council's Fraud Response Plan.

RESOLVED: That the annual update report be noted.

AGB13 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- 1) whether members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- 2) whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

AGB14 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Board received a report from the Divisional Manager – Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance, updating them on the internal audit activity since the last progress report to the Board on 6 July 2022. It also highlighted any matters that were relevant to the Board's responsibilities as the Council's Audit Committee.

Members were referred to appendix one, which listed all the planned work for the year and its current status. The schedule of audits had been updated to reflect the progress made in completing audits since the last update to the Board. By the end of August 2022, 291 days of audit work had been completed, which represented 28.4% of the total planned days for the year. Planned work continued to progress but it was noted that due to a temporary reduction in staff resources there would be some slippage.

Appended to the report were the executive summaries of the reports issued numbering 2 to 13, as listed in the report.

A further update on resources and coverage would be provided to the Board at its November meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit Progress Report and comments made be noted.

Operational
Director - Finance

Meeting ended at 7.10 p.m.

REPORT TO:	Audit Governance Board
DATE:	23 November 2022
REPORTING OFFICER:	Operational Director, Policy, Planning and Transportation
PORTFOLIO:	Leader
SUBJECT:	Corporate Risk Register biannual update 2022/23
WARD(S)	Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To report on the biannual update of the Corporate Risk Register for 2022/23.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1) the progress of actions is noted; and**
- 2) the Board reviews the robustness of the Corporate Risk Register and the adequacy of the associated risk management arrangements.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The report contains a progress commentary on the corporate risks for this year.
- 3.2 The Council recognises that it has a responsibility to manage both internal and external risks as a key component of good corporate governance.
- 3.3 Risk is defined as being the threat that an event or action will adversely affect an organisation's ability to achieve its objectives and to successfully execute its strategies. Risk Management is defined as the process by which risks are identified, evaluated and controlled.
- 3.4 At Directorate level arrangements are in place for the high-risk mitigation measures on the half yearly monitoring reports to be reviewed and updated at mid-year in line with Directorate Business Plans. Progress on these is reported to Management Team and Policy and Performance Boards.

- 3.5 Together with consultation with internal stakeholders, half yearly monitoring reports are central to any reviews and updates of the Corporate Risk Register. This ensures that the council maximises its opportunities whilst minimising and controlling the associated risks in delivering the council's vision and services for Halton.
- 3.6 The Risk Control Measures have been reviewed and updated in line with current changes within the Authority and as proposed by managers and internal stakeholders.
- 3.7 The risks have been grouped in order and the scores relate to 'Unmitigated Risk Scores' and then to 'Mitigated Risk Scores'. As a result once the mitigation measures have been implemented, it reduces the scores and highlights the remaining 'Residual Risk Scores'.
- 3.8 In particular the risks have been reprioritised so that people, i.e. the community and staff, take priority. The headings and scores are:
- i. Delivery of Services to Vulnerable Adults (25:16) (25:20)
 - ii. Safeguarding Children and Adults (25:16)
 - iii. Health & Wellbeing (20:16)
 - iv. Education (12:9)
 - v. Cyber Risk (25:20)
 - vi. Data Protection (25:15)
 - vii. Capacity and Resilience (20:16)
 - viii. Council Finances (25:20)
 - ix. Making Halton Community Safe (15:12)
 - x. Changes to Government Arrangements (25:15)
 - xi. Mersey Gateway (15:10)
 - xii. Community Expectations (20:16)
 - xiii. Partnerships (9:4)
 - xiv. Fraud (20:6) and
 - xv. Funding and Income Generation (16:12) and (20:16)

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 To provide a framework through which effectively manages the actual and potential opportunities and threats that may affect the achievement of the Council's strategic priorities and operational objectives.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Failure to review and monitor the performance of the Corporate Risk Management could result in service development opportunities being lost and existing service delivery being compromised.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Within the risk register there are a number of implications for Equality and Diversity issues, e.g. Council Finances and Capacity and Resilience.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

Corporate Risk Register

Lead Director: **Tim Gibbs**

Risk Management Coordinator: **Lynn P Ramsden**

Initial Register Implementation: **2011**

Register Review Date: **April 2022**

Progress update: **September 2022**

Table of Contents

1. Risk – Delivery of Services to Vulnerable Adults 4

2. Risk – Safeguarding Children and Adults 7

3. Risk – Health & Wellbeing..... 9

4. Risk – Education 11

5. Risk – Cyber Risk 13

6. Risk – Data Protection..... 14

7. Risk – Capacity and Resilience 17

8. Risk – Council Finances..... 19

9. Risk – Keeping Halton’s Community Safe..... 21

10. Risk – Changes to Governance Arrangements..... 23

11. Risk – Mersey Gateway..... 24

12. Risk – Community Expectations..... 26

13. Risk – Partnerships..... 28

14. Risk – Fraud.....30

15. Risk – Funding and Income Generation.....32

Appendix ‘A’ – Scoring Mechanism.....37

DELIVERY OF SERVICES TO VULNERABLE ADULTS

Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
1a	<p>Failure to deliver quality services to vulnerable adults could negatively affect their health and wellbeing i.e. increasing complex care needs, ageing population, reduction in available funding, recruitment and provider failure. Impact of COVID19 on service delivery</p> <p>Care Home Sector financial sustainability due to the impact of COVID 19 and cost of living</p>	5	5	25	A Healthy Halton / A Safer Halton

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively allocating and using available finances and resources in the delivery of services. Integration of Health and Social Care with a view to improving the outcomes for people using the services, such as joint commissioning arrangements for services, joint strategies, e.g. Carers Strategy and Autism Strategy, etc. Transformation of provider markets so that responsive and sustainable markets in adult social care can be developed and supported, e.g. Care Home Development project and Transforming Domiciliary Care. 	4	4	16	6 monthly	Strategic Director - People

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of prevention and early intervention to vulnerable adults through a range of services. • Effective use of alternative funding streams and community assets to provide services. • Joint approach with Health to ensure efficient quality assurance across all adult social care services. <p><u>COVID-19</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued focus and support to Care Homes • Support the flu and COVID booster programmes • Ensure any emergency fundng is allocated immediately • Continued focus on resilience 					
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Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
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Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
1b	Adult Social Care Charging Reforms, as announced September 2021 likely to cause a shortfall in funding to meet the full cost of care. This in turn may trigger a judicial review if Local Authority do not fully fund	5	5	25	A Healthy Halton / A Safer Halton

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADASS regional groups to review risks and approaches and address areas of concern. Local task and finish group to fully understand risks and make recommendations to Local Authority. 	5	4	20	6 monthly	Strategic Director - People

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
2	Failure to support and protect the safeguarding of children and adults could adversely impact on their health, safety and opportunity to reach their potential	5	5	25	A Healthy Halton / Employment, Learning and Skills / Children and Young People / A Safer Halton

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Halton's Children's and Young People Safeguarding Partnership Board fully operational with appropriate resources and are operating within statutory guidance and towards identified priorities. Representatives from the Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Boards to work in partnership through attending corresponding boards. Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Board's to work with strategic groups within the Borough to ensure accountability and effectiveness of safeguarding. Services regularly audit Children's and Adult's cases for quality and consistency of practices. Comprehensive suite of performance reports for Children's and Adults are reviewed at least monthly and compared with regional and national benchmarks. 	4	4	16	6 monthly	Strategic Director - People
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reports for Children’s and Adults are taken to the Board and Members for their attention. • Improving the health and wellbeing of children and adults through early intervention and treatment services delivered in house and externally via a range of providers and partners. • Providing efficient safeguards to support vulnerable adults who lack capacity and require the support of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and the Court of Protection. • Support local care home providers to drive up the quality of care within their homes to ensure positive outcomes for vulnerable adults. <p><u>COVID-19</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visits to care homes now available for residents and visiting professionals as per Government guidelines. 2. Training sessions, Strategy and MDT Meetings returned to face to face meetings. 3. Enhanced Care Home Model returned to face to face meetings. 4. Advocacy progressing towards face to face meetings. 5. NW ADASS group continues to communicate to share learning, ideas and approaches to manage Safeguarding, DoLS and MCA related issues. <p>Mandatory vaccination programme being implemented.</p>					
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HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Item	Identified risk	Impact ⁱ (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
3	<p>Reduced capacity to sustain delivery of services that prevent harm, protect health and promote positive physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing across the population of Halton</p> <p>Failure to engage with appropriate partners and agencies to respond with adequate safeguards and mitigate against current and potential harms to health and wellbeing.</p>	5	4	20	A Healthy Halton / Environment and Regeneration / A Safer Halton / Children and Young People

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that the council adequately fulfils its requirement to protect and promote health within the population, including the appropriate delivery of mandated public health services. Development and implementation of local, regional; and national pandemic response plans, to cover influenza and other mass population outbreak scenarios; including involvement in PHE and local LRF coordination and response structures. 	4	4	16	6 monthly	Director of Public Health

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Wellbeing Strategy to be refreshed; additional public health strategies produced eg healthy weights, tobacco control etc. Public Health Annual Report completed annually. Account taken of local need and national policy • Appropriate health and wellbeing services commissioned e.g. tobacco control, screening, vaccinations and immunisations, sexual health services, obesity programmes • Public Health, health intelligence, Public Protection and Health Improvement Teams in place • Collaborative working with wider partners across NHS, LA's, Voluntary and community sector • Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in place and regularly updated; though some delays due to COVID-19 • Access to Primary care, hospital and immunisation data • Contribution to and development of multi-agency joint response plans; development of local contingency plans (heatwave, floods, etc) and environmental health plans • Key Public Health staff linked with the systems response to COVID-19 as well as shared HPB with Warrington PH team. Responses are also in line with Government response. Vaccination and Testing on going. Potential for enhanced support if designated an enhanced response area (ERA) 					
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EDUCATION

Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
4	<p>Risk of not providing a broad and balanced curriculum and a full educational offer to all children and young people due to absence</p> <p>Risk of negatively impacting vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils disproportionately on their educational outcomes and wider lifelong opportunities</p> <p>Risk of school closure due to failure in energy supply to school</p>	4	3	12 (16)	Children and Young People

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools are back to fulltime operation, and due to vaccination, reduced infection rates and changes in requirements, absences are closer to typical levels All schools continue to have access to a range of resources which includes Oak Academy, National Tutoring and other online resources if needed for any child unwell, but full school provision available full time. Schools and educational provision identify gaps in learning; design a recovery curriculum appropriate to individual needs and hold high expectations and support for children and young people. 	3	3	9 (12)	6 monthly	Strategic Director - People

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools and educational provisions to closely monitor the impact of catch up and intervention programmes on children and young peoples educational outcomes. • Support for children and young peoples health and wellbeing e.g. access to Cahms; educational psychology service; specialist teachers; school based mental health first aider etc. • All schools and educational provisions to have a trained mental health first aider; a trained SENDCO; pastoral lead and knowledge to signpost youth support services as required. • All schools and educational provisions work in close partnership with pupils, parents and carers and communicate regularly and sensitively. <p>COVID-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff and parents/pupils are requested to continue to follow Public Health England, and Central Government advice and guidance • Schools have been asked to review and revise their risk assessments. • LA officers and Public Health colleagues continue to regularly update all educational establishments on advice, support, guidance and legislation. • Ensure children and young people have access to IT equipment/resources and opportunity to engage in remote/home/ learning where this is required (now a reduced requirement due to full reopening of schools, early years settings, and the college). • Provision of PPE from DfE for schools with emergency provision of PPE from Local Authority for schools with ongoing support as necessary. 				
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CYBER RISK

Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
5	Risk of adverse business Impact as a result of the failure of key business systems brought about by cyber incidents.	5	5	25	All

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council adopts a range of activities to manage the risk of loss of services as a result of Cyber threats, which includes risk reduction (mitigation), Risk retention (acceptance), Risk avoidance, Risk transfer. A dedicated service within ICT Services that has the responsibility of managing the cyber risk facing the Council. Clear reporting lines to senior management allowing the risk to be managed. Numerous Compliance regimes that provide the necessary assurance frameworks to demonstrate how the Council complies with industry standards. Ongoing education and awareness programme for key staff. Ongoing adoption and implementation of advice and guidance from NCSC. Continuous improvement - ongoing upskilling of security and Information Governance teams to expand their capabilities against the prevailing cyber climate through training and certification. Migration to office 365 will significantly enhance security posture. 	5	4	20	6 monthly	All Strategic Directors

DATA PROTECTION

Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
6	<p>Data Protection: Risk of breach of data caused by mishandling of personal data by inadequate data handling and not adequately preventing and minimising security incidents, including ICT incidents, resulting in loss of data, unlawful sharing of data, reputational damage and significant financial penalties levied by the Information Commissioner’s Office</p> <p>Failure to comply with information governance requirements, eg Data Protection Act (General Data Protection Regulation); Freedom of Information Act</p>	5	5	25	All

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and procedures for council staff including Data Protection • Policy and Information Governance Handbook. • Wide range of guidance about handling personal data available to council staff on the internal intranet site. • Mandatory training for council staff via E-Learning module • Reporting to senior Management Team Reviews and internal audits. 	5	3	15	6 monthly	All Strategic Directors

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy Impact Assessments for new technologies or where processing is likely to result in a high risk to individuals • Contractor’s compliance • Management controls, including effective logging and tracking, complaints and appeals procedures • Effective use of technology • The model publication scheme approved by the Information Commissioner adopted • Improvement plan developed and being implemented 					
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CAPACITY AND RESILIENCE

Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
7a	Reduced capacity to sustain the delivery of services and respond to emergency situations in line with Council Priorities.	5	4	20	Corporate Effectiveness and Efficiency

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining a supportive working environment through shared service organisational ethos, pride and value across Members, staff, management, Unions and partners Focusing delivery of performance on the council's corporate vision and key strategic priorities leading to a clearly understood and shared set of priorities Emphasis on management and leadership standards with recognition of the challenges faced by the Authority leading to managers who are able to direct, inform, develop and support staff. This also enables a focus on succession planning Maintaining a workforce that are skilled, informed, flexible and competent in order to ensure that they deliver efficient and effective services Manage any emerging COVID-19 implications as they arise, amending working practices temporarily as required 	4	4	16	6 monthly	All Strategic Directors

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise learning from the management of working practices during the pandemic to inform future ways of working and optimise resources. This will be done in a controlled way, incorporating an office accommodation review, through implementation of a 'Future Work Programme', sponsored by Management Team and delivered in a structured way using programme management principles. 					
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Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
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Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
7b	Reduced capacity to continue service provision across various services due to recruitment and / or retention difficulties.	5	4	20	Corporate Effectiveness and Efficiency

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a medium-term strategic approach to resourcing in order to address the issue of an ageing workforce. Development of a short-term strategic approach to resourcing in order to address emerging labour market difficulties, recruitment to hard-to-recruit professional roles, and recruitment to a growing number of vacant posts. Design and implementation of career pathways to attract younger potential employees to the workforce. Collaborative working with LCR CA and LA's to implement broader projects and initiatives to attract potential employees to the sub-regional Local Government Sector. Development of broader projects and initiatives to retain employees within the Council (e.g flexible working). Renewal and use of the corporate contract that is in place to obtain and manage temporary resources (Matrix SCM). Use of controlled 'off-contract' arrangements, via procurement, where the corporate contract cannot meet a requirement. 	4	4	16	6 monthly	All Strategic Directors

COUNCIL FINANCES

Item	Identified risk	Impact ⁱⁱ (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
8	The Council's funding available from Government grant and/or locally raised business rates/council tax, is not sufficient to meet increasing service demands and associated costs, which may lead to an inability to deliver the Council's key service priorities, especially those services essential for the support of the most vulnerable members of the community.	5	5	25	Corporate Effectiveness and Efficiency

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Planning is undertaken to compare available financial resources with spending requirements over the medium term (3 years), resulting in preparation of the Medium Term Financial Strategy which allows overall budget gaps to be identified at an early stage and appropriate plans put in place to tackle them Proposed developments regarding the future funding of Local Government nationally are monitored, to assess the potential impact for the Council and take account of this within the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Government announced the outcome of their Spending Review on 27th October 2021 covering a three year period. However, they also 	5	4	20	6 monthly	Strategic Director - Enterprise Community & Resources

<p>announced that a fundamental review of the Local Government finance regime would be undertaken over the coming year. This creates significant uncertainty in terms of the Council’s medium term financial planning. The Council will monitor the proposed reviews and contribute to any associated consultations, along with those of the LCR and Sigoma, in order to provide the best possible outcome for Halton.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government have announced changes regarding the funding of Health and Social Care, the implications of which are being assessed and incorporated into the Medium Term Financial Strategy. • The Government announced only a one year grant settlement for 2022/23, in light of the proposed review of the Local Government funding regime. This provides further uncertainty in terms of medium term financial planning. • Following the grant settlement, Council on 2nd March 2022 set a balanced revenue budget for 2022/23 by utilising a significant amount of one-off reserves. However, this was agreed only on the basis that over the coming year sufficient permanent savings must be identified and approved, to balance the budgets for the following three years. This creates a significant risk to the Council, therefore, a robust process is underway to ensure sufficient savings are identified across all services. • Effective business planning to ensure that appropriate resources are directed towards the Councils key strategic priorities. • Budget setting is aligned to the annual business planning cycle in order to ensure that the value of financial resources are maximised. • A budget risk register is maintained which works in conjunction with the budget setting cycle to ensure that emerging budget risks are identified together with relevant mitigating measures. 					
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KEEPING HALTON COMMUNITY SAFE

Item	Identified risk	Impact ⁱⁱⁱ (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
9	A failure to monitor and appropriately manage the risks created by global, national and local events, and how these might impact on local community tensions, could potentially lead to a threat to security and have an adverse effect on the stability of Halton’s communities.	5	3	15	A Healthy Halton / Environment and Regeneration / A Safer Halton

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Safer Halton Partnership (SHP) involves joint working, clear communications and information sharing across various partner agencies, including emergency services. The partnership works to ensure that there is community cohesion with safe and secure neighbourhood environments Multi agency Community Safety team that addresses anti-social behaviour and crime thus supporting the SHP agenda The Channel Panel is a multi-agency group which provides support for those who are vulnerable to be drawn into terrorism through a programme of early intervention and diversion 	4	3	12	6 monthly	Chief Executive
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Planning team have developed and tested Multi-Agency Response plans to mitigate a number of risks within the borough. • In response to ‘Major Accident’ cloudburst incidents occurring at Upper Tier COMAH sites; Emergency Planning Team have tested and validated Emergency COMAH Plans for all 9 sites. • Emergency Planning Team work in partnership with the Cheshire Resilience Forum to provide an integrated approach for facilitating and responding with emergencies across Cheshire. • Emergency Planning Team work with cross border organisations and responding agencies within the Liverpool City Region regarding cross border risks and resilience planning. • Critical Incident Management procedures, including ‘lockdown’, have been developed, communicated and tested for Council buildings and schools. • Security surveys conducted for main council buildings and schools. 					
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CHANGES TO GOVERNMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
10	Changes to Government arrangements and other public sector organisations could potentially lead to a deterioration of local services	5	5	25	A Healthy Halton / Employment, learning and skills / Children and Young People / A Safer Halton / Corporate effectiveness and business efficiency

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that both Members and officers from the Council plays an active role in the Combined Authority for the Liverpool City Region Through 'One Halton' work the Authority is ensuring a smooth interaction between Health and Halton Council colleagues, to ensure that Halton's interests are recognised and looked after in any new governance arrangements 	5	3	15	6 monthly	Chief Executive

MERSEY GATEWAY

Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
11	Lack of effective management of and adherence to governance arrangements / contractual requirements or disrupted journeys could lead to increased project costs. In addition these could also lead to adverse publicity and reputational risks to the Council	5	3	15	Environment and Regeneration / Employment, Learning and Skills

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<u>Demand Management Participation Agreement (DMPA)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Base line is realistic and achievable Agreed contract is designed to incentivise an increase in volumes of traffic Mersey Gateway Crossings Board has a role in managing the DMPA Effective publicity around speed and reliability of bridge 	5	2	10	6 monthly	Strategic Director - Enterprise Community & Resources
<u>Tolling Risk</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to mitigate the risk of the project not delivering sufficient toll revenue each year to meet project costs, a liquidity reserve of £19m 					

<p>has been established jointly by the Department for Transport and Halton Borough Council (through borrowing funded from future toll revenues). If necessary the reserve will be topped-up periodically by undertaking further borrowing.</p> <p><u>COVID 19</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact of COVID 19 on traffic using the Mersey Gateway Bridge has been reviewed and incorporated into short term plans, will be constantly reviewed and the position is currently sustainable <p><u>Conclusion of Construction Phase to Subsequent Operating Phase</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated company (Mersey Gateway Crossings Board Ltd) now established, with suitably experienced staff and directors, both Executive and Non-executive, and supported by class leading professional advisers. The relationship between Council and MGCB is detailed within a Governance Agreement Routine project assurance monitored through external bodies including specialist non-executive directors and advisers on the Board of Directors of MGCB, external Gateway Reviews (4Ps) Department for Transport and HM Treasury scrutiny at specific project milestones Delivery within the Funding Framework agreed with Government that is reviewed at regular intervals and managed through the Mersey Gateway Crossings Board’s Risk Register, which is reviewed regularly by both the Audit Committee and the Board of Directors Maintenance of effective relationships with Government Departments (as co funders for MG) maintained by both Department for Transport and HM Treasury being represented on the Board of Directors of MGCB 					
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COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
12	Failure to effectively realise community expectations could lead to damage to the Authorities reputation and credibility resulting in negative views towards the transparency of the decision making process	5	4	20	Corporate Efficiency Effectiveness and

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation and community engagement embedded in the Council's constitution (local code of corporate governance) • Utilising recognised mediums to identify, communicate and coordinate community expectations and priorities. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys; Customer analysis; On line services; Local and social media; Target consultation exercises for specific projects; Service user groups; 	4	4	16	6 monthly	All Strategic Directors

<p>Elected member surgeries; and Other meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting Equality Impact Assessments with new and revised Policies • Honesty and integrity by the Authority in communicating with the public having regard to reducing budgets including promoting a self-help agenda • Any decisions to cease or amend service provision that has a significant impact on communities; early warning of intended actions through direct engagement with relevant communities to invite views • Continue to respond to new challenges to maintain current performance 					
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PARTNERSHIPS

Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
13	Ineffective and poorly governed partnerships, wherever they sit within the council, with statutory and non-statutory organisations will lead to a lack of accountability and ineffective use of resources resulting in a failure to meet the needs of and improve outcomes for local communities.	3	3	9	A Healthy Halton / Employment Learning and Skills / Children and Young People / A Safer Halton / Environment and Regeneration

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having efficient and effective arrangements with external partners through a shared strategic vision and action plans enables and influences partners to deliver at local levels • Maintaining financial probity with the pooled budgets, as appropriate, with partners through effective governance arrangements • Engagement with communities and partners on service priorities in order to identify and design alternative forms of delivery, as appropriate, maximising opportunities for joint working • Collaborating with partners to identify and address community issues • COVID-19, Stakeholders and Partners have a responsibility to have effective and well developed relationships which will enable a swift and effect 	2	2	4	6 monthly	Chief Executive

responsive for Halton residents. These responsibilities are detailed in the council's emergency plans and local outbreak plans.

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FRAUD

Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
14	Failure to prevent and detect fraud and/or corruption may lead to significant financial loss and reputational damage	4	5 (3)	20 (12)	Corporate Effectiveness and Efficiency

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Time scale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<p>The Audit and Governance Board monitors and reviews the adequacy of the Council’s anti-fraud and corruption policies and arrangements. These arrangements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of an effective system of internal control • Rigorous pre-employment checks of new employees • Officers’ Code of Conduct • Members’ Code of Conduct • Gifts and Hospitality Policy • Registration of Interests • Local Code of Corporate Governance • Whistleblowing arrangements 	2	3	6	6 monthly	Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community & Resources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance Standing Orders(3) • Procurement Standing Orders • Anti-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption Strategy • Fraud Response Plan • Fraud Sanction and Prosecution Policy • Anti-Facilitation of Tax Evasion Policy • Fraud and bribery awareness training • A continuous internal audit of the Council’s systems and services • A corporate fraud investigation team, which receives fraud referrals, investigates allegations, recovers losses and sanctions fraudsters • Crime insurance policy to indemnify the Council against significant financial loss resulting from fraud • Participation in the National Fraud Initiative • Fraud awareness campaigns encouraging members of the public and employees to raise any concerns about fraud and corruption • Collaboration with other local authorities and sharing of best practice in regard to tackling fraud and corruption • Formal arrangements with the DWP to participate in joint criminal fraud investigations relating to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) and social security benefit fraud • Membership of the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN), which is the largest shared service in the country and provides data, intelligence and best practice in support of fraud and investigation work 					
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FUNDING AND INCOME GENERATION

Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
15a	Failure to maximise and identify funding opportunities in light of government cuts resulting in a potential challenge of the Councils capacity to delivery its priorities	4	4	16	A Healthy Halton / Employment, Learning and Skills / Children and Young People / A Safer Halton

Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to identify funding streams and income generating options through horizon scanning, alternative untapped funding opportunities and shared partnerships with 3rd sector, private sector, and other public sector bodies Review team structures and redeploy staff to respond to emerging funding streams e.g. housing, climate change and town centre funding. During the budget setting process Directorates identify and prioritise funding requirements biannually including ensuring that there are systems to capture and report when funding comes to an end Corporate External Funding Team reports to Executive Board and Management Team to highlight services the Team can offer and meets with Departments to 	3	4	12	6 monthly	All Strategic Directors

<p>identify funding requirements; regularly signposts Council services to specific funding streams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercially focussed through establishing trading and income generation possibilities in order to protect and effectively use funds; pilot Charging Policy for bid-writing introduced September 2018 and has been made permanent. • Continue to work with colleagues to improve the methods of dissemination and ensure prioritisation of/submission to relevant funding streams 					
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FUNDING AND INCOME GENERATION

Item	Identified risk	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Unmitigated Risk Score (I x L)	Council Priority Area(s)
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15b	Uncertainty surrounding transition arrangements in respect of European Funding Lack of certainty regarding the length of European Programmes and Successor Funding through the 'Transformation and Prosperity Fund'	4	5	20	A Healthy Halton / Employment, Learning and Skills / Children and Young People / A Safer Halton
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Risk control measures	Residual score with measures implemented			Timescale / Review frequency	Lead Officer/s
	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Mitigated Risk Score (I x L)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shared Prosperity Fund will be launched in 2022, the current draft criteria appear to disadvantage Halton. 	4	4	16	6 monthly	All Strategic Directors

Version Control Record

Version	Date Created	Date of Amendment:	Nature of Amendment	Date of Next Review:
1.0	13.10.11			
1.1		28.08.12	Progress Commentary	
2.0		13.03.13	Reviewed and updated	13.10.13
2.1		20.09.13	Progress Commentary	
3.0		31.03.14	Reviewed and updated in line with the Corporate Peer Challenge and the revised Business Planning Process and associated guidance notes	13.10.14
3.1		15.09.14	Progress Commentary	
4.0		10.04.15	Reviewed and updated	12.10.15
4.1		10.09.15	Progress Commentary	
5.0		01.04.16	Reviewed and updated	01.04.17
5.1		10.09.16	Progress Commentary	
6.0		01.04.17	Reviewed and updated	01.09.17

6.1		10.09.17	Progress Commentary	
7.0		01.04.18	Reviewed and updated	01.09.18
7.1		01.09.18	Progress Commentary	
8.0		01.04.19	Reviewed and updated	01.09.19
8.1		01.09.19	Progress Commentary	
9.0		01.05.20	Reviewed and updated	01.05.20
9.1		01.09.20	Progress Commentary	
10.0		01.04.21	Reviewed and updated	01.09.21
10.1		01.09.21	Progress Commentary	
11.0		01.04.22	Reviewed and updated	01.09.22
11.1		01.09.22	Progress Commentary	

Scoring Mechanism

Once the business risks are identified and analysed they are scored by multiplying the impact and likelihood. They will then establish a final score (or significance rating) for that risk:



I
M
P
A
C
T

HI	5	10	15	20	25
S	4	8	12	16	20
M	3	6	9	12	15
L	2	4	6	8	10
IM	1	2	3	4	5
	H IMPROB	IMPROB	POSS	PROB	H PROB

LIKELIHOOD

Those that have been placed in the red boxes are the primary or **Top Risks** followed by lower risks leading to **improbable** risks.

Measures to control the risks are identified from the following options;

1. Reducing the likelihood; or
2. Reducing the impact; or
3. Changing the consequences of the risks by,
 - Avoidance
 - Reduction
 - Retention
 - Transference; or
4. Devising Contingencies, i.e. Business Continuity Planning

The risks are scored again to establish the effects the measures have once implemented on reducing the risks and identify a score rating for residual risks.

Lynn Pennington- Ramsden
Principal H & S Adviser and Risk Management Co-Ordinator
1st September 2022

REPORT TO:	Audit and Governance Board
DATE:	23 November 2022
REPORTING OFFICER:	Operational Director - Finance
SUBJECT:	Annual Governance Statement - 2021/22
PORTFOLIO:	Leader
WARD(S):	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report presents the final 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) to accompany the 2021/22 statement of accounts. The preparation and publication of an AGS is necessary to meet the statutory requirement set out in regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

The format of the statement follows the 2016 best practice guidance issued by CIPFA / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board is asked to consider and approve the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement subject to any changes or additions that members feel appropriate.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework, published by CIPFA / SOLACE, sets the standard for local authority governance in the UK. The Council's AGS for 2021/22 has been developed with reference to this guidance and is attached as an appendix to this report.
- 3.2 The AGS provides an overview of the governance framework that was in place during 2021/22 and up to the date the financial statements are signed off by the Council's external auditor.
- 3.3 The draft 2021/22 AGS was originally published in July 2022. It has however been updated to reflect developments in the Council's governance arrangements since that date. As in previous years, the AGS includes an action plan to ensure that the Council continues to maintain and improve its existing governance arrangements.
- 3.4 The action plan from the 2020/21 AGS has also been reviewed and updated to reflect current progress. Any actions still in progress from the 2020/21 AGS have been incorporated into the 2021/22 action plan.
- 3.5 The 2021/22 AGS describes how the Council continues to maintain a robust governance framework and also continually reviews and develops its arrangements to demonstrate good corporate governance. The document also

explains how the Council's governance arrangements are underpinned by its risk management arrangements and its systems of internal control, which are of paramount importance in the very challenging financial environment within which the Council operates.

- 3.6 Assurance for the AGS is taken from a number of sources, which include:
- Leader of the Council and Chief Executive – who sign the AGS to acknowledge their responsibilities
 - Senior management
 - S151 Officer (Operational Director – Finance)
 - Monitoring Officer (Operational Director – Legal and Democratic Services)
 - Members – Scrutiny arrangements, Audit and Governance Board, other Regulatory Committees / Boards
 - Performance management framework
 - Risk management framework
 - The work of Internal Audit
 - The work of External Audit
 - Other external inspection agencies
- 3.7 The Council's Constitution delegates the responsibility to review and approve the AGS to the Audit and Governance Board. As such, the final version of the AGS will take into account any feedback from the Board.
- 3.8 Once approved by the Audit and Governance Board, the AGS will be signed by the Council Leader and Chief Executive who are responsible for ensuring that any significant actions identified to enhance the Council's governance arrangements are addressed.
- 3.9 The final signed version of the AGS will be published on the Council's website.

4.0 POLICY, FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Council is required to conduct an annual review of its system of internal control and publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) with the annual statement of accounts. The process is a key mechanism for ensuring that the Council has an effective system of internal control and governance, and that any areas for development are identified and addressed.
- 4.2 The powers and duties of the Audit and Governance Board include responsibility for considering the Council's corporate governance arrangements and agreeing necessary actions to ensure compliance with best practice. The AGS provides a commitment to address the governance challenges identified by the Council.
- 4.3 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

5.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Good governance leads to good management, good performance and good stewardship of public money. It therefore enables the Council to implement its vision in accordance with its values and to engage effectively with its citizens and service users and ensure good outcomes for them.

5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

See 5.1 above

5.3 A Healthy Halton

See 5.1 above

5.4 A Safer Halton

See 5.1 above

5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

See 5.1 above

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 The AGS provides assurance that the Council has a sound system of risk management, control and governance. The document provides a public statement of how the Council directs and controls its functions and relates to its community.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 The Council has to have regard to the elimination of unlawful discrimination and harassment and the promotion of equality under the Equalities Act 2010 and related statutes. Proper governance arrangements will ensure that equality and diversity issues are appropriately addressed.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact
CIPFA / SOLACE – Delivering good governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)	Halton Stadium, Widnes	Merv Murphy
CIPFA / SOLACE - Delivering good governance in Local Government: Guidance note for English authorities (2016)		

2021/22

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT



What is Governance?

Governance is about how we ensure that we are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. Good governance leads to:

- Effective leadership
- Good management
- Good performance
- Good stewardship of public money
- Good public engagement, and
- Good outcomes for our citizens and service users.

The governance framework comprises the culture, values, systems and processes by which an organisation is directed and controlled. The framework brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, good practice principles and management processes.

Halton Borough Council acknowledges its responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of governance. The Council has developed a Local Code of Corporate Governance that defines the principles that underpin the governance of the organisation. The Local Code forms part of the Council Constitution and can be accessed on the Council's website.

The Council's governance framework aims to ensure that in conducting its business it:

- Operates in a lawful, open, inclusive and honest manner;
- Makes sure that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively;
- Has effective arrangements for the management of risk;
- Secures continuous improvements in the way that it operates.

The system of internal control is a significant part of the Council's governance framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The Council's system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks occurring and the impact should they happen, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

What is the Annual Governance Statement?

The Council is required by the Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations 2015 to prepare and publish an annual governance statement. This is a public document that reports on the extent to which the Council complies with its own code of governance and explains how the Council has reviewed the effectiveness of its systems of internal control.

In this document the Council:

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

The annual governance statement reports on the governance framework that has been in place at Halton Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2022 and up to the date of approval of the statement of accounts.

How has the Annual Governance Statement been prepared?

The initial review of the Council's governance framework was carried out by a core group of officers supported by other officers across the Council. The core group comprised:

- [The Operational Director – Legal and Democratic Services](#)

This post is designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer under section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, as amended by paragraph 24 of schedule 5 Local Government Act 2000.

The Monitoring Officer is responsible for ensuring that that the Council acts and operates within the law.

- [The Operational Director – Finance](#)

This post is designated as the s151 Officer appointed under the 1972 Local Government Act.

The Operational Director – Finance is the Council's Chief Financial Officer and carries overall responsibility for the financial administration of the Council.

- [The Divisional Manager – Audit, Procurement & Operational Finance](#)

This post is responsible for the Council's internal audit arrangements, including the development of the internal audit strategy and annual plan and providing an annual audit opinion on the Council's governance, risk management and control processes.

In preparing the annual governance statement the Council has:

- Reviewed the Council's existing governance arrangements against its Local Code of Corporate Governance;
- Considered any areas where the Local Code of Corporate Governance needs to be updated to reflect changes in the Council's governance arrangements and best practice guidance;
- Taken account of various sources of assurance over the operation of the Council's governance framework;
- Assessed the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements and highlighted any planned changes in the coming period;
- Considered the impact of COVID-19 in terms of changes made to the Council's governance arrangements.

Management Team, which is chaired by the Chief Executive, has also reviewed the annual governance statement and considered the significant governance issues facing the Council.

The Audit and Governance Board provides assurance to the Council on the effectiveness of its governance arrangements, risk management framework and internal control environment. As part of this role the Board reviews and approves the annual governance statement.

What are the key elements of the Council's Governance Framework?

The Council aims to achieve good standards of governance by adhering to the following key principles set out in the best practice guidance 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016':

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law;
- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement;
- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits;
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes;
- Developing the Council's capacity, including capability of its leadership and the individuals within it;
- Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management;
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

The following pages provide a summary of key elements of the Council's governance framework and how they relate to these principles.

KEY PRINCIPLE:

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

SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES:

- Behaving with integrity
- Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values
- Respecting the rule of law

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

- The Council has a Constitution that sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these are efficient, proportionate, transparent and accountable. The Constitution was reviewed and updated in May 2021.
- The powers and duties of the Council's former Standards Committee were transferred to the Audit and Governance Board in May 2021. One of the roles of the Board is to promote high standards of member conduct and members of the Board were kept updated during the year of standards issues that had arisen.
- The Audit and Governance Board considered a new Model Code of Conduct for elected members at its meeting in July 2021 and recommended its adoption to Council, which was done later the same month. The Code is based on the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Councillor Code of Conduct. It sets out general obligations about the standards of conduct expected of members and co-opted members of the authority, together with provisions about registering and declaring interests. A revised version of the Code was subsequently presented to the Audit and Governance Board in March 2022. The Board recommended its adoption to Council, which was subsequently done in May 2022. The 2021 changes to the Code of Conduct were quite extensive and therefore training was provided for all Members on 15 September 2021 facilitated by an external consultant with expertise in this area. The 2022 changes to the Code of Conduct were relatively minor.
- A complaints process exists for members of the public to raise concerns about standards exhibited by members which can be accessed through the Council's website.
- Officer behaviour is governed by the Employees' Code of Conduct. All new employees attending the corporate induction process during 2021/22 were made aware of the Code. There is an established disciplinary procedure which is invoked when an employee deliberately breaches rules and/or commits acts of misconduct, which are considered sufficiently serious as to warrant formal investigation.

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

- The Council takes fraud, corruption and maladministration seriously and has established a suite of policies and processes which aim to prevent or deal with such occurrences. On 7 July 2021 the Audit and Governance Board received an annual report summarising the operation of the Council's counter fraud and corruption arrangements
- The Council publishes an annual Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement that sets out the Council's actions to understand the potential modern slavery risks related to its business. It also explains the steps the Council has taken to ensure that no slavery or human trafficking takes place in its own business or through its supply chains.
- A corporate complaints procedure operated throughout the year to receive and respond to any complaints received. An annual report summarising the complaints received, trends and outcomes is presented each year to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board. The latest report, which covered 2020/21, was presented at the Board's meeting on 2 November 2021.
- Arrangements exist to ensure that members and officers are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders. These include:
 - Registers of disclosable pecuniary interests were maintained
 - Registers of gifts and hospitality were maintained
 - Opportunities to declare disclosable pecuniary interests and disclosable other interests were provided at the start of meetings.
- The Operational Director – Legal and Democratic Services provided legal advice to the Council throughout the year as the Council's Monitoring Officer. One of the key functions of that role is to ensure the lawfulness and fairness of decision-making.

KEY PRINCIPLE:

Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES:

- Openness
- Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders
- Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

- Information on the Council's performance, finances and the democratic running of the Council is routinely published on the Council's website. The Council also fully complies with the reporting requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.
- The Council's Constitution is published on the Council's website. It explains the Council's decision-making processes and delegated authorities. All key decisions taken by the Council are also publically available on the Council's website.
- The Council engages with key partners and institutional stakeholders in various ways. Formal partnerships include the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Safer Halton Partnership, the Halton Children's Trust and the Halton Learning Alliance. An executive director from the Halton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is also a member of the Council's Management Team.
- The Council is part of the Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership (C&MHCP), which is working towards formal designation as an Integrated Care System (ICS). An ICS is a partnership that brings together providers and commissioners of NHS services across a geographical area with local authorities and other local partners to collectively plan health and care services to meet the needs of their population. During 2021/22 the Council has worked jointly with NHS colleagues to establish the Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System and at the local level to establish the One Halton Place Based Partnership, prior to the abolition of Clinical Commissioning Groups from 1 July 2022. The 2022/23 financial year has been established as a transitional year during which the detailed arrangements will be developed for the operation of the new structures. The One Halton Place Based Partnership Board has been meeting monthly to oversee the development of the partnership arrangements. A number of sub-groups have also been established to take aspects of the work forward. These include the Finance and Performance Sub-Group which is developing a methodology to provide place based financial reporting and control.

