



To: Members of the Audit & Governance Committee

***Notice of a Meeting of the Audit & Governance
Committee***

Wednesday, 17 July 2024 at 2.00 pm

Room 2&3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#)
Please note, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

Committee Officers: Committee Services
Email: committees.democraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Membership

Chair – to be confirmed
Deputy Chair – to be confirmed

Councillors

Brad Baines
Felix Bloomfield
Ted Fenton

Jane Hanna OBE
Jenny Hannaby
Nick Leverton

Ian Middleton
Glynis Phillips
Roz Smith

Co-optee

Dr Geoff Jones

Notes:

- ***Date of next meeting: 18 September 2024***



AGENDA

- 1. Election of Chair for the 2024-25 Council Year**
- 2. Election of Deputy Chair for 2024-25 Council Year**
- 3. Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**
- 4. Declaration of Interests - see guidance note**
- 5. Minutes (Pages 1 - 8)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2024 (**AG3**) and to receive information arising from them.

6. Petitions and Public Address

Members of the public who wish to speak at this meeting can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

To facilitate 'hybrid' meetings we are asking that requests to speak or present a petition are submitted by no later than 9am four working days before the meeting. Requests to speak should be sent to committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that your views are taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9am 2 working days before the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

7. Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 (Pages 9 - 60)

Report by Monitoring Officer

The Audit & Governance Committee has the responsibility of approving the Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) each year.

Local authorities are required to prepare an AGS to be transparent about their compliance with good governance principles. This includes reporting on how they have monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of their governance arrangements in the previous year and setting out any planned changes in the coming period.

RECOMMENDATION

The Audit & Governance Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24, subject to the Monitoring Officer making any necessary

amendments in the light of comments made by the Committee, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, and the Section 151 officer.

8. Treasury Management - Annual Performance 2023/24 (Pages 61 - 74)

Report by the Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) 'Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021' requires that the Council and Audit & Governance Committee receives a report on Treasury Management activities at least four times per year. This report is the final report for the financial year 2023/24 and sets out the position at 31 March 2024.

Throughout this report performance for the 2023/24 financial year is measured against the budget agreed by Council in February 2023.

RECOMMENDATION

The Audit & Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the report, and to RECOMMEND Council to note the council's treasury management activity and outcomes in 2023/24.

9. Update on 2023/24 Statement of Accounts (Pages 75 - 224)

Report by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

This report sets out the latest position on the preparation and audit of the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts including:

- Authorisation of the draft Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 and period of public inspection.
- An update on the external audit of the 2023/24 accounts as well as the backstop arrangements for the Statement of Accounts for 2022/23.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to

- (a) Consider and approve the draft Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 at Annex 1.
- (b) Note the update on the outstanding information on the back stop arrangements for the Statement of Accounts for 2022/23.

10. Internal Audit Charter (Pages 225 - 244)

Report by Executive Director of Resources

This report presents both the Internal Audit Charter and the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme for 2024/25. These are subject to annual review.

RECOMMENDATION

The committee is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) Approve the Internal Audit Charter.
- b) Note the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme.

11. Counter Fraud Plan and Update (Pages 245 - 256)

Report by Executive Director of Resources.

This report presents a summary of activity against the Counter Fraud Plan for 2023/24, which was previously presented to the July 2023 Audit & Governance committee meeting.

The report also presents the Counter Fraud Plan for the coming year 2024/25.

The Counter Fraud plan supports the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy by ensuring that the Council has proportionate and effective resources and controls in place to prevent and detect fraud as well as investigate those matters that do arise.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to

- a) Note the summary of activity against the Counter Fraud Plan for 2023/24.
- b) Approve the Counter Fraud Plan for 2024/25.

12. Risk Management Update (Pages 257 - 262)

Report by Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance

This report sets out updates to Risk Management and an overview of the latest strategic risk register which contains the Council's most significant risks. The strategic risk register is closely managed by the Council Management Team and reported into the Strategic Leadership Team as part of the Council's Business Management and Monitoring Reports. These combined reports contain performance, risk and finance progress updates against the delivery of the current strategic plan priorities.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to

- To note the Risk Management Update

13. Constitutional Changes from HR (Pages 263 - 266)

Report of the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

There is a need to change the approach to hearing and deciding on appeals in employment relations matters in respect of officers of the council to reflect best practice and to reduce delay in dealing with the appeals process.

As a result there will be a need to update the current Officer Employment Procedure Rules set out in Part 8.4 of the Council's Constitution and to amend other relevant clauses in the Constitution to reflect those changes.

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to:

1. Support the proposed changes to the appeals process in respect of employee relations matters and the resultant changes to the Council's Constitution to reflect the changes.
2. Delegate to the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to draft the necessary changes to the Constitution for approval by Council.

TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

1. To approve amendments to the Officer Employment Procedure Rules in Part 8.4 of the Council's Constitution and any consequential amendments to the Constitution.

14. Ernst & Young Update (Pages 267 - 308)

To receive a update from Ernst & Young.

15. AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 309 - 310)

To review the Committee's work programme.

Close of meeting

An explanation of abbreviations and acronyms is available on request from the Chief Internal Auditor.

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships

- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.
- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

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AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday, 8 May 2024 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 4.06 pm

Present:

Voting Members:

Councillor Roz Smith – in the Chair
Councillor Brad Baines (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Ted Fenton
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Nick Leverton
Councillor Glynis Phillips
Councillor Alison Rooke

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillor Dan Levy

By Invitation:

Dr Geoff Jones

Officers:

Whole of meeting

Lorna Baxter (Executive Director Resources), Anita Bradley (Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Sarah Cox (Chief Internal Auditor), Sam Egerton (Principal Auditor), Katherine Kitashima (Audit Manager) and Shilpa Manek (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Part of meeting

Adrian Balmer (Ernst and Young), Kalthiemah Abrahams (Ernst and Young), Stephen Reid (Ernst and Young)

Agenda Item

Officer Attending

The Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with [a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting

31/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Champken-Woods and Middleton. Councillor Alison Rooke was substituting for Councillor Middleton.

The Chair informed the Committee that Councillor Richard Webber had resigned as a Councillor.

32/24 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda No. 2)

Councillor Brad Baines declared a personal interest for Item 5 as he is Chair of Governors at Primary School 1.

33/24 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

RESOLVED: that the minutes of 13 March 2024 were approved by the Committee as an accurate record and all actions had been completed or were in the process of being completed.

34/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda No. 4)

There were no petitions or requests of public address received.

35/24 CHIEF INTERNAL AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

(Agenda No. 5)

Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor, presented the report to the Committee.

The report summarised the work that had been completed to form the opinion and contained how the opinion had been reached. The Chief Internal Auditor was very positive for delivering an opinion that was Satisfactory, which was a good position for the Council in terms of arrangements of governance and risk management and control. The opinion was delivered without any interference and independently.

On staffing, a senior auditor had been successfully recruited and would be in post on 4 June 2024. Interviews had been carried out for the audit apprentice. There had been over 100 applications and some very strong candidates, helping to continue with the grow-your-own strategy. The Principal Audit Officer, Sam Egerton was introduced to the Committee.

The Chief Internal Auditor reported that the Internal Audit Plan 2023/24 had been delivered with thanks to Sam Egerton and Katherine Kitashima.

One of the key parts of the opinion that had been delivered was around the IBC Partnership with Hampshire, both delivered the key financial systems. They provided an assurance report each year, but this had not been received yet, however, there were no significant risks highlighted.

During 2023/24, there had been three red reports. All three reports had been received well and robust action plans were in place with good progress being made already to implement actions. The Committee could decide if any of the internal audit reports required a deep dive at the Audit Working Group.

The Committee raised the following points:

- A deep dive would be interesting to understand the Payments to Providers and the Purchasing Cards audit reports, once they had progressed.
- There were no specific trends over the years for red reports, they were isolated areas that required further work. The reports were classed by the Team, who looked at all the reports for consistency. There were no concerns for the Chief Internal Auditor.
- With respect to KPIs, the implementation rate was 86.7%, which was very good.
- The Committee was concerned that the IBC report had still not been received.
- The reception of the audit reports had definitely improved over the years and was now taken seriously by Managers.
- It would be interesting to see the Supported Transport and the Legal Cases audit reports at the Audit Working Group to understand the actions further.
- The audits were sometimes on request but mainly from a regular to-do list to follow better compliance.
- Good reassurance was given to the Committee that the correct internal audits were being carried out and the quality of them was very good, picking up on areas that needed to be improved. The Team was thanked.
- As an organisation, improvements were still required, such as breaking the silos and working more together.
- There were significant measures required for contracts, so these were being further improved.

ACTION: Audit Working Group to carry out a deep dive, at future meetings and on the advice of the Chief Internal Auditor, for the following internal Audit reports:

- **Payments to Providers**
- **Purchasing Cards**
- **Supported Transport**
- **Legal Cases**

RESOLVED: that the Audit and Governance Committee considered and endorsed the Chief Internal Auditors Annual Report.

36/24 INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY & PLAN 2024/25

(Agenda No. 6)

The report was presented to the Committee by the Chief Internal Auditor, Sarah Cox. This was the Plan, looking ahead for 2024/25. It had already been reported that the Team were now in a good position with recruitment. It was reported that no changes had been made to the Performance Indicators in Appendix 1, from last year in terms of how the performance was going to be managed. However, the reports presented to the Committee would be more evenly spread over September, December, and May. This was a target for the Team. Appendix 2 was the Internal Audit Plan ahead. This had been work in progress, consulting with Teams across the organisation before it was signed off and Appendix 3 was the structure charts for Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Teams. The Committee were informed that a separate Counter Fraud Plan would be presented at the July meeting.

The Committee made the following points:

- There were currently 32 planned audits scheduled but these were subject to change.
- Some internal audits were completed by an external form.
- The reference in the report to 'cross-cutting' referred to across all directorates in the services to provide assurance.
- To date, the benefit seen from social value was a lot to do with employment, using contracts to use a local workforce or apprenticeships used in the contracting provisions. It was a requirement and there was a potential risk of increasing costs, but this had not been seen yet.
- The structure and governance would be looked at first with respect to the Transformation Programme. This was a critical piece of work. This had not been scoped yet, staff were being kept informed by the all-staff updates every other week. Staff engagement was really important.
- The home to assess piece of work was being carried out as the Director and Deputy Director were very keen to make sure all the processes were running well and effectively.
- Could the social value be added to the narrative for the property investments and facilities management and to look at local contractors for the property agenda. It was important to highlight this point as it would help with recruitment and retention. This audit was currently being scoped and therefore could be considered. The social value would also be considered further when the policy was looked at.
- The social value was well articulated in the procurement strategy but not so well in the property strategy.
- The Highway Maintenance contract was a new one and it was key to ensure that all controls and processes were in place, by working with Officers to ensure that processes and controls were effective. The work would continue into next year to ensure that the processes were working.

ACTION: Keep Committee briefed on the progress of the Highways Maintenance Contract

- The Committee would be presented more indicative timescales at the September meeting.
- The Conflicts of Interests Audit was put in by the Monitoring Officer and would be across the organisation, it was not for Members. The Policy was in place, so this was to see if the understanding was there for staff and to get assurance.
- The Delivery of the Savings and Investments Audit was still being considered, but it would be across services and drilling down to understand how assumptions were made and then looking at delivery and how decisions were made, right through to the monitoring end. It was commented that a timely start would assist for the budget planning.

RESOLVED: that the Committee commented and noted the Internal Audit Strategy and the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25.

37/24 AUDIT WORKING GROUP UPDATE

(Agenda No. 7)

The Chair made the following comments under the item that the Committee were required to consider and agree:

- Cancellation of the Audit Working Group on 22 May as there were no items of business.
- To agree the Members of the Audit Working Group and the substitutes for 2024/25.
- To agree items for the 2024/25 Forward Plan.

The Chief Internal Auditor, Sarah Cox, presented the report to the Committee.

The following Members wanted to be Members of the Audit Working Group, Councillors Smith, Hannaby, Baines, Champken-Woods and Councillors Fenton, Leveton and Phillips would be substitutes. It was pointed out that any Member of the Audit and Governance Committee could attend the Audit Working Group.

The Committee agreed the following items for the Forward Plan for the Audit Working Group:

- Proactive Review of Purchasing Cards – July 2024
- Adult Payments to Providers 23/24 – July 2024
- Health Funded Payments 23/24 – July 2024
- Local Transport and connectivity Plan 23/24 – suggest to the Place Scrutiny Committee to carry out a deep dive.
- Supported Transport 23/24 – September 2024
- Legal Case Management 23/24 – September 2024

RESOLVED: that the Audit and Governance Committee noted the report.

38/24 2022/23 OXFORDSHIRE PENSION FUND PROVISIONAL AUDIT RESULTS REPORT

(Agenda No. 8)

The report was presented to the Committee by Kalthiemah Abrahams. It was reported that there had been no audit scope update, and therefore the audits had been carried out as per the Audit Plan that had been agreed. It was reported that all audits had been substantially completed. Of the items still outstanding that were reported in the report, the Level 3 testing had now been completed and reviewed. It was reported that there were no audit differences so there was no impact on the Fund account or the net account statements. All the work had been completed.

The Chair requested that for future reports, could the Committee receive only the text, and no photos or colour images. This would save on resources.

Members of the Committee were satisfied with the update.

RESOLVED: that the Audit and Governance Committee noted the update from EY.

39/24 OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PROVISIONAL AUDIT PLANNING REPORT YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2024

(Agenda No. 9)

The report was presented to the Committee by Stephen Reid, EY. Stephen Reid is the Audit Engagement Partner and was taking over from Maria Grindley for the 2023/24 audits.

The report summarised the 2023 intended report for the 2023/24 audit of the Council and had been prepared from prior knowledge of the organisation, together with completed planning procedures and discussions with management.

The following points were highlighted to the Committee:

- EY were still awaiting on the outcome of the consultation exercise of the backlog and the impacts on the audit strategy.
- EY were also expecting the NAO and FRC to issue guidance, both on the reset and on the recovery, both of which may impact the 2023/24 audit.
- The Value for Money (VfM) work was still ongoing and could be reported to the Committee at a future meeting.
- EY would probably be seeking additional fees for the additional work as a result of the risk assessments.

The Committee made the following comments:

- The Auditors were looking into IFRS and were informed that the Council had been prepared for IFRS for the last two years, so that should not be an issue for auditors.
- The Committee was concerned about having a disclaimer opinion on 2022/23 accounts as a result of EY not being able to carry out the audits in time. Was it possible to know what the disclaimer would read as the authority had received many years of clean opinion and this was now not going to be the case due to no fault of its own and there was going to be an extra cost as it could not be validated.
- There was currently no additional information on the disclaimer as no information or guidance had been issued by the FRC or the NAO. With respect to the government decision to reset the system, this was a system-wide issue for the 2017/18, 2018/19 accounts and the review that contributed to the current position which the whole system finds itself in now. There were still around 640 opinions outstanding across local government in England but this was an improvement from the last count, when there was 900+ opinions outstanding. The backstop date of the end of September 2024 for the 2022/23 accounts, it was anticipated that a large number of disclaimers would be completed.
- The Value of Money reporting would continue for all years.
- The frustration of the Committee was recognised by EY, Stephen Reid explained to the Committee that he had issued two letters to all audit clients clearly focussing on the transparency decisions to meet the objectives. The Minister's letter of July 2023 which identified to seek to maximise assurance for the system and for auditors to get onto the most recent financial year, EY clarified that these

would identify all audits that were almost completed and complete those, identify all Pension Fund audits and the resources required, focus on Value for Money reporting and finally allocate resources to the 2023/24 audits with a view to support the recovery of the system and ensure that no contagion effect fell on the NHS and education.

- The ICB would respond initially within 10 working days for all audit enquiries. This was the same too for Hampshire and the south. Hampshire did not need responses in a non-critical way.

RESOLVED: that the Committee noted the report.

Adrian Balmer, Senior Management, EY, provided the Committee with a verbal update on the VfM arrangements for 2023/24. The VfM work was currently being concluded and had progressed very well. A formal report would be presented to the Committee at the July 2024 meeting.

40/24 REVIEW OF THE AGS - PROGRESS ON ACTIONS

(Agenda No. 10)

The report was presented to the Committee by Anita Bradley, Director of Law and Governance and the Monitoring Officer, who made the following points:

- A significant amount of work had been carried out on the Scheme of Delegation and this would be approved by Annual Council on 21 May 2024.
- In relation to the HR Policies that were being reviewed, the work was still ongoing.
- Some new legislation had come into force from 1 April 2024, and these would be taken on board as well as the new carers allowance for time off.
- The work had been undertaken on the Governance Policies and were with the Monitoring Officer to take on board any lessons learnt.
- There was no formal programme of training for Members. Any information was being given to Members through briefings. The Committee were asked if they wanted any more training. Members felt that some Code of Conduct training would be very helpful.

ACTION: Monitoring Officer to take note and arrange

- It would be very beneficial for Members to be involved in the preparation for the Induction training and Induction Pack.
- Would the Committee want to make a recommendation to Full Council for mandatory training. The issue with this was that there were no sanctions for not completing.
- If mandatory training was recommended, cyber security would be worth including.
- a lot of work had been done on key decisions.
- The Whistleblowing Policy had been approved and the training was being designed.

- The customer feedback was very helpful as was the guidance for staff in dealing with queries.

RESOLVED: that the Committee received the update on the actions from the AGS 2022/23 and made comments upon them.

41/24 AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
 (Agenda No. 11)

The following points were made by the Committee:

- the July meeting to begin at 1pm due to the number of items.
- to update names of EY colleagues.
- remove item 9 and move to September 2024.
- the AGC would like to see training sessions on Risk Management, Internal Audit and Counter Fraud and Treasury Management. These would be one hour before the AGC meetings for 45 minutes to allow for a 15 minutes comfort break. The training to be offered to all Members, run as hybrid meetings and recorded for Members who could not attend.

RESOLVED: that the AGC considered and commented on the AGC forward work programme.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 17 July 2024

Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

Report by Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Audit & Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24, subject to the Monitoring Officer making any necessary amendments in the light of comments made by the Committee, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, and the Section 151 officer.

Executive Summary

2. The Audit & Governance Committee has the responsibility of approving the Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) each year.
3. Local authorities are required to prepare an AGS to be transparent about their compliance with good governance principles. This includes reporting on how they have monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of their governance arrangements in the previous year and setting out any planned changes in the coming period.

Format of the Annual Governance Statement

4. The format of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) reflects the good practice guidance from CIPFA, "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016 Edition" and further guidance issued in 2022, "Understanding the Challenge to Local Authority Governance" (March 2022). It describes the Council's governance framework, the steps the Council has taken to ensure that it is effective and establishes key actions that it will put in place to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of its arrangements.
5. The AGS includes:
 - An opinion on the Council's governance arrangements for 2023/2024 from the Council's Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council,
 - A review of the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements for 2023/2024,
 - A conclusion in relation to the effectiveness of those governance arrangements,
 - A review of the action plan from last year's statement,
 - An action plan for the coming year,
 - An annex summarising the Council's governance framework.

6. The AGS has been prepared in consultation with the Council's Corporate Governance Assurance Group (CGAG), an officer working group, which is responsible for monitoring the Council's governance arrangements during the year. The statement reflects enquiries made of officers with relevant knowledge, experience, and expertise. The review has been undertaken in consultation with the Council's Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer.
7. In preparing the AGS, CGAG have had regards to a set of thematic corporate lead statements. These corporate lead statements are produced by service leads describing the governance in place during the 2023/24 year and highlighting areas of focus for 2024/25. CGAG then monitor these throughout the year.
8. In addition, the Council's Management team (CMT) were asked to work with their Directorate Leadership Teams to assess the level of assurance that they had in their service area regarding colleagues' awareness and compliance.
9. The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) (comprising the Council's Corporate Directors and Statutory s151 and Monitoring Officers) were asked to reflect on their own view of the governance within their directorates during 2023/2024 when each completing their own Certificates of Assurance.
10. The action plan for 2024/25 highlights certain aspects of governance which CGAG consider require a particular level of focus this year which might not otherwise be apparent from work regularly reported to the Committee. As such, progress reports on these actions will be reported to the Committee throughout the year. The AGS is therefore a means of giving the Committee, and the public, visibility on those areas of focus.
11. Other governance and audit activity across the Council will be reported to this Committee (and to the Audit Working Group) through the normal work programmes.