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

- The Health and Wellbeing Board provides a key forum for public accountability of the NHS, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Public Health and other commissioned services relating to the wider determinants of health in Halton. The Board met on four occasions during 2021/22 and received regular updates on the One Halton Place Based Partnership development with Cheshire Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), which included updates on the governance structure to be put in place.
- Engagement with citizens and service users is carried out using a variety of methods, including a range of survey techniques and sampling techniques. During 2021/22 the Council consulted on a range of issues, which included:
 - Safer Streets Survey - Asked the general public about their experience of harassment, intimidation or violence in a public place and if there are any particular streets or areas in Halton where residents might feel unsafe.
 - Air Quality Strategy - Asked Halton residents about their opinions on the primary causes of Air Pollution in Halton.
 - Changing Rooms - To gain a better understanding of where, in Halton, there is demand for safe changing spaces for parents, carers and residents with additional needs who are unable to use standard toileting facilities.
 - Social Care Charging - Consultation including residents and stakeholders asking if Halton Borough Council should subsidise residents who have the means to fund their own care.
- In setting its budget the Council listens to the views of the public and the experience of elected members through their ward work. Individual consultations took place in respect of specific budget proposals and equality impact assessments were completed where necessary.

KEY PRINCIPLE:

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

SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES:

- Defining outcomes
- Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

- The long-term vision for Halton is set out in the Council's Corporate Plan, which defines the Council's priorities and how it hopes to achieve them. It also explains the Council's values and principles. Whilst the priorities contained within the existing plan remain relevant, the plan is due to be updated. During 2021/22 the decision was taken that the review and update of the Corporate Plan would be deferred until 2022/23 when the new Chief Executive of the Council had started in post.
- The Council's Corporate Planning Framework provides the means by which the Council's activities are developed and monitored. A regular system of reporting to the Council's Management Team, Executive Board and Policy and Performance Boards records progress against key business plan objectives and targets.
- Directorate and Departmental Business Plans were produced for 2021/22 that described key developments and emerging issues relating to each department of the Council. The plans formally set out key objectives, milestones and measures for each business area.
- On 9 December 2021, the Executive Board approved, in principle, that the Council sets a target to reach a carbon neutral status by 2040 and endorsed the development of a detailed Action Plan to achieve that objective. Following the development of the Council's action plan, a broader Borough wide strategy is to be developed in consultation with partners and the community.
- On 2 March 2022, the Council formally adopted the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP). The DALP is a key corporate document and the central policy document within Halton's Statutory Development Plan / Local Plan. It has widespread policy implications for the Council and its partners. One of the main thrusts of the DALP is to support the enhancement of the borough's economy and to deliver economic growth. The DALP also aims to consolidate and enhance linkages to the wider sub-region and deliver the economic benefits of Halton's advantageous geographic location.
- The Executive Board approved the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) at its meeting on 18 November 2021. The MTFS represents the "finance guidelines" that form part of the medium term corporate planning process. These guidelines identify the financial constraints which the Council will face in delivering its key objectives over a three-year period, and are an important influence on the development of the Corporate Plan, Service Plans and Strategies.

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

- The Council routinely publishes information on the Council's vision, strategy, plans, finances and performance on its website.
- The Council has continued to generate social value through its procurement processes.

KEY PRINCIPLE:

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

SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES:

- Determining interventions
- Planning interventions
- Optimising achievement of intended outcomes economic, social and environmental benefits

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

- The Council's Corporate Planning Framework in operation during the year provided the means by which the Council's activities were developed and monitored.
- There is a well-established overview and scrutiny framework with six Policy and Performance Boards (PPBs) aligned to the Council's six corporate plan priorities. During the year they held the Executive to account, scrutinised performance and developed policy proposals for consideration by the Executive.
- Performance monitoring reports were produced throughout the year recording progress against key business plan objectives and targets. These reports were presented to the Council's Management Team, to the Executive Board and to the Policy and Performance Boards.
- The Council operates a corporate complaints procedure and specific complaints procedures for Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, schools and complaints relating to elected members. These procedures allow the Council to identify areas where things may have gone wrong and to put them right and prevent them from happening again.
- The Council aims to ensure that the purchase or commissioning of goods, services or works required to deliver services is acquired under Best Value terms. The Council's procurement activity is undertaken in line with the Council's Procurement Strategy and within clearly defined rules set out in Procurement Standing Orders, which are reviewed and updated annually.

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

- The Council's internal audit team carried out a comprehensive programme of audits during the year reviewing both front line and support services. The implementation of recommendations arising from the work of internal audit assists the Council in identifying and managing risks that may impact on the achievement of intended outcomes.
- The Council developed a Children and Young People's Improvement Plan in response to the OFSTED inspection in October 2021. The plan sets out how the Council will ensure that children and young people in Halton are safeguarded and achieve the Council's aspiration that all its services for children and young people are good or better.

KEY PRINCIPLE:

Developing the Council's capacity, including capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES:

- Developing capacity
- Developing leadership
- Developing the capability of individuals

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

- The Council retained the North West Charter for Elected Member Development Exemplar Level status. Elected members were also provided with the opportunity for an annual review to identify their development requirements, which are set out in a Member Action Plan.
- The Council has a Member Development Group that monitors key performance indicators in relation to member development. Its remit also includes raising awareness of learning and development updates. The group also provides a forum for members to raise any other training or support issues to help them in their roles.
- Members of the Audit and Governance Board received training during the year to assist them in their role as the Council's Audit Committee.
- The Council operates ongoing processes to identify the personal development needs of employees. The information gained from these processes is used to inform the design of the corporate training programme and to source specialised professional training.
- The Council's Organisational Development Team offers continuous leadership development through its accreditation with ILM (Institute of Leadership and Management). Specific qualifications have been delivered during 2021/22, with participation numbers increasing due to the restrictions have easing:
 - ILM Level 5 Leadership & Management: Six managers completed in January 2022
 - ILM Level 3 Leadership and Management: Two cohorts are running this year (2022-23) with 27 managers enrolled; both cohorts are due to complete by January 2023.
- The Council has developed a Leadership and Management Framework to ensure continuous development of the senior leadership team and wider management. Implementation of the framework was delayed as a result of the pandemic but it was launched across the Council in May 2021. To date, 83 Managers are enrolled on seven separate cohorts with plans for an eighth later this year.

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

- The Council continued to offer its employees the opportunity to apply for funding to support their academic development that is linked to the Council's priorities thereby increasing individual capacity and supporting succession planning. During 2021/22, the Council supported 13 employees to gain a variety of academic qualifications, such as Masters Degrees, BA Degrees and Diplomas.
- The Council is maximising the Apprenticeship Levy. Apprenticeships that commenced in 2021/22 include:
 - Housing & Property Management, Level 3
 - Senior Housing & Property Management, Level 4
 - Data Analyst, Level 4
 - Adult Care Worker, Level 2
 - Lead Adult Care Worker, Level 3
 - HR Support, Level 3
 - Business Administrator, Level 3
 - Health & Social Care, Level 3
 - Nursing Associate, Level 5

KEY PRINCIPLE:

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

SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES:

- Managing risk
- Managing performance
- Robust Internal Control
- Managing data
- Strong Public Financial Management

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

- The Council provides decision-makers with full and timely access to relevant information. The executive report template requires information to be provided explaining the policy, financial and risk implications of decisions, as well as implications for each of the corporate priorities and any equality and diversity implications.
- The Council has a well-established Audit Committee (the Audit and Governance Board), which met regularly during 2021/22. The Board has clearly defined responsibilities and provides oversight and challenge in regard to the Council's governance, risk management, audit, efficiency and improvement, accounts, procurement and counter fraud and corruption arrangements.
- The Council has embedded risk management arrangements. Directorate and corporate risk registers outline the key risks faced by the Council, including their impact and likelihood, along with the relevant mitigating controls and actions. The Corporate Risk Register was reviewed and approved by the Audit and Governance Board at its meetings on 29 September 2021 and 24 November 2021. The Council's risk management processes are also used to inform the work of internal audit.
- The Council has a Head of Internal Audit and a continuous internal audit service, which has been externally assessed as conforming to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Internal audit plays a key role in reviewing and improving the effectiveness of the Council's risk management, governance and control arrangements. In the 2021 Auditor's Annual report, the Council's external auditor commented that the Council's internal audit service is considered to be effective and well run.

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

- The Head of Internal Audit provides an annual opinion on the Council's risk management, control and governance processes. The annual opinion is based upon the internal audit work completed during the year. The opinion covering 2021/22 was presented to the Audit and Governance Board on 6 July 2022 and concluded that the Council's risk management, control and governance processes that were in place during 2021/22 were considered to be adequate and to have operated effectively during the year.
- Ongoing pressures within demand-led services, especially Adults and Children's Social Care, meant that significant overspending against budget was forecast for the year. Spending continued to be closely monitored and tightly controlled during 2021/22, such that offsetting underspends were achieved in many areas and the eventual Council wide overspend at £1.2m was less than half that previously forecast.
- The Council operates a robust performance management framework with performance monitoring reports being produced each quarter recording progress against key business plan objectives and targets. The reports were presented to the Council's Management Team, to the Executive Board and to the Policy and Performance Boards.
- The Council has a well-established information governance framework. The Data Protection Officer is supported by the Information Governance Service, which plays a key role in ensuring that the Council remains compliant in data protection and security arrangements. The Information Governance Service is responsible for, and oversees, data management and risk, corporate data security policies, staff training and the production of annual reports to the Council's Senior Information Risk Owner.

KEY PRINCIPLE:

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

SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES:

- Implementing good practice in transparency
- Implementing good practice in reporting
- Assurance and effective accountability

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

- The Council fully complies with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and publishes a wide range of information on its website. This includes details of meetings, minutes and agendas, policies and plans, the Council Constitution, the Statement of Accounts, details of members' allowances and expenses (including the outcome of the independent triennial review of the Members' Allowance Scheme which took place during the year), details of senior staff pay, contract awards, and details of land and building assets.
- The Council operates clear and effective processes for dealing with Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and Subject Access Requests (SAR).
- All Council meetings are open and can be attended by members of the public with the exception of those where confidential or personal matters may be disclosed.
- On 24 March 2021, the Council received an unqualified external audit opinion on the 2019/20 financial statements.
- The Council's external auditor provides an annual assessment on how well the Council is managing and using its resources to deliver value for money and better and sustainable outcomes for local people. The latest assessment covering 2020/21 concluded that the Council has established appropriate arrangements to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- In the 2020/21 Auditor's Annual Report, the Council's external auditor stated that their work had focused on gaining a detailed understanding of the governance in place at the Council and the changes instigated as a result of the pandemic. The auditor concluded that their work had not identified any significant weakness in the Council's governance arrangements in both business as usual governance and the adapted structures. The report added that Halton Borough Council exhibits the majority of the features of a well led and well governed organisation.

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DID THIS IN 2021/22:

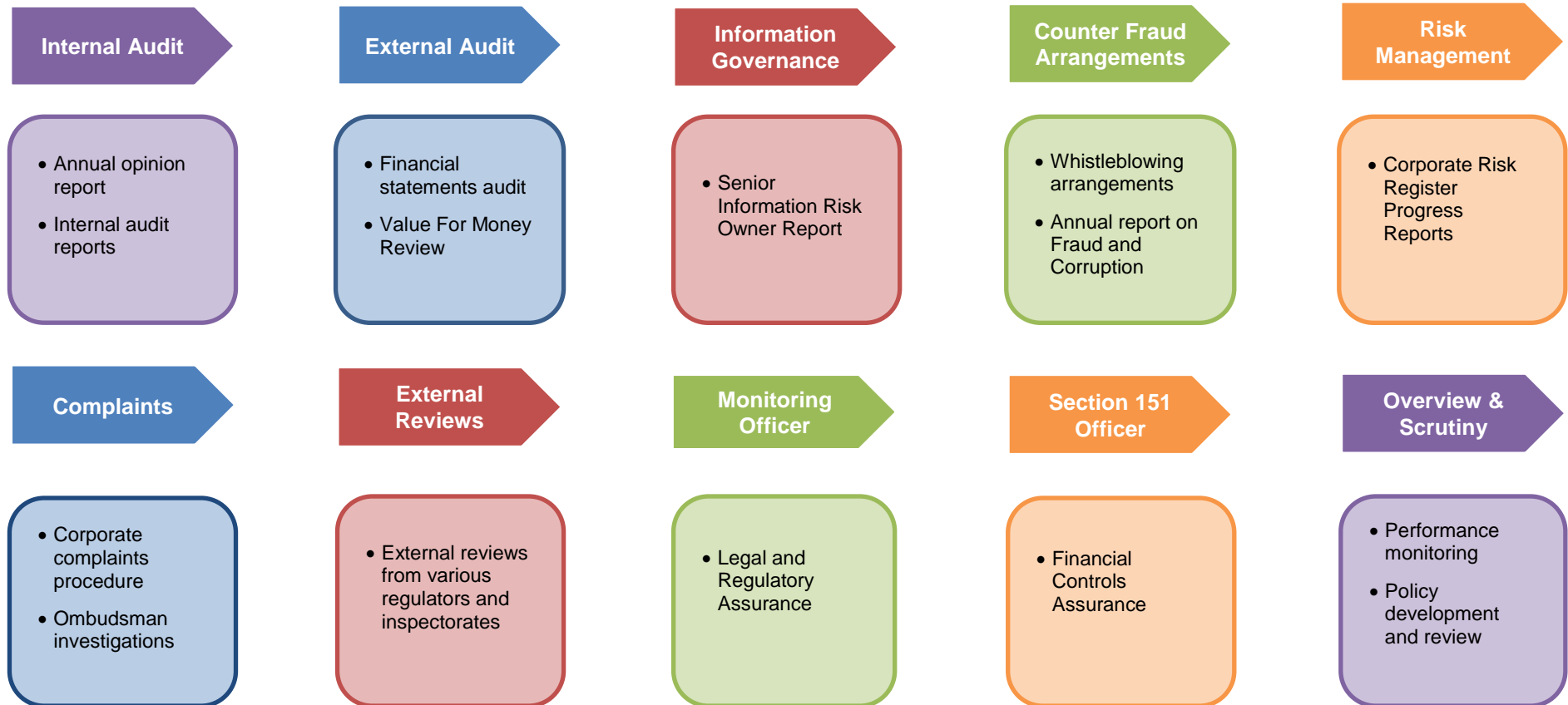
- The Council has established various ongoing arrangements that provide effective assurance. These include the work of internal audit, the Council's risk and performance management arrangements, the work of the Information Governance Group, the work of the Policy and Performance Boards and the work of the Audit and Governance Board.
- The Adult Social Care Annual Report is an embedded part of the reporting cycle for the Council and is recognised as being good practice by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS). The 2020/21 report, which was presented to Executive Board on 17 March 2022, included information on the successes and achievements across Adult Social Care, details of progress against performance metrics, some of the challenges faced, how the Council responded to community needs and details of future activities to be further developed. It also served as a review mechanism for Adult Social Care to consider as part of ongoing continuous service improvement measures.
- The Council operates a whistleblowing procedure and has well-publicised arrangements for employees and the wider community to raise any concerns relating to fraud, misconduct or other issues. Two whistleblowing complaints were received during the year and 48 referrals were received from members of the public. All whistleblowing complaints and referrals received were assessed and investigations undertaken where sufficient information was provided.

What are the roles of those responsible for developing and maintaining the Governance Framework?

<p>Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approves the Corporate Plan - Approves the Constitution - Approves the policy and budgetary framework
<p>Executive Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The main decision-making body of the Council - Comprises ten members who have responsibility for particular portfolios
<p>Audit and Governance Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designated as the Council's Audit Committee (formerly the Business Efficiency Board) - Provides assurance to the Council on the effectiveness of its governance arrangements, risk management framework, procurement strategy and internal control environment.
<p>Standards Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotes high standards of member conduct - Assists members and co-opted members to observe the Council's Member Code of Conduct (The Audit and Governance Board assumed the role of the Council's Standards Committee in May 2021)
<p>Policy & Performance Boards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are six Policy & Performance Boards aligned to the Council's six Corporate Plan priorities - They hold the Executive to account, scrutinise performance and develop policy proposals for consideration by the Executive
<p>Management Team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implements the policy and budgetary framework set by the Council and provides advice to the Executive Board and the Council on the development of future policy and budgetary issues - A wider management group has been meeting since March to manage the Council's response to the Covid-19.
<p>Internal Audit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides assurance over the Council's governance, risk management and control framework - Delivers an annual programme of audits - Makes recommendations for improvements in the management of risk and value for money
<p>Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responsible for maintaining and developing the Council's governance and control framework - Contribute to the effective corporate management and governance of the Council

How does the Council monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its governance arrangements?

The Council annually reviews the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The key sources of assurance that inform this review are outlined below:



How has the Council addressed the governance issues from the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement?

The 2020/21 annual governance statement contained three key governance issues. Details of these issues and how they were addressed are provided below:

Issue:

Funding

The Council continues to face significant funding reductions whilst demand for Council services, particularly within Social Care is rising and there are income shortfalls across many service areas. The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily changed the Council's focus and the related grant funding has assisted with containing 2020/21 spending within budget.

Looking forward there remains huge uncertainty regarding the Government's plans for the future funding of local government. A number of proposed changes to the funding regime have been deferred, including the Fair Funding Review and the national roll-out of business rates retention. It is unclear whether or not Government will return to these proposals.

This makes financial planning extremely difficult at the current time. The Medium Term Financial Strategy forecasts that the Council may need to identify £12m of budget savings in order to set a balanced budget for 2022/23. In light of these financial pressures, a key challenge for the Council is to maintain sufficient service capacity and robust governance arrangements in order to continue to deliver its corporate objectives and strategic priorities for 2022/23 and beyond.

What we did:

Spending during 2021/22 was closely monitored and reported upon, especially in respect of continuing costs and funding related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Continued spending pressures in demand-led services, especially Adults and Children's Social Care, led to an overall outturn overspend of £1.2m against budget. However, this was less than half the previous forecast. The Council's robust governance arrangements were essential in delivering this improved outcome.

The Member's Budget Working Group met regularly during 2021/22 to consider budget saving proposals in the context of the Council's corporate objectives and strategic priorities. Fundamental to the Budget Working Group's assessment was a desire to protect the Borough's most vulnerable residents and the services provided to them.

Despite significant funding constraints and increasing demand for services, resulting in the need to make significant budget savings, the Council was able to set a balanced budget for 2022/23.

However, it has become increasingly difficult for Members to find efficiency or cost savings and as a result it was necessary to utilise around £8m of one-off reserves to set a balanced budget. The Council only agreed to do this on the basis that steps will now be taken to establish a three year budget plan (2023-2026), by identifying around £25m of savings to be delivered over the next three years. The development of this budget plan will be managed via the Budget Working Group.

Issue:

CIPFA Financial Management Code

The CIPFA Financial Management Code (The Code) is designed to support good practice in financial management and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability. The Code therefore sets the standards of financial management for local authorities.

The Code is based on a series of principles supported by specific standards and statements of practice which are considered necessary to provide the strong foundation to manage:

- the short, medium and long-term finances of a local authority
- financial resilience to meet foreseen demands on services
- unexpected shocks in their financial circumstances

Each local authority is required to demonstrate that the requirements of the Code are being satisfied. Demonstrating this compliance with the Code is a collective responsibility of elected members, the Chief Finance Officer and their professional colleagues in the leadership team.

The Code applies a principle-based approach. It does not prescribe the financial management processes that local authorities should adopt. Instead, the Code requires that a local authority demonstrate that its processes satisfy the principles of good financial management for an authority of its size, responsibilities and circumstances. Good financial management is proportionate to the risks to the authority's financial sustainability posed by the twin pressures of scarce resources and the rising demands on services.

Work will be undertaken during 2021/22 to ensure that the Council complies with the CIPFA Financial Management Code. This will take the form of a self-assessment against the key questions included in the Financial Management Code. An action plan will be produced to address any areas requiring further development.

What we did:

It had been intended to undertake work during 2021/22 to self-assess whether the Council was complying with the CIPFA Financial Management Code. An action plan would then be produced to address any areas requiring further development.

Unfortunately, additional workloads due to managing Covid-19 related spending and preparation of grant claims, coupled with key staff vacancies, has meant that sufficient staff resources were not available to undertake this work.

It is therefore proposed to undertake this self-assessment during 2022/23.

Issue:

Integrated Care System Implementation

The Integrated Care White Paper sets out the approach to create Integrated Care System bodies within the NHS at a regional level by April 2022. The aim is to bring about greater integration of Health and Social Care, based upon “place”.

There will be a regional body for Cheshire and Merseyside, below which each of the nine council areas will each have an Integrated Care System Partnership. In Halton, the current roles and funding of Halton CCG will be passed to the regional body, who will decide which roles and funding to devolve to the Halton Integrated Care System Partnership.

Work is underway with Halton CCG colleagues, to put in place the governance arrangements required to manage this new arrangement, along with identifying the services involved and related funding.

What we did:

The Council is part of the Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership (C&MHCP), which is working towards formal designation as an Integrated Care System (ICS). An ICS is a partnership that brings together providers and commissioners of NHS services across a geographical area with local authorities and other local partners to collectively plan health and care services to meet the needs of their population.

During 2021/22 the Council worked jointly with NHS colleagues to establish the Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System and at the local level to establish the One Halton Place Based Partnership, prior to the abolition of Clinical Commissioning Groups from 1 July 2022. Governance arrangements have been established for the operation and oversight of both the Cheshire & Merseyside and One Halton bodies. The coming year (2022/23), has been established as a transitional year, during which the detailed arrangements will be developed for the operation of the new organisational structures. The One Halton Place Based Partnership Board has been meeting monthly to oversee the development of the partnership arrangements. A number of sub-groups have also been established to take aspects of the work forward. These include the Finance and Performance Sub-Group which is developing a methodology to provide place based financial reporting and control.

What are the governance issues for 2022/23?

The Council's governance arrangements are kept under constant review and the following Action Plan sets out key areas of focus for the Council in maintaining and developing its governance arrangements in 2022/23.

Issue	Lead Officer	Timescale
<p><u>Corporate Plan</u></p> <p>The long-term vision for the Council is set out in the Council's Corporate Plan, which defines the Council's priorities and how it hopes to achieve them. The current Corporate Plan has expired and work is underway in developing an updated version of the Corporate Plan during 2022/23.</p> <p>It is anticipated that this process will be completed before year-end.</p>	Chief Executive	31 March 2023

Issue	Lead Officer	Timescale
<p><u>Organisational Structure</u></p> <p>The Council appointed a new Chief Executive who started in his role in April 2022. The role of the Chief Executive, assisted by the senior management team, involves the day to day leadership and management of the Council and responsibility for delivering the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>Since arriving in April 2022, the Chief Executive has taken the opportunity to reflect on the Council’s senior management structure. This was to ensure that the Council is in the best position to respond to the changing environment in which it operates. That includes ensuring that the Council has senior oversight of its key priorities and that there is strong corporate support to underpin the functions of the organisation.</p> <p>To achieve this, in consultation and with the agreement of the Council’s Leader, the organisation is to move from the existing two directorate model, to a new five directorate structure.</p> <p>The new structure is designed to ensure a clear focus on the delivery of priorities that have and will continue to emerge. It will also enable the Council to build on its successes and take advantage of new opportunities.</p> <p>The five new directorates are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults Directorate • Chief Executive’s Directorate • Children’s Directorate • Environment & Regeneration Directorate • Public Health Directorate <p>The new structure will take effect from 1 December 2022.</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>1 December 2022</p>

Issue	Lead Officer	Timescale
<p><u>Funding</u></p> <p>The Council continues to face significant financial challenges over the coming years. Demand for Council services, particularly within Social Care, continues to rise; costs are increasing rapidly with pay and price inflation and there are income shortfalls across many service areas. Whilst the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is much reduced, the Council is bearing ongoing costs for which there is no Government funding, which adds pressure to the Council's budget.</p> <p>The 2021/22 outturn position for the Council was a £1.2m overspend against budget. This position was however much improved from forecasts earlier in the financial year due to the robust monitoring and governance arrangements put in place. A significant outturn overspend is forecast again for 2022/23, primarily due to increased demand and costs of Adults and Children's Social Care. Action is being taken to restrict spending across all Departments to only absolutely essential items as far as possible, in order to minimise the outturn overspend.</p> <p>Looking forward there remains huge uncertainty regarding the Government's plans for the future funding of local government. A number of proposed changes to the funding regime have been deferred, including the Fair Funding Review and the national roll-out of business rates retention. It is still unclear whether or not Government will return to these proposals.</p> <p>This makes financial planning extremely difficult at the current time. The Medium Term Financial Strategy forecasts that the Council may need to identify £25m of budget savings in order to set balanced budgets for the three years commencing 2023/24.</p> <p>To achieve permanent, sustainable, budget reductions of this magnitude will require fundamental changes to how the Council operates and delivers services. Utilising specialist, external support the Council is currently developing a three-year Transformation Programme, in order to bring about such changes via a number of work streams. This work includes supporting</p>	<p>Operational Director - Finance</p>	<p>31 March 2023</p>

Issue	Lead Officer	Timescale
<p>the implementation of the Children’s OFSTED improvement plan and bringing Children in Care costs under greater control.</p> <p>In light of these financial pressures, a key challenge for the Council is to maintain sufficient service capacity and robust governance arrangements in order to continue to deliver its corporate objectives and strategic priorities for 2023/24 and beyond.</p>		

Issue	Lead Officer	Timescale	
<p><u>Children’s Services</u></p> <p>An improvement notice was issued to Halton Borough Council following an OFSTED inspection in October 2021. Two areas were for priority action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assessment and management of risk to children, including the frequency of visits to children, in line with assessed risk and needs. • Management oversight and supervision to provide effective support and challenge. <p>In response to the inspection the Council has developed a Children and Young People’s Improvement Plan. The plan sets out how the Council will ensure that children and young people in Halton are safeguarded and achieve the Council’s aspiration that all its services for children and young people are good or better.</p> <p>This Improvement Plan sets out key actions that focus on what the Council needs to do to ensure that its work makes a difference to the children, young people and families that are supported and safeguarded.</p> <p>Progress in implementing the Improvement Plan will be monitored through the Halton Improvement Board. The Board consists of the Council’s key partner agencies and corporate colleagues who have a vital role to help create the environment where good social work can flourish.</p> <p>The responsibility to implement the agreed actions in the Improvement Plan sits with all staff throughout the organisation who have shared accountability for the outcomes achieved for children and families. The accountable lead officers for delivering the plan and driving improvements will, through the Children and Young People Service Improvement Meeting (CYPSIM), ensure tasks are completed, risks assessed and progress reported to the Improvement Board.</p>	Strategic Director – People	Ongoing 2022/23	throughout

Issue	Lead Officer	Timescale
<p><u>Central register of gifts, hospitality and interests for Members</u></p> <p>In the external auditor’s Annual Report 2020/21 it was noted that the transparency of the registers of gifts, hospitality and interests for members could be improved if they were more clearly signposted for the public to view on the Council website.</p> <p>The Council is therefore going to explore publishing the registers of gifts, hospitality and interests online.</p>	<p>Operational Director – Legal & Democratic Services</p>	<p>31 March 2023</p>

Issue	Lead Officer	Timescale
<p><u>CIPFA Financial Management Code</u></p> <p>The CIPFA Financial Management Code (The Code) is designed to support good practice in financial management and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability. The Code therefore sets the standards of financial management for local authorities.</p> <p>The Code is based on a series of principles supported by specific standards and statements of practice which are considered necessary to provide the strong foundation to manage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the short, medium and long-term finances of a local authority • financial resilience to meet foreseen demands on services • unexpected shocks in their financial circumstances <p>Each local authority is required to demonstrate that the requirements of the Code are being satisfied. Demonstrating this compliance with the Code is a collective responsibility of elected members, the Chief Finance Officer and their professional colleagues in the leadership team.</p> <p>The Code applies a principle-based approach. It does not prescribe the financial management processes that local authorities should adopt. Instead, the Code requires that a local authority demonstrate that its processes satisfy the principles of good financial management for an authority of its size, responsibilities and circumstances. Good financial management is proportionate to the risks to the authority's financial sustainability posed by the twin pressures of scarce resources and the rising demands on services.</p> <p>It is intended that work will be undertaken during 2022/23 to ensure that the Council complies with the CIPFA Financial Management Code. This will take the form of a self-assessment against the key questions included in the Financial Management Code. An action plan will be produced to address any areas requiring further development.</p>	Operational Director - Finance	31 March 2023

Certification

We have been advised on the implications of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by the Audit and Governance Board. The review provides good overall assurance that the Council's arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.

Specific opportunities to maintain or develop the Council's governance arrangements have been identified through this review. We pledge our commitment to addressing these issues over the coming year and we will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed on behalf of Halton Borough Council:

Stephen Young - Chief Executive

Date -

Mike Wharton - Leader of the Council

Date -

REPORT TO: Audit and Governance Board

DATE: 23 November 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director, Finance

PORTFOLIO: Leadership and Corporate Strategy

SUBJECT: 2021/22 Statement of Accounts, Audit Findings Report and Letter of Representation

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Council's Letter of Representation, to consider the Audit Findings Report of the External Auditor (Grant Thornton), and to approve the Council's 2021/22 Statement of Accounts.

2.0 RECOMMENDED that;

- (i) **The draft Letter of Representation in Appendix 1 be approved and any subsequent additions or amendments be approved by the Operational Director - Finance, in liaison with the Chair of the Audit and Governance Board;**
- (ii) **The External Auditor's draft 2021/22 Audit Findings Report in Appendix 2 be received and any subsequent additions or amendments be approved by Operational Director - Finance, in liaison with the Chair of the Audit and Governance Board;**
- (iii) **The Council's draft 2021/22 Statement of Accounts in Appendix 3 be approved and any subsequent additions or amendments be approved by the Operational Director - Finance, in liaison with the Chair of the Audit and Governance Board.**

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Statement of Accounts sets out the Council's financial performance for the year in terms of revenue and capital spending and presents the year-end financial position as reflected in the balance sheet.
- 3.2 The format of the Statement of Accounts is heavily prescribed by the Accounts and Audit Regulations and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting (The Code).
- 3.3 The Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 has been prepared in full compliance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

- 3.4 Grant Thornton will attend the meeting to present the report of their findings, the Audit Findings Report, as shown in Appendix 2.
- 3.5 Section 2 of the Audit Findings Report presents the findings of the External Auditor in respect of matters and risks identified at the planning stage of the audit and additional and significant matters that arose during the course of their work.
- 3.6 The work of the External Auditor in reviewing the Statement of Accounts is largely complete although they will be unable to conclude the audit due to a national infrastructure assets issue that is impacting all organisations with material balances in this area.
- 3.7 Each year the Council is required to provide the External Auditor with a Letter of Representation relating to the financial statements, as shown in Appendix 1. This provides a number of assurances to the External Auditor in connection with the preparation of the Council's accounts. The letter is required to be signed by the Chair of the Board on behalf of the Council.

4.0 KEY SECTIONS WITHIN THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

- 4.1 The Council's 2021/22 Statement of Accounts is presented in Appendix 3. The Narrative Report by the Operational Director, Finance summarises the Council's financial performance for 2021/22, including revenue and capital spending.
- 4.2 The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) presents gross expenditure, gross income and net expenditure for 2021/22 along with the previous year's comparison. The Net Cost of Continuing Operations is adjusted by a number of appropriations to give the Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure. The CIES reports on how the Council performed during the year and whether its operations resulted in a surplus or deficit.
- 4.3 The Council's Balance Sheet sets out the Council's financial position as at 31 March 2022, along with a comparison to the position as at 31 March 2021. The balance sheet is a snapshot of the Council's financial position at a specific point in time, showing what it owns and owes at 31 March.
- 4.4 The Movement in Reserves Statement presents a summary of the changes in the Council's main reserves during the year. Reserves represent the Council's net worth and show its spending power. Reserves are analysed into two categories: usable and unusable.
- 4.5 The Cashflow Statement provides an overall analysis of the movements in cash and cash equivalents during the year.

- 4.6 Detailed notes relating to items within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Balance Sheet, Movement in Reserves Statement and Cashflow Statement are shown under Notes to the Core Financial Statements.
- 4.7 The Collection Fund and associated notes summarise the transactions in respect of the collection of Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax, along with the distribution to the Council's own General Fund and to the Precepting Authorities (Fire, Police, LCR Combined Authority and Parishes).
- 4.8 The Statement of Responsibilities outlines the basis upon which the Statement of Accounts has been prepared and is followed by a statement of the Council's Accounting Policies.
- 4.9 The External Auditor has used the draft Statement of Accounts as the basis for undertaking the annual audit of accounts, for which their Audit Report and Certificate is included within the final Statement of Accounts.
- 5.0 **VALUE FOR MONEY**
- 5.1 On 01 April 2020 the National Audit Office introduced a new Code of Audit Practice. The Code introduced a revised approach to the audit of Value for Money (VFM)
- 5.2 The Code requires External Audit to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. When reporting on these arrangements, the Code requires auditors to structure their commentary on arrangements under three specified reporting criteria:
- Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness
 - Financial Sustainability
 - Governance
- 5.3 Work on VFM arrangements is ongoing, the External Auditor intends to complete work on VFM arrangements by 31 December 2022 and results will be included with the Auditors Annual Report, to be published at a later date.
- 6.0 **ACTION PLAN**
- 6.1 Appendix A of the Audit Findings Report presents an action plan of recommendations for future improvement to the Statement of Accounts. Two recommendations have been made by the External Auditor and agreed with Council management.
- 7.0 **PRIOR YEAR RECOMMENDATIONS**
- 7.1 The 2020/21 Audit Findings Report identified a number of recommendations to improve the process and presentation of the Council's Statement of Accounts.

These recommendations were approved by the Audit and Governance Board on 23 March 2022. All the recommendations have been implemented with the exception of one lower priority issue which the Council chose not to implement. Appendix A and B of the Audit Findings Report provides further detail.

8.0 NEXT STEPS

8.1 Following the meeting and subject to any additional amendments or additions being approved, the Letter of Representation will be signed and the External Auditor will provide their audit opinion. The Statement of Accounts will then be published and made available to the public via the Council’s website.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

9.1 Children and Young People in Halton

There are no specific implications for any of the Council’s priorities.

9.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

See 9.1

9.3 A Healthy Halton

See 9.1

9.4 A Safer Halton

See 9.1

9.5 Halton’s Urban Renewal

See 9.1

10.0 RISK ANALYSIS

The Accounts and Audit Regulations require that the Statement of Accounts is certified by the External Auditor and published by 30 September 2022. As a result of the delay the council had published a Public Notice giving reasons for the delay.

11.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no equality and diversity issues arising from this report.

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015	Halton Stadium	Steve Baker Divisional Manager, Revenues and Financial Management

Code of Practice on
Local Authority
Accounting in the UK
2021/22

Halton Stadium

Steve Baker
Divisional Manager,
Revenues and Financial
Management

Grant Thornton UK LLP
4 Hardman Square
Spinningfields
Manchester
M3 3EB

Date: TO BE DATED SAME DATE AS DATE OF AUDIT OPINION

Dear Sirs

Halton Borough Council
Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2022

This representation letter is provided in connection with the audit of the financial statements of Halton Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2022 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the Council financial statements are presented fairly, in all material respects in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards, and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2021/22 and applicable law.

We confirm that to the best of our knowledge and belief having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

Financial Statements

- i. We have fulfilled our responsibilities for the preparation of the Council's financial statements in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2021/22 ("the Code"); in particular the financial statements are fairly presented in accordance therewith.
- ii. We have complied with the requirements of all statutory directions affecting the Council and these matters have been appropriately reflected and disclosed in the financial statements.
- iii. The Council has complied with all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance. There has been no non-compliance with requirements of any regulatory authorities that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance.
- iv. We acknowledge our responsibility for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud.
- v. Significant assumptions used by us in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable. We are satisfied that the material judgements used in the preparation of the financial statements are soundly based, in accordance with the Code and adequately disclosed in the financial statements. We understand our responsibilities includes identifying and considering alternative, methods, assumptions or source data that would be equally valid under the financial reporting framework, and why these alternatives were rejected in favour of the estimate used. We are satisfied that the methods, the data and the significant assumptions used by us in making accounting estimates and their related disclosures are appropriate to achieve recognition, measurement or disclosure that is reasonable in accordance with the Code and adequately disclosed in the financial statements.
- vi. We confirm that we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the valuation of pension scheme assets and liabilities for IAS19 Employee Benefits disclosures are consistent with our knowledge. We confirm that all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for. We also confirm that all significant post-employment benefits have been identified and properly accounted for.

- vii. Except as disclosed in the financial statements:
 - a. there are no unrecorded liabilities, actual or contingent
 - b. none of the assets of the Council has been assigned, pledged or mortgaged
 - c. there are no material prior year charges or credits, nor exceptional or non-recurring items requiring separate disclosure.
- viii. Related party relationships and transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards and the Code.
- ix. All events subsequent to the date of the financial statements and for which International Financial Reporting Standards and the Code require adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.
- x. We have considered the adjusted misstatements, and misclassification and disclosures changes schedules included in your Audit Findings Report. The Council's financial statements have been amended for these misstatements, misclassifications and disclosure changes and are free of material misstatements, including omissions.
- xi. We have considered the unadjusted misstatements schedule included in your Audit Findings Report and attached below. We have not adjusted the financial statements for these misstatements brought to our attention as they are immaterial to the results of the Council and its financial position at the year-end. The financial statements are free of material misstatements, including omissions.
- xii. Actual or possible litigation and claims have been accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards.
- xiii. We have no plans or intentions that may materially alter the carrying value or classification of assets and liabilities reflected in the financial statements.
- xiv. We have updated our going concern assessment. We continue to believe that the Council's financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis and have not identified any material uncertainties related to going concern on the grounds that:
 - a. the nature of the Council means that, notwithstanding any intention to liquidate the Council or cease its operations in their current form, it will continue to be appropriate to adopt the going concern basis of accounting because, in such an event, services it performs can be expected to continue to be delivered by related public authorities and preparing the financial statements on a going concern basis will still provide a faithful representation of the items in the financial statements
 - b. the financial reporting framework permits the entry to prepare its financial statements on the basis of the presumption set out under a) above; and
 - c. the Council's system of internal control has not identified any events or conditions relevant to going concern.

We believe that no further disclosures relating to the Council's ability to continue as a going concern need to be made in the financial statements

Information Provided

- xv. We have provided you with:
 - a. access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the Council's financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
 - b. additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of your audit; and
 - c. access to persons within the Council via remote arrangements from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.
- xvi. We have communicated to you all deficiencies in internal control of which management is aware.
- xvii. All transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements.

- xviii. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
- xix. We have disclosed to you all information in relation to fraud or suspected fraud that we are aware of and that affects the Council and involves:
 - a. management;
 - b. employees who have significant roles in internal control; or
 - c. others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.
- xx. We have disclosed to you all information in relation to allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.
- xxi. We have disclosed to you all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing financial statements.
- xxii. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Council's related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware.
- xxiii. We have disclosed to you all known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements.