Conclusion

12. Based on the position outlined in the AGS, the 'Opinion' expressed in the AGS is:

"It is our opinion that the Council's governance arrangements in 2023/24 were adequate and provide a platform for achieving the Council's priorities and challenges in 2024/25."
13. The Committee is invited to approve the AGS.

Financial Implications

14. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:

Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer

Kathy.wilcox@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

15. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require councils to undertake an annual review of their governance. The Regulations require that an Annual Governance Statement, prepared to fulfil this requirement, should form part of the Council's Statement of Accounts. The report is therefore coming to the Committee to meet this purpose and that timescale. A version of the AGS therefore needs to be approved at this meeting.

16. The Regulations also state that the Annual Governance Statement should be prepared in accordance with proper practices. Compliance with the CIPFA guidance (*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)*) fulfils this requirement. The AGS put forward with this report is compliant with that guidance/framework and with the updated guidance issued by CIPFA in 2022.

Comments checked by:

Paul Grant, Head of Legal, and Deputy Monitoring Officer.

paul.grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

17. There are no direct staff implications arising from this report.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

18. There are no direct equality and inclusion implications arising from this report.

Sustainability Implications

19. There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

20. There are no direct risk management implications arising from this report.

Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance, and Monitoring Officer

Annex: Annex 1: Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

Contact Officers: Sarah Smith, Senior Governance Lead
governance@oxfordshire.gov.uk

July 2024



Oxfordshire County Council

Annual Governance Statement

2023/2024

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Introduction

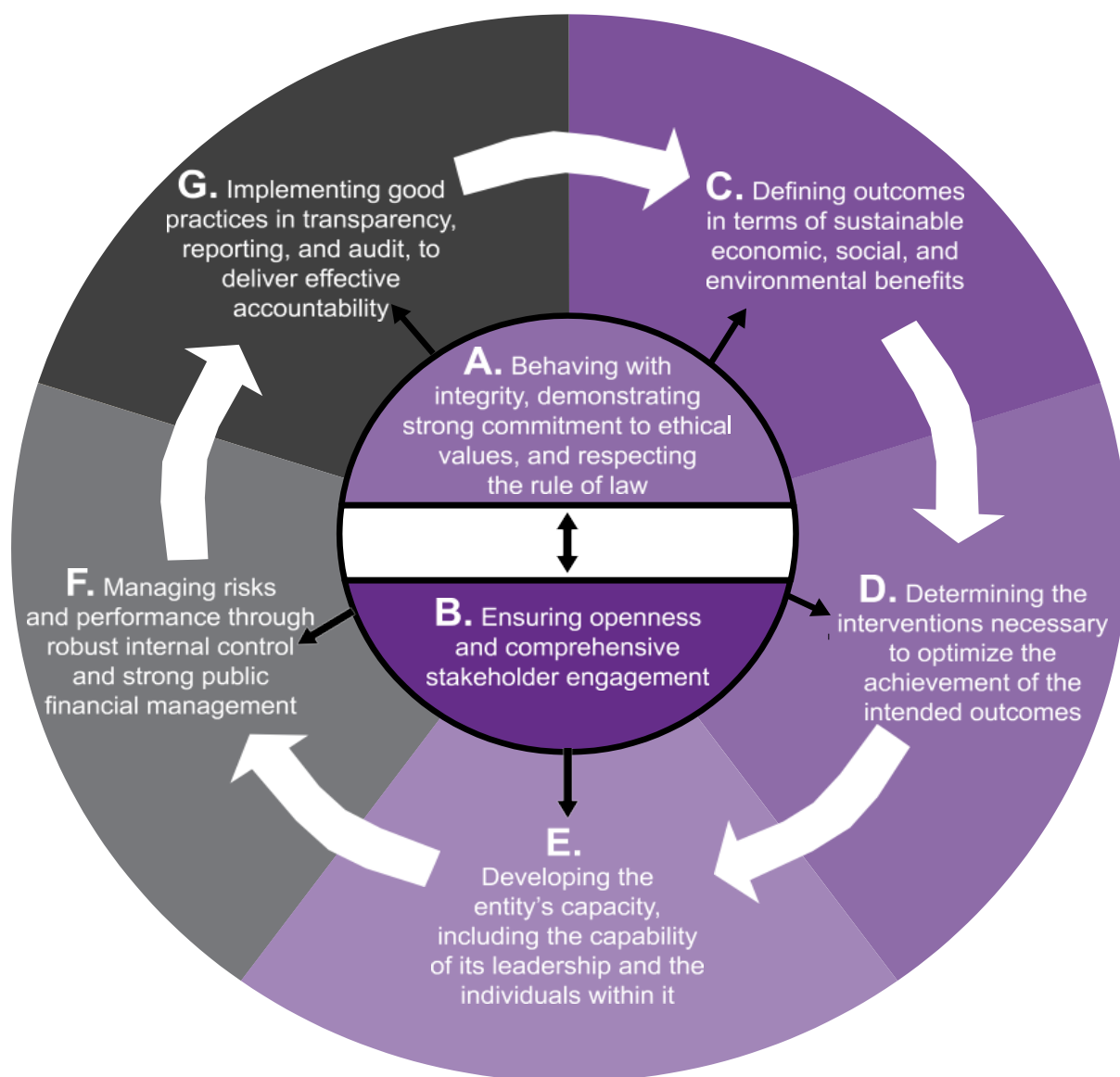
1. Oxfordshire County Council is obliged to ensure it has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and the achievement of its aims and objectives; ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective; and includes effective arrangements for the management of risk.
2. An annual governance statement is a document that local authorities in the UK are required to prepare and publish as part of their annual accounts. It demonstrates how the local authority has complied with its own governance framework and the principles of good governance set out by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). It also identifies any significant governance issues that need to be addressed and how the local authority plans to do so. The annual governance statement aims to provide assurance to the local authority's stakeholders and the public that it is conducting its affairs in a lawful, ethical, and effective manner.
3. In accordance with the Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, we have conducted a review of the effectiveness of our system of internal control in accordance with proper practice as set out in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016).
4. Whilst supporting the Council's arrangements for risk management, the governance framework cannot eliminate all risk to the achievement of policies, aims and objectives and this review can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.
5. Similarly, this review provides assurance that we have in place appropriate processes to ensure transparency and democratic oversight in decision making.
6. This statement is guided by CIPFA Advisory Note One, "Understanding the Challenge to Local Authority Governance" (March 2022) and describes our governance framework, the steps we have taken to ensure that it is effective and establishes key actions that we will put in place to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of our arrangements.
7. The review reflects enquiries made of officers with relevant knowledge, experience, and expertise. The review has been undertaken in consultation with the Council's Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer, and the Executive Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer).

Our Governance Framework

8. The governance framework at Oxfordshire County Council comprises the systems and processes, culture, and values which the council has adopted in order to deliver on the principles in the below diagram, (as taken from the [International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector](#) (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014) (the 'International Framework')).

This illustrates the various principles of good governance in the public sector and how they relate to each other).

9. The council has a separate code of governance, [“the Oxfordshire Code of Corporate Governance”](#) which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SoLACE framework (2016). This is updated each year, approved by the Audit & Governance Committee and evidence actively collated and assessed for compliance. Compliance with the code was reported to the Audit and Governance Committee on 13 March 2024.



10. This Statement provides:

- a) An *opinion* on the Council's governance arrangements from the Council's Senior Officers, and signed by the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council
- b) A review of the *effectiveness* of the Council's governance arrangements during 2023/24
- c) A *conclusion* in relation to the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements
- d) A review of the *action plan* completed in 2023/24
- e) An *action plan* for 2024/25
- f) An *annex* summarising the Council's governance framework.

11. As previously stated, the Annual Governance Statement is required by Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and follows the best practice guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting.

Assurance Statement

12. It is our opinion that the Council's governance arrangements in 2023/24 were adequate and provide a platform for achieving the Council's priorities and challenges in 2024/25.

Signatures

Signed on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council:



Martin Reeves
Chief Executive



Councillor Liz Leffman
Leader of the Council

Reviewing Our Effectiveness During 2023/24

Overview and review of overall effectiveness

13. The Council reviewed its overall effectiveness through an assessment of governance in all Directorates in late 2023 / early 2024. This required members of the Council's Management team (CMT) to work with their Directorate Leadership Teams to assess the level of assurance that they had in their service area regarding colleagues' awareness and compliance in the following areas:
- a) General Corporate Governance
 - b) Business Continuity
 - c) Customer Focus
 - d) Finance and Financial Management
 - e) Health and Safety
 - f) Human resources & Organisational Development
 - g) Information, Technology, Innovation and Digital
 - h) Information Services
 - i) Legislation
 - j) Performance Management
 - k) Procurement and contract management
 - l) Property and security
 - m) Risk Management
14. In addition to the Directorate surveys, corporate lead statements were produced by service leads describing the governance in place during the 2023/24 year and highlighting areas of focus for 2024/25. Statements were produced for areas as noted above at paragraph 13.
15. The Council's Corporate Governance Assurance Group (CGAG), an officer working group, chaired by the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer, will monitor any areas of focus throughout the year.
16. Any areas where issues were identified have been considered and will form part of the action plan for 2024/25.
17. In relation to the completion of the action plan for 2023/24, ten of the thirteen action points were completed, with three requiring further work to be undertaken during 2024/25. The status of these actions is outlined in **Annex 1**. The progress on these actions was reported to the Audit and Governance Committee throughout the year.
18. Specific action points for 2024/25 are set out in **Annex 2**. The Council believes these actions will help to establish some improved practices arising out of our active learning and experience in 2023/24.

Details of how the Council's governance proved effective during 2023/24 can be found under the Service Issues section below (paragraph 59 onwards).

Governance Actions – Review of 2023/24 and priorities for 2024/25

19. The two annexes to this Annual Governance Statement summarise:

Annex 1: updates on the priority actions for 2023/24

Annex 2: actions for 2024/25

20. The Actions for 2023/24 in **Annex 1** highlight certain aspects of emerging governance that might not otherwise be apparent from work regularly reported to the Council's Audit & Governance Committee. As such, progress reports on these actions are reported to the Committee through the year. The Actions for 2024/25 in **Annex 2** will be monitored by the Corporate Governance Assurance Group (CGAG), and the Audit & Governance Committee.

21. Other governance and audit activity across the Council will continue to be reported to [Audit & Governance Committee](#) through its normal work programmes

Governance in Outline

22. **Annex 3** sets out the Council's governance framework in outline. This framework was reviewed and updated in March 2024, by the Corporate Governance Assurance Group (CGAG).

Our Ambitions and People



Our strategic plan 2023 – 2025

23. The Council's strategic plan 2023 – 2025 sets out a vision to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer, and healthier county.
24. The strategic plan sets out nine cross-cutting priorities and commitments to achieve the vision and the areas of focus. Our nine priorities are:
- i. Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work.
 - ii. Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire.
 - iii. Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents.
 - iv. Support carers and the social care system.
 - v. Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network.
 - vi. Preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces.
 - vii. Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.
 - viii. Play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy.
 - ix. Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit.
25. The plan sets out how the Council aims to achieve each priority and ways in which it will work with partners to create a more joined-up approach to delivering services.



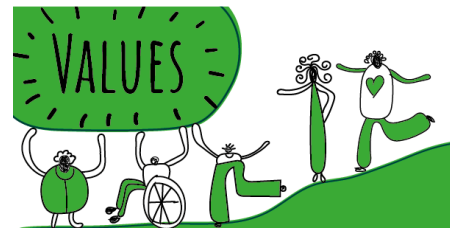
Delivering the Future Together 2023/24

26. Delivering the Future Together (DTFT) underpins everything our employees do; how we work together; how we make decisions; how we manage organisational change and development; and how we serve our residents. DTFT initiatives help us to reach our goal of being an employer of choice, a partner of choice and a place shaper of choice.

27. The values co-created in 2021 have been retained in 2023/24.

28. The values we live by are:

- a) Be kind and care.
- b) Equality and Integrity in all we do.
- c) Always Learning.
- d) Taking Responsibility.
- e) Daring to do it differently.



29. Our values run through all our dealings with colleagues, service users, partners and our residents. They are the foundation for every decision we make.

30. The Council has more than 200 colleagues from across the organisation who have volunteered to Champion DTFT, our new ways of working and help us to live our values and behaviours.

31. DTFT Champions make sure the voices in their teams are heard. They advocate for change in relatable ways and exemplify the spirit of continuous improvement.

32. Progress through the DTFT programme during 2023/24:

- a) In May 2023 we launched a training programme for all new managers which is designed to equip them with the information and skills they need to support their team.
- b) The 2023 employee engagement survey results showed 75 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that agile working is well supported in the Council;

33. Our ways of working, DTFT Champions, values and behaviours all support us to deliver the future together and achieve our vision to become an employer, partner and place shaper of choice:

a) **Employer of choice**

- All our colleagues recommend working here.
- People aspire to work for us and proactively seek employment.

b) **Partner of choice**

- We choose the right organisations to develop purposeful relationships to deliver the best outcomes for our residents.
- Our partners feel well supported by us.

c) **Place shaper of choice**

- We bring together public, private and community groups to shape the county.
- Our residents take pride in where they live and are happy with the facilities and services available to them.

Appointment of Executive Directors and our statutory governance roles

To provide more strategic capacity at the senior management level across the whole Council on 7 November 2023, Council formally approved two new strategic leadership team appointments to the roles of **Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer**, and **Executive Director of People**.

34. The Council is required to appoint to three specific posts, each of which oversees a key aspect of the Council's governance.

- i. **Head of the Paid Service** (HOPS) role; responsible for how the Council's functions are delivered, and the appointment and proper management of staff.
 - Throughout 2023/24 this has been and remains **Martin Reeves, Chief Executive**.
- ii. **Monitoring Officer** – and the Council's Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, throughout 2023/24 has been and remains **Anita Bradley**.
- iii. **'Section 151 Officer'** – the Chief Finance Officer, and Executive Director of Resources (as of November 2023), throughout 2023/24 has been and remains **Lorna Baxter**: responsible for the financial management of the authority.

35. Each of the postholders is an integral member of the Council's Strategic Leadership Team (SLT). As such, they are fully sighted on the Council's objectives, workstreams and emerging plans; and their perspectives and voices continue to be heard in, and to

influence, this senior forum. In line with best practice, the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer report directly to the Chief Executive.

36. The Executive Director of Resources and the Monitoring Officer both have open access to the Chief Executive at all times and meet regularly as statutory officers. They carry a statutory responsibility to report issues to the Council, if needed. As such, the posts remain pivotal to the Council's good governance.
37. In March 2024 Lawyers in Local Government (LLG), CIPFA and SOLACE consulted on a new Code of Practice on Good Governance for Statutory Officers. The Code of Practice for Good Governance sets out expectations for the Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer, and the Monitoring Officer in local authorities. The Code aims to support these roles to work effectively together and deliver good governance. They must recognise their responsibilities, understand the separation of powers, and display good governance. As there are higher expectations from individuals in these roles, the Code considers the seven Nolan Principles in conjunction with the "Golden Triangle"¹ to advise and guide them. The Seven Principles of the Golden Triangle are as follows:
- a) Respect Roles and Responsibilities
 - b) Act Wisely: A duty of enquiry and the exercise of statutory functions
 - c) Be Robust in working arrangements
 - d) Resource up: Get the tools to do the job
 - e) Build resilience: Appointing Deputies
 - f) Champion good decision making
 - g) Effective Oversight: External companies and entities of the authority
38. The consultation period closed in early April 2024. In 2024/25 the Council will consider its Governance position against the final published version of the Code of Practice.

Council Management Team

39. A new Council Management Team (CMT) was established in June 2023 (its inaugural meeting took place on 22 June 2023), which is a small group of leaders from across the Council. CMT is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operation of the Council, including service delivery, quality assurance, finances, governance, performance management, risk, and forward planning.

The creation of CMT means the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) now has more time to focus on strategic activity and setting direction.

¹ The Golden triangle is the trio of statutory officers at the top of a local authority – the Head of Paid Service (typically the CEO), The s151 officer (typically the CFO or Director of Finance), and the Monitoring Officer. These roles are crucial for the governance and decision-making processes within a local authority – LLG.

Risk Management

40. Throughout 2023/24 the Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer had overarching responsibility for risk management. This function is led by the Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes and managed on a day-to-day basis by the Performance and Insight Team Leader.
41. The [Risk and Opportunities Management Strategy](#) was approved by Audit and Governance committee and published in May 2023. This Strategy was developed with considerable input from SLT.
42. The Strategy is the foundation for the Council's approach to risk and opportunity management for the performance and risk management environment. This strategy is reviewed and updated where necessary on an annual basis. As well as collectively owning and supporting, the Council Management Team (CMT) and Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) members worked closely with the performance and Insight team to help implement the Strategy and embed risk management in the Council's everyday business delivering against the strategic priorities.
43. This strategy outlines the process of Identification, Assessment, Managing and Controlling and Review and Reporting of risks across the council. The following systems/mechanisms to ensure internal control have been in place throughout 2023/24 and are captured within the Strategy.



44. Cabinet is responsible for approving the Risk and Opportunities Management Strategy. Audit and Governance Committee considered the draft Strategy and provided input and

comments to Cabinet ahead of its approval. The Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes and Performance Team Leader supports the Group and directorates giving assurance around the escalation process into the Strategic risk register as necessary. The directorates are responsible for their operational risk registers.

Internal Audit in 2023/24

45. The 2019 CIPFA Statement on the “Role of the Head of Internal Audit in public service organisations” outlines the principles that define the core activities and behaviours that belong to the role of the ‘Head of Internal Audit’ and the governance requirements needed to support them. The Council's arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA statement with our Chief Internal Auditor carrying out the following:
- a) objectively assessing the adequacy and effectiveness of governance and management of risks, giving an evidence-based opinion on all aspects of governance, risk management and internal control
 - b) championing best practice in governance and commenting on responses to emerging risks and proposed developments.
 - c) being a senior manager with regular and open engagement across the organisation, particularly with the leadership team and with the audit committee.
 - d) leading and directing an internal audit service that is resourced appropriately, sufficiently, and effectively.
 - e) being professionally qualified and suitably experienced.
46. The Internal Audit Service operates in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). The self-assessment against the standards is completed on an annual basis. It is a requirement of the PSIAS for an external assessment of internal audit to be completed at least every five years. This took place in November 2023 and the results were reported to the Audit & Governance Committee in January 2024. This confirmed that the “service **fully conforms** to the requirements of the standards. There were no areas of either partial or non-conformance with the standards identified and no recommendations arising.
47. The Chief Internal Auditor prepared an Annual Report on the work of Internal Audit which concludes for the 12 months ended 31 March 2024, there is satisfactory assurance regarding Oxfordshire County Council's overall control environment and the arrangements for governance, risk management and control. Where issues have been identified through internal audit review, they have worked with management to agree appropriate corrective action and timescale for improvement.
48. As part of governance arrangements between Oxfordshire County Council and the Hampshire Partnership/Integrated Business Centre (IBC), Hampshire provide annual assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control from the work carried out via the IBC. This is provided through a commissioned

Service Organisation Controls review under ISAE 3402. (International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board –which provides a framework for reporting on the design and compliance with control objectives related to financial reporting). The report for 2023/24 concludes that the key financial system controls were suitably designed and operated effectively, with no exceptions noted.

49. Where Internal Audit identifies areas for improvement, management action plans are in place and are routinely monitored by the Internal Audit team and the Audit Working Group. Managers are required to provide positive assurance that actions have been implemented; performance on implementation is high, demonstrating that control weaknesses identified by Internal Audit are being addressed on a timely basis.