Annual Governance Statement

- xxiv. We are satisfied that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) fairly reflects the Council's risk assurance and governance framework and we confirm that we are not aware of any significant risks that are not disclosed within the AGS.

Narrative Report

- xxv. The disclosures within the Narrative Report fairly reflect our understanding of the Council's financial and operating performance over the period covered by the Council's financial statements.

Approval

The approval of this letter of representation was minuted by the Council's Audit and Governance Board at its meeting on 23 November 2022.

Yours faithfully

Name.....

Position.....

Date.....

Name.....

Position.....

Date.....

The Audit Findings for Halton Borough Council

Year ended 31 March 2022

23 November 2022



Contents



Your key Grant Thornton team members are:

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Section

1. Headlines
2. Financial statements
3. Value for money arrangements
4. Independence and ethics

Page

- 3
- 5
- 21
- 22

Appendices

- A. Action plan
- B. Follow up of prior year recommendations
- C. Audit adjustments
- D. Fees
- E. Management Letter of Representation
- F. Audit letter in respect of delayed VFM work

This Audit Findings presents the observations arising from the audit that are significant to the responsibility of those charged with governance to oversee the financial reporting process, as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK) 260. Its contents have been discussed with management and the Audit and Governance Board.

Michael Green

Name : Michael Green
For Grant Thornton UK LLP
Date : 23 November 2022

The contents of this report relate only to the matters which have come to our attention, which we believe need to be reported to you as part of our audit planning process. It is not a comprehensive record of all the relevant matters, which may be subject to change, and in particular we cannot be held responsible to you for reporting all of the risks which may affect the Council or all weaknesses in your internal controls. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit and should not be quoted in whole or in part without our prior written consent. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

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1. Headlines

This table summarises the key findings and other matters arising from the statutory audit of Halton Borough Council ('the Council') and the preparation of the Council's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022 for those charged with governance.

Financial Statements

Under International Standards of Audit (UK) (ISAs) and the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to report whether, in our opinion:

- the Council's financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council and its income and expenditure for the year; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting and prepared in accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

We are also required to report whether other information published together with the audited financial statements (including the Annual Governance Statement (AGS), and Narrative Report, is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

Our audit work was completed both on site and remotely during July to October. Our findings are summarised at Section 2 of this report. We did not identify any adjustments to the draft outturn in the Council's Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Audit adjustments were primarily presentational impacting the notes to the financial statements and are detailed in Appendix C. We have also raised recommendations for management as a result of our audit work in Appendix A. Our follow up of recommendations from the prior year's audit are detailed in Appendix B.

Our work is substantially complete and there are no matters of which we are aware that would require modification of our audit opinion or material changes to the financial statements, subject to the following outstanding matters;

- review of infrastructure asset presentation and valuation, which is subject to CIPFA determination;
- completion of value for money audit work;
- responses to a small number of audit queries;
- Completion and review of work on PPE valuations;
- Clearance of review points on journal sample testing;
- Final review of employee remuneration procedures;
- Completion of work on infrastructure assets following the anticipated issue of the statutory instrument and updates to the CIPFA Code
- final quality control and review processes;
- receipt of management representation letter – see Appendix E; and
- review of the final set of financial statements.

We have concluded that the other information to be published with the financial statements, is consistent with our knowledge of your organisation and the financial statements we have audited.

Our anticipated audit report opinion will be unqualified. Issuance of the opinion will be delayed until the statutory instrument relating to Infrastructure assets has been issued later this year and completion of related procedures.

1. Headlines

Value for Money (VFM) arrangements

Under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Auditors are now required to report in more detail on the Council's overall arrangements, as well as key recommendations on any significant weaknesses in arrangements identified during the audit.

Auditors are required to report their commentary on the Council's arrangements under the following specified criteria:

- Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- Financial sustainability; and
- Governance

We have not yet completed all of our VFM work and so are not in a position to issue our Auditor's Annual Report. A letter explaining the reasons for the delay was sent on 26 September 2022 and is attached in the Appendix F to this report. We expect to issue our Auditor's Annual Report by 31 December 2022. This is in line with the National Audit Office's revised deadline, which requires the Auditor's Annual Report to be issued no more than three months after the date of the opinion on the financial statements.

As part of our work, we considered whether there were any risks of significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We identified a risk in respect of future financial stability. Our work on this risk is underway and an update is set out in the value for money arrangements section of this report. The financial pressures and budget gaps in the medium term financial plan, and dependency upon the Council's Transformation Programme represent a risk of significant weakness requiring a Key Recommendation in accordance with NAO Code of Practice requirements.

Further detail is set out at Section 3 of this report.

Statutory duties

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 ('the Act') also requires us to:

- report to you if we have applied any of the additional powers and duties ascribed to us under the Act; and
- to certify the closure of the audit.

We have not had cause to exercise any of our additional statutory powers or duties.

We have completed the majority of work under the Code and expect to be able to certify the completion of the audit upon completion of our work on the Council's VFM arrangements, which will be reported in our Annual Auditor's report in December 2022, and completion of NAO Whole of Government Accounts consolidation procedures. The NAO has not yet issued instructions to auditors for NAO consolidation audit.

Significant Matters

We did not encounter any significant difficulties or identify any significant matters arising during our audit.

2. Financial Statements

Overview of the scope of our audit

This Audit Findings Report presents the observations arising from the audit that are significant to the responsibility of those charged with governance to oversee the financial reporting process, as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK) 260 and the Code of Audit Practice ("the Code"). Its contents have been discussed with management and the Audit and Governance Board.

As auditor we are responsible for performing the audit, in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and the Code, which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements.

Audit approach

Our audit approach was based on a thorough understanding of the Council's business and is risk based, and in particular included:

- An evaluation of the Council's internal controls environment, including its IT systems and controls; and
- Substantive testing on significant transactions and material account balances, including the procedures outlined in this report in relation to the key audit risks

We have not had to alter our audit plan, as communicated to you on 6 July 2022.

Conclusion

We have substantially completed our audit of your financial statements and subject to outstanding queries being resolved, we anticipate issuing an unqualified audit opinion following the Audit and Governance Board meeting on 23 November 2022.

Issuance of the opinion will be delayed until the statutory instrument relating to Infrastructure assets has been issued later this year.

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the assistance provided by the finance team and other staff.

2. Financial Statements



Our approach to materiality

The concept of materiality is fundamental to the preparation of the financial statements and the audit process and applies not only to the monetary misstatements but also to disclosure requirements and adherence to acceptable accounting practice and applicable law.

Materiality levels remain the same as reported in our Audit Plan to the Audit and Governance Board on 6 July 2022.

We detail in the table across our determination of materiality for Halton Borough Council.

Amount (£) Qualitative factors considered

Materiality for the financial statements	8,795,000	The threshold above which could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of the reader of the financial statements.
Performance materiality	6,596,000	The amount set to reduce to an appropriately low level the probability that the aggregate of uncorrected and undetected misstatements exceeds overall materiality.
Trivial matters	440,000	Considered to be the threshold below which an error would be trivial to the overall financial statements.
Materiality for Senior Officers Remuneration	34,000	Considered to be of heightened public interest.



2. Financial Statements - Significant risks

Significant risks are defined by ISAs (UK) as risks that, in the judgement of the auditor, require special audit consideration. In identifying risks, audit teams consider the nature of the risk, the potential magnitude of misstatement, and its likelihood. Significant risks are those risks that have a higher risk of material misstatement.

This section provides commentary on the significant audit risks communicated in the Audit Plan.

Risks identified in our Audit Plan

Commentary

Management override of controls

Under ISA (UK) 240, there is a non-rebuttable presumed risk that the risk of management override of controls is present in all entities. The Council faces external scrutiny of its spending and this could potentially place management under undue pressure in terms of how they report performance.

We therefore identified management override of control, in particular journals, management estimates, and transactions outside the course of business as a significant risk for the Council.

In response to this risk we have:

- evaluated the design effectiveness of management controls over journals
- analysed the journals listing and determine the criteria for selecting high risk unusual journals
- tested unusual journals recorded during the year and after the draft accounts stage for appropriateness and corroboration
- gained an understanding of the accounting estimates and critical judgements applied made by management and consider their reasonableness with regard to corroborative evidence
- evaluated the rationale for any changes in accounting policies, estimates or significant unusual transactions.

Our audit work has not identified any issues in respect of management override of controls.

From our review of all journals posted during the year, we identified specific routines to consider and test in detail. These included consideration of material post year-end journals, journals posted by senior officers and journals posted to unusual account combinations. This identified a sample of 76 journals to test for potential management override. In addition, we performed testing of a further three journals identified through supplementary procedures focusing on a combination of risk based characteristics.

From testing carried out, there has been no evidence of inappropriate management override of controls through journals. This area of work is subject to follow up of queries based on initial review.

Our commentary on key accounting estimates is set out on pages 13 to 16. We found accounting policies to be appropriate.

Improper revenue and expenditure recognition risk (ISA240)

This risk- risk rebutted as explained in the Audit Plan.

Despite revenue and expenditure recognition not being a significant risk we still undertook the following procedures to ensure that revenue and expenditure included within the accounts is materially correct.

Our audit procedures have not identified any reason to reverse this rebuttal and substantive income and expenditure testing has not identified any errors that we are required to bring to your attention.

2. Financial Statements - Significant risks

Risks identified in our Audit Plan

Commentary

Valuation of Land & Buildings & Investment Property

The Council revalues its land and buildings on a rolling basis. Investment Property is valued annually. Revaluations are shared between the Council's Internal Valuer and an external valuation expert, Sanderson Weatherall.

These valuations represent a significant estimate by management in the financial statements due to the size of the numbers involved and the sensitivity of this estimate to changes in key assumptions.

Additionally for land and buildings, management will need to ensure the carrying value in the financial statements is not materially different from the current value or the fair value at the financial statements date, where a rolling programme is used.

For assurance over the balance sheet valuation of land & Buildings (including valuations undertaken by both the internal and external valuation experts) we have:

- evaluated management's processes and assumptions for the calculation of the valuation estimate, the instructions issued to valuation experts and the scope of their work
- evaluated the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the Council's valuation expert
- written to the Council's valuation expert and discussed with the valuer the basis on which the valuation was carried out
- challenged the information and assumptions used by the valuer to assess completeness and consistency with our understanding
- tested revaluations made during the year to see if they had been input correctly into the Council's asset register
- evaluated the assumptions made by management for those assets not revalued during the year and how management has satisfied themselves that these are not materially different to current value at year end

The value of investment property is £1.344m and was not therefore considered a risk of material misstatement on the Council's Balance Sheet.

As part of our overall audit work we tested 34 asset valuations, including individually large assets or those with unusual movements, as well as a sample across the remainder of the total population of 104 assets. In completing our work we examined the accounting entries, data and assumptions used, relevant asset indices and considered those assets not revalued.

Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in respect of the valuation of land and buildings reported on the Council's Balance Sheet. However the following matters have been raised with management but management has not adjusted the financial statements as the values are not material.

- Note 17 Property Plant and Equipment table showing assets by year of valuation omits an asset revalued as £0.65m during 2021/22 and incorrectly reports it as valued in 2019/20
- Note 21 Assets Held for Sale is overstated by £0.54m due to an asset held for sale being incorrectly reported at its carrying value rather than the realisable value.

Both of these matters are reported as unadjusted errors at Appendix C.

There remain some minor outstanding queries in this area and responses to review points raised on review of the work completed to date.

2. Financial Statements - Significant risks

Risks identified in our Audit Plan

Commentary

Valuation of the Pension Fund Net Liability

The Council's pension fund net liability, as reflected in its balance sheet as the net defined benefit liability, represents a significant estimate in the financial statements.

The pension fund net liability is considered a significant estimate due to the size of the numbers involved and the sensitivity of the estimate to changes in key assumptions.

We therefore identified valuation of the Council's pension fund net liability as a significant risk of material misstatement.

In response to this risk we have:

- updated our understanding of the processes and controls put in place by management to ensure that the Council's pension fund net liability is not materially misstated and evaluated the design of the associated controls
- evaluated the instructions issued by management to their management expert (an actuary) for this estimate and the scope of the actuary's work
- assessed the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the actuary who carried out the Council's pension fund valuation
- assessed the accuracy and completeness of the information provided by the Council to the actuary to estimate the liability
- tested the consistency of the pension fund asset and liability and disclosures in the notes to the core financial statements with the actuarial report from the actuary
- undertaken procedures to confirm the reasonableness of the actuarial assumptions made by reviewing the report of the consulting actuary (as auditor's expert) and performing any additional procedures suggested within the report
- obtained assurances from the auditor of Cheshire Pension Scheme as to the controls surrounding the validity and accuracy of membership data; contributions data and benefits data sent to the actuary by the pension fund and the fund assets valuation in the pension fund financial statements

Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in respect of the valuation of the pension fund net liability reported on the Council's Balance Sheet. However the following matter has been raised with management but management has not adjusted the financial statements as the value is not material:

- The auditor of Cheshire Pension Fund has reported an unadjusted error of £9.379m understatement in the value of the Fund's investments. Halton Council's share of this error is £1.032m (11%) which is not considered to be material by management and therefore not adjusted. This matter is reported in the schedule of unadjusted errors at Appendix C.

2. Financial Statements – Other risks identified in the audit plan

Risks identified in our Audit Plan

Commentary

Accounting for Mersey Gateway Bridge Private Finance Initiative (PFI) liability

The Mersey Gateway Bridge PFI scheme is large and high profile to the residents of the borough.

PFI schemes are complex and involve a degree of subjectivity in the measurement of financial information.

We therefore identified the accuracy and presentation of the Mersey Gateway Bridge PFI scheme as a risk for the audit.

In response to this risk we have:

- reviewed the PFI model and assumptions contained within
- obtained an understanding of any changes to PFI contracts made since the prior year
- compared the PFI model to the prior year model to identify any changes
- reviewed and tested the output produced by the PFI model to generate financial balances within the financial statements
- reviewed the disclosures relating to the PFI scheme for compliance with the Code and the International Accounting Standard IFRIC12

Our audit work has not identified any issues in respect of the Council's accounting for Mersey Gateway PFI liability.

Accounting for grant revenues and expenditure correctly

The Council (as with all other Local Authorities) has been the recipient of significant increased grant revenues during the 2021/22 financial year relating to Covid-19.

In common with all grant revenues, the Council will need to consider for each type of grant whether it is acting as agent or principal, and depending on the decision how the grant income and amounts paid out should be accounted for.

In response to this risk we have:

- held discussions with management to understand the different types of material grants received during 2021/22 and any conditions applicable
- understood the conditions for payment out to other entities, businesses and individuals
- understood whether the Council should be acting as agent or principal for accounting purposes; and
- tested material grant revenues to ensure the Council has accounted for these correctly.

Subject to completion of audit testing where there are two outstanding sample items, our audit work has not identified any issues in respect of accounting for grant revenues and associated expenditure.

2. Financial Statements – Other risks identified in the audit plan

Risks identified in our Audit Plan

Commentary

Value of Infrastructure assets and the presentation of the gross cost and accumulated depreciation in the PPE note

Infrastructure assets includes roads, highways, streetlighting and bridge assets. Each year the Council spends a material sum on Infrastructure capital additions. As at 31 March 2021, the net book value of infrastructure assets was £640m, with the majority relating to the Mersey Gateway Bridge.

In accordance with the Code, Infrastructure assets are measured using the historical cost basis, and carried at depreciated historical cost. With respect to the financial statements, there are two risks which we plan to address:

The risk that the value of infrastructure assets is materially misstated as a result of applying an inappropriate Useful Economic Life (UEL) to components of infrastructure assets.

The risk that the presentation of the PPE note is materially misstated insofar as the gross cost and accumulated depreciation of Infrastructure assets is overstated. It will be overstated if management do not derecognise components of Infrastructure when they are replaced.

Our review of the Council's arrangements for accounting for infrastructure assets noted that, as with many other local authorities, they do not fully comply with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and International Accounting Standard (IAS) 16. The Council, in common with most other local authorities capitalises additional expenditure on infrastructure assets, for example on resurfacing roads. However, the Council does not write out the gross cost and depreciation values relating to the original spend on the same asset where capital improvements occur. As a result, there is a risk that the gross cost and depreciation balances are materially misstated. The Council has deemed that the treatment applied does not however, materially impact the Net Book Value of Infrastructure assets.

The valuation of Infrastructure assets in local government continues to be an on-going national issue. Given the value of infrastructure assets at the Council totals over £626m, a resolution for the sector is necessary before we are able to conclude on the 2021-22 audit.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities are continuing to work on a Statutory Instrument (SI), with a plan to this being laid in Parliament on 30 November 2022 and coming into force on 25 December 2022. We expect that the SI, along with updates to the CIPFA Code, will resolve the majority of the ongoing audit challenges related to Infrastructure asset balances. We will conclude our work in this area after publication of the SI and consider any further reporting impact.

2. Financial Statements – new issues and risks

This section provides commentary on new issues and risks which were identified during the course of the audit that were not previously communicated in the Audit Plan and a summary of any significant deficiencies identified during the year.

Issue	Commentary	Auditor view
<p>IFRS 16 implementation</p> <p>Following consultation and agreement by FRAB, the Code will provide for authorities to opt to apply IFRS 16 in advance of the revised implementation date of 1 April 2024. If management elect to implement IFRS 16 from April 2022 (early adoption) then in 2021/22 accounts as a minimum, we would expect audited bodies to disclose the title of the standard, the date of initial application and the nature of the changes in accounting policy for leases, along with the estimated impact of IFRS 16 on the accounts</p>	<p>Halton Council is not intending to exercise early adoption of IFRS16 for 2022/23 and therefore no additional disclosure is required in 2021/22.</p>	<p>We have no further comments, although management will need to include additional IFRS 16 disclosures in the 2022/23 financial statements as that will be the year prior to adoption.</p>

2. Financial Statements – key judgements and estimates

This section provides commentary on key estimates and judgements inline with the enhanced requirements for auditors.

Significant judgement or estimate	Summary of management's approach	Audit Comments	Assessment
<p>Land and Building valuations – £202m (PY £199.8m)</p> <p>Land £33.7m</p> <p>Buildings £168.2m</p>	<p>All land is revalued at 31 March 2022 totalling £33.7m Buildings comprise £168.2m with the majority being specialised assets such as schools and libraries, which are required to be valued at depreciated replacement cost (DRC) at year end, reflecting the cost of a modern equivalent asset necessary to deliver the same service provision. The remaining assets are not specialised in nature and are required to be valued at existing use in value (EUV) at year end. The Council has engaged Sanderson Wetherall LLP to complete the valuation of the majority of property as at 31 March 2022 with the remaining property within the valuation cycle valued by the Council's Internal valuer. 50% of total Land and Buildings were revalued during 2021/22.</p> <p>Statement of Accounting Policy 15 Non-Current Assets, Property, Plant and Equipment details the Council's policy which is consistent with the previous year and with our expectations.</p> <p>Management undertake a rolling programme of revaluations to ensure that all assets are revalued at least every three years on an agreed schedule. The revaluation by the professional valuer is dated 31 March 2022.</p> <p>Management considered the year end value of non-valued properties, and the potential valuation change in the assets revalued during 2021/22 (at 31 March valuation date) to determine whether there has been a material change in the total value of these properties. Management's assessment of assets not revalued has identified no material change to the value of these properties.</p> <p>The total year end valuation of land and buildings was £202m, a net increase of £2.2m from 2020/21 (£199.8m).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have assessed the Council's external valuer, Sanderson Wetherall LLP and the Council's internal valuer, to be competent, capable and objective We have carried out completeness and accuracy testing of the underlying information provided to the valuer used to determine the estimate, including floor areas Valuation methods remain consistent with the prior year, however in response to 2020/21 audit recommendation Council has moved from a five yearly to a three yearly valuation cycle from 2021/22 to gather better assurance on the overall valuations. The valuation date has also moved from 31 October to 31 March to give further assurance In relation to assets not revalued in the year, we have compared the Council's carrying values to movements reported by Gerald Eve indices (valuation specialists), and concluded there were no material valuation differences. We also challenged the Council's valuation specialists on valuation differences identified through our sensitivity analysis work using other indices. There are no significant matters to report Overall we are satisfied the Council's land and buildings valuation is not materially misstated. Non-material valuation items are reported at page 8. The accounting policy is adequately disclosed and estimation techniques are properly supported. 	Light Purple

Assessment

- [Purple] We disagree with the estimation process or judgements that underpin the estimate and consider the estimate to be potentially materially misstated
- [Blue] We consider the estimate is unlikely to be materially misstated however management's estimation process contains assumptions we consider optimistic
- [Grey] We consider the estimate is unlikely to be materially misstated however management's estimation process contains assumptions we consider cautious
- [Light Purple] We consider management's process is appropriate and key assumptions are neither optimistic or cautious

2. Financial Statements - key judgements and estimates

Significant judgement or estimate	Summary of management's approach	Audit Comments	Assessment																								
Net pension liability – £91.2m (PY £169.1m)	<p>The Council's net pension liability at 31 March 2022 is £91.2m (PY £169.1m) falling within the Cheshire Pension Fund Local Government Scheme. The liability has reduced due to an improvement in actuarial forecasts. The Council uses Hymans Robertson LLP to provide actuarial valuations of the Council's assets and liabilities derived from this scheme. A full actuarial valuation is required every three years.</p> <p>The latest full actuarial valuation was completed in 2019 and was reflected in the 2019/20 financial statements. A roll forward approach is used in intervening periods which utilises key assumptions such as life expectancy, discount rates, salary growth and investment return. Given the significant value of the net pension fund liability, small changes in assumptions can result in significant valuation movements. There has been a £77.9m net actuarial gain during 2021/22.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have assessed the Council's actuary, Hymans Robertson, to be competent, capable and objective We have performed additional tests in relation to accuracy of contribution figures, benefits paid, and investment returns to gain assurance over the 2021/22 roll forward calculation carried out by the actuary and have no issues to raise. We have used PwC as our auditor expert to assess the actuary and assumptions made by actuary – see table below for our comparison of the key assumptions which confirms they lie within expectations: <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Assumption</th> <th>Actuary Value</th> <th>PwC range</th> <th>Assessment</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Discount rate</td> <td>2.7%</td> <td>2.70%-2.75%</td> <td>●</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pension increase rate</td> <td>3.2%</td> <td>3.15%-3.3%</td> <td>●</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Salary growth</td> <td>3.9%</td> <td>3.7%-5.7%</td> <td>●</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Life expectancy – Males current pensioners aged 65</td> <td>21.2 years</td> <td>20.1-22.7 years</td> <td>●</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Life expectancy – Females current pensioners aged 65</td> <td>23.8 years</td> <td>22.9-24.9 years</td> <td>●</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Assumption	Actuary Value	PwC range	Assessment	Discount rate	2.7%	2.70%-2.75%	●	Pension increase rate	3.2%	3.15%-3.3%	●	Salary growth	3.9%	3.7%-5.7%	●	Life expectancy – Males current pensioners aged 65	21.2 years	20.1-22.7 years	●	Life expectancy – Females current pensioners aged 65	23.8 years	22.9-24.9 years	●	Light Purple
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have confirmed the controls and processes over the completeness and accuracy of the underlying information used to determine the estimate We have confirmed there were no significant changes in 2021/22 to the valuation method <p>Subject to the non-material valuation matters reported at page 9 of this report, we are satisfied with the reasonableness of estimate of the net pension liability.</p>																									

2. Financial Statements - key judgements and estimates

Significant judgement or estimate	Summary of management's approach	Audit Comments	Assessment
Provisions for NNDR appeals - £6.654m (PY £8.382m)	The Council are responsible for repaying a proportion of successful rateable value appeals. Management has calculated a provision based upon the latest information about outstanding rates appeals provided by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) and previous success rates. The provision for non domestic rate appeals is £6.654m (£8.382m in 2020/21)	<p>We examined the estimate, considering the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> appropriateness of the underlying information used to determine the estimate impact of any changes to valuation method consistency of estimate against peers/industry practice reasonableness of increase in estimate adequacy of disclosure of estimate in the financial statements. <p>We were satisfied with the methodology for the calculation of the provision.</p>	Light Purple
Minimum Revenue Provision - £9.403m (PY £9.356m)	<p>The Council is responsible on an annual basis for determining the amount charged for the repayment of debt known as its Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The basis for the charge is set out in regulations and statutory guidance.</p> <p>The year end MRP charge was £9.4m, a net increase of £47k from 2020/21.</p>	<p>We have reviewed the Council's calculation of MRP and concluded that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Council's policy on MRP complies with statutory guidance the Council's MRP has been calculated in line with the statutory guidance 	Light Purple
Mersey Gateway toll income and penalty charge notice (PCN) and associated bad debt provision	<p>A significant proportion of the Authority's bad debt provision relates to the collectability of Mersey Gateway Bridge PCNs. At 31 March 2022 the PCN and Toll debt was £16.264m (PY £17.62m) against which the Council has provided £13.5m or 83% (PY £12.652m 71%).</p> <p>Indications show that the level of PCN debt is falling which may in part be due to reduced crossings caused due to increased familiarity with the Toll and changed working patterns brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>	<p>We have performed the following work in response to the identified risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reviewed the level of PCN and Toll debt at 31 March 2022 and management's assumptions regarding collectability in arriving at the bad debt provision reviewed management's process for identifying and writing out uncollectable Toll and PCN debt <p>Upon enquiry with the Mersey Gateway Crossings Board Ltd (MGCB) who issue the PCNs we have received assurance that the majority of toll income is paid without recourse to PCN, and MGCB has a reasoned approach to unpaid PCNs based upon ability to pay.</p> <p>We are satisfied that management has prudently calculated the expected recovery of PCN and toll debt in the 2021/22 financial statements.</p>	Light Purple

2. Financial Statements - key judgements and estimates

Significant judgement or estimate	Summary of management's approach	Audit Comments	Assessment
<p>Grants Income Recognition and Presentation – Note 7 Revenue Grants Credited to services £184.7m (PY £179.4m). This excludes non specific grant income shown in note 5</p> <p>Due to the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a significant increase in the level of Covid related grant funding with associated complexity and management judgement required. This has comprised a mix of discretionary and non discretionary schemes.</p>	<p>Management take into account three main considerations in accounting for grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> whether the authority is acting as the principal or agent and particularly whether it controls the goods or services before they transfer to the service recipient. Management's assessment needs to consider all relevant factors such as who bears credit risk and responsibility for any overpayments, who determines the amount, who sets the criteria for entitlement, who designs the scheme and whether there are discretionary elements. whether there are conditions outstanding (as distinct from restrictions) that would require the grant to be recognised as receipt in advance, otherwise grant should be recognised as income whether the grant is a specific or non-specific grant. General un-ringfenced grants are disclosed on the face of the CIES, whereas ringfenced grants are required to be credited to service revenue accounts. <p>There may be significant judgements over the accounting treatment. Different conclusions may be reached by authorities depending on how they have applied any discretion in administering the schemes .</p>	<p>We completed sample testing on grant income, considering;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> whether the Council is acting as the principal or agent which would determine whether the authority recognises the grant at all the completeness and accuracy of the underlying information used to determine whether there are conditions outstanding (as distinct from restrictions) that would determine whether the grant be recognised as a receipt in advance or income the impact for grants received, whether the grant is specific or non specific grant (or whether it is a capital grant) – which impacts on where the grant is presented in the CIES. the adequacy of disclosure of judgement in the financial statements. <p>The Council assessed the major business support grant programmes administered during the financial year to determine whether the Council was acting as principal (where the Council had discretion over the amount of funding to award or the criteria for who could be awarded funding) or agent (passing money to businesses on behalf of government).</p> <p>In acting as principal, the Council carried forward any unspent balances on these grants to 2022/23 as receipts in advance. Where the Council acts as an agent, any unspent balances are carried forward as a creditor.</p> <p>We are satisfied that the Council's judgement is reasonable based on the terms of the grant and how they have applied it.</p>	Light Purple

Assessment

- **Dark Purple** We disagree with the estimation process or judgements that underpin the estimate and consider the estimate to be potentially materially misstated
- **Blue** We consider the estimate is unlikely to be materially misstated however management's estimation process contains assumptions we consider optimistic
- **Grey** We consider the estimate is unlikely to be materially misstated however management's estimation process contains assumptions we consider cautious
- **Light Purple** We consider management's process is appropriate and key assumptions are neither optimistic or cautious

2. Financial Statements - other communication requirements

We set out below details of other matters which we, as auditors, are required by auditing standards and the Code to communicate to those charged with governance.

Issue	Commentary
Matters in relation to fraud	We have previously discussed the risk of fraud with the Audit and Governance Committee. We have not been made aware of any other incidents in the period and no other issues have been identified during the course of our audit procedures.
Matters in relation to related parties	We are not aware of any related parties or related party transactions which have not been disclosed. We have recommended that management review their processes to disclose related party transactions so as to report only those related parties where the Council exercises control.
Matters in relation to laws and regulations	You have not made us aware of any significant incidences of non-compliance with relevant laws and regulations and we have not identified any incidences from our audit work.
Written representations	A letter of representation has been requested from the Council which is shown at Appendix E.
Confirmation requests from third parties	We requested permission from management to send confirmation requests to the Council's bankers and a sample of investment counterparties. This permission was granted and the requests were sent and responded to with positive confirmations.
Accounting practices	We have evaluated the appropriateness of the Council's accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures. Our review found no material omissions in the financial statements.
Audit evidence and explanations/ significant difficulties	All information and explanations requested from management was provided.

2. Financial Statements - other communication requirements



Our responsibility

As auditors, we are required to “obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence about the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern assumption in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements and to conclude whether there is a material uncertainty about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern” (ISA (UK) 570).

Issue	Commentary
Going concern	<p>In performing our work on going concern, we have had reference to Statement of Recommended Practice – Practice Note 10: Audit of financial statements of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom (Revised 2020). The Financial Reporting Council recognises that for particular sectors, it may be necessary to clarify how auditing standards are applied to an entity in a manner that is relevant and provides useful information to the users of financial statements in that sector. Practice Note 10 provides that clarification for audits of public sector bodies.</p> <p>Practice Note 10 sets out the following key principles for the consideration of going concern for public sector entities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the use of the going concern basis of accounting is not a matter of significant focus of the auditor's time and resources because the applicable financial reporting frameworks envisage that the going concern basis for accounting will apply where the entity's services will continue to be delivered by the public sector. In such cases, a material uncertainty related to going concern is unlikely to exist, and so a straightforward and standardised approach for the consideration of going concern will often be appropriate for public sector entities for many public sector entities, the financial sustainability of the reporting entity and the services it provides is more likely to be of significant public interest than the application of the going concern basis of accounting. Our consideration of the Council's financial sustainability is addressed by our value for money work, which is covered elsewhere in this report. <p>Practice Note 10 states that if the financial reporting framework provides for the adoption of the going concern basis of accounting on the basis of the anticipated continuation of the provision of a service in the future, the auditor applies the continued provision of service approach set out in Practice Note 10. The financial reporting framework adopted by the Council meets this criteria, and so we have applied the continued provision of service approach. In doing so, we have considered and evaluated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the nature of the Council and the environment in which it operates the Council's financial reporting framework the Council's system of internal control for identifying events or conditions relevant to going concern management's going concern assessment. <p>On the basis of this work, we have obtained sufficient appropriate audit evidence to enable us to conclude that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a material uncertainty related to going concern has not been identified management's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

2. Financial Statements - other responsibilities under the Code

Issue	Commentary
Other information	<p>We are required to give an opinion on whether the other information published together with the audited financial statements including the Annual Governance Statement and Narrative Report, is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.</p> <p>Minor presentational improvements have been identified and have been adequately responded to by management. We plan to issue an unmodified opinion in this respect.</p>
Matters on which we report by exception	<p>We are required to report on a number of matters by exception in a number of areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with disclosure requirements set out in CIPFA/SOLACE guidance or is misleading or inconsistent with the information of which we are aware from our audit, • if we have applied any of our statutory powers or duties. • where we are not satisfied in respect of arrangements to secure value for money and have reported a significant weakness <p>We have nothing to report on these matters.</p>
Specified procedures for Whole of Government Accounts	<p>We are required to carry out specified procedures (on behalf of the NAO) on the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) consolidation pack under WGA group audit instructions.</p> <p>There is a delay with the NAO issuing WGA data collection instructions meaning that our specified procedures will not be completed until after the audit opinion is issued, resulting in a delay in the issue of the audit closure certificate as set out below.</p> <p>We are satisfied that the delayed WGA procedures should not result in a material matter for our opinion on the accounts or VFM duties.</p>
Certification of the closure of the audit	<p>We intend to delay the certification of the closure of the 2021/22 audit of Halton Borough Council in the audit report in order to complete our WGA procedures set out above and Value for Money work.</p>



3. Value for Money arrangements

Approach to Value for Money work for 2021/22

The National Audit Office issued its guidance for auditors in April 2020. The Code requires auditors to consider whether the body has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

When reporting on these arrangements, the Code requires auditors to structure their commentary on arrangements under the three specified reporting criteria.



Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Arrangements for improving the way the body delivers its services. This includes arrangements for understanding costs and delivering efficiencies and improving outcomes for service users.



Financial Sustainability

Arrangements for ensuring the body can continue to deliver services. This includes planning resources to ensure adequate finances and maintain sustainable levels of spending over the medium term (3-5 years)



Governance

Arrangements for ensuring that the body makes appropriate decisions in the right way. This includes arrangements for budget setting and management, risk management, and ensuring the body makes decisions based on appropriate information

Potential types of recommendations

A range of different recommendations could be made following the completion of work on the body's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, which are as follows:



Statutory recommendation

Written recommendations to the body under Section 24 (Schedule 7) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. A recommendation under schedule 7 requires the body to discuss and respond publicly to the report.



Key recommendation

The Code of Audit Practice requires that where auditors identify significant weaknesses in arrangements to secure value for money they should make recommendations setting out the actions that should be taken by the body. We have defined these recommendations as 'key recommendations'.



Improvement recommendation

These recommendations, if implemented should improve the arrangements in place at the body, but are not made as a result of identifying significant weaknesses in the body's arrangements

3. VFM - our procedures and conclusions

We have not yet completed all of our VFM work and so are not in a position to issue our Auditor's Annual Report. An audit letter explaining the reasons for the delay is attached in the Appendix F to this report. We expect to issue our Auditor's Annual Report by 31 December 2022. This is in line with the National Audit Office's revised deadline, which requires the Auditor's Annual Report to be issued no more than three months after the date of the opinion on the financial statements.

As part of our work, we considered whether there were any risks of significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We identified the risk set out in the table below. Our work on this risk is underway and an update is set out below.

Risk of significant weakness

Work performed to date

Financial Sustainability – addressing budget gaps in the medium-term financial plan

The Council has identified budget gaps (deficits) within its medium-term financial plan (MTFP) which will need to be addressed to secure financial sustainability. A balanced budget of £113.9m has been set for 2022/23 although with a planned transfer of £7.8m from reserves, however there are budget gaps of £11.7m in 2023/24 and £4.8m in 2024/25 and £6.6m in 2025/26. The use of reserves can only be a temporary measure to achieving long term financial sustainability.

In response to this risk we will:

- meet with management to review the steps taken by management to address the budget gaps in the MTFP
- test the robustness of assumptions within the MTFP where budget gaps are addressed
- ensure that the financial position is clearly explained to Members in budget monitoring reports and financial plans

Review of budget documentation and discussions with senior officers confirm there is a significant budget gap in the Council's medium-term financial plan, together with slippage against the 2022/23 quarter 2 position and forecast outturn.

The 2021/22 financial statements reported an outturn position over the approved budget by £1.195m, excluding unfunded covid costs of £1.118m which was met directly from earmarked reserves. The £1.195m overspend reduced the Council's General Fund Balance to £5.149m.

At 30 September 2022 the Council reports an overspend of £3.378m over the 2022/23 budget, forecast to increase to £7.586m by 31 March 2023.

The latest medium-term financial plan identifies the following funding gaps based upon council tax increases at 2.99%:

2023/24: £21.073m

2024/25: £1.909m

2025/26: £2.010m

Management recognise that there remains much uncertainty regarding future funding levels and cost inflation which would impact these values.

Management have developed a seven tier Transformation Plan to help address the underlying cost pressures and restore financial sustainability, but as with any transformation plan at this scale we anticipate reporting a risk of significant weakness and a key recommendation in our Auditor's Annual Report.

4. Independence and ethics

Independence

We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention. We have complied with the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard and confirm that we, as a firm, and each covered person, are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements

We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirements of the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard and we as a firm, and each covered person, confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

Further, we have complied with the requirements of the National Audit Office's Auditor Guidance Note 01 issued in May 2020 which sets out supplementary guidance on ethical requirements for auditors of local public bodies.

Details of fees charged are detailed in Appendix D.

Transparency

Grant Thornton publishes an annual Transparency Report, which sets out details of the action we have taken over the past year to improve audit quality as well as the results of internal and external quality inspections. For more details see [Transparency report 2020 \(grantthornton.co.uk\)](https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/transparency-report-2020)



4. Independence and ethics

Audit and non-audit services

For the purposes of our audit we have made enquiries of all Grant Thornton UK LLP teams providing services to the Council. No non-audit services were identified which were charged from the beginning of the financial year to the date of issue of this report (October 2022). Below are the audit related services provided during the year, as well as the threats to our independence and safeguards that have been applied to mitigate these threats.

Service	Fees £	Threats identified	Safeguards
Audit related			
Housing Benefits Subsidy Certification	19,344	Self-Interest (because this is a recurring fee)	The level of this recurring fee taken on its own is not considered a significant threat to independence as the fee for this work is £19,344 in comparison to the total fee for the audit of £134,951 and in particular relative to Grant Thornton UK LLP's turnover overall. Further, it is a fixed fee and there is no contingent element to it. These factors all mitigate the perceived self-interest threat to an acceptable level.
		Self review (because GT provides audit services)	To mitigate against the self review threat, the timing of certification work is done after the audit has completed, materiality of the amounts involved to our opinion and unlikelihood of material errors arising and the Council has informed management who will decide whether to amend returns for our findings and agree the accuracy of our reports on grants.
Teachers' Pension Agency Certification	7,500	Self-Interest (because this is a recurring fee)	The level of this recurring fee taken on its own is not considered a significant threat to independence as the fee for this work is £7,500 in comparison to the total fee for the audit of £134,951 and in particular relative to Grant Thornton UK LLP's turnover overall. Further, it is a fixed fee and there is no contingent element to it. These factors all mitigate the perceived self-interest threat to an acceptable level.
		Self review (because GT provides audit services)	To mitigate against the self review threat, the timing of certification work is done after the audit has completed, materiality of the amounts involved to our opinion and unlikelihood of material errors arising and the Council has informed management who will decide whether to amend returns for our findings and agree the accuracy of our reports on grants.

These services are consistent with the Council's policy on the allotment of audit work to your auditors. All services have been approved by the Audit and Governance Board and none of the services provided are subject to contingent fees.

Appendices

A. Action plan – Audit of Financial Statements

We have identified two recommendations for the Council as a result of issues identified during the course of our audit. We have agreed our recommendations with management and we will report on progress on these recommendations during the course of the 2021/22 audit. The matters reported here are limited to those deficiencies that we have identified during the course of our audit and that we have concluded are of sufficient importance to merit being reported to you in accordance with auditing standards.