Financial Management Code ('FM Code')

50. A key goal of the Financial Management Code of Practice (launched by CIPFA in November 2019) is to improve the financial resilience of organisations by embedding enhanced standards of financial management. In accordance with the CIPFA Financial Management (FM) Code, local authorities should disclose compliance with the FM Code in the AGS and identify any outstanding areas for improvement or change.
51. There are clear links between the FM Code and the Governance Framework, particularly with its focus on achieving sustainable outcomes. As set out in the council's Financial Strategy, an assessment has been made of the Council's current compliance with the Code for 2023/24 (**See Annex 4**).
52. The assessment identified the Council's compliance for the year, and 15 of the 17 standards have been assessed as green meaning that compliance can be evidenced.
53. The two standards assessed as amber (see references A and E in the assessment at **annex 4**) are expected to be addressed through the council's transformation programme and the development and implementation of strategies for data & insight and commercial activity.

Procurement

54. The Procurement Act 2023 received Royal Assent in October 2023 and will come into effect from 28 October 2024. This legislation will be applicable to all new procurement activity from 28 October 2024 onwards. The Procurement team are attending training given by central government, to ensure that they are all aware of the new legislation and how it will apply to the Council's procurement activities. This knowledge and information will be shared with colleagues across the Council and Contract Procedure Rules will need to be reviewed and amended as necessary to be compliant with the change of legislation.

55. A Commercial Board was established in January 2024, to challenge and discuss all new tender requirements and contract renewals. Membership currently comprises the Director for Financial Services, Head of Procurement, and the Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer. Directorates will present tender requirements, contract renewals, and income generation opportunities to this group to ensure that the most commercial route forward is identified wherever possible. It also provides an opportunity to identify any cross-Directorate synergy and opportunities not easily seen at an operational level.

Customer Focus

56. The Customer Experience function can be split into two areas for governance, the Customer Service Centre (CSC) and the Continuous Improvement Team (CIT). Both areas have their own governance structure with overall responsibility from the CSC Management team which comprises the Director for Customer Experience and Cultural Services, Service Delivery Manager and Quality & Performance Manager.
57. The Council's operating model has determined that customer contact work should be dealt with by the CSC and a programme of business development is in place. This aspect forms one part of the wider 'Improving the Customer Experience' which is now embedded in the Council's transformation agenda.
58. As part of the new ways of working to deliver the future together, there is now an 'Improving the Customer Experience' programme which is responsible for the development of the council's customer experience approach.

Service Issues

HR Policies and Procedures

59. Following a need identified in 2022/23 there has been an ongoing review of the Council's Human Resources (HR) policies and procedures throughout 2023/24, where specific policies have been reviewed and updated, and associated procedural/guidance documents refreshed/reviewed to support these policies.
60. Four of the six policies reviewed during 2023/24 have been updated. The two outstanding, disciplinary and capability policies, and associated toolkits will form part of a wider programme of work to improve performance capability and conduct across the organisation.
61. All HR policies support the council's People and Culture Strategy, comply with employment law, promote leading employment practice, have a consistency of approach to people management, and are designed to be straightforward and easy to use.

Capital Governance

62. Since the introduction of new governance measures in 2022, there has been a commitment to continuously improve upon what is already in place. An ongoing programme of work is aiming to build upon these foundations, enabling efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness across all areas of Capital Programme governance. Central to this, is the integration of technology tools which will provide senior leaders with increased visibility and oversight of the Capital Programme and enhanced capacity to make evidence-based decisions.
63. There are Capital Programme Boards established for Major Infrastructure, Highways, Property, IT & Digital and Environment & Climate which report into the Strategic Capital Board (SCB), chaired by the Chief Executive Officer. The SCB meets monthly and provides a collective officer oversight of capital projects within the Capital Programme. The Board functions as an internal governance requirement, complementary to the Council's democratic process and makes recommendations to an executive decision-maker to an Officer, Cabinet Member or Cabinet.
64. The Board oversees the performance of the Council's Capital Programme and addresses risks and / or issues through exception reporting with a focus on variations in time, scope and cost, ensuring the programme delivers value for money and reflects the strategic priorities of the Council. It also reviews the drafted annual Capital Programme ahead of consideration and approval by Council as part of the business planning process. The Board may also recommend to executive decision-makers, any new in-year additions to the Capital Programme that are greater than £500,000 that have not been considered through the annual business planning process.

Adult Social Care

65. Adult Social Care has been making great progress in the Council's commitment to support people to live independently in their own homes with the roll out of the Discharge to Assess approach to hospital discharge. This has supported more people than ever before to return directly to their own homes and access reablement following a hospital stay. Indicative data shows that 87.6% of people who receive reablement go on to regain their independence or require less care support than at the point of discharge. Broken down this is 74.8% of people having regained full independence with 12.8% having had a reduction in support needed. The teams have delivered an online financial assessment tool to support people and their families to upload information directly at a time and place that suits them, making for faster and more streamlined assessments. Adult Social Care continues to support 6550 people with care and support needs and responded to 6713 safeguarding concerns in 2023.
66. The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced a new duty for Care Quality Commission (CQC) to independently review and assess how local authorities are delivering their Care Act functions. A total of 25 authorities across the country have been notified of their

assessment dates by CQC. To ensure a state of readiness Adult Social Care has been refining the Self-Assessment with a quarterly refresh to capture key updates. Adult Social Care invited the Local Government Association to undertake a peer review in March 2024 to support our preparations. It was a great opportunity to celebrate what has gone well but also to confirm the Council's commitment to further development in co-production and delivering strength-based practices.

Children and Young Peoples Services

67. A standard inspection under the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) took place in February 2024. The report was published on 09 April 2024. The overall Judgement was 'Good' and the Council achieved 'good across all five judgements. The link to the report can be found here: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50243682>.

68. The report commented upon effective practice and improved outcomes for children. Considerable work had been undertaken to ensure that consistent and effective practice is delivered to children and their families. The report also reviewed school and education services delivered by the local authority and were positive about the strengths.

69. Performance data continues to be strong. The Council is confident that it knows its service well and where we could strengthen practice and service delivery.

Demand for services continues to rise in line with a national picture. This appears to be driven by the post covid impact on children and families and further exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis and the increasing population and new residents that will require services, be that education services or statutory children's social care.

70. However, while overall demand for services increase, the number of 'Children We Care For' has reduced following close management oversight and intervention, those that do require care are often the most complex children and their needs are increasing in complexity of presentation. This continues to place pressure in terms of high-cost placements. The Council has a number of strategies to mitigate this including the residential and fostering strategy and an expansion of family help.

71. In 2024, the senior Leadership team within Children, Education & Families (CEF) has stabilised with permanent and longer-term appointments after a period of change.

72. In July 2023 the Local Area Partnership for SEND was inspected under the new Ofsted/CQC framework and in September 2023 the published judgement was that significant concerns had been identified an improvement notice was issued and a SEND Area Improvement Board was established. The board is chaired independently with key strategic leads and close work with stakeholders. A Priority Action Plan is in place and additional investment has been made to meet improvements. Early signs of improvement can be seen in the timeliness of EHCP's issued within 20 weeks, which has been above the national average. The demand for EHCP's continues to rise and the

wider availability of services, means the High Needs Block continues to be under pressure.

Law & Governance

73. The Monitoring Officer provided her [annual report to the Audit and Governance Committee](#) on her view on the Council's governance arrangements. This review was formally reported to and endorsed by the Audit & Governance Committee on [20 September 2023](#). This report confirmed the progress in maintaining democratic accountability and transparency, with members continuing to undertake their role as community leaders.
74. The Law & Governance transformation programme was established in 2022-2023 and includes an Improvement Steering Group to monitor and drive progress against the project's objectives and timelines. Following the reshape of Legal Services and Governance in 2023-2024, working groups have been set up to deal with the targeted improvement of aspects of the individual services.
75. In Governance the working groups cover Democratic Processes, including digitalisation, Corporate Governance, and Information Services. They are overseeing several projects including the introduction of new system for school appeals, report preparation, Subject Access Requests (SARs) and data breaches. There is also a project to encourage more councillors to go paperless and use the case management system.
76. Legal Services have established working groups to consider Practice Improvements and Lexcel accreditation, and Case Management. Project plans were established for both working groups - and meetings commenced - at the start of April 2024.
77. A full review of the Council's Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints Against Members has been undertaken. Revised arrangements were presented to Audit & Governance Committee on 13 March 2024, who recommended to Council that these revised arrangements, together with annexes 1 to 5 are approved and adopted. Council approved the revised arrangements on 16 April 2024.
78. Electoral Review – The Local Government Boundary Commission for England continued its electoral review of the Council. The Council has responded to the Commission's draft recommendations and subsequent further draft recommendations during 2023-24. The new electoral arrangements will become effective for the May 2025 County Council Election.
79. The Whistleblowing policy has been reviewed. – The terms of reference for the Audit and Governance Committee have been revised to include oversight of the Whistleblowing Policy and arrangements for whistleblowing. This change was confirmed by Council on 16 April 2024.

80. Information Governance - The Information Governance Board chaired by the Monitoring Officer met on a regular basis to ensure that the Council has adequate arrangements for data protection and information security. The Board includes the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO), Caldicot Guardian and Data Protection Officer. The Information Governance Group has an operational role in looking at data breaches and security incidents in more detail and highlighting risk areas that need to be addressed through Council-wide training. The Group comprises representatives from across the Council and refers matters to the Board as appropriate.

Conclusion

81. The Council's governance arrangements are regarded as fit for purpose and will be monitored throughout 2024/25.

Annex 1 - Significant Governance Issues – 2023/24 Actions Update

Actions identified for 2023/24 - Update

This is a review of the progress during 2023/24 on the priorities for that year. The actions identified were completed in-year

Actions that were planned for 2023/24	Original Timescale	Outcome
<p>1. Directorate Scheme of Delegation: Powers and Financial Powers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review and update all outwardly facing documentation, as well as review the location of information. The updated Scheme of Delegation pages within the Constitution (7.1 and 7.2) updated on the Council's website. Directorate level Schemes of Delegation, which are held centrally, have been reviewed by representatives of each directorate and updated. A further review is required to reflect the recent changes in reporting arrangements. 	<p>31 August 2023</p> <p>30 September 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed. The updated Scheme of Delegation pages within the Constitution (7.1 and 7.2) were approved by Council on 16 May 2023 and will be published in the next Constitution update for the website. Work is still required to finalise the Directorate Schemes of Delegation with further reviews needed to be undertaken by each Directorate. The Scheme of Delegation for Law & Governance has been completed and signed off by the Director of Law & Governance; this will be shared with other directorates as part of a wider piece of communication following the Council's recent organisational changes. The

Actions that were planned for 2023/24	Original Timescale	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Powers: The schemes of delegation for each directorate are reviewed. Updated versions will be signed off by the Corporate Directors and the S151 Officer 	<p>30 September 2023</p>	<p>Directorate Schemes of Delegation will be carried forward for completion in 24/25.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review undertaken. Financial Powers: The Council's Finance Team have undertaken a complete update in relation to the financial scheme of delegation with the intention that going forward the schedule of authorised officers will be updated on a rolling basis rather than an annual update. The team have also been working with the directorates to agree the principles of how their authorisations will work going forward and documenting directorate specific schemes of financial delegation (like a financial powers documents). This was a more significant piece of work than originally expected due to substantial organisational changes. As with the completion of the directorate delegated powers documents, completing the finance directorate schemes and schedules has been a time challenge. Updates as of March/April 2024: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intranet page has been updated with Finance scheme of delegation section. In relation to Directorate Schemes, we have focused on completing the Delivery Directorate's. Adults published.

Actions that were planned for 2023/24	Original Timescale	Outcome
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CEF - 80% complete, delayed to due to Inspection/Year end - will be published by end of May 2024 ○ Public Health - complete just requires sign off to be sent w/c 29/4/24. ○ E&P - some issues with last version, now updated, (received Director sign off and published in May 2024). ○ Property - Additional services moved needed adding, then ready for Director sign off w/c 29/4/24. ○ Enabling services - to be completed after above published/subject. ○ Work still required on schemes of delegation across Governance, Finance, Legal to align approach to delegated powers.
<p>2. Cherwell-Oxfordshire Decoupling Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following Decoupling in 2022, Cherwell District Council and the Council agreed a way forward for continued provision of certain services between Cherwell District Council and the Council 	6 October 2023	Completed. The documentation had been completed as of 14 December 2023.

Actions that were planned for 2023/24	Original Timescale	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where appropriate for each council, revised partnership arrangements will remain in-place within the framework of new agreements. 		
3. HR policies to be reviewed and updated for 2023/2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic abuse- supporting employees: policy and guidance (HR and Public Health) Sickness/supporting attendance policy and process maps. Agile working policy Additions to pay policy (to include honoraria, market supplements) Capability policy and procedures Disciplinary policy and procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 September 2023 30 September 2023 30 September 2023 31 March 2024 31 March 2024 31 March 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed action: Domestic Abuse supporting employees' policy and how to guide launched 12/03/2024. Completed action: Sickness supporting attendance policy launched 31/01/2024. Completed action: Agile working policy launched 31/10/2023. Completed action: Market supplements guidance on target to be uploaded on the intranet by 31/03/2024. Honoraria guidance and any required updates still under review. Both the disciplinary and capability policies and associated toolkits will form part of a wider project of work to improving performance capability and conduct across our organisation. These will be removed from the policy list for 2024/2025,

Actions that were planned for 2023/24	Original Timescale	Outcome
		whilst the Council focus on the organisation change policy suite.
4. Governance Policies and Procedures To review and update the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register of interests • Gifts & Hospitality • Member representation on Outside Bodies • Social Media for Members (as part of the Council's Main Social Media Policy) • Officer Guidance on executive decision making and key decisions. 	31 March 2024	The Policies and procedures have been reviewed and currently with the Director of Law & Governance to approve.
5. Constitution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconvene the Constitution Working Group and continue the review of the Council's Constitution 	31 March 2024	The officer group has been established and is formed to work alongside the member group. The Officer group is formulating the schedule of work to be considered by members.
6. Member training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a further programme of Member training and briefings responding to the identified needs of Members. 	31 March 2024	Training to date and information is being provided to Members through regular briefings. An improved and responsive training programme reflecting the evolving requirements of elected Members will be in place by 31 March 2025 as part of the

Actions that were planned for 2023/24	Original Timescale	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To act upon evaluation of Member feedback following training events. 		induction programme following the elections in May 2025.
7. Review of Members’ and Officers’ fiduciary responsibilities and accountability, and legal status in respect of outside bodies including indemnities.	31 December 2023	It is important that the legal status of and responsibilities and accountabilities of Members are clearly understood in relation to outside bodies they are appointed to by the Council. This work has not yet commenced and will be carried forward to 2024/25.
8. Review of Customer Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer feedback via corporate and statutory complaints and Freedom of Information requests is very important to Oxfordshire County Council. We will act to ensure that colleagues are fully aware of the importance placed upon responding in the appropriate timescales and that training, knowledge share and learning from customer feedback is promoted across the council. 	31 March 2024	<p>Complete. From April to November 2023 there has been a heightened level of engagement and communication about the complaints (statutory and corporate) process and the need to have an improved performance in terms of responsiveness and quality.</p> <p>Actions included:</p> <p>a) A complaints (and FOI) report has been produced for each monthly Business Monitoring and Management Report (BMMR). This was reviewed, signed off and owned at Council Management Team (CMT) level. On a bi-monthly basis, the report is also taken to Cabinet.</p> <p>b) On 5 July 2023, the Director for Customer Experience and Cultural services wrote to all Extended Leadership Team (ELT) colleagues requesting the cascade of the message to all colleagues to improve the current responsiveness rates; this was</p>

Actions that were planned for 2023/24	Original Timescale	Outcome
		<p>followed by articles in the Managers' Briefings and on the intranet.</p> <p>c) On 30 July 2023, the Director for Customer Experience and Cultural Services wrote to all ELT colleagues asking for them to provide feedback on the draft revised complaints process.</p> <p>d) In November 2023, the newly updated complaints policy was launched.</p> <p>21. In addition, the Customer Feedback team have provided the following information:</p> <p>a) Stage 1 training has been provided for Children's Social Care. There were around 90 attendees, and a further session took place at the end of November for those staff unable to attend the original training.</p> <p>b) The Customer Feedback Team is working closely with the Partnership Youth Development Manager to support stage 1 responses within the relevant timeframe.</p> <p>c) Work is being undertaken with Head of The Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)/front door to provide a face-to-face training session on the quality of responses. This training will be rolled out in early 2024 and will become mandatory in future.</p> <p>d) The team have provided Statutory Stage 2 training to SEND colleagues to provide an overview of the process should any complaints become part of the statutory process.</p>

Actions that were planned for 2023/24	Original Timescale	Outcome
		e) The team have created guidance to support staff with writing responses until the they are able to provide in-person training.
<p>9. Review the current culture of dealing with information requests and the expectations of the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Customer Feedback, and Governance Teams to review the joint working approach when dealing with requests for information under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR), Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and Subject Access Request (SAR) regimes. Teams to meet regularly to ensure the Council is working in accordance with the relevant legislation and to consult with the ICO during the year to assist with the monitoring of the Council’s performance. 	31 March 2024	Complete. Six-monthly meetings have taken place with an ICO Case Worker to assist in the understanding of the Council’s performance against other similar authorities. The last meeting with the ICO took place in January 2024.
<p>10. Recording of Decisions</p>	30 September 2023	Complete. A paper was taken to the Council Management Team (CMT) setting out the approach to key decisions and officer decision notices. This detailed the need for consistency in decision making and reminded colleagues of the importance of making and retaining records of officer decisions where such matters were not taken before a political decision maker. Internal communications regarding the approach to key decisions has been publicised and guidance added to the intranet.

Actions that were planned for 2023/24	Original Timescale	Outcome
11. Proactive Training for Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance sessions to raise awareness and skills level within the Organisation to be carried out by Head of Legal. 	First session on 29 June 2023, with further roll out to SLT/CMT and SMF in 2023/24.	Following a review of the Governance policies, training will be put in place including raising awareness about the Council's whistleblowing process and amended policy. The training materials are in development.
12. Review of the Annual Governance Statement Process	31 August 2023	Complete. The Director of Law and Governance presented the AGS process to the Council Management Team (CMT) on 5 December 2023.
13. Financial Management Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Financial Management Strategy is in development which will set out the improvements required to enhance financial management capabilities including financial management reporting structures and the development of business objects dashboard reporting. 	31 August 2023	<p>Complete. The Financial Management Strategy action has been integrated into the Business Services Transformation Programme (BST). This new programme, which is running for 12 months, until October 2024 is reviewing Financial Management, Procure to Pay and HR activities performed across the Council, focusing on improvements in three key themes; People Change (roles and responsibilities, training); Process Improvement; Data and Reporting.</p> <p>A Programme Board headed by the Executive Director of Resources is established and this will report to the Strategic Transformation Board as a priority A programme. This</p>

Annex 1 - Significant Governance Issues – 2023/24 Actions Update

Actions that were planned for 2023/24	Original Timescale	Outcome
		programme of change will run for 12 months, ending 31 October 2024.