Assessment	Issue and risk	Recommendations
Medium	<p>Note 21 Assets held for sale</p> <p>An asset held for sale is incorrectly reported at its carrying value rather than the realisable value, resulting in an overstatement of £0.54m.</p> <p>As set out in note 15(d) to the financial statements “When it becomes probable that the carrying amount of an asset will be recovered through the sale of a transaction rather than through its continuing use, it is reclassified as an Asset Held for Sale. The asset is revalued immediately before reclassification and then carried at the lower of this amount and fair value at highest and best use, less costs to sell”.</p> <p>The Council has not applied the correct accounting treatment in re-classifying the asset to ‘held for sale’ and there is a risk that similar matters could be identified in future.</p>	<p>In reclassifying assets to ‘held for sale’, the Council should ensure that Code guidance regarding AHFS valuation is followed and applied</p> <p>Management response</p> <p>Code guidance around Assets Held for Sale will be followed in future years.</p>
Medium	<p>Note 33 Financial instruments</p> <p>The financial instruments note should include a reconciliation between the fair values in the note and the Balance Sheet values. This will require the non financial instruments to be identified and included as reconciling items and allow a reader of the accounts to link back to the amounts disclosed in the Balance Sheet.</p>	<p>For the 2022/23 financial statements onwards the financial instruments disclosure note should include a reconciliation the values reported in the balance sheet to aid the understanding of the reader.</p> <p>Management response</p> <p>Reconciliation between the values in the note and the Balance Sheet will be considered if appropriate and beneficial to the reader of the accounts.</p>

Controls

- High – Significant effect on financial statements
- Medium – Limited Effect on financial statements
- Low – Best practice

Appendix B: Progress against prior year audit recommendations

We identified the following issues in our 2020/21 audit of the Council's financial statements, which resulted in 7 recommendations being reported in our 2020/21 Audit Findings Report. As part of our risk assessment we have also considered the impact of unadjusted prior period errors.

The 2020/21 recommendations and our assessment of progress in implementation are shown below.

Assessment	Priority	Issue and risk	Recommendation	Update on action taken
✓	Medium	1. Management undertake a rolling programme of revaluations to ensure that all assets are revalued at least every five years on an agreed schedule. The revaluation by the professional valuer is dated 31 October 2020. This presents the risk that assets not revalued and/or revalued assets at 31 October contain material movements at the year end.	<p>Management should undertake an annual assessment to quantify and clearly evidence whether:</p> <p>1. the assets not revalued as part of the five-year cycle are not materially misstated, 2. the movement between the valuation date and 31 March 2021 on revalued assets is not materially misstated.</p> <p>Management response</p> <p>As indicated in the management response to the 2019/20 Audit Findings Report, the Council is to move from a five yearly to a three yearly valuation cycle from 2021/22 to gain more assurance on the overall valuations. The valuation date will move to 31 January to give further assurance.</p>	Management have implemented this recommendation.
✓	Medium	2. The Council's bank reconciliations contain a high volume of historic reconciling items. This presents the risk that the Council's bank account may be incorrectly recorded in the general ledger.	<p>Review the reconciling items on bank reconciliations with a view to writing off any items that will not be cleared with particular reference to historic items.</p> <p>Management response</p> <p>Included within the bank reconciliation are 69 historic items totalling £93k. The Council will review this balance with a view to clearing.</p>	Management have implemented this recommendation.
✓	Medium	3. Certain organisations were disclosed as related parties in the 2020/21 disclosure note but did not meet the definition of related parties in accordance with section 3.9 of the Code.	<p>Ensure that related party disclosures are consistent with the guidance set out in the Code.</p> <p>Management response</p> <p>There have been significant improvements to the related party transaction note between the 2019/20 and 2020/21 statement of accounts. Work is already underway to ensure the note is improved further and consistent with guidance.</p>	Management have implemented this recommendation.

Assessment

✓ Action completed

X Not yet addressed

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Appendix B: Progress against prior year audit recommendations (cont.)

Assessment	Priority	Issue and risk	Recommendation	Update on action taken
✓	Medium	4. We note that there is a year on year improvement in supporting working papers. They could be improved further if debtor and creditor populations are cleansed to remove contra items, which will make audit sample selection more focused on true year end balances and thus increase efficiency during the audit.	<p>Improve the quality of year end working papers by preparing a cleansed schedule of debtor and creditor populations (which does not include matching debit and credits to offset)</p> <p>Management response</p> <p>The Council will work with the External Auditor to agree a format of these working papers for future years.</p>	We have noticed an ongoing improvement in the supporting 2021/22 working papers, although will continue to work with management to reduce the scale of contra entries within debtor and creditor balances.
✓	Medium	5. We note that there is a year on year improvement in supporting working papers. They could be improved further if a year on year analytical review was prepared to explain significant variances. This will also assist management in assuring that values are in accordance with expectations	<p>Prepare a year-on-year analytical review of significant movements at 31 March 2022 and thereafter.</p> <p>Management response</p> <p>Analytical review will be built into the closedown timetable.</p>	Management have implemented this recommendation.
X	Low	6. The presentation of the financial statements would be improved for the reader if the 2019/20 Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) comparator values were included in tabular format on the same page as the current year CIES. Similarly the prior year comparator notes would be better placed chronologically after the current year notes.	<p>Change the presentation of prior year comparators in the 2021/22 financial statements.</p> <p>Management response</p> <p>The presentation of comparator information has not been raised as an issue by any reader of the accounts. Regardless if there is available resource time the Council will review this.</p>	Not implemented.
✓	Low	7. Finance Team do not undertake any routine checking of the existence of assets held on the fixed asset register, and rely on notification by the staff responsible for the asset regarding any potential disposals or obsolescence.	<p>Control recommendation that the Finance Team undertake regular testing of assets held on the asset register for existence and making subsequent amendments where necessary.</p> <p>Management response</p> <p>The Council's Internal Audit team carry out checks as part of their programme of work on control of assets.</p>	Management have implemented this recommendation via the Internal Audit function.

C. Audit Adjustments

We are required to report all non trivial misstatements to those charged with governance, whether or not the accounts have been adjusted by management.

Impact of adjusted misstatements

There have been no adjusted misstatements identified during the 2021/22 audit which would impact the key statements and the reported net expenditure for the year ending 31 March 2022.

C. Audit Adjustments

Misclassification and disclosure changes

The table below provides details of misclassification and disclosure changes identified during the audit which have been made in the final set of financial statements.

Disclosure omission	Auditor recommendations	Adjusted?
Statement of cash flows	Adjusted to reflect £1.972m net outflow of agency grants not shown in financing activities.	✓
Note 1 – Expenditure and Funding Analysis	Compilation error of £15.417m in Segmental Income and Expenditure table regarding overstatement of Mersey Gateway income.	✓
Note 7 – Grant Income	£2.9m grant income transferred from service line (Community and Resources) to Non Specific Grant Income on CIES as misclassified.	✓
Note 7 – Grant Income	REFCUS grant £5.061m transferred from service line to REFCUS grants as originally misclassified as fees and charges income.	✓
Note 10 – Officers Remuneration	Banding misclassification for two officers from £135 - £139k band to the band below.	✓
Note 11 Exit Packages	Banding misclassification for one officer from £20 – £40 k to the band below.	✓
Note 17 Property Plant and Equipment	The table showing assets by year of valuation incorrectly shows an asset valued at £065m as valued in 2020/21 which was in fact valued in 2019/20	X
Note 33 – Financial Instruments	Provision for overdue debt £18.476m within debt analysis table amended to £17.646k to be consistent with debtors note 23	✓
Note 33 – Financial Instruments	The financial instruments note should include a reconciliation between the fair values in the note and the Balance Sheet values	X
Accounting policies	Updated to report schools accounting as a critical judgement	✓
Other information	Some presentational improvements were made to the Narrative Report and Annual Governance Statement.	✓

C. Audit Adjustments

Impact of unadjusted misstatements

The table below provides details of adjustments identified during the 2021/22 audit which have not been made within the final set of financial statements. The Audit and Governance Board is required to approve management's proposed treatment of all items recorded within the table below.

Detail	Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000	Statement of Financial Position £' 000	Impact on total net expenditure £'000	Reason for not adjusting
Note 32 Pension Scheme				
Understatement of pension fund asset valuation		1,032		Not material to Halton's financial statements and based upon an estimated value
Dr Pension Investment	(1,032)			
Cr Remeasurement of net pension liability				
Note that this movement is reversed out to the Capital Adjustment Account under Local Authority accounting regulations so as not to impact the Council's overall financial position.				
Note 21 Assets Held for Sale				
An asset held for sale is incorrectly reported at its carrying value rather than the realisable value, resulting in an overstatement of £0.5m				
Dr Revaluation Reserve	540	540		Not material to Halton's financial statements
Cr Assets Held for Sale	(500)	(540)		
Overall impact	£(1,032)	£1,032	0	

C. Audit Adjustments

Impact of prior year unadjusted misstatements

The table below provides details of adjustments identified during the prior year audit which had not been made within the final set of 2020/21 financial statements

Detail	Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000	Balance Sheet £' 000	Impact on total net expenditure £'000	Reason for not adjusting	Impact on 2021/22 financial statements
Note 17 Property Plant and Equipment					
School valuation overstated by £615,700				Not material	No impact – revaluations reperformed in 2021/22 to address movements
Dr Revaluation Reserve		616			
Cr Buildings valuation		(616)			
Note 29 Other Long Term Liabilities (Pension Liability)					
The auditor of the Pension Fund reported an unadjusted investment understatement of £31.55m. Halton's share of the fund's investment asset is 10.64%, equating to a potential understatement in the Council's plan assets and overstatement in the net pension liability of £3.36m.				Not material and based upon an estimated value at a point in time	No impact – the liability at 31 March 2022 is based upon updated 2021/22 Pension Fund financial statements
Dr Pension Fund net liability		3,357			
Cr Remeasurement of net defined benefit liability	(3,357)				
Note that pension fund gains and losses are reversed through the Movement in Reserves Statement so do not impact the general fund.					
Other Income					
Income completeness testing identified s106 income of £570k received in April 2021 that was not accrued as a Debtor at year-end.				Not material	No impact for 2021/22 financial statements as unique to 2020/21
Dr Debtors		570			
Cr Income	(570)		(570)		
Overall impact	£(3,927)	£3,927	£(570)		

D. Fees

We confirm below our final fees charged for the audit and provision of audit related services. We confirm there were no non audit related services provided to the Council.

Audit fees	Proposed fee	Final expected fee
Council Audit	£134,951	£134,951*

Audit related fees	Proposed fee	Final expected fee
Housing Benefits Subsidy certification (Certification deadline 31 January 2023)	£19,344	£19,344
Teachers' Pensions Agency certification (Certification deadline 30 November 2022)	£7,500	£7,500
Total audit related fees (excluding VAT)	£26,844	£26,844

The above 2021/22 fees reconcile to the financial statements.

E. Management Letter of Representation

Grant Thornton UK LLP (FAO Michael Green)
 11th Floor Landmark Building
 St Peter's Square
 1 Oxford St
 Manchester
 M1 4PB

[Date] – {TO BE DATED SAME DATE AS DATE OF AUDIT OPINION}

Dear Sirs

Halton Borough Council
 Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2022

This representation letter is provided in connection with the audit of the financial statements of Halton Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2022 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the Council financial statements are presented fairly, in all material respects in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards, and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2021/22 and applicable law.

We confirm that to the best of our knowledge and belief having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

Financial Statements

i. We have fulfilled our responsibilities for the preparation of the Council's financial statements in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2021/22 ("the Code"); in particular the financial statements are fairly presented in accordance therewith.

ii. We have complied with the requirements of all statutory directions affecting the Council and these matters have been appropriately reflected and disclosed in the financial statements.

iii. The Council has complied with all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance. There has been no non-compliance with requirements of any regulatory authorities that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance.

iv. We acknowledge our responsibility for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud.

v. Significant assumptions used by us in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable. We are satisfied that the material judgements used in the preparation of the financial statements are soundly based, in accordance with the Code and adequately disclosed in the financial statements. We understand our responsibilities includes identifying and considering alternative, methods, assumptions or source data that would be equally valid under the financial reporting framework, and why these alternatives were rejected in favour of the estimate used. We are satisfied that the methods, the data and the significant assumptions used by us in making accounting estimates and their related disclosures are appropriate to achieve recognition, measurement or disclosure that is reasonable in accordance with the Code and adequately disclosed in the financial statements.

vi. We confirm that we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the valuation of pension scheme assets and liabilities for IAS19 Employee Benefits disclosures are consistent with our knowledge. We confirm that all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for. We also confirm that all significant post-employment benefits have been identified and properly accounted for.

vii. Except as disclosed in the financial statements:

- a. there are no unrecorded liabilities, actual or contingent
- b. none of the assets of the Council has been assigned, pledged or mortgaged
- c. there are no material prior year charges or credits, nor exceptional or non-recurring items requiring separate disclosure.

F. Management Letter of Representation

viii. Related party relationships and transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards and the Code.

ix. All events subsequent to the date of the financial statements and for which International Financial Reporting Standards and the Code require adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.

x. We have considered the adjusted misstatements, and misclassification and disclosures changes schedules included in your Audit Findings Report. The Council's financial statements have been amended for these misstatements, misclassifications and disclosure changes and are free of material misstatements, including omissions.

xi. We have considered the unadjusted misstatements schedule included in your Audit Findings Report and attached below. We have not adjusted the financial statements for these misstatements brought to our attention as they are immaterial to the results of the Council and its financial position at the year-end. The financial statements are free of material misstatements, including omissions.

xii. Actual or possible litigation and claims have been accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards.

xiii. We have no plans or intentions that may materially alter the carrying value or classification of assets and liabilities reflected in the financial statements.

xiv. We have updated our going concern assessment. We continue to believe that the Council's financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis and have not identified any material uncertainties related to going concern on the grounds that:

- a. the nature of the Council means that, notwithstanding any intention to cease its operations in their current form, it will continue to be appropriate to adopt the going concern basis of accounting because, in such an event, services it performs can be expected to continue to be delivered by related public authorities and preparing the financial statements on a going concern basis will still provide a faithful representation of the items in the financial statements
- b. the financial reporting framework permits the entry to prepare its financial statements on the basis of the presumption set out under a) above; and
- c. the Council's system of internal control has not identified any events or conditions relevant to going concern.

We believe that no further disclosures relating to the Council's ability to continue as a going concern need to be made in the financial statements

xv. The Council has complied with all aspects of ring-fenced grants that could have a material effect on the Council's financial statements in the event of non-compliance.

Information Provided

xvi. We have provided you with:

- a. access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the Council's financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
- b. additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of your audit; and
- c. access to persons within the Council via remote arrangements from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

xvii. We have communicated to you all deficiencies in internal control of which management is aware.

xviii. All transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements.

xix. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud

xx. We have disclosed to you all information in relation to fraud or suspected fraud that we are aware of and that affects the Council and involves:

- a. management;
- b. employees who have significant roles in internal control; or
- c. others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.

F. Management Letter of Representation

xxi. We have disclosed to you all information in relation to allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

xxii. We have disclosed to you all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing financial statements.

xxiii. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Council's related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware.

xxiv. We have disclosed to you all known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements.

Annual Governance Statement

xxv. We are satisfied that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) fairly reflects the Council's risk assurance and governance framework and we confirm that we are not aware of any significant risks that are not disclosed within the AGS.

Narrative Report

xxvi. The disclosures within the Narrative Report fairly reflect our understanding of the Council's financial and operating performance over the period covered by the Council's financial statements.

Approval

The approval of this letter of representation was minuted by the Council's Audit and Governance Board at its meeting on 23 November 2022.

Yours faithfully

Appendix – schedule of unadjusted errors:

See appendix c

F. Audit letter in respect of delayed VFM work



Our ref: 117426-106

Councillor Rob Polhill
Chair of Audit and Governance Board
Halton Council
Municipal Building
Kingsway
Widnes
WA8 7QF

Grant Thornton UK LLP
11th Floor Landmark Building
St Peter's Square
1 Oxford St
Manchester
M1 4PB
T +44 (0)161 234 6362

26 September 2022

Dear [Councillor Polhill](#)

The original expectation under the approach to VFM arrangements work set out in the 2020 Code of Audit Practice was that auditors would follow an annual cycle of work, with more timely reporting on VFM arrangements, including issuing their commentary on VFM arrangements for local government by 30 September each year at the latest. Unfortunately, due to the on-going challenges impacting on the local audit market, including the need to meet regulatory and other professional requirements, we have been unable to complete our work as quickly as would normally be expected. The National Audit Office has updated its guidance to auditors to allow us to postpone completion of our work on arrangements to secure value for money and focus our resources firstly on the delivery of our opinions on the financial statements. This is intended to help ensure as many as possible could be issued in line with national timetables and legislation.

As a result, we have therefore not yet issued our Auditor's Annual Reports, including our commentary on arrangements to secure value for money for 2020/21 or 2021/22. We now expect to publish both of these reports no later than 31 December 2022. The 2020/21 Auditor's Annual Report will be finalised once a regulatory decision is agreed regarding infrastructure asset accounting to enable the audit opinion to be issued. The 2021/22 Auditor's Annual Report will be finalised once the VFM audit fieldwork is completed and infrastructure asset accounting is agreed with regulators.

For the purposes of compliance with the 2020 Code, this letter constitutes the required audit letter explaining the reasons for delay.

Yours faithfully

Michael Green

Michael Green





STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS
2021/22

	Page
Contents	
Narrative Report by the Operational Director – Finance	1
Core Financial Statements	
Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	17
Balance Sheet	19
Movement in Reserves Statement	20
Cash Flow Statement	21
Notes to the Core Financial Statements	
1. Expenditure and Funding Analysis	22
2. Expenditure and Income Analysed by Nature	29
3. Other Operating Expenditure	29
4. Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	30
5. Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income	30
6. Material Items of Income and Expenditure	30
7. Grant Income	31
8. Disclosure of Deployment of Dedicated Schools Grant	34
9. Pooled Budgets	35
10. Officers Remuneration	37
11. Exit Packages and Termination Benefits	40
12. Member Allowances	41
13. Related Party Transactions	41
14. External Audit Fees	44
15. Events After the Balance Sheet Date	44
16. Capital Expenditure and Financing	45
17. Non-Current Assets, Property, Plant and Equipment	47
18. Heritage Assets	52
19. Investment Properties	53
20. Intangible Assets	54
21. Assets Held for Sale	55
22. Investments	55
23. Debtors	58
24. Cash & Cash Equivalents	59
25. Creditors	59
26. Borrowings	60
27. Provisions	61
28. Contingent Liabilities	61
29. Other Long Term Liabilities	62

30. Leases	62
31. Private Finance Initiatives and Similar Schemes	64
32. Pension Schemes	66
33. Financial Instruments	74
34. Adjustments between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulation	84
35. Usable Reserves	87
36. Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves	89
37. Unusable Reserves	91
38. Cash Flow Statement – Operating Activities	99
39. Cash Flow Statement – Investing Activities	100
40. Cash Flow Statement – Financing Activities	100
41. Interest in Companies and Other Entities	101

Supplementary Financial Statements

Collection Fund	103
Collection Fund Statement	104
Collection Fund Balance Sheet	105
Notes to the Collection Fund	106

Other

Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts	108
Statement of Accounting Policies	109
Glossary	132

Narrative Report by Operational Director - Finance

Introduction

The aim of this narrative is to provide an understandable guide to the Council's year-end financial position and future outlook which are relevant to the performance of the Council.

The Statement of Accounts sets out the Council's income and expenditure for the year and also provides a snapshot of the financial position as at 31st March 2022. Included are core financial statements supported by supplementary statements, which will help to provide an analysis of the financial performance of the Council over the financial year 2021/22.

Whilst the publication of the Statement of Accounts is a statutory requirement, the purpose behind the requirement is to provide stakeholders with clear information regarding the Council's financial performance over the past year. The Council continues to review the style and content of information within the Statement of Accounts to ensure the content included is relevant and material from both a quantitative and qualitative viewpoint.

The format and content of the financial statements is prescribed by the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting 2021/22 (known as The Code), which in turn is underpinned by International Financial Reporting Standards.

The Core Statements are:

- **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 which is funded from taxation. The end result is a very different position to how net outturn spend compared to budget is reported. A reconciliation between the two is provided as part of this narrative statement and the Expenditure and Funding Analysis Statement, included within Note 1.
- **Balance Sheet** – The Balance Sheet shows the value as at 31st March 2022 of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Council. The net assets of the Council (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Council.
- **Movement in Reserves Statement** – this statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Council, analysed into “Usable Reserves” i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure (both capital and revenue) or reduce local taxation, and “Unusable Reserves”, reserves which highlight changes to unrealisable gains or losses.
- **Cash Flow Statement** – this statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents (cash invested for 3 months or under) of the Council during the reporting

period. The statement shows how the Council generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. Cash flows arising from financing activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital (i.e. borrowing) to the Council.

- **Notes to the above Statements** – extensive notes to support the core statements are set out in accordance with the requirements of the Code. The notes shall:
 1. Present information about the basis of preparation of the financial statements and the specific accounting policies used.
 2. Disclose the information required by the Code that is not presented elsewhere in the core financial statements.

The Supplementary Financial Statements are:

- **Collection Fund Account** – this is a statement that reflects the statutory obligation for the Council as a billing authority to maintain a separate Collection Fund. The statements show the transactions of the Council in relation to the collection from taxpayers and distribution to major and local preceptors of council tax and non-domestic rates.

-

Other Statements / Financial Reports are:

- **Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts** – this statement sets out the responsibilities of the Council and the Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer).
- **Statement of Accounting Policies** – this statement explains the basis for the recognition, measurement and disclosure of transactions and other events in the accounts.
- **Independent Auditor’s Report to Members** – this is the report and certificate following the external audit of the Council’s accounts, carried out by Grant Thornton UK LLP.

Organisational Overview

The Council is structured with an Executive Board comprising ten portfolio holders (as at May 2022 this reduced to nine portfolio holders), whose areas of responsibility reflect the Council’s corporate priorities. There are six Policy and Performance Boards and an Audit & Governance Board, which also reflect the corporate priorities and undertake an overview and scrutiny role, along with a number of regulatory and other boards. Financial and non-financial key performance indicator data is reported to Policy and Performance Boards on a quarterly basis and is published on the Council’s website.

Operationally the Council's structure comprises two directorates. The People Directorate includes Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Schools, Education Services and Public Health. All other Council services operate within the Enterprise, Community & Resources Directorate.

There have been no significant changes to the Council's governance arrangements during 2021/22. However, further details regarding the effectiveness of those arrangements can be found in the Annual Governance Statement, which is reviewed, reported upon, and published annually alongside the Statement of Accounts.

There is close co-operation between the Council and Halton Clinical Commissioning Group (HCCG) to deliver integrated health and social care services utilising a pooled budget arrangement. As of 1st July 2022, HCCG will be dissolved and instead form part of the Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System (ICS).

The ICS consists of an Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). CCG functions will lift and shift to the ICB from the 1st of July. There is some uncertainty about delegations to place partnerships however, it is not expected that CCGs will propose, or ICBs will undertake any delegations in 2022/23. The existing Section 75 arrangements (an agreement which allows partners (NHS bodies and councils) to contribute to a common fund which can be used to commission health or social care related services) are a key consideration as the current Joint Working Agreement (JWA) is between the Council and Halton CCG.

The JWA is in place until 31st March 2023. For the remainder of the term this will be transferred to the ICB and renegotiated with a new agreement set out from April 2023. The first year will be a transition period, ensuring arrangements land safely with the changeover to ICB with any more significant changes being considered from 2023.

The Council is a member of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Combined Authority and works closely with the other five member councils in respect of a number of key service areas, including economic regeneration, highways and transport services. In addition, the Council is part of the LCR Business Rates Retention pilot scheme, designed to incentivise councils to develop their local economy by permitting them to retain any resulting growth in business rates. The pilot scheme will continue to operate through 2022/23, however participation in the scheme beyond March 2023 is uncertain.

The past decade of public austerity continues to have a significant impact on the Council. Using the Government's own interpretation of Spending Power, since 2010/11 Halton has had its spending power reduced in real terms by £50.6m (29%), the equivalent of £865 per dwelling. This continues to bring exceptional challenges for the Council in setting a robust, balanced budget each year whilst continuing to deliver high quality, essential public services. During the same period, demand for adults and children's social care services has increased steadily, adding further challenges and pressures on the budget.

The impact of the Covid pandemic has continued to present challenges to the Council over the past year, both in terms of service and financial pressures. There has been reduced Government financial support over the period in comparison to the previous financial year

(2020/21), but the Council continues to incur costs and loss of income relating to the pandemic. This is likely to be the same case in 2022/23 as the Council incur legacy costs as a result of the pandemic.

Financial Performance 2021/22

The Council incurs both revenue and capital expenditure. Revenue expenditure is generally on items which are used in the year, and net expenditure is generally financed by council tax, retained business rates and top-up funding. Capital expenditure generally has a life beyond one year and increases the value of an asset. The financing of capital expenditure is charged to revenue over a number of years in accordance with statutory requirements.

The Council operates a pilot scheme for the retention of 99% business rates (the remaining 1% going to Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service). The pilot is part of a scheme with all six member authorities of the Liverpool City Region. Government gave a guarantee that as a result of the pilot the Council would be no worse off than had it continued with business rate retention of 49%.

The impact of the pilot scheme for the Council is that both Revenue Support Grant and Improved Better Care Fund are no longer paid as separate grants but instead replaced by the additional retained business rates and an increased element of top-up funding.

On 3rd March 2021, Council set a 2021/22 revenue budget of £111.4m. At the same time, Council approved a council tax requirement for the year of £54.5m, setting the Band D rate at £1,549.34 (excluding preceptors). This was inclusive of a 1.99% increase to basic council tax and 3% increase to the Adult Social Care precept levy.

For 2021/22, the Council's total Government Settlement Funding Allocation was £52.4m. This is made up of £46.8m Business Rates Baseline Funding and Top-Up Grant of £5.6m. The increase to the Settlement Funding Assessment from 2020/21 was marginal at 0.1%. Government also provided a £4.0m ring-fenced grant specifically for social care. Whilst this represented an increase of £1.2m (30%) on the previous year, it was insufficient to keep pace with increasing demand and costs for both children's social care and adult social care.

Funding of the Council's budget position continues to be driven by locally raised taxes as opposed to support from Central Government. In 2010/11 local taxes accounted for 60% of the Council's net budget compared to 95% for 2021/22.

Financial performance and forecast of the Council's annual net spend is reported on a quarterly basis to both the Executive Board and Policy & Performance Boards. During 2021/22 financial performance reports consisted of two elements, one reporting on the operational day to day spending with a second reporting separately on the costs and funding associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

A budget risk register is maintained on a quarterly basis, key risks are evaluated and control measures put in place.

Going back to the start of austerity measures in 2010/11 the Council's budget has consistently been under financial pressure. Starting with large decreases in Government funding from 2010/11, followed by notable increases in demand pressures (predominantly within social care), has created a challenge each year in setting a balanced budget.

Whilst setting a balanced budget has been achieved, there then follows a greater test in ensuring net spend for the year remains within budget. From 2016/17 through to 2019/20 the Council recorded increasing net overspends against budget. This was reversed in 2020/21 with the Council recording net spend as £2.3m under the approved budget. It was noted at the time that this was considered to be a one-off given the impact of the Covid pandemic, with a number of services closing or running at reduced levels for a period of time. In addition, Government were responsive to the challenges brought by the pandemic and helped local government through providing a number of grant funding streams. At the time the Council did emphasise that the financial position for 2020/21 was a one-off and the budget pressures the Council had evidenced in the years preceding the pandemic were far from over, evident in the financial outturn for 2021/22.

Overall, the Council reported net spend for the year of £112.6m, £1.2m over the approved budget of £111.4m. Whilst not an ideal position, the final outturn figure represented an improvement from the quarter 2 and quarter 3 forecast of £5.8m and £3.0m respectively. This represented a continued push by operational directors to restrict spend to where absolutely necessary in all departments. Further details on day to day operational spending and Covid net costs are included further on in this report.

The final underspend against budget has reduced the Council's General Fund balance to £5.1m, approximately 4.5% of the Council's 2022/23 net budget of £113.9m.

The Council holds earmarked reserves which have been set aside to cover known future one-off costs. The value of earmarked reserves as at 31st March 2022 total £131.9m, an increase of £3.3m from £128.6m at the same point in 2021.

Included within the Earmarked Reserves is grant provided by the Department for Transport to assist in the running costs of Mersey Gateway. This reserve at 31st March 2022 totalled £73.4m, an increase of £9.2m from 31st March 2021. Note that this grant income is ring-fenced for spend on Mersey Gateway only, and cannot be utilised by the Council for any other purpose.

Details of the earmarked reserves are shown in Note 36.

The table below shows the movement on the Council's General Fund position compared to budget.

	2021/22 Original Budget £000	2021/22 Actual £000
Net Expenditure	111,446	112,641
Parish Precepts	147	147
Total	111,593	112,788
Financed by Local Taxpayers – Council Tax	(54,656)	(54,656)
Financed by Local Taxpayers – Business Rates*	(51,037)	(51,037)
Financed by Local Taxpayers – Council Tax Surplus	(333)	(333)
Financed by Top-Up Funding	(5,567)	(5,567)
(Surplus)/Deficit for Year	-	1,195
General Fund Balance Brought Forward	(6,342)	(6,342)
General Fund Balance Carried Forward	(6,342)	(5,147)

*Note – Actual level of business rates receipts in 2021/22 was £35.779m due to additional reliefs given, the balance of which was funded directly by Government grant.

Financial Performance 2021/22 – Operational Spending

The continued push to reduce spending during the second half of the financial year resulted in all departments' operational net spending to be under the approved budget for the year, the exception to this being Children & Family Services.

The main budget pressure for the Children & Families department was in relation to out of borough residential placements. Spend for the year was £12.5m against budget provision of £8.9m, resulting in an overspend of £3.6m. Demand pressures for the service have notably increased since 2014/15. The average number of children being placed in out of borough residential placements has increased from 38 to 70, an increase of 84%. Alongside the demand increase there has been a corresponding increase in costs. The average annual package cost of care has increased from £0.115m to £0.178m (55%) over the period 2014/15 to 2021/22.

The Council is also seeing demand pressures within Adult Social Care, although the increase in costs relating to this for the past year has been mitigated by a transfer of funds from the Complex Care Pool budget (hosted between the Council and Halton Clinical Commissioning Group). In addition, the Council has also used remaining funding from Covid grants to help mitigate these costs.

Severance costs incurred during the year totalled £0.7m (2020/21 - £0.4m). These were met from the Transformation Fund Reserve which the Council established to meet the costs associated with structural changes. Posts vacated from staff electing to take up voluntary redundancy terms have been deleted from the Council's staffing structure to provide on-going savings. Further details on exit packages can be found in supporting Note 11 to the financial statements.

Financial Performance 2021/22 – Covid-19 Impact

The impact of the Covid pandemic is still being felt on services and on the Council's financial position. It is considered that some services will continue to feel the financial impact of Covid over the short to medium-term which will have an impact on the Council's finances.

The gross cost and loss of income attributable to Covid over the past year totals £18.0m. In meeting this cost, £10.9m has been funded from specific grants provided by Government, £1.4m from the balance of 2020/21 general Covid grant, £4.4m general grant made available for 2021/22, and compensation for the loss of fees and charges totalling £0.2m. The balance of £1.1m has been funded directly by the Council from a review of earmarked reserves.

Legacy costs of the pandemic are unknown going forward but there should be expectancy that some areas will continue to experience costs or loss of income. This will need to be managed carefully as currently the expectation is that there will be no further financial support from Government. The Council will continue to lobby Government to provide further funding for the ongoing cost of Covid.

The Council have continued to support Government in responding to the pandemic by providing the process to passport on funding to businesses within the borough. To date business support grants totalling £29.7m have been provided to help businesses who have experienced a stop / start trading approach over the last two years.

Where the Council has acted as an agent only (on behalf of Government), these costs and associated funding are excluded from the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Schools

Expenditure incurred in relation to the Schools budget, both by individual schools and the Council, totalled £83.4m and is shown in more detail in Note 8.

School balances at 31st March 2022 total £7.4m (£7.1m 31st March 2021).

At 31st March 2022 there was a deficit of £1.9m (£1.0m 31st March 2021) of schools related central spend compared to the available funding. This balance will be carried forward into

2022/23 and the Council will undertake a DSG deficit recovery plan to set out how the £1.9m will be met over the next year.

Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement

Whilst the General Fund shows a net deficit for the year of £1.2m, the accounting position presented in the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement (CIES) shows a surplus for the year of £97.9m. The CIES takes a wider view of financial performance than that shown in the General Fund and shows the true accounting position for the year. This surplus represents the total amount by which the Council's equity has increased over the year as shown in the Balance Sheet.

Supporting the CIES is the Expenditure and Funding Analysis included in Note 1 to the accounts. It shows the movement by Council directorate from the year-end outturn position reported to the Council's Executive Board to what is included in the surplus position on the provision of services, included as part of the CIES.

The table below reconciles the General Fund overspend, via the deficit position on the provision of services, to the total surplus for 2021/22 on the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement. Included below the table are supporting notes to the amounts within the table.

	2021/22 £000
General Fund Underspend	1,195
Accounting Adjustments Provision of Services:	
Adjustment for Capital Purposes	
- Depreciation, Impairment and Revaluation Losses of Non-Current Assets	27,954
- Capital Grant Income	(7,519)
- Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital	7,938
- Gain on De-Recognition of Non-Current Assets	(1,232)
- Minimum Revenue Provision	(9,403)
- Other Capital Adjustments	(9,447)
Pension Adjustments	22,932
Movement in Reserves	(3,250)
Other Differences	(14,397)
Deficit on the Provision of Services	14,771
Accounting Adjustments Other:	
Surplus on Revaluation of Non-Current Assets	(9,686)
Gain on Pension Assets	(36,314)
Gain on Pension Assumptions (Demographic, Financial and Other)	(64,520)
Revaluation of Financial Assets Measured at Fair Value Through Other Comprehensive Income	(2,189)
Total Comprehensive Income & Expenditure	(97,938)

- **Adjustment for Capital Purposes**
 - Depreciation and Revaluation Losses of Non-Current Assets – Reflects the annual cost of assets consumed during the year
 - Capital Grant Income – Used to help fund the capital programme, recognised in the CIES in line with proper accounting practice.
 - Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital – Capital funded expenditure charged to the CIES under statute.
 - Gain on De-Recognition of Non-Current Assets and Financial Instruments – Largely net capital receipt gains over the year.
 - Minimum Revenue Position – Amount set aside in the General Fund to recognise the repayment of debt. In line with proper accounting practice this is not required to be included in the CIES.
- **Pension Adjustments** - Denotes the difference between the accounting cost of pensions (included in the CIES) and the actual employer contributions to the pension fund. More information on pensions is included elsewhere within the narrative report.
- **Movement in Reserves** - As per proper accounting practice, changes to reserves are not required to be included in the CIES.
- **Other Differences** – Includes the Collection Fund adjustment, which is the difference between amounts credited to the CIES and amounts to be recognised under statutory provisions relating to council tax and business rates.
- **Surplus on Revaluation of Non-Current Assets** - Increase in the value of those non-current assets that have been revalued during the year.
- **Gain on Pension Assets / Loss on Pension Adjustments** – Information on these adjustments is included within the Pension Liability heading as part of the narrative report.
- **Revaluation of Financial Assets Measured at Fair Value Through Other Comprehensive Income** – Increase in the value of financial instruments held. This has no impact on the General Fund.

Capital Planning

The Council prepares and reports a rolling capital programme to forecast the probable level of capital spend over the next three years, along with the likely sources of funding. The Council also maintains a capital reserve, which has been generated from revenue contributions in order to support the funding of the capital programme. The forecast shows that there are sufficient resources over the medium-term to cover the current capital programme, funded from borrowings, grants, revenue contributions, capital receipts and use of reserves.

At 31st March 2022, unused capital receipts were £1.1m, and the balance on the revenue backed capital reserve was £1.8m. Capital receipts are expected to increase over the next couple of years through anticipated receipts for the disposal of all of the remaining land at

HBC Fields (with corresponding repayment of grant liability) and Mersey Gateway handback sites. The forecast level of receipts as at 31st March 2025 is £8.9m.

The Council considers any new additions to the capital programme in light of the resources available.

On 2nd March 2022, Council approved the 2022/23 Capital Strategy. This helps to provide a high level, long-term overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management will contribute to the provision of services. It also provides an overview of how associated risks are managed and implications for future financial sustainability. The Council's Asset Management Working Group meet on a quarterly basis to plan and develop the Council's Asset Management Plan.

Capital Expenditure

The Council spent £21.3m on capital schemes (excluding finance leases) in 2021/22, compared with planned expenditure of £24.0m (which historically assumes 20% slippage in the £30.1m capital programme). The shortfall of spending is linked mainly to delays on Bridge and Highway Maintenance, Integrated Transport and Foundry Lane Residential Area projects. Major elements of spend on the 2021/22 capital programme include £1.8m spend on decarbonisation works at Halton Stadium, £5.5m on Runcorn Station Quarter works and £1.5m on bridge and highway maintenance.

The approved budget and capital outturn position, together with the various sources of funding is as follows:

	2021/22 Budget £000	2021/22 Actual £000	2021/22 Variance £000
Expenditure:			
Schools Related	2,498	1,145	1,353
People Directorate	1,430	1,218	212
Enterprise, Community and Resources Directorate	26,172	18,955	7,217
Total Expenditure	30,100	21,318	8,782
Funded By:			
Borrowing	(7,806)	(8,511)	705
Capital Receipts	(2,077)	(3,344)	1,267
Revenue	(22)	(124)	102
Grants and Other Contributions	(20,195)	(9,339)	(10,856)
Total Funding	(30,100)	(21,318)	(8,782)

Analysis of capital expenditure is included as part of the notes to the financial statements in Note 16.

Pension Liability

Under International Accounting Standard 19, the Council is required to restate its accounts to reflect the activities of the two major pension providers, the Cheshire Pension Fund and the Teachers' Pension Agency.

As at 31st March 2022 the Council has defined pension net liabilities of £91.2m. This is a decrease of £77.9m to the net liabilities of £169.1m from 31st March 2021. Scheme obligations have decreased by £30.7m over the course of the past year, linked to the remeasurement of financial assumptions. There has been an increase of £47.2m to the scheme assets attributable to the return on plan assets.

Funding levels of the pension fund are monitored on an annual basis. Following the triennial review in 2019, Council approved the payment of the past service deficit cost as a lump sum for the period 2020-2023, rather than paying these on a monthly basis as had been the historical preferred method. This resulted in a cash saving over the period given the forecast low level of investment returns and strong cash flow position of the Council.

Treasury Management

The Council operates within a Treasury Management framework, which requires that each year a strategy is prepared including setting prudential indicators to form a framework for the Council's borrowing and lending activities. The Council has adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management. Performance is regularly monitored throughout the year, with reports presented to the Council's Executive Board at the halfway point of the year and a report on the final outturn position.

For the majority of the past year the Bank of England held the interest base rate at the record low of 0.10%, although towards the end of the year there was a gradual increase to interest rates as efforts were made to control levels of inflation, reaching 0.75% in March 2022. The impact of rising interest rates should help to increase the return on cash investments that the Council will generate over the next year compared to 2021/22.