Annex 2 - Significant Governance Issues 2024/25

Actions identified for 2024/25

	Action now planned for 2024/25	Timescale for Completion	Outcome	Senior Responsible Officer
1	Constitution Working Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To establish a member working group to work alongside the officer working group, 	31/03/2025	To continue the review of the Council's Constitution.	Head of Governance
2	HR policies to be reviewed and updated for 2024/2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational Change policy Redeployment policy Redundancy procedure Fixed Term /Temporary contracts of employment policy TUPE guidance Pensions and Retirement policy 	30/06/2024 30/06/2024 30/06/2024 30/06/2024 30/04/2024 30/06/2024	All HR policies support the council's Workforce Strategy, comply with employment law, promote leading employment practice, consistency of approach to people management, and are straightforward and easy to use.	Head of HR Business Partnering & Advisory, HR Policy Manager

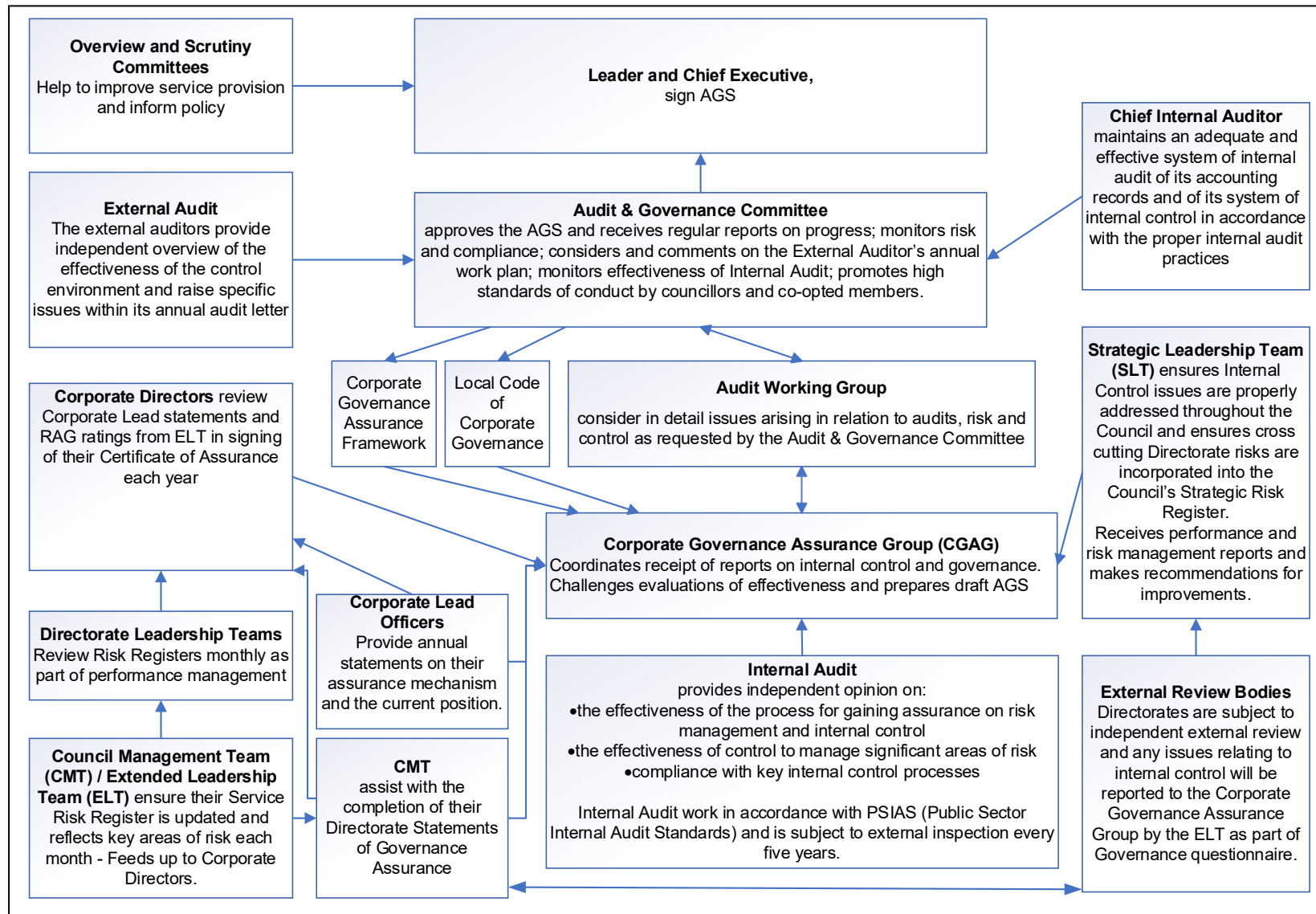
	Action now planned for 2024/25	Timescale for Completion	Outcome	Senior Responsible Officer
3.	Directorate level Schemes of Delegation, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue with the review and update of the Directorate Schemes of Delegation 	31 March 2025	Directorate level Schemes of Delegation, which are held both by individual Directorates and centrally, require further review to reflect the recent changes in reporting arrangements.	Head of Governance
4.	Further consideration of the Information Commissioner's Office's (ICO) expectations when handling Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulation requests. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During 2023/24 the Council improved its compliance rates in respect of meeting statutory response deadlines. The Customer Feedback Team (FOI Officers) need now to work with services to improve the quality of responses to requests, and the handling of requests in accordance with FOI/EIR 	31 March 2025	A joined-up approach to responding to Information requests which enables the Council to consistently meet the statutory requirements and reflects best practice,	Director of Transformation, Digital & Customer Experience, Head of Governance

	Action now planned for 2024/25	Timescale for Completion	Outcome	Senior Responsible Officer
	<p>legislation, to further improve resolutions ahead of any ICO involvement.</p> <p>Officers in the Customer Feedback team to work with the Corporate Governance Team on increasing awareness within the Council on the correct application of the legislation.</p>			
6.	Full review of current CCTV & intruder alarm monitoring arrangements.	1 November 2024	As part of an ongoing initiative to increase self-delivery of services, provide a detailed options paper for CCTV & Intruder alarm monitoring to be self-delivered vs. the current outsourced model.	Director of Property Services, Head of Facilities Management
7.	Review of Members' and Officers' fiduciary responsibilities and accountability, and legal status in respect of outside bodies including indemnities.	31 March 2025	It is important that the legal status of and responsibilities and accountabilities of Members are clearly understood in relation to outside bodies they are appointed to by the Council.	Head of Governance
8.	Proactive Training for Governance	31 March 2025	Following a review of the Governance policies, training materials are in development which will be published and used in Governance sessions, including raising awareness	Head of Governance, Head of Legal

Annex 2 - Significant Governance Issues 2024/25

	Action now planned for 2024/25	Timescale for Completion	Outcome	Senior Responsible Officer
	Governance sessions to raise awareness and skills level within the Organisation to be carried out by Heads of Governance and Legal.		about the Council's whistleblowing process and amended policy.	

Annex 3: Overview of Corporate Governance Assurance Framework



Annex 4: Financial Management Code of Practice – Summary Compliance Assessment 2023/24

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
1. Responsibilities of the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) and Leadership Team				
A	The leadership team is able to demonstrate that the services provided by the authority provide value for money (VfM)	Services use benchmarking to inform opportunities to improve VfM but this is often ad hoc and there is limited visibility beyond the service. Procurement decisions consider VfM by considering the quality of service and not just price.	The council's transformation programme is expected to focus on improving the business intelligence information available to the council. This will include developing a strategy for data and insight. A commercial strategy, that will be overseen by a new Commercial Board is being drafted and will also focus on procurement, third party spend, commissioning and commercial activity.	AMBER

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
B	The authority complies with the CIPFA “Statement of the Role of the CFO in Local Government”	<p>The CFO is qualified accountant with significant experience working as an active member of the council’s leadership team.</p> <p>In carrying out their role as Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, the CFO is a member of SLT (Strategic Leadership Team) and reports directly to the Chief Executive. The CFO has an influential role with members of the Cabinet, Audit & Governance Committee and lead opposition members.</p> <p>The budget proposals for 2024/25 include funding for additional finance capacity needed to support the organisation to transform and to ensure that the CFO is able to lead and direct a finance function that is resourced to be fit for purpose.</p>	The Business Services Transformation project will focus on sustainable financial management across the organisation through developing improved guidance and training for non – finance staff and reviewing, documenting and clarifying roles and responsibilities and accountabilities with efficient use of systems and processes to support that in the council’s self service operating framework.	GREEN

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
2. Governance and Financial Management Style				
C	The Leadership Team demonstrates in its actions and behaviours responsibility for governance and internal control	<p>The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) understands its responsibilities in relation to Financial Management and considers the assessment against the Code and actions or further work required in order to continuously improve.</p> <p>The Council Management Team (CMT) receive and review on a quarterly basis a report from the Chief Internal Auditor on progress against the Internal Audit Plan, implementation of agreed management actions and delivery of the Counter Fraud Plan. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and Action Plan are also considered by CMT.</p> <p>In addition, the Audit & Governance Committee have a key role in providing independent assurance over governance, risk and internal control arrangements.</p>	<p>SLT are continuing to discharge their responsibilities through CMT including focussing on managing pressures over the short and medium term to maintain financial resilience through the Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p> <p>The council's Delivering the Future Together programme has moved to a new phase and is focussing on the operational priorities for the council of employer, place shaper and partner of choice.</p>	GREEN
D	The authority applies the CIPFA/SOLACE "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)"	The Local Code of Corporate Governance sets out how the Council complies with the requirements of the Framework and identifies key documents, which provide detailed information as to how the Council ensures the Corporate Governance principles are adhered to. The annual update of the Oxfordshire Code of Corporate Governance was last approved by Audit & Governance Committee in May 2023.		GREEN

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
E	The Financial Management style of the authority supports financial sustainability	<p>The Council has adopted a Business Partnering model that supports managers to deliver financially sustainable services by providing strategic advice and support. Training in financial management roles and responsibilities has been a focus across a number of Directorates during the last financial year. This is underpinned by a Corporate Function that manages the strategic financing issues and provides the budget setting and accounting framework for the organisation.</p> <p>An updated Financial Strategy including financial performance indicators that are tracked and reporting during the following year is published annually as part of the budget agreed by Council.</p>	<p>Business Services Transformation will develop a clearer framework of financial roles and accountability and develop training to support that which will be used consistently across the Council.</p> <p>A new Financial Management Strategy and a Commercial Strategy are being developed. Business Partnering will be developed across more functions within the council and a formal operating model for business partnering will be developed.</p> <p>Development of improved and digitised business case process for capital and revenue.</p>	AMBER

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
3. Long to Medium-Term Financial Management				
F	The authority has carried out a credible and transparent financial resilience assessment	<p>A review of both the 2022/23 Financial Resilience index and the OFLOG finance data set compared to the nearest neighbour's cohort of local authorities has been undertaken. This is set out in in the Financial Strategy (section 4.5 of the Budget & Business Planning Report to Cabinet in January 2024).</p> <p>The Financial Strategy also includes a suite of measures against which financial performance is measured during the year and reported through the Business Management & Monitoring Reports to Cabinet. These measures include the forecast level of General Balances against the minimum risk assessed level for balances taking into account the latest monitoring position in the current year and the forecast achievement of savings built into the budget.</p> <p>The council's People and Culture Strategy, which will inform future workforce requirements will be considered for approval by Cabinet in January 2024.</p>		GREEN