Over the past year the Council has benefited from investments with local authority counterparties where the rate of return on offer has been greater than that of more traditional investments whilst maintaining the same level of security.

The Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23 was approved by Council on 2nd March 2022. The aim of the treasury management operation is to ensure that cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low risk counterparties or instruments, with security being prioritised over yield.

As at 31st March 2022 long-term borrowing totalled £172m, well within the authorised borrowing limit. Borrowing comprises loans from the Public Works Loan Board of £162m and a Lenders Option Borrowers Option (LOBO) loan with Commerzbank for £10m. There was no new borrowing (long or short term) undertaken over the course of the year.

Of the £172m, total borrowing of £142m relates to the contribution from the Council towards the Mersey Gateway Bridge construction costs. This borrowing has been taken with a maturity period of between 26-30 years and will be repaid fully using toll income from the Mersey Gateway Crossing.

The Council's cash flow position continues to be well managed. Cash held (and deposits payable within 3 months) totals £13.3m (£21.5m in 2020/21), and short-term deposits (up to 1 year) total £100.1m (£70.1m in 2020/21). Deposits over 12 months total £10.7m (£5.0m in 2020/21), and £10.6m (£4.7m in 2020/21) is held as a longer-term investment in a property fund

The Council has a prompt payment discount scheme, whereby in agreement with suppliers it will arrange early payment of invoices in return for a percentage discount on the invoice total, a scheme that is equally beneficial to both parties.

All transactions relating to investments and borrowings complied with the approved guidelines for the year. Treasury management risk is evaluated within the Treasury Management Strategy and reviewed by the Council's Internal Audit function.

Collection Fund

The transactions on this fund record the collection of council tax and non-domestic rates.

The Business Rate Retention Scheme was implemented on 1st April 2013, with the Liverpool City Region pilot scheme introduced on 1st April 2017. As part of the pilot scheme, the Council collects non-domestic rates on behalf of Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service, and itself.

For the period to 31st March 2022, the Council as the Billing Authority collected council tax on behalf of Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service, Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, and itself.

As at 31st March 2022 the council tax position showed the Council had a gross surplus position of £2.8m (to be shared with major preceptors). In setting the 2022/23 budget the Council approved the use of £1.2m of the Collection Fund surplus in balancing the overall budget.

As at 31st March 2022 the Business Rates position showed the Council had a gross deficit position of £5.4m. This excludes grant of £4.7m received from Government to apply expanded retail discount relief to small businesses, the retail, leisure and hospitality sector, and nurseries during 2021/22.

Further details on the Collection Fund can be found within the supplementary financial statements.

Performance Measures 2021/22

The vision of the Council and its partners is that “Halton will be a thriving and vibrant borough where people can learn and develop their skills; enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality; sustained by a thriving business community; and safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhoods.”

The Council’s Corporate Plan 2019-2022 identifies the Council’s vision, values and principles and six strategic themes which underpin the work of the various departments and service areas across the Council. They are:

- Halton’s Children & Young People
- Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton
- Environment & Regeneration in Halton
- Healthy Halton
- Safer Halton
- Corporate Effectiveness and Efficiency

These strategic themes provide the basis for the development of key actions and activities, and performance measures, which are reported on a quarterly basis to the Policy and Performance Board with responsibility for scrutiny in each of these strategic areas. These Priority Based Performance Reports also contain information concerning the key developments and emerging issues that have arisen during the period of reporting.

These reports are placed on public deposit and are available on the Council’s website via the relevant Policy and Performance Board agenda packs. The reports identify what progress is being made throughout the year in relation to the delivery of predetermined actions and the progress of a range of measures including direction of travel and achievement of targets.

The reports provide financial statements identifying variation in planned spend during the quarter and providing an explanatory comment.

Policy and Performance Boards also receive a mid-year update concerning the implementation of mitigation measures for those risks contained within the Directorate Risk Registers which have been assessed as high.

This approach allows the opportunity for the effective scrutiny of the Council’s performance during the course of the year in order that any underperformance can be addressed in a

timely manner and/or resources can be realigned in response to prevailing conditions or pressures.

Listed below are a number of key performance indicators used in assessing the Council putting in place economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources:

- The average number of working days lost during the year due to sickness absence has increased from 10.02 in 2020/21 to 12.94 in 2021/22.
- Council tax collection rate for the year was 94.15%, an increase of 0.01% on this point last year. Cash collected during the year (on behalf of the Council, Fire, Police, LCR and local preceptors) was £68.4m against an expected budget of £65.9m. Cash collected includes growth to the council tax base and a further £2.2m collected from previous years' arrears.
- The 2021/22 collection rate for business rates was 97.38%, an increase of 1.2% on this point last year. Cash collected during the year (on behalf of the Council and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service) was £53.2m, including £1.1m relating to previous years' arrears.

Financial Planning

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is a major element of the Council's corporate planning process. It brings together resources and spending plans and identifies financial constraints over the medium-term. Its purpose is to ensure that resources are properly targeted towards Council priorities, to avoid excessive council tax rises, to deliver a balanced and sustainable budget, and to continue to identify efficiencies.

The public spending austerity programme has had, and will continue to have, a significant impact upon the Council's finances over the medium-term and this has been reflected in the MTFS.

The Council has continued to review its services, changing the way in which services are delivered in order to realise efficiencies. In addition, the Council has continued to seek improved procurement, better utilisation of assets, changes to staff terms and conditions, collaborative working with other Councils and partner agencies, and increased income from external sources in order to manage costs within the funding constraints imposed by Government.

The most recent MTFS was reported to the Council's Executive Board in November 2021 and subsequently updated as part of the budget report in March 2022. The latest report identified potential shortfalls in funding for the Council over the following three years of approximately £11.7m (2023/24), £5.0m (2024/25) and £6.6m (2025/26).

The 2022/23 net budget requirement of £113.9m was approved by Council on 2nd March 2022. The budget will be funded from £57.2m of council tax (an increase of 2.99% on the

2021/22 Band D level), business rates of £49.4m, top-up funding of £6.1m and a share of the collection fund surplus of £1.2m.

Beyond 2022/23 there is great uncertainty regarding the funding of Local Government, due to the potential impact of a number of changes to the local government funding regime, lack of certainty of future funding settlements and impact of the Fair Cost of Care programme due to be implemented from October 2023. Alongside the funding issue, the high cost of inflation is placing further pressure on local government finances. At the time of writing the CPI inflation rate has hit a high of 9.1%.

Conclusion

The past financial year has been a challenging time for the Council as it has slowly progressed out of the difficulties caused by the Covid pandemic. Forecasting work early in the financial year identified the significant financial risk of net spend for the year being in the region of £5m to £6m over the available budget. The hard work of members and officers has helped to control and reduce the overspend position to a more reasonable £1.2m.

The Council's financial base position remains sound. This has been evidenced through the work undertaken by the External Auditor, who concluded in their 2020/21 Annual Report that the Council had identified no significant weaknesses under the criteria for financial sustainability and arrangements in improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Reserve and provision balances continue to be set at prudent levels and continued commitment to capital expenditure allows the borough to develop and grow. The collection fund function funds 95% of the Council's net budget, supported by treasury management, and the prompt collection of external charges allows the Council to be more self-sufficient through funding from local resources, albeit with an increased level of risk.

I would like to thank all Members and Officers that have assisted greatly over the past year, which has helped contribute to and shape this set of financial statements.

Ed Dawson

Operational Director – Finance

Core Financial Statements

Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement as at 31st March 2022

		Gross Expenditure 2021/22 £000	Gross Income 2021/22 £000	Net Expenditure 2021/22 £000
Services	Note			
CONTINUING OPERATIONS				
Enterprise, Community and Resources		118,048	(63,016)	55,032
People		184,212	(87,639)	96,573
Schools		83,078	(77,390)	5,688
Corporate and Democracy		2,534	(1,770)	764
Mersey Gateway		33,843	(73,260)	(39,417)
Net Expenditure of Continuing Operations		421,715	(303,075)	118,640
Other Operating Expenditure	3			2,220
Financing and Investment Income & Expenditure	4			34,646
Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income	5			(140,735)
(Surplus) or Deficit on the Provision of Services				14,771
(Surplus) or Deficit on revaluation of Non-Current Assets	37			(9,686)
(Surplus) or Deficit on revaluation of financial assets measured at fair value through other comprehensive income	37			(2,189)
Remeasurement of net defined benefit liability	32			(100,834)
Other Comprehensive Income & Expenditure				(112,709)
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME & EXPENDITURE				(97,938)

Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement as at 31st March 2021

		Gross Expenditure 2020/21	Gross Income 2020/21	Net Expenditure 2020/21
Services	Note	£000	£000	£000
CONTINUING OPERATIONS				
Enterprise, Community and Resources		113,935	(56,569)	57,366
People		172,023	(85,589)	86,434
Schools		78,353	(76,366)	1,987
Corporate and Democracy		2,040	65	2,105
Mersey Gateway		28,777	(65,336)	(36,559)
Net Expenditure of Continuing Operations		395,128	(283,795)	111,333
Other Operating Expenditure	3			3,161
Financing and Investment Income & Expenditure	4			39,227
Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income	5			(135,721)
(Surplus) or Deficit on the Provision of Services				18,000
(Surplus) or Deficit on revaluation of Non-Current Assets	37			(5,992)
(Surplus) or Deficit on revaluation of financial assets measured at fair value through other comprehensive income	37			(1,015)
Remeasurement of net defined benefit liability	32			97,566
Other Comprehensive Income & Expenditure				90,559
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME & EXPENDITURE				108,559

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2022

31/03/2021			31/03/2022
£000		Note	£000
857,943	Non-Current Assets – Property Plant & Equipment	17	845,218
1,291	Heritage Assets	18	1,410
806	Investment Properties	19	1,344
762	Intangible Assets	20	632
2,913	Investments in Associates and Joint Ventures	22	5,102
9,722	Long Term Investments	22	21,329
14,060	Long Term Debtors	23	13,550
887,497	Total Long Term Assets		888,585
	Current Assets		
295	Inventories		396
6,060	Assets held for Sale < 12 months	21	12,738
35,903	Short Term Debtors	23	33,198
70,149	Short Term Investments	22	100,121
21,493	Cash/Cash Equivalents	24	13,327
133,900	Total Current Assets		159,780
	Current Liabilities		
(617)	Short Term Borrowing	26	(618)
(55,985)	Short Term Creditors	25	(71,905)
(16,270)	Short Term Grants Receipts in Advance	7	(9,400)
(3,922)	Provisions < 1 year	27	(3,673)
(76,794)	Total Current Liabilities		(85,596)
57,106	Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)		74,184
944,603	Total Net Assets		962,769
	Long Term Liabilities		
(172,000)	Long Term Borrowing	26	(172,000)
(6,542)	Provisions > 1 year	27	(4,867)
(6,874)	Long Term Grants Receipts in Advance	7	(14,004)
(529,817)	Other Long Term Liabilities	29	(444,590)
(715,233)	Total Long Term Liabilities		(635,461)
229,370	Total Assets Less Liabilities		327,308
(154,049)	Usable Reserves	35	(162,640)
(75,321)	Unusable Reserves	37	(164,668)
(229,370)	Total Equity		(327,308)

Signed by:



Ed Dawson – Operational Director Finance

Date: 13 July 2022

Movement in Reserves Statement

	General Fund	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	TOTAL USABLE RESERVES (Note 35)	TOTAL UNUSABLE RESERVES (Note 37)	TOTAL COUNCIL RESOURCES
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance as at 31st March 2020	(109,574)	(5,640)	(12,481)	(127,695)	(210,234)	(337,929)
Movement in Reserves during 2020/21						
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	18,000	-	-	18,000	90,559	108,559
Adjustments between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulations (note 34b)	(43,396)	3,558	(4,514)	(44,352)	44,352	-
Other Adjustments	6	-	(8)	(2)	2	-
(Increase)/Decrease in the year	(25,390)	3,558	(4,522)	(26,354)	134,913	108,559
Balance at 31st March 2021 carried forward	(134,964)	(2,082)	(17,003)	(154,049)	(75,321)	(229,370)
Balance as at 31st March 2021	(134,964)	(2,082)	(17,003)	(154,049)	(75,321)	(229,370)
Movement in Reserves during 2021/22						
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	14,771	-	-	14,771	(112,709)	(97,938)
Adjustments between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulations (note 34a)	(16,825)	1,021	(7,557)	(23,361)	23,361	-
Other Movements	(1)	-	-	(1)	1	-
(Increase)/Decrease in the year	(2,055)	1,021	(7,557)	(8,591)	(89,347)	(97,938)
Balance at 31st March 2022 carried forward	(137,019)	(1,061)	(24,560)	(162,640)	(164,668)	(327,308)

Please note that the General Fund Balance includes Earmarked Reserves and School Reserves. See Notes 1 and 36 for further details.

Cash Flow Statement as at 31st March 2022

2020/21 £000		Note	2021/22 £000
18,000	Net (surplus) or deficit on the provision of services		14,771
(42,654)	Adjustments to net (surplus) or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	38	(70,768)
14,894	Adjust for items in the net (surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	38	14,189
(9,760)	Net cash flows from Operating Activities		(41,808)
5,056	Net cash flows from Investing Activities	39	41,121
6,071	Net cash flows from Financing Activities	40	8,853
1,367	Net (increase)/decrease in cash and cash equivalents		8,166
(22,860)	Cash and Cash Equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	24	(21,493)
(21,493)	Cash and Cash Equivalents at the end of the reporting period	24	(13,327)

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

Please note the Accounting Policies are shown on page 109.

1. Expenditure and Funding Analysis

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis demonstrates how the funding available to the Council for the year (including government grants, council tax and business rates) has been used to provide services in comparison with those resources consumed or earned under generally accepted accounting practices. This also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between the Council's Directorates.

Expenditure and Funding Analysis 2021/22

	Outturn reported to Management	Movement in Earmarked Reserves	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund Balances	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounts Basis	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
	2021/22 £000	2021/22 £000	2021/22 £000	2021/22 £000	2021/22 £000
Enterprise, Community and Resources	47,343	(899)	46,444	8,588	55,032
People	89,174	1,589	90,763	5,810	96,573
Schools	-	(1,206)	(1,206)	6,894	5,688
Corporate and Democracy	(31,882)	6,950	(24,932)	25,696	764
Mersey Gateway	8,026	(9,233)	(1,207)	(38,210)	(39,417)
Net Cost of Services	112,661	(2,799)	109,862	8,778	118,640
Other Income and Expenditure	(111,466)	(451)	(111,917)	8,048	(103,869)
(Surplus) or Deficit	1,195	(3,250)	(2,055)	16,826	14,771
Opening General Fund Balance	(6,342)	(128,622)	(134,964)		
Transfer to from Earmarked Reserves to General Fund	-	-	-		
(Surplus) or Deficit in year	1,195	(3,250)	(2,055)		
Closing General Fund Balance at 31st March	(5,147)	(131,872)	(137,019)		

Note to Expenditure and Funding Analysis 2021/22

Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts	Other Income and Expenditure £000	Adjustments for Capital Purposes £000	Net change for the Pension Adjustments £000	Other Adjustments £000	Total Adjustments £000
Enterprise, Community and Resources People	(2,616)	3,314	8,235	(345)	8,588
Schools	(2,113)	252	7,850	(179)	5,810
Corporate and Democracy	2,093	217	3,701	883	6,894
Mersey Gateway	(9,580)	17,928	(429)	17,777	25,696
Net Cost of Services	(38,208)	(2)	-	-	(38,210)
Other Income and Expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis	50,424	(13,418)	3,575	(32,533)	8,048
Difference between General Fund surplus or deficit and Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	8,291	22,932	(14,397)	16,826

Expenditure and Funding Analysis 2020/21

	Outturn reported to Management Restated	Movement in Earmarked Reserves	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund Balances	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounts Basis	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
	2020/21 £000	2020/21 £000	2020/21 £000	2020/21 £000	2020/21 £000
Enterprise, Community and Resources	46,442	5,696	52,138	5,228	57,366
People	82,444	4,614	87,058	(624)	86,434
Schools	-	(2,517)	(2,517)	4,504	1,987
Corporate and Democracy	(23,476)	(25,384)	(48,860)	50,965	2,105
Mersey Gateway	8,020	(5,928)	2,092	(38,651)	(36,559)
Net Cost of Services	113,430	(23,519)	89,911	21,422	111,333
Other Income and Expenditure	(115,770)	469	(115,301)	21,968	(93,333)
(Surplus) or Deficit	(2,340)	(23,050)	(25,390)	43,390	18,000
Opening General Fund Balance	(4,002)	(105,572)	(109,574)		
Transfer to from Earmarked Reserves to General Fund					
(Surplus) or Deficit in year	(2,340)	(23,050)	(25,390)		
Closing General Fund Balance at 31st March	(6,342)	(128,622)	(134,964)		

Note to Expenditure and Funding Analysis 2020/21

Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts	Other Income and Expenditure £000	Adjustments for Capital Purposes £000	Net change for the Pension Adjustments £000	Other Adjustments £000	Total Adjustments £000
Enterprise, Community and Resources	(2,628)	5,912	2,028	(84)	5,228
People	(19)	(12)	1,983	(2,576)	(624)
Schools	-	119	818	3,567	4,504
Corporate and Democracy	4,990	18,995	(278)	27,258	50,965
Mersey Gateway	(38,486)	(166)	-	1	(38,651)
Net Cost of Services	(36,143)	24,848	4,551	28,166	21,422
Other Income and Expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis	36,143	(9,379)	1,556	(6,352)	21,968
Difference between General Fund surplus or deficit and Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	15,469	6,107	21,814	43,390

Other Income and Expenditure

This column moves all items that are shown within the directorate spend reported to management, but are shown below the Net Cost of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. These include:

- Interest Payable and Receivable
- Levy Payments

Adjustments for Capital Purposes

This column adjusts for any capital transactions that are not included in the directorate spend reported to management but are shown in the in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. These include:

- Capital funding
- Revaluation gains and losses
- Revenue Expenditure Funded by Capital Under Statute

This column also includes items that are included in the spend reported to management, but are not shown in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. This includes:

- Minimum Revenue Provision
- The reversal of depreciation transactions shown in Corporate and Democracy

Net Charge for Pension Adjustments

This column includes the net change for the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS 19 employee benefits pension related income and expenditure:

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

Other adjustments

This column includes:

- The difference between what is chargeable under statutory regulations for council tax and non-domestic rates 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 to show Schools income and expenditure separately on the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. This is reported under the People Directorate when reported to management.

Segmental Income and Expenditure

Income and expenditure received on a segmental basis is analysed below:

	Revenues from External Customers £000	Interest Revenue £000	Interest Expense £000	Depreciation and Amortisation £000
2021/22				
Enterprise, Community and Resources	(14,289)	-	-	15,767
People	(11,805)	-	-	1,256
Schools	(179)	-	-	2,252
Corporate and Democracy	(80)	(1,621)	2,661	(27,301)
Mersey Gateway	(49,539)	-	31,691	8,026
Net Cost of Services	(75,892)	(1,621)	34,352	-

	Revenues from External Customers £000	Interest Revenue £000	Interest Expense £000	Depreciation and Amortisation £000
2020/21				
Enterprise, Community and Resources	(9,178)	-	-	15,829
People	(9,562)	-	-	1,028
Schools	(98)	-	-	2,724
Corporate and Democracy	(41)	(1,631)	2,710	(27,601)
Mersey Gateway	(40,631)	-	32,176	8,020
Net Cost of Services	(59,510)	(1,631)	34,886	-

2. Expenditure and Income Analysed by Nature

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
	Expenditure	
147,819	Employee Benefits	162,924
223,140	Other service expenses	233,514
30,758	Depreciation, amortisation and impairment	27,954
34,886	Interest Payments	34,352
3,592	Precepts and levies	3,575
440,195	Total Expenditure	462,319
	Income	
(104,988)	Fees and charges and other service income	(114,730)
(431)	Gain on disposal of non-current assets	(1,355)
(90,150)	Income from Council Tax and Business Rates	(105,757)
(224,995)	Government grants income	(224,085)
(1,631)	Interest and investment income	(1,621)
(422,195)	Total Income	(447,548)
18,000	(Surplus) or Deficit on the Provision of Services	14,771

3. Other Operating Expenditure

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
148	Parish Council Precepts	147
3,444	Levies	3,428
-	Movement in value of Assets Held for Sale	-
(431)	(Gains)/Losses on the Disposal of Non-Current Assets	(1,355)
3,161	Total	2,220

4. Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
34,886	Interest payable and similar charges	34,352
1,556	Net interest on the net defined benefit liability	3,575
(1,631)	Interest receivable and similar charges	(1,621)
(136)	Income & Expenditure in relation to Investment Properties and changes in their fair value	24
34	Movement in fair value of financial instruments	(908)
3,593	Loss on transfer of academies	124
925	Other investment income and expenditure	(900)
39,227	Total	34,646

5. Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
(53,515)	Council Tax income	(55,814)
(36,635)	Non domestic rates	(49,943)
(26,561)	Non-ringfenced government grants	(17,545)
(5,515)	NNDR Top Up Grant	(5,567)
(13,495)	Capital grants and contributions	(11,866)
(135,721)	Total	(140,735)

6. Material Items of Income and Expenditure

There are no individually material items of income and expenditure to report beyond those disclosed on the face of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and supporting notes.

7. Grant Income

The Council has received a number of grants and contributions that have yet to be recognised as income. At the balance sheet date, conditions existed which remain to be satisfied. The balances at year-end are as follows:

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
Long Term Receipts in Advance		
Capital		
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	(4,699)	(12,059)
Other Grants	(2,175)	(1,945)
Total	(6,874)	(14,004)

	31/03/2021			31/03/2022		
	Revenue £000	Capital £000	Total £000	Revenue £000	Capital £000	Total £000
Short Term Receipts in Advance						
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	(297)	(7,360)	(7,657)	(941)	-	(941)
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy	(689)	(1,296)	(1,985)	(3,087)	-	(3,087)
Department for Education	-	(330)	(330)	-	(409)	(409)
Department of Transport	-	(215)	(215)	-	-	-
Department of Health & Social Care	(3,093)	(1,640)	(4,733)	(560)	(2,468)	(3,028)
Other Grants	(463)	(179)	(642)	(970)	-	(970)
Contributions	(708)	-	(708)	(965)	-	(965)
	(5,250)	(11,020)	(16,270)	(6,523)	(2,877)	(9,400)

The Council credited the following grants to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in 2021/22.

	2020/21	2021/22
	£000	£000
Revenue Grants Credited to Services		
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	(7,195)	(8,877)
Dedicated Schools Grant	(78,923)	(82,777)
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy	(1,611)	(2,187)
Department for Education	(16,418)	(14,695)
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs	(223)	(37)
Department for Transport	(25,031)	(24,007)
Department for Works & Pensions	(1,862)	(3,002)
Department of Health & Social Care	(13,558)	(19,041)
Home Office	(433)	(804)
Rent Allowance Subsidy	(30,600)	(29,080)
Other Grants	(3,570)	(5,254)
Total	(179,424)	(189,761)

During 2021/22, the Council administered several grant schemes to support local residents, businesses and care providers during the Covid-19 pandemic where the eligibility criteria and the amount of the grant award was determined by Central Government. Under accounting practice, the Council has therefore acted as an agent in delivering these grant schemes.

Where the Council has acted as an agent, the associated income and expenditure is not included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the balance of any funding remaining at 31st March 2022 is included in the Balance Sheet as a Creditor. These grant schemes are summarised in the following table:

	2021/22			
	Grant Expenditure £000	Grant Income Carried Forward from 2020/21 £000	Grant Income Received in 2021/22 £000	Debtor / (Creditor) Held on Balance on Balance Sheet £000
Grant - Authority as Agent				
Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSB)	372	(2,605)	-	(2,233)
Christmas Support Payment (CSP) for Wet-Led Pubs	2	(4)	-	(2)
Closed Business Lockdown Payment (CBLP)	259	(1,814)	-	(1,555)
Restart Grants	4,224	-	(4,734)	(510)
Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant	431	-	(612)	(181)
Infection Control and Vaccine Fund (Mandatory Element Passported to Care Homes)	648	-	(665)	(17)
Rapid Testing Fund (Mandatory Element Passported to Care Homes)	461	-	(461)	-
Covid-19 Self-Isolation Scheme	470	(100)	(197)	173
Total	6,867	(4,523)	(6,669)	(4,325)

8. Disclosure of Deployment of Dedicated Schools Grant

The Council's expenditure on schools is funded by grant monies provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). DSG is ring-fenced and can only be applied to meet expenditure properly included in the Schools Budget, as defined in the School Finance and Early Years (England) Regulations 2019. The Schools Budget includes elements for a range of educational services provided on an authority-wide basis and for the Individual Schools Budget, which is divided into a budget share for each maintained school.

Details of the deployment of DSG receivable for 2021/22 are shown below:

Total 2020/21 £000		Central Expenditure 2021/22 £000	Individual Schools Budget 2021/22 £000	Total 2021/22 £000
(122,099)	Final DSG before academy recoupment			(131,114)
43,099	Academy figure recouped in year			48,191
(79,000)	Total DSG after academy recoupment			(82,923)
(136)	Plus brought forward			-
100	Less carry forward agreed in advance			293
(79,036)	Agreed budgeted distribution	(20,026)	(62,604)	(82,630)
-	- In Year Adjustments	407	(67)	340
(79,036)	Final Budget Distribution	(19,619)	(62,671)	(82,290)
19,336	Less actual central expenditure	20,773		20,773
60,696	Less actual ISB deployed to schools		62,671	62,671
-	- Plus Council Contribution			-
996	Carry Forward	1,154	-	1,154
-	- Plus carry forward agreed in advance			(294)
996	Carry Forward to following year			860
996	DSG Unusable Reserve at 31/03/2021			996
-	- Addition to DSG Unusable Reserve at 31/03/2022			860
996	Total DSG Unusable Reserve at end of year			1,856
996	Net DSG Position at end of year			1,856

9. Pooled Budgets

Better Care Fund

In 2015 the Government introduced a £3.8 billion Better Care Fund, a pooled budget for health and social care services, shared between the NHS and local authorities, to deliver better outcomes and greater efficiencies through more integrated services for older and disabled people.

From April 2015 the pooled budget between Halton Borough Council (HBC) and the Halton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) was expanded to incorporate this Better Care Fund (BCF) under a Section 75 agreement for health and social care services provided to the residents of Halton. The pooled budget, hosted by the council, continues to provide an integrated system enabling resources to be used efficiently and effectively in the delivery of personalised, responsive and holistic care to those who are most in need within the community. This results in the alignment of systems, improved pathways, speeding up the discharge processes, transforming patient/care satisfaction and ensuring the future sustainability of meeting the needs of people with complex needs.

The Additional Better Care Fund (ABCF) was announced in the 2017 Spring Budget, with a condition that it is pooled into the local BCF plan. The grant determination enables the funding to be spent on three purposes:

- Meeting adult social care needs
- Reducing pressures on the NHS, including supporting more people to be discharged from hospital when they are ready
- Ensuring that the local social care provider market is supported

In addition to the BCF and ABCF allocations, the Council and Clinical Commissioning Group each contributed additional funds equal to 58% and 42% respectively (excluding the BCF allocation) for 2021/22.

The pooled budget is hosted by the Council on behalf of the partners to the agreement.

	2020/21		2021/22
	£000		£000
Balance Brought Forward	117		(40)
Funding provided to the pooled budget:			
- Halton Borough Council	(3,535)		(3,732)
- Halton Clinical Commissioning Group	(3,467)		(3,196)
- Better Care Fund	(10,891)		(10,792)
- Winter Pressures	(639)		(639)
	(18,532)		(18,359)
Income raised through the pooled budget:			
- Halton Borough Council	(609)		(621)
	(609)		(621)
Expenditure met from the pooled budget:			
- Halton Borough Council	4,053		4,257
- Halton Clinical Commissioning Group	3,401		3,127
- Better Care Fund	10,891		10,792
- Winter Pressures	639		639
	18,984		18,815
Net (surplus)/deficit arising on the pooled budget during the year	(157)		(165)
Share of the (surplus)/deficit for the year:			
- Halton Borough Council	58%	(91)	58%
- Halton Clinical Commissioning Group	42%	(66)	42%
		(157)	(165)
Balance Carried Forward	(40)		(205)

10. Officers Remuneration

The number of employees whose remuneration, inclusive of redundancy payments and car benefit but excluding pension contributions, was £50,000 or more, grouped in rising bands of £5,000 is shown below. This list is inclusive of officers reported in the senior officers disclosure note.

Remuneration Band		2020/21		2021/22	
		Number of Employees		Number of Employees	
		Teaching	Non-Teaching	Teaching	Non - Teaching
£50,000	£54,999	14	10	10	14
£55,000	£59,999	14	10	15	7
£60,000	£64,999	7	9	11	7
£65,000	£69,999	9	11	10	10
£70,000	£74,999	8	4	6	6
£75,000	£79,999	-	4	1	6
£80,000	£84,999	1	1	1	2
£85,000	£89,999	1	2	-	2
£90,000	£94,999	-	5	-	4
£95,000	£99,999	1	2	-	1
£100,000	£104,999	-	3	-	2
£105,000	£109,999	-	-	-	1
£110,000	£114,999	-	-	-	-
£115,000	£119,999	-	-	-	-
£120,000	£124,999	-	-	-	-
£125,000	£129,999	-	2	-	-
£130,000	£134,999	-	-	-	2
£135,000	£139,999	-	-	-	-
£140,000	£144,999	-	-	-	-
£145,000	£149,999	-	-	-	-
£150,000	£154,999	-	-	-	-
£155,000	£159,999	-	-	-	-
£160,000	£164,999	-	-	-	-
£165,000	£169,999	-	-	-	-
£170,000	£174,999	-	-	-	-
£175,000	£179,999	-	-	-	-
£180,000	£184,999	-	1	-	-
£185,000	£189,999	-	-	-	-
£190,000	£194,999	-	-	-	-
£195,000	£199,999	-	-	-	1
		55	64	54	65

The note excludes salaries for staff at Voluntary Aided Schools who are employed directly by the school's governing body. 51 staff with a total salary value of £3,147,868 have been excluded from the 2020/21 figures. In 2021/22, 50 staff members of Voluntary Aided Schools with a total salary value of £3,048,584 were excluded from Note 10.

Halton Borough Council is required to disclose to local taxpayers the total remuneration package for the senior officers charged with the stewardship of the organisation.

A senior employee has a significant level of responsibility for contributing to the strategic decision making of the Council. Senior officers will include those that have a statutory duty under legislation.

Senior employees whose salary is between £50,000 and £150,000 are disclosed by job title. Senior employees whose salary is more than £150,000 are disclosed by job title and name.

These notes refer to the detailed table below:

Note 1: The Chief Executive left the authority on 31st March 2022.

Note 2: The Statutory Operational Director – Education, Inclusion & Provision left the authority on 30th September 2021 and was replaced on 1st October 2021.

Note 3: The Operational Director – Community and Environment left the authority on 31st August 2021 and was replaced on 1st September 2021.

Note 4: The Operational Director – Public Health left the authority on 30th September 2021 and was replaced on 1st October 2021.

Note 5: The Interim Director – Public Health undertook a secondment with the National Institute for Health Research between October 2021 and March 2022. The additional remuneration cost of £5,207 is included in these figures, but has been fully reimbursed to the Council.

Post Title		Salary (including fees & allowances)		Compensation for loss of employment		Benefits in Kind		Total Remuneration excluding pension contributions		Employers Pension contributions		Total Remuneration including pension contributions	
		2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Chief Executive - David Parr	1	182,500	199,500	-	-	-	-	182,500	199,500	-	-	182,500	199,500
Strategic Director - People		128,600	130,500	-	-	-	-	128,600	130,500	24,200	27,900	152,800	158,400
Strategic Director - Enterprise, Communities & Resources		128,600	130,500	-	-	-	-	128,600	130,500	8,200	0	136,800	130,500
Operational Director - Planning & Transportation		83,600	87,200	-	-	-	-	83,600	87,200	16,500	18,800	100,100	106,000
Operational Director - Legal & Democratic Services		90,600	91,900	-	-	-	-	90,600	91,900	17,700	19,600	108,300	111,500
Statutory Operational Director - Adult Social Care		102,000	103,500	-	-	-	-	102,000	103,500	20,000	22,100	122,000	125,600
Statutory Operational Director - Children & Families Services		102,000	103,500	-	-	-	-	102,000	103,500	20,000	22,100	122,000	125,600
Statutory Operational Director - Education, Inclusion & Provision	2	102,100	55,300	-	-	-	-	102,100	55,300	20,000	11,100	122,100	66,400
Interim Statutory Operational Director - Education, Inclusion & Provision	2	-	42,900	-	-	-	-	-	42,900	-	9,200	-	52,100
Operational Director - Finance		90,600	91,900	-	-	-	-	90,600	91,900	17,700	19,600	108,300	111,500
Operational Director - ICT & Support Services		98,400	99,300	-	-	-	-	98,400	99,300	19,300	21,200	117,700	120,500
Operational Director - Economy, Enterprise & Property		90,600	91,900	-	-	-	-	90,600	91,900	17,900	19,900	108,500	111,800
Operational Director - Community & Environment	3	90,600	46,400	-	-	-	-	90,600	46,400	17,700	8,400	108,300	54,800
Operational Director - Community & Environment	3	-	47,300	-	-	-	-	-	47,300	-	10,100	-	57,400
Operational Director - Public Health	4	96,900	48,000	-	-	-	-	96,900	48,000	13,900	6,900	110,800	54,900
Interim Operational Director - Public Health	4, 5	-	60,900	-	-	-	-	-	60,900	-	8,800	-	69,700
Operational Director - Policy, People, Performance & Efficiency		86,000	89,600	-	-	-	-	86,000	89,600	16,800	19,100	102,800	108,700
		1,473,100	1,520,100	-	-	-	-	1,473,100	1,520,100	229,900	244,800	1,703,000	1,764,900

11. Exit Packages and Termination Benefits

The number of exit packages with total cost per band and total cost of compulsory and voluntary redundancies and early retirements are set out in the table below:

Exit package cost band	Number of compulsory redundancies		Number of voluntary redundancies		Number of early retirements		Total number of exit packages by cost band		Total cost of exit packages in each band	
	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000
£0 - £20,000	4	4	21	19	-	-	25	23	186	167
£20,001 - £40,000	-	-	3	7	-	-	3	7	78	179
£40,001 - £60,000	-	-	2	1	-	-	2	1	93	46
£60,001 - £80,000	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	134
£80,001 - £100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£100,001 - £150,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£150,001 - £200,000	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	163
£200,001 - £250,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£250,001 - £300,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	4	4	26	30	-	-	30	34	357	689

The total cost of exit packages in 2021/22 is £0.689m (2020/21 - £0.357m) charged to the authority's Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES). Costs associated with redundancies include officers aged 55 or over being able to access their pensions immediately. There were no early retirements taken in 2021/22 (2020/21 - £0.000m).

Termination Benefits

The Council incurred no liabilities relating to past early retirements charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

12. Members Allowances

During the year £811,549.68 (2020/21 - £833,827.59) was paid to Members, including Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral allowances.

13. Related Party Transactions

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

Once these relationships are brought to the attention of users, transactions are disclosed so that readers can assess for themselves whether these relationships might have had an effect or could have an effect in the future.

Materiality

Materiality has been assessed with regards to the Council and the related party.

Central Government

UK Central Government has significant influence over the general operations of the Council. It is responsible for providing the statutory framework within which the Council operates, provides significant funding in the form of grants and prescribes the terms of many of the transactions that the Council has with other parties (e.g. council tax bills, housing benefits).

Grants received from government departments are set out in Note 7.

Members and Officers

Members of the Council have direct control over the Council's financial and operating policies. The Council operates a system of self-regulation which requires each Executive Director and Member to complete a declaration highlighting whether they or any members of their family have been involved in any material financial transactions between the Council and any external bodies they are affiliated to during the financial year.

The total of members allowances paid in 2021/22 is shown in Note 12. The total of senior officers remuneration paid in 2021/22 is shown in Note 10.

In 2021/22, 7 Members had interests in various organisations and voluntary sector bodies involving payments worth £2.044m and receipts worth £0.046m for various works and services.

Payments/receipts from Organisations where Members or their spouse hold an interest	2021/22		31/03/2022	
	Expenditure	Income	Creditor	Debtor
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Creative Health Initiatives CIC	26	(8)	-	-
Halton Play Council	102	(4)	-	-
Mersey Gateway Crossings Board	1,916	(34)	198	(335)
Total	2,044	(46)	198	(335)

In 2021/22, no senior officers had interests in organisations which were party to transactions with the Council.

Other Public Bodies

The Council is a member of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, from which it received £7.382m of income in 2021/22, plus outstanding debtors of £1.399m. This related to highways grant funding of £7.949m from Merseytravel, funding for skills and apprenticeship programmes of £0.421m, £0.200m funding for the Borough of Culture programme, £0.179m for IT hosting services, £0.019m for cross-boundary bus charges and £0.019m for housing programmes. £0.176m of expenditure was incurred in 2021/22.

The Council had one pooled budget arrangement with Halton Clinical Commissioning Group during 2021/22 under s75 of the Health Act 2006. Transactions and balances are highlighted in Note 9. In addition to the pooled budget arrangement there were further payments of £0.170m made to Halton Clinical Commissioning Group in relation to end of life care, plus creditors of £0.114m outstanding at year end. There was additional income received of £9.543m for contributions to care packages, £1.214m for the Covid-19 hospital discharge scheme, £0.132m for commissioned public health services, a £0.082m contribution towards the benefits advice scheme, a £0.071m contribution towards Health Engagement Officer salaries, £0.065m for the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Programme, £0.035m funding for the Women's Centre, a £0.015m contribution towards the Direct Payments Service, and £0.015m received for other services.

£0.832m of expenditure was paid to Warrington and Halton Hospitals NHS Trust from the pooled budget, including £0.404m for reablement services, £0.176m for the Halton Community Team Project, £0.169m for supported hospital discharge services, and £0.083m for other public health and social care services. One member of the Council is a Governor of the Trust.

The Council incurred £1.394m of expenditure with Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Trust in 2021/22 from the pooled budget for the Adult Social Care Joint Equipment Service (£1.116m), the Intermediate Care and Frailty Service (£0.144m), the Rapid Action Rehabilitation Service (£0.115m), and the falls service (£0.019m). Outside of the pooled budget, the Council

incurred £3.677m of expenditure for the 0-19 public health service (£3.557m), for children's therapy equipment (£0.068m), and for vision and deafness support services (£0.052m).

During 2021/22 there was a contract in place with North West Boroughs NHS Trust to provide occupational health services to the Council, at a cost of £0.065m.

£0.074m of expenditure was incurred to Cheshire Police in 2021/22, including £0.055m to fund victim support services within Halton. There was an additional £0.063m of creditors outstanding at 31st March 2022 relating to staffing costs. £0.057m of funding for community safety services was received, along with £0.045m of debtors outstanding at year end, relating to funding for the Domestic Abuse Prevention Service (£0.030m), and the Halton Children and Young People's Safeguarding partnership (£0.025).

The Council has contracted with Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority (MRWA) to manage the disposal of household waste, the processing of recyclables, and to run the Household Waste and Recycling Centres within Halton. Expenditure incurred during 2021/22 totalled £5.803m, with additional creditors of £2.364m outstanding at 31st March 2022. One member of the Council represents Halton as a member of MRWA.

Full details of the Council's pension fund transactions can be found in Note 32, Pension Schemes.

Entities Controlled or Significantly Influenced by the Council

Halton Borough Council are joint venture partners in Daresbury SIC (Pub Sec) LLP, which has significant influence over Daresbury SIC LLP. £1.859m was paid from the Council to Daresbury SIC LLP for the construction of Project Violet, which is treated as Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute in the Council's capital programme. This will be funded from Business Rates income raised by the Enterprise Zone over the next 16 years. Income of £0.441m was received in 2021/22, including £0.432m of payments for the lease of Tech Space 1. The total debtor outstanding is £6.404m and further details of the lease are provided in Note 30, Finance Leases – Authority as a Lessor.

Details of the Council's interests in companies are disclosed in Note 41, Interest in Companies and Other Entities.

14. External Audit Fees

The Council paid the following amounts to Grant Thornton in 2021/22 for fees relating to external audit, inspection and additional services.

	2020/21	2021/22
	£000	£000
Fees payable for:		
- Audit	128	135
- Additional fees for prior year audit	33	53
- Grants and returns	21	27
Total	182	215

Due to the timing of the audit of grant claims, the audit fee for Grants and Returns is based on an estimate and may include amounts relating to previous years.

15. Events after the Balance Sheet Date

These accounts have been authorised for issue by the Operational Director Finance, on the 8th July 2022 and reflect all known events for the financial year. 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 31st March 2021, the figures in the financial statements and notes have been adjusted in all material respects to reflect the impact of this information.

16. Capital Expenditure and Financing

The total amount of capital expenditure incurred in the year is shown in the table below, together with the resources that have been used to finance it. 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.

	2020/21	2021/22
	£000	£000
Opening Capital Financing Requirement	613,236	615,219
Capital Investment:		
Property, Plant & Equipment	21,350	13,189
Investment Properties	-	-
Intangible Assets	126	191
Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute	9,815	7,938
Source of Finance:		
Capital Receipts	(4,957)	(3,344)
Government Grants & Other Contributions	(14,266)	(9,339)
Direct Revenue Contributions	(729)	(124)
Minimum Revenue Provision	(9,356)	(9,403)
Closing Capital Financing Requirement	615,219	614,327
Explanation of movement in year:		
Increase in underlying need to borrow	11,841	9,022
Minimum Revenue Provision statutory set aside	(9,356)	(9,403)
Use of Capital Reserves to reduce MRP liability	(502)	(511)
Increase/(Decrease) in Capital Financing Requirement	1,983	(892)

The table above shows the Council spent £21.3m on capital during 2021/22.

Disposal of Assets/Capital Receipts

Land/Dwellings/Recovered Advances – the Council received £1.282m from the sale of land, vehicles and various properties.

Under residual arrangements, the Council received £0.387m (£0.019m in 2020/21) from Halton Housing Trust for the sale of homes during the year, and a further £0.143m (£0.067m in 2020/21) under VAT Shelter arrangements.

17. Non-Current Assets, Property, Plant and Equipment
Movements during 2021/22

	Land and Buildings £000	Community Assets £000	Infrastructure Assets £000	Vehicles, Plant and Equipment £000	Surplus Assets £000	Under Construction / Development £000	Total 2021/22 £000	Service Concession Assets included in PPE £000
Cost or Valuation								
As at 1st April 2021	205,064	4,869	816,092	26,001	6,687	2,011	1,060,724	472,081
Additions and Enhancements	1,168	226	9,934	1,118	-	626	13,072	-
Revaluations Recognised in the Revaluations Reserve	1,668	14	-	-	1,394	-	3,076	-
Revaluations Recognised in the Provision of Services	(784)	-	-	-	(95)	-	(879)	-
Derecognition – Disposals	(124)	-	-	(357)	(453)	-	(934)	-
Derecognition – Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Assets Reclassified (to)/from held for sale	-	-	(5,450)	-	(1,437)	-	(6,887)	-
Other Movements	396	-	(1,043)	-	645	(588)	(590)	-
As at 31st March 2022	207,388	5,109	819,533	26,762	6,741	2,049	1,067,582	472,081
Depreciation								
As at 1st April 2021	(5,267)	(2,356)	(175,443)	(19,645)	(70)	-	(202,781)	(25,541)
Depreciation for the year	(7,017)	(192)	(17,730)	(2,068)	(65)	-	(27,072)	(7,297)
Depreciation written out to revaluation reserve	6,588	-	-	-	22	-	6,610	-
Depreciation written out to Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	318	-	-	-	-	-	318	-
Derecognition – Disposals	-	-	-	353	-	-	353	-
Derecognition – Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other movements in depreciation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
As at 31st March 2022	(5,378)	(2,548)	(193,173)	(21,360)	(113)	-	(222,572)	(32,838)
Balance Sheet Amount as at 31st March 22	202,010	2,561	626,360	5,402	6,628	2,049	845,010	439,243
Balance Sheet Amount as at 1st April 21	199,797	2,513	640,649	6,356	6,617	2,011	857,943	446,540

Movements during 2020/21

	Land and Buildings £000	Community Assets £000	Infrastructure Assets £000	Vehicles, Plant and Equipment £000	Surplus Assets £000	Under Construction / Development £000	Total 2020/21 £000	Service Concession Assets included in PPE £000
Cost or Valuation								
As at 1st April 2020	209,307	3,468	800,810	22,968	5,413	3,513	1,045,479	472,081
Additions and Enhancements	2,368	105	15,282	2,257	-	1,327	21,339	-
Revaluations Recognised in the Revaluations Reserve	239	-	-	-	1,707	-	1,946	-
Revaluations Recognised in the Provision of Services	(3,990)	-	-	-	(29)	-	(4,019)	-
Derecognition – Disposals	(3,593)	-	-	(24)	(344)	-	(3,961)	-
Derecognition – Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Assets Reclassified (to)/from held for sale	-	-	-	-	(60)	-	(60)	-
Other Movements	733	1,296	-	800	-	(2,829)	-	-
As at 31st March 2021	205,064	4,869	816,092	26,001	6,687	2,011	1,060,724	472,081
Depreciation								
As at 1st April 2020	(2,854)	(2,141)	(158,019)	(17,804)	(39)	-	(180,857)	(17,863)
Depreciation for the year	(7,328)	(215)	(17,424)	(1,862)	(61)	-	(26,890)	(7,678)
Depreciation written out to revaluation reserve	4,024	-	-	-	21	-	4,045	-
Depreciation written out to Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	891	-	-	-	9	-	900	-
Derecognition – Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition – Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other movements in depreciation	-	-	-	21	-	-	21	-
As at 31st March 2021	(5,267)	(2,356)	(175,443)	(19,645)	(70)	-	(202,781)	(25,541)
Balance Sheet Amount as at 31st March 21	199,797	2,513	640,649	6,356	6,617	2,011	857,943	446,540
Balance Sheet Amount as at 1st April 20	206,453	1,327	642,791	5,164	5,374	3,513	864,622	454,218

Depreciation

Depreciation is calculated on a straight-line basis and the following useful lives and depreciation rates have been used:

Buildings and Other Operational Properties	10-60 years
Community Assets	15 years
Infrastructure Assets	15-120 years
Vehicles, Plant and Equipment	3-10 years
Intangible Assets	5 years

Capital Commitments

At 31st March 2022, the Council has entered into a number of contracts for the construction or enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment.

The major commitments are:

Runcorn Busway	£1.31m
East Runcorn Connectivity pre-development	£1.18m
Fleet Vehicles	£0.45m
Cremators	£0.23m
Green Cycle / Walk Corridors	£0.19m
Open Spaces Schemes	£0.11m

At 31st March 2022 the capital commitments totalled £4.12m (£2.21m at 31 March 2021).

Revaluations

The Council carries out a rolling programme that ensures all Property, Plant and Equipment required to be measured at fair value is revalued at least every 5 years, moving to revaluations every 3 years over the next 2 years. A mixture of revaluations from each of the below categories are valued each year. Valuations were carried out by Sanderson Weatherall LLP and by the Council's in-house valuer Louise Risk MRICS. 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 Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

- Corporate Properties
- Children's centres, Children's homes and miscellaneous properties, land and open spaces
- Day care centres, homes, leisure centres, sports fields and changing rooms, allotments, community centres, libraries and cemeteries
- Nursery, infant, junior, primary, secondary, special and PRU schools.

All assets are subject to an annual review to ensure valuations have not materially changed in the years they are not valued and that the carrying value is not significantly different to their fair value.

Assets which were subject to a revaluation in 2021/22 are dated the 31st March 2022. The valuation report which is used in the preparation of the Council's Statement of Accounts takes account of all known events throughout 2021/22 which could subsequently affect the assets value and is therefore dated the 31st March 2022.

The assets shown by year of valuation are shown in the table below:

	Other Land & Buildings	Community Assets	Infrastructure Assets	Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	Surplus	Under Construction / Development	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Valued at current value as at:							
31 March 2022	101,902	-	-	-	1,691	-	103,593
31 March 2021	47,826	-	-	-	4,098	-	51,924
31 March 2020	46,315	-	-	-	516	-	46,831
31 March 2019	4,870	-	-	-	162	-	5,032
31 March 2018	1,305	-	-	-	161	-	1,466
Valued at Historic Cost	-	2,561	626,360	5,402	-	2,049	636,372
Total	202,218	2,561	626,360	5,402	6,628	2,049	845,218

Land & Buildings

Non-specialised property is valued at Fair Value – Existing Use Value. Specialised Property is valued on the basis of Depreciated Replacement Costs.

Community Assets

This group includes parks, cemetery land and other identifiable assets held in perpetuity, usually at Depreciated Historic Cost.

Infrastructure

These are included on the balance sheet at Depreciated Historical Costs in accordance with the guidelines contained in the RICS Appraisal and Valuation Standards.

Vehicles, Plant and Equipment

The majority of the Council's plant and equipment is included in the valuation of the buildings. The vehicles and other equipment are valued at Depreciated Historical Cost.

Intangible Assets

This group consists mainly of software licences for computer systems held at Depreciated Historical Cost.

Surplus Assets

Assets held for sale have strict criteria to be met before any assets can be included under this heading. Where assets are not in use but do not meet the criteria, they are accommodated within surplus assets. They are held at highest and best use value.

Assets under Construction/Development

These schemes are held temporarily on the balance sheet at Historic Cost until the asset is completed, when it is replaced with a formal valuation.

Fair Value Hierarchy for Investment Properties, Surplus Assets and Assets Held for Sale

Investment Properties, Surplus Assets and Assets Held for Sale have been value assessed as Level 2 on the fair value hierarchy for valuation purposes (see Statement of Accounting Policies 9 – Fair Value)

Valuation Techniques Used to Determine Level 2 Fair Values.

The fair value of Investment Properties, Surplus Assets and Assets Held for Sale have been measured using a market approach, which takes into account quoted prices for the existing or similar assets in active markets, existing lease terms and rentals, research into market evidence including market rentals and yields, the covenant strength for existing tenants, and data and market knowledge gained in managing the Council's Asset portfolio. This information is contained within the Valuation Assumptions and Evidence note agreed between the authority's Asset Manager and professional staff. Market conditions are such that similar properties are actively purchased and sold and the level of observable inputs are significant, leading to the properties being categorised as Level 2 on the fair value hierarchy.

There has been no change in the valuation techniques used during the year for Investment Properties, Surplus Assets or Assets Held for Sale.

Highest and Best Use

In estimating the fair value of the Council's Investment Properties, the highest and best use is their current use, though Assets Held for Sale have been valued taking their development potential into account.

De-minimis Assets

At 31st March 2021, the Council had 111 assets that fell below its de-minimis level of £35,000 which totalled £0.866m. These assets are not recorded on the Balance Sheet.

18. Heritage Assets

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

	2020/21			2021/22		
	Civic Regalia £000	Outdoor Sculpture £000	Total £000	Civic Regalia £000	Outdoor Sculpture £000	Total £000
Cost or Valuation						
1st April	858	421	1,279	858	433	1,291
Additions		12	12	-	119	119
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluations	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment Losses/(reversals) Recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment Losses/(reversals) Recognised in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-	-
31st March	858	433	1,291	858	552	1,410

Other Heritage Assets

For the following Heritage Assets no valuation is held as the records for the cost of acquisition / construction are no longer available and they are not insured as individual items so are not recorded on the Council's balance sheet. Although these assets have a cultural significance to the local community, they are not considered to have a material financial value.

War Memorials

The Council has two war memorials, one in Runcorn on Moughland Lane and the other in Widnes in Victoria Park.

Duck Decoy (Hale Village)

The Duck Decoy in Hale Village has been restored for use as a nature reserve with assistance from the Heritage Lottery Fund

Outdoor Works of Art

A metal sculpture called Spire in Church Street, Runcorn and works of art on Runcorn Promenade and within sets of railings and panels around Halton Castle.

Halton Castle

One of only two Norman Castles remaining in Cheshire managed on behalf of the Council by Norton Priory Museum Trust.

19. Investment Properties

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

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
(43)	Rental Income from Investment Property	(44)
-	Direct Operating Expenses from Investment Property	16
(43)		(28)

Investment Properties are not directly involved in the delivery of a service and are valued annually.

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 the remittance of income and the proceeds of disposal. The Council has no obligations to purchase, construct or develop investment property or undertake repairs, maintenance or enhancement.

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

	2020/21	2021/22
	£000	£000
Balance at the start of the year	800	806
Additions:		
- Purchases	-	-
- Construction	-	-
- Subsequent expenditure	-	-
Disposals	(87)	-
Net gain/(losses) from fair value adjustments	93	(52)
Transfers:		
- (To)/from Inventories	-	-
- (To)/from Property, Plant and Equipment	-	590
Other changes	-	-
	806	1,344

For details of the fair value valuations used for Investment Properties, see Note 17.

20. Intangible Assets

The Council accounts for its software as intangible assets, with the exception of software which is an integral part of a particular IT system and accounted for as part of the hardware item of Property, Plant and Equipment.

All software is given a finite life, based on assessments of the period that the software is expected to be of use to the Council. The useful lives assigned to the major software suites used by the Council are 5 years.

The carrying amounts of intangible assets are amortised on a straight-line basis. The amortisation of £0.321m charged to revenue in 2021/22 was charged to various cost centres and then absorbed as an overhead across all service headings in the Net Expenditure of Continuing Operations.

The movement on Intangible Asset balances during the year is as follows:

	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000
Balance at start of year:		
Gross carrying amounts	9,542	9,668
Accumulated amortisation	(8,157)	(8,906)
Net carrying amount at start of year	1,385	762
Additions:		
Purchases	126	191
Amortisation for the period	(749)	(321)
Net carrying amount at end of year	762	632
Comprising:		
Gross carrying amounts	9,668	9,859
Accumulated amortisation	(8,906)	(9,227)
	762	632

21. Assets Held for Sale

	2020/21	2021/22
	£000	£000
Balance outstanding at start of Year	6,000	6,060
Assets newly classified as held for sale:		
- Property, Plant and Equipment	60	6,886
- Intangible Assets	-	-
Revaluation Losses	-	-
Revaluation Gains	-	-
Impairment Losses	-	-
Assets declassified as held for sale:	-	-
- Property, Plant and Equipment	-	-
- Intangible Assets	-	-
Assets Sold	-	-
Transfers from non-current to current	-	-
Other Movements	-	-
Balance outstanding at year-end	6,060	12,946

For details of the fair value valuations used for Assets Held for Sale, see Note 17.

Please note all Assets Held for Sale are due to be sold within a year and are shown as Current Assets on the Balance Sheet.

22. Investments

Investments in Associates and Joint Ventures are shown below:

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
Associates and Joint Ventures		
Daresbury SIC LLP (25% equity shares)	2,913	5,102
	2,913	5,102

Copies of the accounts for Daresbury SIC LLP are available from Companies House (gov.uk/get-information-about-a-company)

Long-Term Investments consist of:

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
Subsidiaries		
Mersey Gateway Share Capital - de minimis	-	-
	-	-
Other Long Term Investments		
Municipal Bonds Agency	10	10
CCLA Property Fund	4,712	10,619
Halton Development Partnership Limited – de minimis	-	-
Widnes Regeneration Limited – de minimis	-	-
Long Term Deposits	5,000	10,700
	9,722	21,329
Total Long Term Investments	9,722	21,329

Please note that Halton Development Partnership Limited was dissolved in April 2021 and shares in Widnes Regeneration Limited were sold in January 2022.

Short-term investments consist of:

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
UK Banks & Building Societies		
Santander	20,000	20,000
Goldman Sachs	-	15,000
Non-UK Banks		
Australia and New Zealand Banking Group	-	5,000
Toronto Dominion Bank	-	10,000
Landesbank Hessen-Thüringen	-	5,000
Local Authorities		
Thurrock Council	25,000	30,000
Cambridgeshire County Council	5,000	-
Derbyshire County Council	5,000	-
Powys County Council	10,000	-
Slough Borough Council	5,000	10,000
Warrington Borough Council	-	5,000
Interest accrued on investments 31st March	149	121
	70,149	100,121

23. Debtors

	Gross Debtors	Impairment	Net Debtors	Gross Debtors	Impairment	Net Debtors
	31/03/2021			31/03/2022		
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Short Term						
Mersey Gateway						
- Toll and registration fees	1,414	(919)	495	1,331	(1,070)	261
- Public charge notices	16,206	(11,733)	4,473	14,933	(12,431)	2,502
VAT	4,479	-	4,479	4,886	-	4,886
Other receivable amounts	23,576	(2,961)	20,615	23,229	(4,145)	19,084
Prepayments	2,318	-	2,318	2,148	-	2,148
Local Taxation	16,264	(12,741)	3,523	18,241	(13,924)	4,317
	64,257	(28,354)	35,903	64,768	(31,570)	33,198
Long Term						
Other receivable amounts	14,060	-	14,060	13,550	-	13,550
	14,060	-	14,060	13,550	-	13,550

The past due but not impaired amount for local taxation (council tax and non-domestic rates) can be analysed by age as follows:

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
Less than one year	2,043	2,211
one to two years	635	803
two to three years	363	524
three to four years	225	320
four to five years	126	218
five years and above	131	241
	3,523	4,317

24. Cash and Cash Equivalents

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
Cash held by the Council	60	60
Bank current accounts	1,993	1,818
Short-term deposits	19,440	11,449
	21,493	13,327

25. Creditors

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
Mersey Gateway		
- Payment to toll collection company	(1,685)	(1,751)
- Payment of unitary charge	(6,112)	(6,694)
- Construction costs	(27)	(27)
Short Term element of Long term liabilities	(6,996)	(7,324)
Other payable amounts	(41,165)	(56,109)
	(55,985)	(71,905)

26. Borrowings

Short-term borrowings consist of:

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
Source of loans:		
Interest accrued on borrowing	(617)	(618)
	(617)	(618)

Long-term borrowings consist of:

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
Source of loans:		
Public Works Loan Board	(162,000)	(162,000)
Commerzbank	(10,000)	(10,000)
	(172,000)	(172,000)
Analysis of loans by maturity:		
Maturing in 1-2 years	-	-
Maturing in 2-5 years	-	-
Maturing in 5-10 years	-	-
Maturing in more than 10 years	(172,000)	(172,000)
	(172,000)	(172,000)

27. Provisions

	Short Term				Long Term
	NDR Appeals £000	Insurance Provision £000	Other Provisions £000	Total £000	NDR Appeals £000
Balance at 1st April 2021	(1,840)	(1,728)	(354)	(3,922)	(6,542)
Movement in use of provision in year	53	196	-	249	1,675
Amounts reclassified as <12 months	-	-	-	-	-
Amounts reclassified from >12 months	-	-	-	-	-
Balance at 31st March 2022	(1,787)	(1,532)	(354)	(3,673)	(4,867)

NDR Appeals

The Council is required to make a provision for NDR valuation appeal claims. It is assumed that appeals outstanding on the 2010 list will be settled in 2022/23.

Insurance Provision

The Council have a number of insurance claims outstanding in relation to employers' liability and public liability claims. The provision shown above reflects the expected cost to the Council, up to the value of the excess for each claim. It is assumed that all claims will be settled during 2022/23.

28. Contingent Liabilities

At 31st March 2022, the Council had two categories of material Contingent Liabilities:

Mersey Gateway

The Mersey Gateway project is a major capital scheme which saw the completion of the new six lane toll bridge over the river Mersey. The bridge opened in October 2017. The new bridge provides a multitude of economic and regional benefits whilst relieving the congested and ageing Silver Jubilee Bridge.

Under Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 the Council has received 677 claims from a number of residential properties in the proximity of the Mersey Gateway and relevant project roads. The obligation cannot be measured with sufficient reliability although the Council are estimating a potential cost of between £3.5m and £7.4m for dealing with such claims.

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, participants in planning appeals can apply for costs against other parties. The Council have received two applications for the award of costs. The Council are defending the claims and a final decision is yet to be made. No details

have been provided on the actual costs participants are claiming but based on historical cases it is estimated these costs will be in the region of £650,000.

29. Other Long Term Liabilities

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
Defined Benefit Pension liability	(169,109)	(91,204)
Finance PFI Lease liability due more than 12 months	(17,725)	(17,169)
Mersey Gateway unitary charge due more than 12 months	(342,954)	(336,188)
Deferred liabilities	(29)	(29)
	(529,817)	(444,590)

30. Leases

Operating Leases – Authority as Lessee

The Council has acquired a number of properties by entering into operating leases.

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

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
Not later than one year	248	205
Later than one year and not later than five years	637	589
Later than five years	10,044	9,815
	10,929	10,609

Operating Leases - Authority as a Lessor

The Council leases out property under operating leases to supplement the Council's income, to allow short term use of assets being retained for longer term asset strategy and to allow the use of the Council assets by the third sector.

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

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
Not later than one year	1,861	1,612
Later than one year and not later than five years	2,565	1,957
Later than five years	9,069	7,991
	13,495	11,560

Finance Leases - Authority as a Lessor

The authority leases buildings in Venture Fields and Daresbury SciTech. The authority has a gross investment in the leases, made up of the minimum lease payments expected to be received over the remaining term and the residual value anticipated for the properties when the lease comes to an end. The minimum lease payments comprise settlement of the long-term debtor for the interest in the property acquired by the lessee and finance income that will be earned by the authority in future years while the debtor remains outstanding. The gross investment is made up of the following amounts:

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
Finance lease debtor (net present value of minimum lease payments)		
- Current	513	526
- Non Current	11,384	10,858
Unearned Finance income	3,133	2,837
Gross investment in the lease	15,030	14,221

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

	Gross Investment in the lease		Minimum Lease Payments	
	31/03/2021	31/03/2022	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Not later than one year	810	810	810	810
Later than one year and not later than five years	3,238	3,238	3,238	3,238
Later than five years	10,982	10,173	10,982	10,173
	15,030	14,221	15,030	14,221

As the Council is unaware of any financial circumstances that might result in lease payments not being made, there has been no provision set aside for uncollectable amounts. This will be reviewed on an annual basis.

31. Private Finance Initiatives and Similar Schemes

Halton Grange School PFI Scheme

On 20th June 2011 the Council entered into a 25 year Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangement with HTP Grange Ltd for the provision of 1 new high school. There is a 25 year PFI contract for the construction, maintenance, and facilities management of Grange School. The new school building was handed over to the Council on 15th April 2013 and on 1st January 2018 the school converted to an academy.

The Grange PFI School was removed from the Council's Property Plant and Equipment during 2017/18 at a cost of £21.4m. As the Council is party to the contract with the PFI Operator, the PFI liability is retained on the Council's Balance Sheet and the income from the Academy school is recognised to reduce the overall charge in the year.

The contract specifies minimum standards for the services provided by the contractor to the school. The contractor took on the obligation to construct the school and maintain it in a minimum acceptable condition and to procure and maintain the plant and equipment needed to operate the school. The buildings and any plant and equipment installed in them at the end of the contract will be transferred to the Council for nil consideration. The Council only has rights to terminate the contract if it compensates the contractor in full for the costs incurred and future profits that would have been generated over the remaining term of the contract.

Payments

The Council makes an agreed payment each year which is increased annually by inflation and can be reduced if the contractor fails to meet availability and performance standards in any year, but which is otherwise fixed.

Payments remaining to be made under the PFI contract at 31st March 2022 (excluding any estimation of inflation and availability/performance deductions) are as follows:

	Payment for Services £000	Reimbursements of Capital Expenditure £000	Interest £000	Total £000
Payment in 2022/23	1,826	558	1,521	3,905
Payable within 2-5 years	7,271	2,786	5,563	15,620
Payable within 6-10 years	9,011	5,171	5,343	19,525
Payable within 11-15 years	9,490	7,213	2,822	19,525
Payable within 16-20 years	1,742	1,992	171	3,905
Total	29,340	17,720	15,420	62,480

Although the payments made to the contractor are described as unitary payments, they have been calculated to compensate the contractor for the fair value for the services they provide,

the capital expenditure incurred and interest payable. The liability outstanding to the contractor for capital expenditure incurred is as follows:

	2020/21	2021/22
	£000	£000
Balance outstanding at 1st April	18,738	18,205
Payments during the year	(533)	(485)
Capital expenditure incurred in the year	-	-
Balance outstanding at 31st March	18,205	17,720

The carrying value of the PFI liability is the present value of the payments due using the interest rate implicit in the contract.

Mersey Gateway – Unitary Payments

On 13th October 2017 the Mersey Gateway Bridge opened. The project was funded through a mixture of capital payments from Halton Borough Council and monthly unitary charge payments to Merseylink paid using the toll income raised. Unitary Charge payments cover the costs of construction and ongoing maintenance of the bridge for a period of 27 years.

The Mersey Gateway Bridge is recognised in Infrastructure Assets on the Council's Balance Sheet. Movements in the value of the Mersey Gateway over the year are detailed in the analysis of the movement on the property, plant and equipment balance in Note 17.

The Project Company took on the obligation to construct the bridge and associated roads, and maintain them in a minimum acceptable condition and at the end of the contract the assets will be handed back to the Council for nil consideration. Full details of the requirement to achieve acceptable handback condition are in the Project Agreement. The Council has rights to terminate the contract if it compensates the contractor in full as detailed in the Project Agreement. There are also provisions for termination by either party for certain breaches of performance.

Payments

The Council makes an agreed payment each month to Merseylink which is increased annually by inflation and can be reduced if traffic flows fall below an agreed level.

Payments remaining to be made under the scheme at 31st March 2022 (excluding any deductions) are as follows:

	Payment for Services £000	Reimbursements of Capital Expenditure £000	Interest £000	Total £000
Payment in 2022/23	6,920	6,766	26,017	39,703
Payable within 2-5 years	25,521	35,049	98,240	158,810
Payable within 6-10 years	37,704	54,939	105,870	198,513
Payable within 11-15 years	40,548	76,358	81,607	198,513
Payable within 16-20 years	38,881	112,580	47,053	198,514
Payable within 21-25 years	16,560	57,263	5,582	79,405
Total	166,134	342,955	364,369	873,458

Please note the services element of the contract is calculated using the estimated costs over the life of the agreement.

Although the payments made to the contractor are described as unitary payments, they have been calculated to compensate the contractor for the fair value of the services they provide, the capital expenditure incurred and interest payable. The liability outstanding to the contractor for capital expenditure incurred is as follows:

	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000
Balance outstanding at 1st April	355,782	349,472
Payments during the year	(6,310)	(6,517)
Capital expenditure incurred in the year	-	-
Balance outstanding at 31st March	349,472	342,955

32. Pension Schemes

Disclosure of Net Pensions Asset/Liability

Participation in pension schemes

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers and other employees, the Council makes contributions towards the cost of post-employment retirement 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 entitlement.

The Council participates in three pension schemes, all of which offer defined benefit schemes:

The Local Government Pension Scheme administered by Cheshire West and Chester Council - this is a funded career average revalued earnings (CARE) defined benefit scheme, meaning

that the Council and its employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liabilities with investment assets.

The principal risks to the authority of the scheme are the longevity assumptions, changes to inflation, bond yields, the performance of the equity investments held and any significant statutory or structural changes to the scheme. The risks are, in part, mitigated by the annual process of charging to the General Fund any increase/decrease in the net asset or liability, as identified in the actuarial valuation.

The Teachers' Pension Scheme – this is a centralised scheme administered by Teachers' Pensions Agency. Although the scheme is unfunded, the Agency uses a notional fund as the basis for calculating the employers' contribution rate paid by Local Education Authorities.

The NHS Pension Scheme relates to 27 employees. The scheme operates on a similar basis to the Teacher's pension scheme.

Local Government Pension Scheme

Transactions Relating to Post-Employment Benefits

In 2021/22, the Council paid an employer's contribution to the Cheshire Pension Fund of £13.250m (£16.189m in 2020/21).

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

	2020/21	2021/22
Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement		
Cost of Services	£000	£000
Current Service Costs	21,022	33,177
Past Service Costs/(Gain)	14	246
Losses/(Gains) from Settlements	-	(396)
Finance & Investment Income & Expenditure		
Net interest expense	1,556	3,575
Total Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	22,592	36,602
Other Post-employment Benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		
Re-measurement of the net defined benefit liability comprising:		
Return on plan assets (excluding the amount included in the net interest expense)	(88,104)	(36,314)
Actuarial (gains) and losses arising on changes in demographic assumptions	12,333	(5,202)
Actuarial (gains) and losses arising on changes in financial assumptions	180,281	(60,932)
Other experience	(6,944)	1,614
Total Post-employment Benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	97,566	(100,834)
Movement in Reserves Statement		
Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or Deficit on the provision of Services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the Code	(22,592)	(36,601)
Actual amount charged against the General Fund Balance for pensions in the year:		
Contributions in respect of unfunded benefits	436	420
Employers' contributions payable to scheme	16,050	13,250

Pension Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

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

	2020/21	2021/22
	£000	£000
Present value of funded liabilities	(859,589)	(829,364)
Present value of unfunded liabilities	(6,281)	(5,763)
Fair value of plan assets	696,761	743,923
Sub Total	(169,109)	(91,204)
Other movement in the liability / (asset)	-	-
Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation	(169,109)	(91,204)

Reconciliation of the Movements in the Fair Value of Scheme (Plan) Assets

	2020/21	2021/22
	£000	£000
Opening fair value of scheme assets	595,157	696,761
Interest income	13,681	13,903
Remeasurement gain / (loss)	-	-
The return on plan assets, excluding the amount included in the net interest expense	88,104	36,314
Contributions from employer	16,189	13,250
Contributions from employees into the scheme	4,019	4,192
Benefits Paid	(19,297)	(19,572)
Effect of Settlements	(1,092)	(925)
Closing fair value of scheme assets	696,761	743,923

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

	2020/21	2021/22
	£000	£000
Opening balance at 1 April	(660,594)	(865,870)
Current service cost	(21,022)	(33,177)
Interest Cost	(15,237)	(17,478)
Contribution from scheme participants	(4,019)	(4,192)
Remeasurement (gains) and losses:		
- Actuarial gains / losses arising from changes in demographic assumptions	(12,333)	5,202
- Actuarial gains / losses arising from changes in financial assumptions	(180,281)	60,932
- Other	6,944	(1,614)
Past service cost	(14)	(246)
Benefits paid	19,594	19,995
Liabilities extinguished on settlements	1,092	1,321
Closing balance at 31 March	(865,870)	(835,127)

Local Government Pension Scheme assets comprised:

	Fair value of scheme assets 2020/21			Fair value of scheme assets 2021/22		
	Quoted prices in active markets £000	Quoted prices not in active markets £000	Total £000	Quoted prices in active markets £000	Quoted prices not in active markets £000	Total £000
Cash and cash equivalents	-	31,133	31,133	-	44,131	44,131
Equity securities						
- Consumer	11,340	-	11,340	11,128	-	11,128
- Manufacturing	13,585	-	13,585	9,295	-	9,295
- Energy & utilities	581	-	581	537	-	537
- Financial institutions	7,094	-	7,094	4,967	-	4,967
- Health & Care	5,043	-	5,043	4,398	-	4,398
- Information technology	51,233	-	51,233	40,124	-	40,124
- Other	4,681	-	4,681	5,912	-	5,912
Sub-total equity	93,557	-	93,557	76,361	-	76,361
Debt Securities						
- Corporate Bonds	-	-	-	-	-	-
- Government Bonds	-	-	-	-	-	-
- Other	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub-total bonds	-	-	-	-	-	-
Property						
- UK property	-	49,621	49,621	-	51,716	51,716
- Overseas property	-	885	885	-	860	860
Sub-total property	-	50,506	50,506	-	52,576	52,576
Private Equity	-	23,684	23,684	-	36,962	36,962
Other investment funds						
- Equities	132,849	-	132,849	153,371	-	153,371
- Bonds	245,604	48,544	294,148	228,992	79,787	308,779
- Hedge funds	-	42,949	42,949	-	43,523	43,523
- Infrastructure	-	-	-	-	90	90
- Other	-	27,935	27,935	-	28,130	28,130
Sub-total investment funds	378,453	119,428	497,881	382,363	151,530	533,893
Total Assets	472,010	224,751	696,761	458,724	285,199	743,923

Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels, etc. The liabilities have been assessed by Hymans Robertson LLP, an independent firm of actuaries.

The principal assumptions used by the actuary are shown below:

	2020/21	2021/22
Mortality Assumptions		
Longevity at 65 for current pensioners:		
- Men	21.4 years	21.2 years
- Women	24.0 years	23.8 years
Longevity at 65 for future pensioners:		
- Men	22.4 years	22.1 years
- Women	25.7 years	25.5 years
Rate of inflation	2.9%	3.2%
Rate of increase in salaries	3.6%	3.9%
Rate of increase in pensions	2.9%	3.2%
Rate for discounting scheme liabilities	2.0%	2.7%
Take-up of option to convert annual pension into retirement lump sum		
- Service to April 2008	50%	50%
- Service from April 2008	75%	75%

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. The sensitivity analyses below have been determined based on reasonable possible changes of the assumptions occurring at the end of the reporting period and assumes for each change that the assumption analysed changes while all 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 overleaf did not change from those used in the previous period.

	Approximate % increase to Employer Liability	Approximate monetary amount £000
Change in assumptions at 31 March 2022		
0.1% decrease in Real Discount Rate	2%	16,597
1 year increase in Member Life Expectancy	4%	33,277
0.1% increase in the Salary Increase Rate	0%	1,743
0.1% increase in the Pension Increase Rate	2%	14,721

Impact on the Authority's Cash Flows

The objectives of the scheme are to keep employers' contribution at as constant a rate as possible. The Council has agreed a strategy with the scheme's actuary to achieve a funding level of 100% over the 20 years following the last valuation. Funding levels are monitored on an annual basis and the next triennial valuation was completed on 31st March 2022.

The scheme will need to take account of the national changes to the scheme under the Public Pensions Services Act 2013. Under the Act, the Local Government Pension Scheme in England and Wales and other main existing public service schemes may not provide benefits in relation to service after 31st March 2014 (or service after 31st March 2015 for other main existing public service pension schemes in England and Wales). The Act provides for scheme regulations to be made within a common framework, to establish new career average revalued earnings schemes to pay pensions and other benefits.

The authority is anticipated to pay contributions of £13.086m to the scheme in 2022/23.

The weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation for scheme members is 19 years in 2021/22 (19 years in 2020/21).

Further information can be found in Cheshire West and Chester Council's Pension Funds Annual Report, which is available from Cheshire Pension Fund, Cheshire West and Chester Council, 4 Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BE.

Teachers' Pension Scheme

Defined Contribution Scheme

In 2021/22, the Council paid an employers' contribution to the Teachers' Pension Agency of £6.347m (£6.302m in 2020/21) in respect of teachers' pension costs. The contribution rate for 2021/22 was 23.7% (23.7% in 2020/21) of teachers' pensionable pay.

The scheme is a defined benefit scheme. Although the scheme is unfunded, Teachers' Pensions use a notional fund as the basis for calculating the employers' contribution rate paid by Local Education Authorities. It is not possible for the Council to identify a share of the underlying liabilities in the scheme attributable to its own employees. For the purpose of the statement of accounts, it is therefore accounted for on the same basis as a defined contribution scheme.

The Council is responsible for any additional benefits granted upon early retirement, outside the standard terms of the scheme. For the year 2021/22 the cost was £0.476m (£0.466m in 2020/21).

NHS Pension Scheme

Defined Contribution Scheme

In 2021/22 the Council paid an employers' contribution to the National Health Service Pensions Scheme in respect of 27 employees, the amount paid was £0.146m (£0.161m in

2020/21) in respect of these former NHS employees' pension costs. The contribution rate was 14.4% (14.4% in 2020/21) of pensionable pay.

The scheme is a defined benefit scheme. Although the scheme is unfunded, the NHS use a notional fund as the basis for calculating the employers' contribution rate paid by local authorities.

It is not possible for the Council to identify a share of the underlying liabilities in the scheme attributable to its own employees. For the purposes of this Statement of Accounts, it is therefore accounted for on the same basis as a defined contribution scheme.

33. Financial Instruments

Categories of Financial Instruments

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

Financial Assets

	Long Term 31/03/2021 £000	Current 31/03/2021 £000	Long Term 31/03/2022 £000	Current 31/03/2022 £000
Fair value through profit and loss	4,711	-	10,619	-
Amortised cost				
- Investments	5,001	70,149	10,700	100,121
- Debtors	14,060	24,684	13,550	22,254
- Cash & Cash Equivalents	-	21,493	-	13,327
Fair value through other comprehensive income				
- Designated equity instruments	10	-	10	-
- Other	2,913	-	5,102	-
Total financial assets	26,695	116,326	39,981	135,702

Financial Liabilities

	Long Term 31/03/2021 £000	Current 31/03/2021 £000	Long Term 31/03/2022 £000	Current 31/03/2022 £000
Financial Liabilities at amortised cost				
- Borrowings	(172,000)	(617)	(172,000)	(618)
- Finance lease liabilities and PFI	(17,725)	(479)	(17,167)	(558)
- Mersey Gateway Unitary Charge	(342,954)	(6,518)	(336,188)	(6,766)
- Creditors	-	(41,962)	-	(57,093)
Fair Value through profit or loss	-	-	-	-
Total financial liabilities	(532,679)	(49,576)	(525,355)	(65,035)

Financial Instruments Designated at Fair Value through Profit or Loss

The Council's investment in the CCLA Property Fund has been disclosed at Fair Value through Profit or Loss, and is valued at £10.619m at 31st March 2022. An additional £5m has been invested in the fund during the 2021/22 financial year.

The valuation is based on the net asset value provided by CCLA at 31st March 2022.

As the property fund has been designated at Fair Value through Profit or Loss, the changes in the valuation will have a direct impact on the General Fund Balance. The value of the investment was £4.711m at 31st March 2021, providing income to the General Fund of £0.908m in 2021/22 once the additional £5m investment is taken into account.

Investments in Equity Instruments Designated at Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income

The Council holds a 25% equity holding in Daresbury SIC LLP, valued at a net asset value of £5.102m at 31st March 2022 (£2.913m at 31st March 2021).

The Council also holds a £0.010m shareholding in the Municipal Bonds Agency, which is valued at cost based on materiality.

Income, Expense, Gains and Losses

	2020/21		2021/22	
	Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services £000	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure £000	Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services £000	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure £000
Net (gains)/losses on:				
Financial assets measured at fair value through profit or loss	34	-	(907)	-
Financial assets measured at fair value through other comprehensive income	-	(1,015)	-	(2,189)
Interest revenue				
Financial assets measured at amortised cost	(1,424)	-	(1,459)	-
Financial assets measured at fair value through profit or loss	(207)	-	(162)	-
Interest expense	34,886	-	34,352	-
Net Gain/(Loss)	33,289	(1,015)	31,824	(2,189)

Fair Values of Financial Assets

Some of the authority's financial assets are measured at fair value on a recurring basis and are described in the following table, including the valuation techniques used to measure them.

Recurring fair value measurements	Input level in fair value hierarchy £000	Valuation technique used to measure fair value £000	31/03/2021 £000	31/03/2022 £000
Fair Value through Profit or Loss: CCLA Property Fund	Level 1	Unadjusted quoted prices in active markets for identical shares	4,711	10,619
Fair Value through Comprehensive Income & Expenditure: Daresbury SIC LLP	Level 2	Net Asset Valuation	2,913	5,102
Municipal Bonds Agency	Level 3	At Cost	10	10

There have been no transfers between input levels during the year, and no change in the valuation technique used.

The Fair Values of Financial Assets and Financial Liabilities that are not Measured at Fair Value (but for which Fair Value disclosures are required)

Except for the financial assets carried at fair value (described in the table above), all other financial liabilities and financial assets held by the authority are carried in the Balance Sheet at amortised cost. Their fair value can be assessed by calculating the present value of the cash flows that will take place over the remaining term of the instruments (Level 2), using the following assumptions:

- Estimated ranges of interest rates at 31st March 2022 for loans from PWLB and other loans receivable and payable, based on new lending rates for equivalent loans at that date.
- No early repayment or impairment is recognised for loans or investments.
- Short Term Investments, Cash and Cash Equivalents are held at carrying value.
- The fair value of trade and other receivables is taken to be the invoiced or billed amount less a provision for impairment.
- Short-term creditors are carried at cost.

The fair values are shown below:

	2020/21		2021/22	
	Carrying Amount	Fair Value	Carrying Amount	Fair Value
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Financial Assets - short-term				
Investments - loans and receivables	70,149	70,149	100,121	100,084
Cash and Cash Equivalents	21,493	21,493	13,327	13,327
Debtors	24,684	24,684	22,254	22,254
Financial Assets - long-term				
Investments	5,001	5,056	10,700	10,550
Debtors	14,060	14,951	13,550	13,641
Fair Value through profit and loss	4,711	4,711	10,619	10,619
Fair Value through other comprehensive income	2,923	2,923	5,112	5,112

Where the fair value of assets is higher than the carrying amount, this is because the Council's portfolio of investments includes a number of fixed rate investments where the interest receivable is higher than the rates available for similar loans at the Balance Sheet date. This shows a notional future gain (based on economic conditions at the 31st March 2022) attributable to the commitment to receive interest above current market rates.

Where the fair value is lower than the carrying amount, this is because the Council's portfolio of investments includes a number of fixed rate investments where the interest receivable is lower than the rates available for similar loans at the Balance Sheet date. This shows a notional future loss (based on economic conditions at the 31st March 2022) attributable to the commitment to receive interest below current market rates.

	2020/21		2021/22	
	Carrying Amount	Fair Value	Carrying Amount	Fair Value
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Financial Liabilities - short-term				
Borrowings	(617)	(617)	(618)	(618)
Finance lease liabilities & PFI	(479)	(479)	(558)	(558)
Mersey Gateway unitary charge	(6,518)	(6,518)	(6,766)	(6,766)
Creditors	(41,962)	(41,962)	(57,093)	(57,093)
Financial Liabilities - long-term				
Borrowings	(172,000)	(223,489)	(172,000)	(205,168)
Finance lease liabilities & PFI	(17,725)	(29,953)	(17,167)	(26,691)
Mersey Gateway unitary charge	(342,954)	(605,731)	(336,188)	(544,135)

The fair value of the liabilities is higher than the carrying amount because the Council's portfolio of loans includes a number of fixed rate loans where the interest rate payable is

higher than the prevailing rates at the Balance Sheet date. This shows a notional future loss (based on economic conditions at 31st March 2022) arising from a commitment to pay interest to lenders above current market rates.

Nature and Extent of Risks 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 enough 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 the treasury management section, under policies approved by the Council in the Treasury Management Strategy. The Council provides written principles for overall risk management, as well as written policies covering specific areas, such as interest risk, credit risk and the investment of surplus cash.

Fair Value

The Code requires that each class of financial asset and liability should disclose the "fair value" in a way that permits it to be compared with its carrying amount, as well as the method used in determining such fair values. The Council has used Link Asset Services, its treasury management advisors, to calculate these values and they have based the calculation on the appropriate PWLB rate for new loans as at 31st March 2022.

Credit Risk

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

Risks are minimised through the Annual Investment Strategy by ensuring that cash deposits are only placed with financial institutions identified on the Council's Approved List of Counterparties that meet identified minimum credit criteria and imposes a maximum sum to be invested with a financial institution located within each category. This list was established as one of the series of controls recommended by the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) which the Council has adopted. The Annual Investment Strategy is regularly reviewed, as is the approved counterparty list, to help minimise the Council's exposure to risk.

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 parameters set by the Council.

The Council's maximum exposure to credit risk in relation to its investments held in banks and building societies of £66.449m 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 non-recoverability applies to all Council deposits, but there was no evidence at 31st March 2022 that this was likely to crystallise.

During the year the Council complied fully with the requirements laid out in the Code and no counterparty indicated any problem with repaying any deposit placed by the Council.

The counterparties on the Councils' list are grouped and ranked by a mixture of credit ratings and size, and are set out below:

Maximum Deposit per institution £000	Counterparties	Exposure at 31/03/2022 £000
40,000	UK Government	-
	UK Banks and Building Societies	
30,000	- Minimum Rating AAA	-
25,000	- Minimum Rating AA	8,100
20,000	- Minimum Rating A	38,349
10,000	- Minimum Rating BBB	-
	Foreign Banks (with Sovereign Rating of AAA)	
20,000	- Minimum Rating AAA	-
10,000	- Minimum Rating AA	10,000
5,000	- Minimum Rating A	10,000
	Money Market Funds	
20,000	- Minimum Rating AAA	-
10,000	Property Funds	10,619
40,000	Local Authorities	55,700
		132,768

The amount invested in the CCLA Property Fund is £10m, the value of which was £10.619m at 31st March 2022.

The counterparties on the list are under constant assessment using a variety of sources including rating agencies and professional advice.

The following table analyses the Council's potential maximum exposure to credit risk on financial assets. The historical experience of default has been provided by Link Asset Services based on the rating of each institution.

	Amount outstanding at 31/03/2022 £000	Historical experience of default %	Estimated maximum exposure to default and non- collection at 31/03/2022 £000
Deposits with AA rated banks and building societies			
- 1 year and over	-	0.02	-
- under 1 year	18,100	0.00	-
Deposits with A rated banks and building societies			
- 1 year and over	-	0.05	-
- under 1 year	48,349	0.00	-
Deposits with other Local Authorities	55,700	0.00	-
Deposits with MMF	-	0.00	-
Deposits with property funds	10,619	0.00	-
	132,768		-

None of the Council's counterparties had any difficulty in repaying their liabilities during 2021/22. There has been no impairment of any financial assets during the course of the year. The Council does not anticipate any losses due to non-performance of its counterparties.

An analysis of the customer/client debt is shown below. As at 31st March 2022, £27.643m of this debt is overdue:

	31/03/2021 £000	31/03/2022 £000
Less than 3 months	8,382	10,194
3 to 6 months	2,148	3,238
6 months to 1 year	4,143	4,451
More than 1 year	14,698	11,137
	29,371	29,020
Provision for non-payment	(15,613)	(17,646)

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 (PWLb). There is no significant risk that the Council will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments under financial instruments. Instead, the risk is that the Council will be bound to replenish a

significant proportion of its borrowings at a time of unfavourable interest rates. The Council sets limits on the proportion of its fixed rate borrowing during specified periods.

The maturity analysis of financial liabilities is as follows.

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
	£000	£000
Less than 1 year	46,645	65,035
Between 1 and 2 years	7,324	7,942
Between 2 and 5 years	27,255	29,894
More than 5 years	498,100	487,519
	579,324	590,390

Market Risk

Interest Rate Risk

The Council is exposed to interest rate movements on its borrowing and investments. Movements in interest rates can have a complex impact on the Council. For example, a rise in interest rates would have the following effects:

Borrowing at variable rates – the interest expense charged to the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement will rise

Borrowing at fixed rates – the fair value of liabilities will fall (with no impact on revenue balances)

Investment at variable rates – the interest income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement will rise

Investment at fixed rates – the fair value of assets will fall (with no impact on revenue balances)

Borrowings are not carried at fair value on the Balance Sheet, so nominal gains and losses on fixed rate borrowings would not impact on the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. However, changes to interest payable and receivable on variable rate borrowings and investments are posted to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and affect the General Fund Balance. Movements in the fair value of fixed rate investments that have a quoted market price will be reflected in Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.

The Council has a number of strategies for managing interest rate risk. The Annual Treasury Management Strategy draws together the Council's prudential and treasury indicators and its expected treasury operations, including an expectation of interest rate movements. From this strategy, the treasury management section monitor interest rates within the year and adjust exposures accordingly. During periods of falling interest rates, and where economic circumstances make it favourable, fixed rate loans will be repaid early to limit exposure to

losses and fixed rate investments may be taken for longer periods to secure better long-term results. Similarly, the drawing of longer-term fixed rate borrowing would be postponed.

If interest rates had been 1% higher with all other variables held constant, the financial effect would be:

	31/03/2022
	£000
Increase in interest payable on short-term borrowings	-
Increase in interest receivable on short-term investments	(1,336)
	(1,336)

The impact of a 1% fall in interest rates would be as shown previously but with movements being reversed.

Price Risk

The Council has invested £10m in the CCLA property fund as at 31st March 2022. The price of the investment is subject to potential gains and losses based on market volatility. The investment is shown in the accounts at its value as at 31st March 2022 and any gains or losses relating to this investment are shown in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The Council has no other holdings that are subject to market volatility, an example of which would be shares traded on the equity market.

Foreign Exchange Risk

Other than £5k held in petty cash, the Council has no financial assets or liabilities, denominated in foreign currencies and thus has no exposure to loss or movement in exchange rates.

34. Adjustments between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulation

This note details the adjustments that are made to 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.

(a) 2021/22

	General Fund Balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied £000	Movement in Usable Reserves £000	Movement in Unusable Reserves £000
Capital adjustment account reversal of items debited or credited to the CIES:					
Charges for depreciation and impairment on non-current assets	(27,072)	-	-	(27,072)	27,072
Revaluation losses on Property, Plant and Equipment	(561)	-	-	(561)	561
Movements in the Market Value of Investment Properties	(52)	-	-	(52)	52
Amortisation of Intangible Assets	(321)	-	-	(321)	321
Capital Grants and Contributions applied	7,519	-	1,820	9,339	(9,339)
Revenue Expenditure Funded by Capital Under Statute	(7,938)	-	-	(7,938)	7,938
Amounts written off on disposal of Academies to CIES	(124)	-	-	(124)	124
Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the CIES	1,356	(2,323)	-	(967)	967
Insertion of items not debited or credited to the CIES:					
Statutory provision for the financing of Capital investment	9,403	-	-	9,403	(9,403)
Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund Balance	124	-	-	124	(124)
Capital Grants Unapplied Account					
Capital Grants and Contributions unapplied credited to the CIES	9,377	-	(9,377)	-	-

	General Fund Balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied £000	Movement in Usable Reserves £000	Movement in Unusable Reserves £000
Capital Receipts Reserve					
Use of Capital Receipts Reserve to Finance new Capital Expenditure	-	2,833	-	2,833	(2,833)
Use of Capital Receipts to reduce MRP liability	-	511	-	511	(511)
Pensions Reserve					
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited/credited to the CIES	(36,601)	-	-	(36,601)	36,601
Employers pension contributions and direct payments to pensioners	13,670	-	-	13,670	(13,670)
Collection Fund Adjustment					
Amount by which council tax income credited to the CIES is different from council tax income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	14,990	-	-	14,990	(14,990)
Accumulated Absences Account					
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the CIES on an accruals basis is different from remuneration in accordance with statutory requirements	265	-	-	265	(265)
Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account					
Reversing impact of overspent Dedicated Schools Grant on General Fund	(860)	-	-	(860)	860
TOTAL ADJUSTMENTS	(16,825)	1,021	(7,557)	(23,361)	23,361

(b) 2020/21

	General Fund Balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied £000	Movement in Usable Reserves £000	Movement in Unusable Reserves £000
Capital adjustment account reversal of items debited or credited to the CIES:					
Charges for depreciation and impairment on non-current assets	(26,890)	-	-	(26,890)	26,890
Revaluation losses on Property, Plant and Equipment	(3,119)	-	-	(3,119)	3,119
Movements in the Market Value of Investment Properties	93	-	-	93	(93)
Amortisation of Intangible Assets	(749)	-	-	(749)	749
Capital Grants and Contributions applied	10,568	-	3,698	14,266	(14,266)
Revenue Expenditure Funded by Capital Under Statute	(9,815)	-	-	(9,815)	9,815
Derecognition of Financial Instruments measured at other comprehensive income and expenditure	-	-	-	-	-
Amounts written off on disposal of Academies to CIES	(3,593)	-	-	(3,593)	3,593
Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as gain/loss on disposal to the CIES	464	(1,399)	-	(935)	935
				-	
Insertion of items not debited or credited to the CIES:					
Statutory provision for the financing of Capital investment	9,356	-	-	9,356	(9,356)
Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund Balance	729	-	-	729	(729)
				-	
Capital Grants Unapplied Account					
Capital Grants and Contributions unapplied credited to the CIES	8,212	-	(8,212)	-	-

	General Fund Balance	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	Movement in Usable Reserves	Movement in Unusable Reserves
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Capital Receipts Reserve					
Use of Capital Receipts Reserve to Finance new Capital Expenditure	-	4,455	-	4,455	(4,455)
Use of Capital Receipts to reduce MRP liability	-	502	-	502	(502)
				-	
Pensions Reserve					
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited/credited to the CIES	(22,592)	-	-	(22,592)	22,592
Employers pension contributions and direct payments to pensioners	16,486	-	-	16,486	(16,486)
				-	
Collection Fund Adjustment					
Amount by which council tax income credited to the CIES is different from council tax income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(19,934)	-	-	(19,934)	19,934
				-	
Accumulated Absences Account					
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the CIES on an accruals basis is different from remuneration in accordance with statutory requirements	(1,616)	-	-	(1,616)	1,616
				-	
Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account					
Reversing impact of overspent Dedicated Schools Grant on General Fund	(996)	-	-	(996)	996
TOTAL ADJUSTMENTS	(43,396)	3,558	(4,514)	(44,352)	44,352

35. Usable Reserves

Usable reserves are those reserves that contain resources that the Council can apply to the provision of services, either by incurring expenses or undertaking capital investment. Usable reserves include the General Fund Balance, any earmarked reserves under the General Fund umbrella, the Capital Receipts Reserve and any Capital Grants Unapplied.

General Fund Balance

The General Fund Balance records the Council's accumulated income over expenditure for each financial year. The fund manages the reversal of a number of transactions that are required to be included in the preparation of the financial statements but which are subsequently removed under statutory mitigation.

Earmarked Reserves

These reserves help to meet specific known or predicted future requirements and are legally part of the General Fund Reserve. The earmarked reserves also include unspent school balances of budgets delegated to individual schools.

The movements in earmarked reserves are analysed in Note 36.

Capital Receipts Reserve

This reserve holds the proceeds from the sale of assets and can only be used for funding capital investment or the repayment of borrowing.

Movements in the Council's usable reserves are detailed in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Capital Grants Unapplied

This reserve holds Capital Grants income for which all conditions have been met, but the funding has yet to be used to finance capital expenditure.

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
	General Fund	
(6,342)	- Excluding Earmarked Reserves	(5,147)
(128,622)	- Earmarked Reserves	(131,872)
	Capital Reserves	
(2,082)	- Capital Receipts Reserve	(1,061)
(17,003)	- Capital Grants Unapplied	(24,560)
(154,049)	Total Usable Reserves	(162,640)

36. Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves

This note sets out the amounts set aside from the General Fund in earmarked reserves to provide financing for future expenditure plans, and the amounts posted back from earmarked reserves to meet General Fund expenditure in 2021/22.

	Balance at 31 st March 2020	Movement (to)/from Reserve	Balance at 31 st March 2021	Movement (to)/from Reserve	Balance at 31 st March 2022
General Fund	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Schools Reserves	(4,517)	(2,582)	(7,099)	(334)	(7,433)
Balances held by schools under the scheme of delegation					
Capital	(1,900)	(147)	(2,047)	261	(1,786)
To support Capital Programme					
Insurance General Fund	(1,758)	129	(1,629)	(445)	(2,074)
To self-fund possible insurance claims					
Building Schools for the Future Capital	(4,830)	(821)	(5,651)	(553)	(6,204)
To fund future capital costs					
Enterprise and Employment	(1,056)	(191)	(1,247)	(16)	(1,263)
To fund E&E activities for future years					
Health & Community	(2,054)	(699)	(2,753)	(700)	(3,453)
To support future Adult Social Care revenue budgets					
Housing & Communities	-	-	-	(750)	(750)
To support future revenue budgets in Housing and Community Services					
Transformation Fund	(416)	(184)	(600)	(869)	(1,469)
To fund costs arising from future efficiency reviews					
Public Health & Health Protection	(549)	(975)	(1,524)	(1,220)	(2,744)
To fund future Public Health activities					
Fleet Replacement	(1,221)	316	(905)	85	(820)
Rolling replacement programme for Council fleet vehicle					
Enterprise Zone	(1,183)	1,183	-	-	-
To support development of Daresbury Science Park					

	Balance at 31st March 2020	Movement (to)/from Reserve	Balance at 31st March 2021	Movement (to)/from Reserve	Balance at 31st March 2022
General Fund	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Pension Past Service Deficit To enable pension deficits to be funded as a lump sum, resulting in finance efficiencies	(6,323)	1,646	(4,677)	821	(3,856)
Education, Inclusion & Provision Education Grant Income held for a specific purpose but with no repayment conditions attached	(653)	14	(639)	(226)	(865)
Revenue Efficiencies To help fund budget gaps over the medium term	(4,479)	(254)	(4,733)	(2,896)	(7,629)
NNDR Pilot Scheme To fund No Detriment policy as part of the Liverpool City Region 100% business rate retention scheme	-	(5,321)	(5,321)	3,246	(2,075)
Mersey Gateway Grant Reserve To fund any shortfall in the Mersey Gateway tolling Income to cover unitary charge payments, and repayment of grant to Department for Transport	(58,255)	(5,929)	(64,184)	(9,233)	(73,416)
Covid Grant Funding from MHCLG to cover the additional costs and fall in income associated to the Covid-19 pandemic	(3,642)	2,273	(1,369)	1,369	-
Government Grants RIA Grants Income held for a specific purpose but with no repayment conditions attached	(5,126)	(11,023)	(16,149)	11,393	(4,756)
Covid-19 Contingency To fund additional costs in respect of COVID-19 pandemic	(2,000)	-	(2,000)	2,000	-
Employment, Learning & Skills To fund Adult Education Schemes and Work Programmes in 2022/23	-	-	-	(1,642)	(1,642)
Pay Inflation 2022/23 To fund potential additional costs from the pending 2022/23 pay award	-	-	-	(871)	(871)
Other Earmarked Reserves Total of reserves under £750k	(5,610)	(485)	(6,095)	(2,671)	(8,766)
TOTAL ALL RESERVES	(105,572)	(23,050)	(128,622)	(3,251)	(131,872)

In order to streamline the note any reserves under £0.750m have been summarised as 'Other Earmarked Reserves' in the table above.

37. Unusable Reserves

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
(131,392)	Revaluation Reserve	(135,650)
169,110	Pensions Reserve	91,207
(120,251)	Capital Adjustment Account	(111,364)
(12,127)	Deferred Capital Receipts	(11,616)
17,974	Collection Fund Adjustment Account	2,984
(2,913)	Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve	(5,102)
3,282	Accumulated Absences Account	3,017
996	Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account	1,856
(75,321)	Total Unusable Reserves	(164,668)

Revaluation Reserve

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

- Revalued downwards or impaired and the gains are lost.
- Used in the provision of services and the gains are consumed through depreciation.
- Disposed of and the gains are realised.

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

2020/21		£000	2021/22
£000		£000	£000
(136,518)	Balance at 1st April		(131,392)
(7,378)	Upward revaluation of assets	(15,275)	
1,386	Downward revaluation of assets and impairment losses not charged to the Surplus/(Deficit) on the Provision of Services	5,589	
(5,992)	Surplus or deficit on revaluation of non-current assets not posted to the Surplus/(Deficit) on the Provision of Services		(9,686)
8,242	Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation	5,428	
2,683	Accumulated gain on academies transferred	-	
193	Accumulated gains on assets sold or scrapped	-	
11,118	Amount written off to the Capital Adjustment Account		5,428
(131,392)	Balance at 31st March		(135,650)

Capital Adjustment Account

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

The account contains accumulated gains and losses on investment properties and gains recognised on donated assets that are yet to be consumed by the Council.

The account also contains revaluation gains accumulated on property, plant and equipment before 1st April 2007, the date the revaluation reserve was created to hold such gains.

2020/21 £000		£000	2021/22 £000
(124,331)	Balance at 1st April		(120,251)
	Reversal of items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:		
26,890	Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	27,073	
3,119	Revaluation losses on Property, Plant and Equipment	561	
749	Amortisation of intangible assets	321	
9,815	Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute	7,938	
3,593	Carrying value of Academies transferred	124	
433	Carrying amount of non-current assets sold	456	
44,599			36,473
(11,118)	Adjusting amounts written out of the Revaluation Reserve		(5,428)
33,481	Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in the year		31,045
	Capital financing applied in the year:		
(4,455)	Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure	(2,833)	
(10,568)	Capital grants and contributions credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement that have been applied to capital financing	(7,519)	
(3,698)	Application of grants to capital financing from the Capital Grants Unapplied Account	(1,820)	
(9,356)	Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment charged against the General Fund	(9,403)	
(502)	Use of Capital Receipts to reduce MRP liability	(511)	
(729)	Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund	(124)	
(29,308)			(22,210)
(93)	Movements in the market value of investment properties debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		52
(120,251)	Balance at 31st March		(111,364)

Pension 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 pays 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 the funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

2020/21		£000	2021/22
£000		£000	£000
65,438	Balance at 1st April		169,110
	Re-measurement of the net defined benefit liability comprising:		
12,333	Changes in demographic assumptions	(5,202)	
180,280	Changes in financial assumptions	(60,931)	
(6,943)	Other experience	1,613	
(88,104)	Returns on assets excluding amounts included in net interest	(36,314)	
97,566			(100,834)
	Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		
22,592			36,601
(16,486)	Employers pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year		(13,670)
169,110	Balance at 31st March		91,207

Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve

Deferred Capital Receipts are amounts derived from the sale of assets, which will be received in instalments over an agreed period of time.

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
(232)	Castlefields Equity Advances	(232)
(6,661)	Sci-Tech Daresbury Lease	(6,405)
(5,235)	Venture Fields lease	(4,979)
(12,128)		(11,616)

The Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve holds the gains recognised on the disposal of non-current assets but for which cash settlement has yet to take place. Under statutory arrangements, the Council does not treat these gains as usable for financing new capital expenditure until they are backed by cash receipts. When the deferred cash settlement eventually takes place, amounts are transferred to the Capital Receipts Reserve.

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
(12,629)	Balance at 1st April	(12,128)
-	Transfer of deferred sale proceeds credited as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-
501	Transfer to the Capital Receipts Reserve upon receipt of cash	512
(12,128)	Balance at 31st March	(11,616)

Collection Fund Adjustment

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

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
(1,960)	Balance at 1st April	17,974
	Amount by which council tax income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from council tax income collected in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(826)
(104)		
	Amount by which non-domestic rates income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from non-domestic rates income collected in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(14,164)
20,038		
17,974	Balance at 31st March	2,984

Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve

The Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve contains the gains made by the authority arising from increases in the value of its investments that are measured at fair value through other comprehensive income. The balance is reduced when investments with accumulated gains are:

- Revalued downwards or impaired and the gains are lost
- Disposed of and the gains are realised.

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
(1,898)	Balance at 1st April	(2,913)
(1,015)	Upward revaluation of investments	(2,189)
-	- Downward revaluation of investments	-
-	- Change in impairment loss allowances	-
(2,913)		(5,102)
-	Accumulated gains or losses on assets sold and maturing assets written out to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Other Investment	-
-	Accumulated gains or losses on assets sold and maturing assets written out to the General Fund Balances for financial assets designated to Fair Value through Other	-
-	- Comprehensive Income	-
(2,913)	Balance at 31st March	(5,102)

Accumulated Absences Account

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

2020/21 £000		2021/22 £000
1,666	Balance at 1st April	3,282
(1,666)	Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year	(3,282)
3,282	Amount accrued at the end of the current year	3,017
1,616	Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(265)
3,282	Balance at 31st March	3,017

Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account

Statutory arrangements require that any school budget deficits must not be charged to the General Fund, and the deficit must be carried forward to be funded from future Dedicated Schools Grant Income. The deficit balance is held in the Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account as shown below:

2020/21 £000		2021/22 £000
-	Balance at 1st April	996
996	Amount by which Dedicated Schools Grant is in deficit at 31st March	860
996	Balance at 31st March	1,856

38. Cash Flow Statement – Operating Activities

The surplus or deficit on the provision of services has been adjusted for the following non-cash movements.

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
(26,890)	Depreciation	(27,072)
(3,129)	Impairment and downward valuation	(561)
(749)	Amortisation of intangible assets	(321)
103	Movement in market value of investment properties	(52)
9,135	(Increase)/decrease in impairment debtors	(3,217)
(2,797)	(Increase)/decrease in creditors and receipts in advance	(18,604)
(6,225)	Increase/(decrease) in debtors	(236)
23	Increase/(decrease) in inventories	101
(6,106)	Non-cash pension adjustments	(22,931)
(1,711)	Contributions (to)/from provisions	1,924
(433)	Carrying amount of non-current assets and non-current assets held for sale, sold or de-recognised	(456)
(3,593)	Loss on transfer to academies	(124)
(282)	Other non-cash adjustments	781
(42,654)	Total non-cash movements	(70,768)

The surplus or deficit on the provision of services has been adjusted for the following items that are investing and financing activities:

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
13,495	Capital grants credited to the surplus or deficit on the provision of services	11,866
1,399	Proceeds from the sale of non-current assets	2,323
-	Other cash flows from investing or financing activities	-
14,894	Net cash flows from investing or financing activities	14,189

The cash flows for operating activities include the following items:

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
(1,890)	Interest received	(1,650)
34,885	Interest paid	34,351
-	Dividends received	-
32,995		32,701

39. Cash Flow Statement – Investing Activities

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
28,646	Purchase of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	13,452
85,000	Purchase of short-term and long-term investments	130,700
(1,594)	Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	(1,899)
(90,000)	Proceeds from short-term and long-term investments	(90,000)
(16,996)	Other receipts from investing activities	(11,132)
5,056	Net Cash flows from Investing Activities	41,121

40. Cash Flow Statement – Financing Activities

2020/21		2021/22
£000		£000
-	Cash receipts of short-term and long-term borrowing	-
68	Agency treatment of Collection Fund balances	(80)
7,312	Cash payments from the reduction of the outstanding liabilities relating to finance leases and on balance sheet PFI contracts	6,961
5,000	Repayments of short-term and long-term borrowing	-
(6,309)	Net Adjustment for Agency Treatment of Government Grants	1,972
-	Other payments for financing activities	-
6,071	Net Cash flows from Financing Activities	8,853

Reconciliation of Liabilities Arising from Financing Activities

	Note	31/03/2021 £000	Financing Cash Flows £000	Non-Cash Changes £000	31/03/2022 £000
Long-Term Borrowings	26	(172,000)	-	-	(172,000)
Short-Term Borrowing	26	(617)	-	(1)	(618)
On Balance Sheet PFI Liabilities	31	(367,677)	6,961	44	(360,672)
Net Cash flows from Financing Activities		(540,294)	6,961	43	(533,290)

41. Interest in Companies and Other Entities

The Council is involved with several companies over which it has varying degrees of control and influence. The Council is required to classify the entities according to whether they are subsidiaries, associates or joint ventures

Subsidiary

An entity is only a subsidiary if the Council has power over the entity, exposure, or rights, to variable returns from its involvement with the entity and ability to use its power over the entity to affect the amount of the Council's returns.

As at 31st March 2022 the following was a subsidiary of the Council:-

- Mersey Gateway Crossings Board Ltd - The principal activity of the company is to deliver the Mersey Gateway Bridge project, and to administer and oversee the construction and maintenance of the new tolled crossings, including the tolling of the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge. The Council holds 100% of the shares issued by the company. An amount of £500k is held as a long-term debtor on the Council's Balance Sheet; this is the amount which has been passed to Mersey Gateway Crossings Board Ltd as working capital.

In accordance with paragraph 9.1.1.7 of the Code, the subsidiary has not been consolidated into group accounts as they are not considered to be of material value.

Copies of the accounts for Mersey Gateway Crossings Board Ltd are available from Companies House.

Joint Ventures

These are arrangements under which two or more parties have contractually agreed to share control, such that decisions about activities that significantly affect returns require the unanimous consent of the parties sharing control, and joint parties have rights to the net assets of the arrangement.

As at 31st March 2022 the Council were party to the following joint venture:-

- Daresbury SIC (Pub Sec) LLP - The principal activity of the company during the year was to assist, promote, encourage, develop and secure the development of the International Science Park at Daresbury, Cheshire. Members of the partnership are Halton Borough Council and United Kingdom Research & Innovation.

In accordance with paragraph 9.1.1.7 of the Code, the Council's equity within the joint venture has not been consolidated into group accounts as it is not considered to be of material value.

Associates

Associates are entities for which the Council is an investor and has significant influence. The Council can have an associate relationship with an entity that is a joint venture under the control of other investors.

As at 31st March 2022 the Council had associate relationships with the following:-

- Daresbury SIC LLP- The principal activity of the LLP is the management and development of the Sci-Tech Daresbury Campus in the North West. Designated members of the partnership are Langtree Daresbury Ltd and Daresbury SIC (Pubsec) LLP, in which the Council is an equal partner. Amounts of £6.1m are held as a long-term debtor and £0.3m held as a short-term debtor on the Council's Balance Sheet. This relates to a long-term lease agreement between the Council and the company for a property asset based at the Sci-Tech Daresbury Campus.

In accordance with paragraph 9.1.1.7 of the Code, the Council's equity within the associate relationship has not been consolidated into group accounts as it is not considered to be of material value.

Note during 2021/22 the Council held a minority shareholding in Widnes Regeneration Ltd. These shares were sold in full by the Council on 26th January 2022.

Collection Fund

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 billing authority in relation to the collection from taxpayers and the distribution to local authorities and the Government in relation to council tax and non-domestic rates.

Collection Fund Statement

2020/21				2021/22		
Council Tax £000	Non Domestic Rates £000	Total £000		Council Tax £000	Non Domestic Rates £000	Total £000
(64,230)		(64,230)	Income			
			Council Tax	(69,264)		(69,264)
(1,336)		(1,336)	Transfer from General Fund to cover cost of COVID-19 council tax hardship	-		-
	(41,586)	(41,586)	Non Domestic Rates		(51,908)	(51,908)
	1,799	1,799	Transitional Protection Payment		1,754	1,754
(65,566)	(39,787)	(105,353)		(69,264)	(50,154)	(119,418)
			Expenditure			
			<u>Precepts, Demands & Shares</u>			
	-	-	Central Government		-	-
52,179	53,932	106,111	Halton Borough Council	54,509	53,671	108,180
7,441	-	7,441	Cheshire Police Authority	7,931		7,931
2,804	545	3,349	Cheshire Fire Service	2,845	542	3,387
672	-	672	Liverpool City Region	668		668
148	-	148	Parish Precept	147		147
			<u>Apportionment of Previous Year's Surplus</u>			
	-	-	Central Government		-	-
1,084	2,742	3,826	Halton Borough Council	333	(17,892)	(17,559)
139	-	139	Cheshire Police Authority	47	-	47
59	28	87	Cheshire Fire Service	18	(181)	(163)
			<u>Charges to Collection Fund</u>			
261	(1)	260	Write off uncollectable amounts	291	193	484
629	706	1,335	Increase / (Decrease) in Bad Debt Provision	1,468	826	2,294
	1,699	1,699	Increase / (Decrease) in Appeals Provision		(1,746)	(1,746)
	157	157	Cost of Collection		154	154
	220	220	Disregarded Amounts		278	278
65,416	60,028	125,444		68,257	35,845	104,102
(1,684)	(548)	(2,232)	Balance Brought Forward	(1,834)	19,693	17,859
(150)	20,241	20,091	Movement on Fund Balance	(1,007)	(14,309)	(15,316)
(1,834)	19,693	17,859	Balance Carried Forward	(2,841)	5,384	2,543

Further information on the Collection Fund balance as at 31st March 2022 can be found within the Narrative Report (Page 13).

Collection Fund Balance Sheet

2020/21					Council Tax	2021/22				
Halton BC £000	Cheshire P&CC £000	Cheshire Fire £000	LCR £000	Total £000		Halton BC £000	Cheshire P&CC £000	Cheshire Fire £000	LCR £000	Total £000
9,807	1,426	510	120	11,863	Arrears	10,736	1,563	559	132	12,990
(6,254)	(910)	(326)	(77)	(7,567)	Provision for Doubtful Debts	(7,467)	(1,086)	(390)	(92)	(9,035)
(888)	(129)	(46)	(11)	(1,074)	Overpayments / Prepayments	(593)	(86)	(31)	(7)	(717)
(1,522)	(219)	(79)	(14)	(1,834)	(Surplus)/Deficit	(2,353)	(340)	(122)	(26)	(2,841)
(1,143)	(168)	(59)	(18)	(1,388)	Cash	(323)	(51)	(16)	(7)	(397)
-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-

2020/21				Non-Domestic Rates	2021/22			
Central Gov £000	Halton BC £000	Cheshire Fire £000	Total £000		Central Gov £000	Halton BC £000	Cheshire Fire £000	Total £000
-	6,421	65	6,486	Arrears	-	7,159	72	7,231
-	(5,593)	(56)	(5,649)	Provision for Doubtful Debts	-	(6,411)	(65)	(6,476)
-	(8,383)	(85)	(8,468)	Appeals Provision	-	(6,654)	(67)	(6,721)
-	(492)	(5)	(497)	Overpayments / Prepayments	-	(456)	(5)	(461)
-	19,496	197	19,693	(Surplus)/Deficit	-	5,330	54	5,384
-	(11,449)	(116)	(11,565)	Cash	-	1,032	11	1,043
-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-

Notes to the Collection Fund

1. Introduction of the Council Tax

The property based council tax was introduced on the 1st April 1993, replacing the personal liability Community Charge. The Council determined its Band D equivalent tax base for 2021/22 at 35,182 (2020/21 – 35,359)

2. The Council Tax Base Determination

Band	Properties	Ratio	Band D Equivalents
Disabled	64	5/9	36
A	17,503	6/9	11,668
B	9,804	7/9	7,625
C	7,090	8/9	6,303
D	4,616	9/9	4,615
E	3,480	11/9	4,253
F	1,148	13/9	1,659
G	317	15/9	529
H	29	18/9	57
Total	44,051		36,745
Reductions relating to Non-Collection and changes in assumptions			(1,563)
Tax Base set for 2021/22			35,182

The parishes' individual tax bases are shown below:

	2020/21	2021/22
Hale	663	655
Daresbury	179	179
Moore	327	324
Preston Brook	368	357
Halebank	523	521
Sandymoor	1,265	1,326

3. Precepting Authorities

Halton Borough Council has three precepting authorities; Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner, Cheshire Fire Authority, and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. The Band D charge and total precept are shown in the table below:

	2020/21	2021/22
	£	£
Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner		
- Band D Charge	210.44	225.44
- Precept	7,440,948	7,931,430
Cheshire Fire Authority		
- Band D Charge	79.29	80.87
- Precept	2,803,615	2,845,168
Liverpool City Region		
- Band D Charge	19.00	19.00
- Precept	671,821	668,458

4. Non-Domestic Rates

The non-domestic rate replaced locally fixed rates from 1st April 1990. The rateable value at 31st March and the business rate multiplier, which is fixed by the Government, are shown in the table below:

	2020/21	2021/22
	£	£
Rateable value at 31st March	127,967,261	127,149,106
Non Domestic rating multiplier	51.2	51.2
Small Business Non Domestic rating multiplier	49.9	49.9

Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts

The Council's Responsibilities

The Council 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 Council, the Operational Director – Finance has that responsibility;

To manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets;

To approve the Statement of Accounts.

The Operational Director – Finance Responsibilities

The Operational Director – Finance is responsible for the preparation of the Council's statement of accounts which, in terms of CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in Great Britain ("the Code of Practice"), is required to present a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council at the accounting date and its income and expenditure for the year (ended 31 March 2022).

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

Selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;

Adopted the principal of "True and Fair" regarding the Council's financial position;

Made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent;

Complied with the Code of Practice.

The Operational Director – Finance has also:

Kept proper accounting records which were kept up to date;

Taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

I certify that this Statement of Accounts presents a true and fair view of the financial position and income and expenditure of Halton Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2022.



Signed by:

Operational Director – Finance

Date: 13 July 2022

Statement of Accounting Policies

1. General

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Council's transactions for the 2021/22 financial year and its position at the year-ending 31st March 2022.

Halton Borough Council is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, which is required to be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice of Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2021/22 supported by International Financing Reporting Standards (IFRS).

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

2. Changes to the 2021/22 Accounting Policies

The Council's accounting policies are subject to regular review arising from changes in the way costs are accounted for and changes in the requirements of the Code of Practice.

3. Accruals of Income and Expenditure

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

3(a) Revenue Recognition

Revenue from contracts with service recipients, whether for services or the provision of goods, is recognised when (or as) the goods or services are transferred to the service recipient in accordance with the performance obligations in the contract.

3(b) Employee Costs

The full cost of employees is charged to the period which the employees worked. Accruals are made for pay awards awaiting settlement and for the cost of holiday entitlements and time off in lieu earned by employees but not taken before the year-end. To ensure that the actual costs to the Council falls in the year in which they are paid a transfer is made to an Employee Benefit Reserve.

3(c) 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 in exchange for those benefits. They are charged on an accrual basis at the earlier of when the Council can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Council recognises costs for 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 Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for pension enhancement termination benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

3(d) Interest

Interest receivable on investments and payable on borrowings is accounted for respectively as income and expenditure on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instrument rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract.

3(e) Supplies and Services

Supplies and services are accounted for in the period that they are consumed or received. Accruals are made for all material sums unpaid at year end for goods and services received or works completed. Where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet.

3(f) 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 highly liquid investments that mature within 3 months or less from the date of acquisition and are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change of value.

In the Cash Flow Statement, cash and cash equivalents are shown net of bank overdrafts that are repayable on demand and form an integral part of the Council's cash management.

3(g) Debtors and Creditors

Where revenue and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where debts may not be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.

Known uncollectable debt is written off with a charge being made to the Bad Debt Provision.

4. Contingent Assets

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

Contingent assets are not recognised on the Balance Sheet but by way of notes to the accounts where it is probable that there will be an inflow of economic benefit or service potential.

5. 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 are not recognised on the Balance Sheet but disclosed by way of notes to the accounts.

6. The Collection Fund

The Council is required by statute to maintain a separate fund (i.e. The Collection Fund) for the collection and distribution of amounts due in respect of council tax and national non-domestic rates.

6(a) Council Tax Income

In its capacity as a billing authority the Council acts as an agent. It collects council tax income on behalf of the major preceptors (The Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire, Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority) and itself.

6(b) National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR)

As part of the Business Rate Retention Pilot Scheme the Council acts as an agent and collects national non-domestic rates on behalf Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service and itself.

6(c) Accounting for Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates

While the council tax and non-domestic rates income for the year credited to the Collection Fund is the accrued income for the year, regulations determine when it should be released from the Collection Fund and transferred to the General Fund. The amount credited to the General Fund under statute is the Council's demand for the year plus the Council's agreed share of the surplus (or less its share of the deficit) on the Collection Fund.

The difference between the income included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the amount required 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 authority's share of the end of year balances in respect of council tax and NDR relating to arrears, impairment allowances for doubtful debts, overpayments and prepayments and appeals.

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

7. Events after the Reporting Period

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

Those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is adjusted to reflect such events.

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

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

8. Financial Instruments

The Council invests and borrows money as part of its day to day business and Treasury Management Strategy. It is required to present on the balance sheet at fair value its outstanding financial obligations and assets in relation to these transactions. Assets exclude short term investments i.e. invested for periods of less than 3 months at inception and not due for repayment at balance sheet date. These investments are treated as cash equivalents due to their liquid nature.

The Council uses Link Asset Services to provide independent valuations of the position at the period end.

Link Asset Services use the Net Present Value valuation technique to value borrowings. The discount rate used within the calculation is the Public Works Loans Board new borrowing rate.

8(a) Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are initially measured at fair value and carried at their amortised cost. Annual charges to 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. Financial liabilities due to be settled within 12 months of the Balance Sheet date, along with accrued interest on all financial liabilities, are recorded as a current liability.

8(b) Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified based on a classification and measurement approach that reflects the business model for holding the financial assets and their cash flow characteristics.

There are three main classes of financial assets measured at:

- amortised cost
- fair value through profit or loss (FVPL), and

- fair value through other comprehensive income (FVOCI)

Financial Assets Measured at Amortised Cost

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

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

Expected Credit Loss Model

The Council recognises expected credit losses on all of its financial assets held at amortised cost [or where relevant FVOCI], either on a 12-month or lifetime basis. Only lifetime losses are recognised for trade receivables (debtors) held by the Council.

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

Financial Assets Measured at Fair Value through Profit or Loss

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

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

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

The inputs to the measurement techniques are categorised in accordance with the following three levels:

- Level 1 inputs – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets that the Council can access at the measurement date.
- Level 2 inputs – inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset, either directly or indirectly.
- Level 3 inputs – unobservable inputs for the asset.

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

9. Fair Value

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

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

The Council measures the fair value of an asset or liability using the assumptions that market participants would use when pricing the asset or liability, assuming that market participants act in their economic best interest.

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

The Council uses valuation techniques that are appropriate in the circumstances and for which sufficient data is available, maximising the use of relevant observable inputs and minimising the use of unobservable inputs.

Inputs to the valuation techniques in respect of the Council's fair value measurement of its assets and liabilities are categorised within the fair value hierarchy as follows:

- Level 1 – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets or liabilities that the authority can access at the measurement date.
- Level 2 – inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly or indirectly.
- Level 3 – unobservable inputs for the asset or liability

10. Government Grants, Other Contributions and Donated Assets

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.

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

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

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

11. Interest in Companies and Other Entities

The Council has an interest in subsidiaries, joint ventures and associated entities that would require it to prepare group accounts. As the transactions relating to group entities are not material, no group financial statements are being produced for the 2021/22 accounts.

The definition of materiality as per the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting is:

The relevance of information contained in the financial statements is affected by its nature and materiality. Omissions or misstatements of items are material if they could, individually or collectively, influence the decisions or assessments of users made on the basis of the financial statements. Materiality depends on the nature or size of the omission or misstatement judged in the surrounding circumstances. The nature or size of the item, or a combination of both, could be the determining factor. Therefore, materiality provides a threshold or cut-off point rather than a primary qualitative characteristic which information must have if it is to be useful. An authority need not comply with the Code, as to both disclosure and accounting principles, if the information is not material to the true and fair view of the financial statements and to the understanding of users.

In assessing the materiality of group entities an assessment has been undertaken of the following quantitative and qualitative factors:

Quantitative Factor

- The activities of group entities are not significant to the representation of the operational activities of the authority as a whole.
- Gross Value of the investments in gross entities are not significant in terms of the balance sheet of HBC.
- Gross Value of the borrowings or other liabilities of group entities are not significant to the balance sheet of HBC.
- An adjustment to usable reserves that would arise on consolidation would not be significant.

Qualitative Factor

- The authority does not depend significantly on group entities for continued provision of statutory services.
- There is no concern to which the Council has passed on control of its assets to other parties.
- There is no concern about the extent to which the Council is exposed to commercial risk.
- Not consolidating group entities does not mask significant trends.
- Grouping the accounts would not provide any more useful disclosures.

12. Intangible Assets

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

Intangible assets are initially measured at cost. Amounts are only revalued where the fair value of the assets held by the Council can be determined with reference to an active market. In practice, no intangible asset held by the Council meets these criteria, and they are therefore carried at amortised cost. The depreciable amount of any intangible asset is amortised over its useful life to the relevant service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

13. Inventories and Long Term Contracts

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

Long-term contracts are accounted for on the basis of charging the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services with the consideration allocated to the performance obligations satisfied based on the goods or services transferred to the service recipient during the financial year.

14. Leases

14(a) Finance Leases

Leases are classified as Finance Leases where the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the property, plant or equipment from the lessor to the lessee.

Where a lease covers both land and buildings, the land and buildings elements are considered separately for classification.

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

down the lease liability. Contingent rents are charged as expenses in the periods in which they are incurred.

Lease payments are apportioned between:

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

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

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

14(b) Operating Leases

Operating leases are all leases which are not categorised as finance leases. Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as an expense of the services benefitting from use of the leased property, plant or equipment. Charges are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments.

15. Non-Current Assets, Property, Plant and Equipment

15(a) Recognition

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

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of a non-current asset is capitalised on an accruals basis. Expenditure is only capitalised when it adds to or extends, and not merely maintains the value of an existing asset.

15(b) Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

- the purchase price
- any costs attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management
- the initial estimate of the costs of dismantling and removing the item and restoring the site on which it is located

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

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

- Infrastructure, assets under construction and community assets are measured on the basis of depreciated historic cost.
- Surplus asset, investment properties and assets held for sale are based on their fair value, estimated at highest and best use from a market participant's perspective.
- School buildings – current value, but because of their specialist nature, are measured at depreciated replacement cost which is used as an estimate of current value
- All other assets are measured at current value which is determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use ("existing use value" – EUV).

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

Assets are subject to an annual impairment check. A proportion of the assets will be subject to revaluation each year to allow for the workload of revaluation to be more evenly spread and the balance sheet to be more accurate. Each asset will be re-valued on a 3-year cycle.

All assets are subject to an annual review to ensure valuations have not materially changed in the years they are not valued and that the carrying value is not significantly different to their fair value.

Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains. Exceptionally, gains might be credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services where they arise from the reversal of a loss previously charged to a service.

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

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

The Council operates a de-minimis level of £35,000 at acquisition, in respect of land and property, and a qualified valuer certifies the valuation. In respect of vehicles, plant & equipment these are carried at depreciated historic cost subject to an initial recognition de-minimis of £5,000.

15(c) Impairment

Assets are assessed at 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, the carrying amount of the asset is written down first against the accumulated gains in the revaluation reserve.

Where there is no longer a balance in the revaluation reserve to consume the loss, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against the relevant service lines in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

When an impairment loss is reversed, the reversal is credited to the relevant services lines in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, up to the amount of the original loss and adjusted for depreciation that would have been charged if the loss had never been recognised.

15(d) Disposals and Non-Current Assets Held for Sale

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

To be classified as held for sale an asset must meet all of the following criteria:

- The asset (or disposal group) must be available for immediate sale in its present condition subject to terms that are usual and customary for sales of such assets (or disposal groups).
- The sale must be highly probable; the appropriate level of management must be committed to a plan to sell the asset (or disposal group) and an active programme to locate a buyer and complete the plan must have been initiated.

- The asset (or disposal group) must be actively marketed for a sale at a price that is reasonable in relation to its current value.
- The sale should be expected to qualify for recognition as a completed sale within one year of the date of classification and action required to complete the plan should indicate that it is unlikely that significant changes to the plan will be made or that the plan will be withdrawn.

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 carrying amount before they were classified as held for sale; adjusted for depreciation, amortisation or revaluations that would have been recognised had the asset not been classified as held for sale, and their recoverable amount at the date of the decision not to sell.

Receipts from the disposal of PPE assets greater than £10,000 are credited to the useable capital receipts reserve on an accruals basis. Lower amounts are treated as de-minimis and credited to the revenue account.

15(e) Depreciation

Depreciation is provided for on all property, plant and equipment assets with a finite useful life. The provision for depreciation is calculated by allocating the cost less any estimated residual value of the asset over its useful life. The useful lives of assets are estimated on a realistic basis and reviewed regularly, and where necessary revised.

The estimated useful lives of assets by class are as follows:

Buildings & Other Operational Properties	Up to 60 years
Existing Highway Infrastructure and Community Assets	15 Years
New Highway Infrastructure	25 Years
Mersey Gateway Crossing - In line with the policy on Componentisation (Para 15g), significant components are:	
• Structures (Main Crossing, Earthworks, Bridge Approaches)	120 Years
• Highways (incl Street Lighting)	25 Years
• Other (Tolling, Landscaping, Signage)	30 Years
• General (Financing and Development Costs)	Split pro-rata across above elements
Vehicles, Plant and Equipment	3-10 Years
Intangible Assets	5-10 Years
Finance Leases – vehicles, plant and equipment of lease	3-10 Years equal to length

Finance Leases – buildings

Up to 60 years

All assets are depreciated on a straight line basis, with depreciation commencing the year after acquisition. In exceptional circumstances, for example, if a particularly expensive asset is acquired with a short life expectancy, then a charge may be levied in the year of acquisition to ensure the charge to the service is more in line with the consumption of the asset.

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.

An exception to depreciation 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), these are not depreciated.

15(f) Investment Property

Investment property is property (land or a building – or part of a building – or both) held solely to earn rentals or for capital appreciation or both, rather than for:

- (a) Use in the production or supply of goods or services or for administrative purposes; or
- (b) Sale in the ordinary course of operations.

Investment properties are initially measured at cost and subsequently at fair value, being the price that would be received to sell such an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. As a non-financial asset, investment properties are measured at highest and best use. Properties are not depreciated but revalued annually according to market conditions at the year end. Gains and losses on revaluation are posted to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The same treatment is applied to gains and losses on disposal.

Rentals received in relation to investment properties are credited to the Financing and Investment Income line and result in a gain to the General Fund balance. Revaluation and disposal gains and losses are not permitted by statutory arrangements to have an impact on the General Fund balance. The gains and losses are reversed out of the General Fund in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account and (for any sale proceeds greater than £10,000) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

15(g) Componentisation

The objective of component accounting is to follow proper accounting practice by ensuring that items of Property, Plant and Equipment are accurately and fairly included in the Balance Sheet and the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Consumption of economic benefits should be properly reflected over the assets individual useful lives, through depreciation charges.

The overall value of an asset must be fairly apportioned over significant components, which need to be accounted for separately, with their useful lives and the method of depreciation being determined on a reasonable and consistent basis.

Having identified individual material assets or groups of similar assets with similar characteristics, each component part of an item of Property, Plant and Equipment with a cost that is significant in relation to the total cost of the asset shall be depreciated separately.

All Land and Buildings are only split between land and buildings, further componentisation is not considered material. Land is a separate component in its own right, but is not considered for depreciation purposes. Generally, land is considered to have an infinite life.

The Mersey Gateway Bridge, recorded within Infrastructure Assets is componentised between Structures (120 years), Highways (25 years) and Other (30 years).

15(h) Charges to Revenue for Non-Current Assets

Services are debited with the following amounts to record the cost of holding non-current assets during the year:

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

The Council does not raise council tax to fund depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisations. However, the Council is required to make an annual contribution from revenue towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement equal to an amount calculated on a prudent basis determined by the Council in accordance with statutory guidance.

Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses and amortisations are therefore replaced by the contribution in the General Fund balance from the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement known as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

15(i) Schools (Land & Buildings)

Section 20 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 established the following categories of maintained schools in England and Wales:

- (a) Community Schools
- (b) Foundation Schools
- (c) Voluntary Schools comprising Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled
- (d) Community Special Schools, and
- (e) Foundation Special Schools

In order to recognise a non-current school's asset on the Council's Balance Sheet, the Council has followed the recognition criteria of the Code and determined the extent to which the Council has control of the service potential associated with the schools assets.

The Council has concluded that a) Community Schools and d) Community Special Schools will form part of the Council's non-current Assets.

For all other schools the Council is merely using the non-current asset under licence. A licence passes no interest in the non-current asset to the Council and is always revocable, therefore these schools will not form part of the Council's non-current assets.

15(j) Accounting for Schools Transferring to Academy Status

The accounting standards on group accounts and consolidation mean all types of school are now considered to be entities controlled by the Council. When a school transfers to academy status this control is transferred to a third party. As a result, the school as an entity needs to be derecognised in the Council's accounts by writing off the net assets of the school to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

15(k) Highway Network Infrastructure Assets

Highways network infrastructure assets include carriageways, footways and cycle tracks, structures (eg. bridges), street lighting, street furniture (eg. illuminated traffic signals, bollards), traffic management systems and land, which together form a single integrated network.

Recognition

Expenditure on the acquisition or replacement of components of the network is capitalised on an accrual basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefits associated with the item will flow to the Authority and the cost of the item can be measured reliably.

Measurement

Highways network infrastructure assets are generally measured at depreciated historical cost. However, this is a modified form of historical cost - opening balances for highways infrastructure assets were originally recorded in balance sheets at amounts of capital undischarged for sums borrowed as at 1st April 1994, which was deemed at that time to be historical cost.

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided on the parts of the highways network infrastructure assets that are subject to deterioration or depletion and by the systematic allocation of their depreciable amounts over their useful lives.

Annual depreciation is the depreciation amount allocated each year. Useful lives of the various parts of the highways network are shown below:

- Newly constructed Carriageways, Footways, Cycle tracks – 25 years
- Repairs and Maintenance of all highways assets – 15 years
- Mersey Gateway Bridge
 - o Structures (Main Crossing, Earthworks, Bridge Approaches) – 120 years
 - o Highways (including Street Lighting) – 25 years
 - o Other (Tolling, Landscaping, Signage) – 30 years
 - o General (financing and development costs) – split pro rata across elements above
- Street Lighting and Street Furniture – 15 years

16. Overheads and Support Services

The costs of overheads and support services are charged to those that benefit from the supply and service. The total absorption costing principal is used – the full cost of overheads and support services are shared between users in proportion to the benefits received.

17. Pension Costs

General

The cost of providing pensions for employees is charged in accordance with the requirements of IAS19 Retirement Benefits subject to the interpretation set out in the Code governing the pension schemes. The Council pays an employer's contribution to the Cheshire Pension Fund; Teachers' Pension Agency and the National Health Service Pension Scheme.

Pensions Reserve

Where there is a difference between the amount charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year and the amount payable to the pension funds, that sum is taken to the Pension Reserve. This additional debit or credit to the services is shown as a reconciling item in the Movement in Reserves Statement within the Adjustments between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under regulations note.

Classification of Schemes

Defined Benefit Schemes

Accounting policies set out as below apply in respect of pension costs arising from the Local Government Pension Scheme and unfunded discretionary benefits paid:

- (i) The liabilities of the Cheshire Pension Fund and unfunded liabilities of the Teachers' 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 retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc., and projections of projected earnings for current employees.
- (ii) Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using the relevant discount rate.
- (iii) The assets of Cheshire Pension Fund attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value
 - a. Quoted securities – current bid price
 - b. Unquoted securities – professional estimate
 - c. Unitised securities – current bid price
 - d. Property – market value
- (iv) The change in the net pensions liabilities is analysed into the following components:
 - a. Service cost comprising:
 - i. Current service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year – allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement of the services for which the employees worked

- ii. Past service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of a scheme amendment or curtailment whose effect relates to years of services earned in earlier years – debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- iii. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset), i.e. net interest expense for the Council – the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability (asset) that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement – this is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability (asset) at the beginning of the period – taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability (asset) during the period as a result of the contribution and benefit payments.
- b. Re-measurements comprising:
 - i. 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.
 - ii. 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.
- c. Contribution paid to Pension Funds – cash paid as employer’s contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities: not accounted for as an expense.
- (v) In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provision requires the General Fund Balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Council to the pension fund or directly to pensions in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, this means that there are transfers to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year end. The negative balance that arises on the Pension Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

Defined Contribution Schemes

The arrangements for the Teachers’ Pension Scheme and the NHS Pension Scheme means that liabilities for these benefits cannot ordinarily be specified by the Council. The scheme is therefore accounted for as if it were a defined contribution scheme and no liability for future payments or benefits is recognised on the Balance Sheet. The relevant service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is charged with the Council’s contributions payable to Teachers’ Pensions and NHS Pension Scheme in the year.

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 (including teachers) 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.

18. Pooled Budgets

Under Section 75 of the Health Act, the Council is able to establish joint working arrangements with NHS bodies and other Councils to pool funds from both organisations to create a single pot. Where pooled budgets are established, the Council's accounts reflect only the Council's share of the overall pot and exclude the share attributable to partner organisations.

19. Prior Period Adjustments

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

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

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

20. Provisions

Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the Council a legal or constructive obligation that probably requires settlement by a transfer of economic benefits or service potential, and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation. Provisions are created by a charge to a service and as such appear in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the Cost of Services in the year the Council becomes aware of the obligation, and are measured at the best estimate at the Balance Sheet date of the expenditure required to settle the obligation, taking account of risks and uncertainties. Where it becomes apparent that a lower settlement is anticipated than first thought, the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service.

When payments are eventually made, they are charged to the provision carried in the Balance Sheet.

21. Repurchase of Borrowing

Gains or losses arising on the repurchase or early settlement are charged in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the period during which the

repurchase is made. If the repurchase was coupled with refinancing or restructuring, gains or losses are charged over the life of the replacement loan.

22. Reserves

The Council sets aside specific amounts as reserves for future policy purposes to cover contingencies. Reserves are created by apportioning amounts out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When expenditure to be financed from the reserve is incurred, it is charged to the apportionment service in that year to score against the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The reserve is then appropriated back in the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement so that there is no net charge against council tax for the expenditure.

The Council maintains two kinds of reserve, Usable and Unusable Reserves.

Usable reserves comprise:

- Capital Receipts Reserve
- General Fund Balance
- Schools Balances
- Earmarked Reserves
- Capital Grants Unapplied
- Earmarked Schools Budget Reserve

Unusable reserves comprise:

- Revaluation Reserve
- Capital Adjustment Account
- Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve
- Pensions Reserve
- Collection Fund Adjustment Account
- Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve
- Accumulated Absences Account
- Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account

Usable reserves are available to fund expenditure, either revenue or capital incurred by the Council. Unusable reserves are not available to fund expenditure since they do not represent new resources available to the Council.

23. Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute

Legislation allows some expenditure to be classified as capital for funding purposes when it does not result in the creation on a non-current asset on the Balance Sheet. Such expenditure is charged to the appropriate service account within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in accordance with the provisions of the Code.

Where the Council has determined to meet the cost of this expenditure from existing capital resources or borrowing, a transfer in the Movement in Reserves Statement from the General

Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account then reverses the amounts charged so that there is no impact on the council tax.

24. Senior Officers

The Council is required to disclose senior officers who are paid a salary of more than £150,000 by name and job title. The requirement also extends to those officers whose salary is more than £50,000 and have a statutory role defined by legislation or are responsible for directing and controlling the day-to-day operations of the Council; disclosure is restricted to job title.

25. Service Concessions

PFI and similar contracts are agreements to receive services, where the responsibility for making available the property, plant and equipment needed to provide the services passes to the PFI contractor. As the Council is deemed to control the services that are provided under PFI schemes, and as ownership of the property, plant and equipment will pass to the Council at the end of the contracts for no additional charge, the Council carries the assets used under the contracts on its Balance Sheet as part of Property, Plant and Equipment.

The original recognition of these assets at fair value (based on the cost to purchase the property, plant and equipment) is balanced by the recognition of a liability for amounts due to the scheme operator to pay for the capital investment.

Non-current assets recognised on the Balance Sheet are re-valued and depreciated in the same way as property, plant and equipment owned by the Council.

The amounts payable to the PFI operators each year are analysed into five elements:

- Fair value of the services received during the year – debited to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- Finance cost – an interest charge on the outstanding Balance Sheet liability, debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- Contingent rent – increases in the amount to be paid for the property arising during the contract, debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- Payment towards liability – applied to write down the Balance Sheet liability towards the PFI operator (the profile of write-downs is calculated using the same principles as for a finance lease)
- Life cycle replacement costs – where material, a proportion of the amounts payable is posted to the Balance Sheet as a prepayment and then recognised as additions to Property, Plant and Equipment when the relevant works are eventually carried out.

26. Heritage Assets

Where applicable, heritage assets are measured at insurance valuation on the Balance Sheet.

Unlike other non-current assets, depreciation is not required on heritage assets which have infinite useful lives. Similarly, impairment reviews are only required in limited circumstances, for example if a heritage asset has suffered breakage or physical deterioration.

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

Under the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2021/22 (the Code), the Council is required to disclose information setting out the impact of an accounting change required by new accounting standards which have been issued at the balance sheet date but which will not apply to local authorities' accounts until subsequent financial years. The following amendment will apply from 1st April 2022.

- Property, Plant and Equipment: Proceeds before Intended Use (Amendments to IAS 16)

The 2022/23 Code will incorporate other minor changes to accounting policies but it is not anticipated that these will have any impact on the figures recognised with the authority's accounts.

28. Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies

In applying the accounting policies set out in above, the Council has had to make certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events. The critical judgements made in the Statement of Accounts are:

28(a) Future levels of funding

There is a continued high degree of uncertainty about future levels of funding for local government. The Council has determined that this uncertainty is not yet sufficient to provide an indication that the assets of the Council might be impaired as a result of a need to close facilities and reduce levels of service provision.

28(b) Mersey Gateway Unitary Payments

On 13th October 2017 the Mersey Gateway Crossing opened. The project is funded through a mixture of capital payments from the Council and monthly unitary payments to Merseylink. Unitary payments cover the costs of construction of the bridge.

To calculate an initial valuation of the liability of future unitary payments the Council has estimated the present value of payments due using the Internal Rate of Return implicit within the operators financial model. The carrying and fair value of the liability will be reduced on an annual basis in line with unitary payments.

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

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

The items in the Council's Balance Sheet at 31st March 2021 for which there is a significant risk of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year are as follows:

29(a) Property, Plant and Equipment

The carrying amount in the Balance Sheet at the 31st March 2022 is £845.0m, of which £439.2m relates to the Unitary Charge element of the Mersey Gateway Crossing.

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 current economic climate makes it uncertain that the Council will be able to sustain its spending on repairs and maintenance, bringing into doubt the useful lives of those assets. Ongoing maintenance for the Mersey Gateway Crossing is covered by unitary payments and therefore has no impact on the Council's on-going repairs and maintenance spending.

If the useful life of Buildings included in Property, Plant and Equipment is reduced, depreciation increases and the carrying amount of the asset falls. It is estimated that the annual depreciation charge for buildings could increase between 10%-15% equating to an additional £0.702m to £1.053m for every year that useful lives had been reduced.

30(b) Pensions Liability

The carrying amount in the Balance Sheet at the 31st March 2022 is £91.2m

Estimation of the net 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. Hymans Robertson LLP is engaged on behalf of the Council by Cheshire West and Chester Council to provide expert advice about the assumptions to be applied.

An estimate of the impact of any changes to the principal assumptions provided by the actuary are shown in Note 32.

31 Going Concern

The statement of accounts has been prepared on an assumption that the Council will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. This is a requirement of the Code, which reflects the fact that since the management of a statutory local authority does not have the power to cease operations and wind up the entity, a statutory local authority will always be a going concern as defined by IAS1 (Presentation of Financial Statements).

Glossary of Terms

For the purposes of the Code of Practice the following definitions have been adopted:

Accruals

The concept that income and expenditure are recognised as they are earned or incurred, not as money is received or paid.

Accounting Policies

Those principals, bases, conventions, rules and practices applied by an entity that specify how the effects of transactions and other events are to be reflected in its financial statements through:

- (a) Recognising;
- (b) Selecting and measurement bases for; and
- (c) Presenting.

Assets, liabilities, gains, losses and changes to reserves.

Accounting policies do not include estimation techniques.

Accounting policies define the process whereby transactions and other events are reflected in financial statements. For example, an accounting policy for a particular type of expenditure may specify whether an asset or a loss is to be recognised; the basis on which it is to be measured; and where in the Income and Expenditure account or Balance Sheet it is to be presented.

Acquired Operations

Operations comprise services and divisions of service as defined in SerCOP. Acquired operations are those operations of the Council that are acquired in the period.

Actuarial Gains and Losses

For a defined benefit pension scheme, the changes in actuarial deficits or surpluses that arise because:

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

Capital Expenditure

Expenditure on the acquisition of a non-current asset or expenditure which adds to and not merely maintains the value of an existing non-current asset.

Class of Non-Current Assets

The classes of non-current assets required to be included in the accounting statements are:

Property, Plant and Equipment:

- Other land and buildings
- Vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment
- Infrastructure assets
- Community assets
- Assets under construction
- Surplus assets

Other classes of assets:

- Investment properties
- Assets held for sale
- Heritage assets

Community Assets

Assets that the Council intends to hold in perpetuity, that have no determinable useful life, and that may have restrictions on their disposal. Examples of community assets are parks and historic buildings.

Consistency

The concept that the accounting treatment of like items within an accounting period and from one period to the next are the same.

Constructive Obligation

An obligation that derives from a Council's actions where:

- (a) By an established pattern of past practice, published policies or a sufficiently specific current statement, the Council has indicated to other parties that it will accept certain responsibilities; and
- (b) As a result, the Council has created a valid expectation on the part of those other parties that it will discharge those responsibilities.

Contingent Asset

A contingent asset is a possible asset arising from past events whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the Local Authority's control.

Contribution

A contribution may be received from a partner to help perform a particular function (i.e. PCT and third sector in health/education, S106 developers etc...)

Contingent Liability

A contingent liability is either:

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

Corporate and Democratic Core

The corporate and democratic core comprises all activities which Local Authorities engage in specifically because they are elected multi-purpose Authorities. The cost of these activities are thus over and above those which would be incurred by a series of independent, single purpose, nominated bodies managing the same services. There is therefore no basis for apportioning these costs over or across services.

Current Service Cost (Pensions)

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

Curtailment

For a defined benefit scheme, an event that reduces the expected years of future service of present employees or reduces for a number of employees the accrual of defined benefits for some or all of their future service. Curtailments include:

- (a) Termination of employees' services earlier than expected, for example as a result of closing a factory or discontinuing a segment of a business; and
- (b) Termination of, or amendment to the terms of, a defined benefit scheme so that some or all future service by current employees will no longer qualify for benefits or will qualify only for reduced benefits.

Deferred Charges

Expenditure which may properly be deferred, but which does not result in, or remain matched with, tangible assets. Examples of deferred charges are expenditure on items such as improvement grants and the expenses of private acts.

Defined Benefit Scheme

A pension or other retirement benefit scheme other than a defined contribution scheme. Usually, the scheme rules define the benefits independently of the contributions payable, and the benefits are not directly related to the investments of the scheme. The scheme may be funded or unfunded (including notionally funded).

Defined Contribution Scheme

A pension other retirement benefit scheme into which an employer pays regular contributions fixed as an amount or as percentage of pay and will have no legal or constructive obligation to pay further contributions if the scheme does not have sufficient assets to pay all employee benefits relating to employee service in the current and prior periods.

Depreciation

The measure of cost or revalued amount of the benefits of the non-current asset that have been consumed during the period.

Consumption includes the wearing out, using up or other reduction in the useful life of a non-current asset whether arising from use, effluxion of time or obsolescence through either changes in technology or demand for the goods or services produced by the asset.

Discontinued Operations

Operations comprise services and divisions of service as defined in CIPFA's Standard Classification of Income and Expenditure. An operation should be classified as discontinued if all of the following conditions are met:

- (a) The termination of the operation is completed either in the period before the earlier of three months after the commencement of the subsequent period and the date on which the financial statements are approved;
- (b) The activities related to the operation have ceased permanently;
- (c) The termination of the operation has a material effect on the nature and focus of the Local Authority's operations and represents a material reduction in its provision of services resulting either from its withdrawal from a particular activity (whether a service or division of service or its provision in a specific geographical area) or from a material reduction in net expenditure in the Local Authority's continuing operations;
- (d) The assets, liabilities, income and expenditure of operations and activities are clearly distinguishable physically, operationally and for financial reporting purposes

Operations not satisfying all the conditions are classified as continuing.

Discretionary Benefits

Retirement benefits which the employer has no legal, contractual or constructive obligation to award which are awarded under the Council's discretionary powers, such as The Local Government (Discretionary Payments) Regulations 1996, the Local Government (Discretionary Payments and Injury Benefits) (Scotland) Regulations 1998, or the Local Government (Discretionary Payments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001.

Estimation Techniques

The methods adopted by an entity to arrive at estimated monetary amounts, corresponding to the measurement bases selected, for assets, liabilities, gains losses and changes to reserves.

Estimation techniques implement the measurement aspects of accounting policies. An accounting policy will specify the basis on which an item is to be measured; where there is uncertainty over the monetary amount corresponding to that basis, the amount will be arrived at by using an estimation technique. Estimation techniques include, for example:

- (a) Methods of depreciation, such as straight-line and reducing balance, applied in the context of a particular measurement basis, used to estimate the proportion of the economic benefits of a tangible non-current asset consumed in a period
- (b) Different methods used to estimate the proportion of debts that will not be recovered, particularly where such methods consider a population as a whole rather than individual balances.

Events after the Balance Sheet Date

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

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 a fair presentation of the accounts.

Exit Packages

Exit packages are defined as amounts payable as a result of either an employer's decision to terminate an employee's employment before the normal retirement date, or an employee's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits. Exit packages also include enhancement of retirement benefits, when an employee retires early without actuarial reduction of pension.

Expected Rate of Return on Pensions Assets

For a funded defined benefit scheme, the average rate of return, including both income and changes in fair value but net of scheme expenses, expected over the remaining life of the related obligation on the actual assets held by the scheme.

Extraordinary Items

Material items, possessing a high degree of abnormality, which derive from events or transactions that fall outside the ordinary activities of the Council and which are not expected to recur. They do not include exceptional items nor do they include prior period items merely because they relate to a prior period.

Fair Value

The fair value of an asset is the price at which it could be exchanged in an arm's length transaction less, where applicable, any grants receivable towards the purchase of use of the asset.

Finance Lease

A finance lease is one where the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the property, plant or equipment from the lessor to the lessee. A lease would be classified as a finance lease if:

- The lease transfers ownership of the asset to the lessee by the end of the lease term.
- The lessee has the option to purchase the asset at a price that is expected to be sufficiently lower than the fair value so as to make it reasonably certain the option will be exercised.
- The lease term is for the major part of the economic life of the asset.
- The present value of minimum lease payments amounts to at least substantially all of the fair value of the leased asset.
- The leased assets are of such a specialised nature that only the lessee can use them without major modifications.

Notwithstanding the fact that the lease meets the definitions above, the presumption that an asset should be classified as a finance lease may in exceptional circumstances be rebutted if it can be clearly demonstrated that the lease in question does not transfer substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership (other than legal title) to the lessee.

Going Concern

The concept that the Council will remain in operational existence for the foreseeable future, in particular that the Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet assume no intention to curtail significantly the scale of the 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.

Heritage Assets

Heritage Assets are assets that have historical, artistic, scientific, technological, geophysical or environmental qualities. Examples of heritage assets held by the Council include civic regalia, paintings and artefacts.

Impairment

A reduction in the value of a non-current asset below its carrying amount on the Balance Sheet.

Infrastructure Assets

Non-current assets that are inalienable, expenditure on which is recoverable only by continued use if the asset created. Examples of infrastructure assets are highways and footpaths.

Interest Cost (Pensions)

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

Inventories

The amount of unused or unconsumed stocks held in exception of future use, comprising the following categories:

- (a) goods or other assets purchased for re-sale;
- (b) consumable stores;
- (c) raw materials and components purchased for incorporation into products for sale;
- (d) products and services in intermediate stages of completion;
- (e) long-term contract balances; and
- (f) finished goods.

Investments (Non-Pensions Fund)

A long-term investment is an investment that is intended to be held for use on a continuing basis in the activities of the Council. Investments should be classified only where an intention to hold the investment for the long term can clearly be demonstrated or where there are restrictions as to the investor's ability to dispose of the investment.

Investments, other than those in relation to the pensions fund, that do not meet the above criteria should be classified as current assets.

Investments (Pensions Fund)

The investments of the Pensions Fund will be accounted for in the statements of that Fund. However, councils are also required to disclose, as part of the transitional disclosures relating to retirement benefits, the attributable share of the pension scheme assets associated with their underlying obligations.

Investments Properties

Interest in land and/or buildings:

- (a) In respect of which construction work and development have been completed; and
- (b) Which is held for its investment potential, and rental income being negotiated at arm's length.

Liquid Resources

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

Long-Term Contracts

A contract entered into for the design, manufacture or construction of a single substantial asset or the provision of a service (or a combination of assets or services which together constitute a single project), where the time taken substantially to complete the contract is such that the contract activity falls into different accounting periods. Some contracts with a shorter duration than one year should be accounted for as long-term contracts if they are sufficiently material to the activity of the period.

Net Book Value

The amount at which non-current assets are included in the balance sheet, i.e. their historical cost or current value less the cumulative amounts provided for depreciation.

Net Current Replacement Cost

The cost of replacing or recreating the particular asset in its existing condition and in its existing use, i.e. the cost of replacement or of the nearest equivalent asset, adjusted to reflect the current condition of the existing asset.

Net Debt

The Council's borrowings less cash and liquid resources. Where cash and liquid resources exceed borrowings, reference should be to net funds rather than debt.

Net Realisable Value

The open market value of the asset in its existing use (or open market value in case of non-operational assets), less the expenses to be incurred in realising the asset.

Operating Lease

A lease other than a finance lease.

Past Service Cost

For a defined benefit scheme, the increase in the present value of the scheme liabilities related to employee service in prior periods arising in the current period as a result of the introduction of, or improvements to, retirement benefits.

Prior Period Adjustments

Those material adjustments applicable to prior years arising from changes in accounting policies or from the correction of fundamental errors. A fundamental error is one that is of such significance as to destroy the validity of the financial statements. They do not include normal recurring corrections or adjustments of accounting estimates made in prior years.

Projected Unit Method

An accrued benefits valuation method in which the scheme liabilities make allowance for projected earnings. An accrued benefit valuation method is a valuation method in which the scheme liabilities at the valuation date relate to:

- (a) The benefits for pensioners and deferred pensioners (i.e. individuals who have ceased to be active members but are entitled to benefits payable at a later date) and their dependants, allowing where appropriate for future increases; and
- (b) The accrued benefits for members in service on the valuation date.

The accrued benefits are the benefits for service up to a given point in time, whether vested rights or not. Guidance on the projected unit method is given in the Guidance Note GN26 issued by the Faculty and Institute of Actuaries.

Related Parties

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

- (a) A party has direct or indirect control of the other party; or
- (b) The parties are subject to common control from the same source; or
- (c) One party has influence over the financial and operational policies of the other party to an extent that the other party might be inhibited from pursuing at all times its own separate interests; or
- (d) The parties, in entering a transaction, are subject to influence from the same source to such an extent that one of the parties to the transaction has subordinated its own separate interest.

Examples of related parties of a Council include:

- (a) Central government;
- (b) Local authorities and other bodies precepting or levying demands on the council tax;
- (c) Its subsidiary and associated companies;
- (d) Its joint ventures and joint ventures partners;
- (e) Its members
- (f) Its chief officers; and
- (g) Its pension fund.

Examples of related parties of a pension fund include its:

- (a) Administering authority and its related parties
- (b) Scheduled bodies and their related parties; and
- (c) Trustees and advisors

This list is not intended to be comprehensive.

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

- (a) Members of the close family, or the same household; and

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

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

- (a) The purchase, sale, lease rental or hire of assets between related parties;
- (b) The provision by a pension fund to a related party of assets of loans, irrespective of any direct economic benefit to the pension fund;
- (c) The provision of a guarantee to a third party in relation to a liability or obligation of a related party;
- (d) The provision of services to a related party, including the provision of pension fund administration services;
- (e) Transactions with individuals who are related parties of the Council or a pension fund, except those applicable to other members of the community or the pension fund, such as council tax, rents and repayments of benefits.

This list is not intended to be comprehensive.

The materiality of related party transactions should be judged not only in terms of their significance to the Council, but also in relation to its related party.

Remuneration

All sums paid to or receivable by an employee and sums due by way of expenses allowances and the money value of any other benefits received other than in cash. Pension contributions payable by the employee are excluded.

Residual Value

The net realisable value of an asset at the end of its useful life. Residual values are based on prices prevailing at the date of acquisition (or revaluation) of the asset and do not take account of expected future prices.

Retirement Benefits

All forms of consideration given by an employer in exchange for services rendered by employees that are payable after completion of employment. Retirement benefits do not include termination benefits payable as a result of either (i) an employer's decision to terminate an employee's employment before the normal retirement date, or (ii) an employee's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits, because these are not given in exchange for services rendered by employees.

Scheme Liabilities

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

Settlement

An irrevocable action that relieves the employee (or the defined benefit scheme) of the primary responsibility for a pension obligation and eliminates significant risks relating to the obligation and the assets used to effect the settlement. Settlements include:

- (a) A lump-sum cash payment to scheme members in exchange for their rights to receive specified pension benefits;
- (b) The purchase of an irrevocable annuity contract sufficient to cover vested benefits; and
- (c) The transfer of scheme assets and liabilities relating to a group of employees leaving the scheme.

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.

Total Cost

The total cost of a service or activity includes all costs which relate to the provision of the service (directly or bought in) or to the undertaking of the activity. Gross total cost includes employee costs, expenditure relating to premises and transport, supplies and services, third party payments, transfer payments, support services and capital charges. This includes an appropriate share of all support services and overheads, which need to be apportioned.

Useful Life

The period over which the Council will derive benefits from the use of a non-current asset.

Vested Rights

In relation to a defined benefit scheme, these are:

- (a) For active members, benefits to which they would unconditionally be entitled on leaving the scheme;
- (b) For deferred pensioners, their preserved benefits;
- (c) For pensioners, pensions to which they are entitled.

Vested rights include where appropriate the related benefits for spouses or other dependants.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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