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
G	The authority understands its prospects for financial sustainability in the longer term and has reported this clearly to members	<p>The Financial Strategy and MTFS outline the financial challenges and opportunities facing the Council over the medium term.</p> <p>The Capital & Investment Strategy and the Capital Programme both cover a 10-year period. The Capital & Investment Strategy sets out the long-term context in which capital expenditure and investment decisions are made and articulates how the Council's capital investment will help achieve the Council's vision and priorities as well as respond to demographic change.</p>	With the development of a new business intelligence approach, it remains an ambition to progress the development of scenario planning in relation to the long term and the council's place shaping ambitions.	GREEN

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
H	The authority complies with the CIPFA “Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities”	<p>The Capital & Investment Strategy is updated annually and agreed by Council alongside the Capital Programme, Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy.</p> <p>The Capital Programme is monitored monthly with reports produced quarterly for the Strategic Capital Board and Cabinet. Quarterly Treasury Management reports are taken to Audit & Governance Committee, Cabinet and Council, including monitoring of Prudential Indicators.</p> <p>The ratio of financing costs to the net revenue stream is forecast to remain within 4%-5% over the medium term. The future affordability of any proposed new borrowing is a key consideration within the Budget & Business Planning process.</p>		GREEN
I	The authority has a rolling multi-year medium-term financial plan consistent with sustainable service plans	The Council has an integrated Business and Budget Planning Process with a multi-year Medium Term Financial Strategy linked to service plans. This is reviewed and updated each year with new future years added to ensure that the strategy covers at least three years.		GREEN

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
4. The Annual Budget				
J	The authority complies with its statutory obligations in respect of the budget setting process	The Council produces an annual balanced budget and supporting documentation within the necessary timeframe.		GREEN
K	The budget report includes a statement by the CFO on the robustness of the estimates and a statement on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves	The CFO's Section 25 report accompanies the suite of Budget documents and includes a commentary on the adequacy of proposed financial reserves with reference to CIPFA's Resilience Index as well as assessed compliance with the FM Code.		GREEN

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
5. Stakeholder Engagement and Business Plans				
L	The authority has engaged where appropriate with key stakeholders in developing its long-term financial strategy, medium-term financial plan and annual budget	<p>One of the Council's priorities has been to develop and implement a new consultation and engagement strategy, enhancing opportunities for residents, including young people and those seldom heard, to have their say in service development. This was implemented for the 2023/24 budget process and has been developed further for 2024/25.</p> <p>New for 2024/25 the council is using an online budget simulator tool, that enables residents and other stakeholders to weigh up funding choices and trade-offs for themselves.</p> <p>Wider engagement and outreach activities include two sounding board events for secondary school aged children, three online Oxfordshire Conversations in December 2023 and five events for adults known to experience inequity, in December and January to support their engagement with the simulator.</p> <p>Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee have also considered the budget proposals ahead of the budget being agreed by Council.</p>		GREEN

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
M	The authority uses an appropriate documented options appraisal methodology to demonstrate the value for money of its decisions	Key decisions requiring investment to deliver service improvements, deliver savings or invest or save opportunities require business case to aid decision making via the appropriate governance process (e.g., Strategic Capital Board).	Review the requirements, standards and guidance for business cases including training options for responsible officers and decision makers. A project to automate the completion and sign off of business cases for revenue and capital projects has just commenced and is expected to be completed in Spring 2024.	GREEN

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
6. Monitoring Financial Performance				
N	The Leadership Team takes action using reports enabling it to identify and correct emerging risks to its budget strategy and financial sustainability	<p>The regular Business Management and Monitoring Reports to Cabinet include performance, finance and risk so enable the council's leadership team and Cabinet to respond to emerging issues and to take action to manage those.</p> <p>The regular Capital Programme monitoring report includes updates on scheme activity, performance and risks.</p>	<p>Continue to improve the visibility and links between performance, risk and finance reporting, highlighting key issues that need to be considered in the Business Management & Monitoring Report as well as any issues arising from the Capital Programme.</p> <p>Business Services Transformation and development of Data and Insight are expected to improve reporting capabilities and the use of data to underpin that.</p>	GREEN
O	The Leadership Team monitors the elements of its balance sheet that pose a significant risk to financial sustainability	The Business Management and Monitoring Reports to Cabinet include monitoring of key balance sheet items including balances, reserves, debtors, and cash (including the performance of Treasury Management).		GREEN

Ref	CIPFA Financial Management Standards	Current Status	Further Work	RAG Status
7. External Financial Reporting				
P	The CFO has personal and statutory responsibility for ensuring that the statement of accounts produced by the local authority complies with the reporting requirements of the “Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom” (The Code)	<p>The annual accounts are produced in compliance with The Code and have always received an unqualified audit opinion.</p> <p>Statutory deadlines for publication of the accounts were consistently met until 2021/22 when resourcing issues impacted the completion of the accounts. Since then the on-going impact of audits for previous years has made it more difficult to complete the accounts by the deadline.</p> <p>The audit of the 2020/21 accounts was completed during 2023/24 and the audit of the 2021/22 accounts is expected to be completed in early 2024.</p> <p>The audit of the 2022/23 accounts remains outstanding as at 31 December 2023 pending national guidance on the approach to be taken to resolve the national audit backlog.</p>		GREEN
Q	The presentation of the final outturn figures and variations from budget allows the leadership team to make strategic financial decisions	The Council Management Team and Cabinet consider the outturn and year end variances in a Provisional Outturn Report to Cabinet each June. Where relevant this enables strategic financial decisions to be made early in the following financial year.		GREEN

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Division(s): N/A

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE 17 JULY 2024 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL PERFORMANCE 2023/24

Report by the Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. **Audit & Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the report, and to RECOMMEND Council to note the council's treasury management activity and outcomes in 2023/24.**

Executive Summary

2. Treasury management is defined as: "The management of the organisation's borrowing, investments and cash flows, including its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities, and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."
3. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) 'Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021' requires that the Council and Audit & Governance Committee receives a report on Treasury Management activities at least four times per year. This report is the final report for the financial year 2023/24 and sets out the position at 31 March 2024.
4. Throughout this report performance for the 2023/24 financial year is measured against the budget agreed by Council in February 2023.
5. At 31 March 2024, the council's outstanding debt totalled £284m and the average rate of interest paid on long-term debt during the year was 4.39%. £10m of maturing Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loans and £10m of LOBO¹ loans were repaid during the year. No new external borrowing was arranged during 2023/24. The Council's debt financing position for 2023/24 is shown in Annex 1.
6. The [Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24](#) agreed in February 2023 assumed an average base rate forecast of 4.25% consistent with rates at that time. Taking into account historic loans, the investment return on in house investments for 2023/24 was forecast to be 3.00% on an average portfolio of £379m.
7. The Council achieved an average in-house return for the year of 3.96% on average cash balances of £490.107m, producing gross interest receivable of £19.617m. In relation to external funds, the return for the year was 4.70% producing gross distributions totalling £4.747m, bringing total investment income to £24.364m. This compares to budgeted investment income of £14.863m, giving a net overachievement of £9.501m which contributed to the £7.2m underspend on [Interest on Balances reported in the Provisional](#)

¹ LOBO (Lender's Option/Borrower's Option) Loans are long-term loans which include a re-pricing option for the bank at predetermined intervals.

[Outturn reported in June 2024](#) . £7.819m of the investment income received was used to fund the indexation of Section 106 funding held by the council.

8. At 31 March 2024, the council's investment portfolio of £537.181m comprised £439.375m in house investments and £97.806m in pooled funds with a variable net asset value. Annex 4 provides an analysis of the investment portfolio at 31 March 2024.

Treasury Management Activity

Debt Financing & Maturing Debt

9. The Strategy for Long Term Borrowing agreed in February 2023 included the option to fund new or replacement borrowing up to the value of £180m through internal borrowing. The aim was to reduce the Council's exposure to credit risk and reduce the cost of carry (difference between borrowing costs and investment returns) whilst debt rates remained higher than investment interest rates.
10. The council is able to borrow from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), through the money markets, or through internal borrowing by temporarily using its cash balances. The strategy for the year assumed that the council's borrowing requirement would be met through internal borrowing, as external borrowing rates were forecast to remain high during the year, then reduce over the medium term. Borrowing rates did remain high during the year, therefore no new external borrowing was arranged during 2023/24.
11. As at 31 March 2024, the authority had 43 PWLB loans totalling £244.383m, 7 LOBO loans totalling £35.0m and one £5.0m money market loan. The weighted average for interest paid on long-term debt was 4.39%. The Council's debt portfolio as at 31 March 2024 is shown in Annex 1.
12. As set out in Annex 2 the Council repaid £12m of maturing PWLB loans during the year. The council also repaid £10m of LOBO loans during the year, when the lender exercised their option to amend the interest rate. The outturn for interest payable on loans in 2023/24 was £12.9m which was below the budgeted figure of £13.1m.

Investment Strategy

13. In line with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the council prioritised security and liquidity of cash above the requirement to maximise returns during 2023/24. Fixed deposits, call accounts, notice accounts, money market funds and pooled funds were utilised to deposit the council's in-house cash surpluses. Credit quality information regarding the institutions on the council's approved Lending List was continuously monitored to reduce risk.
14. In order to reduce credit risk exposure, deposits with other local authorities were favoured over deposits with banking institutions which still carry bail in risk. The rates achieved when lending to other local authorities was similar to the rates offered by banks. This strategy therefore reduced credit risk without foregoing investment return.

15. The 2023/24 Treasury Management Strategy allowed for 50% of the total portfolio to be held in Strategic Pooled funds and this policy was maintained throughout the year, although the value held in these funds was consistently well-below that maximum.

The Council's Lending List

16. In-house cash balances are deposited with institutions that meet the council's approved credit rating criteria. The approved lending list, which sets out those institutions, is updated to reflect changes in bank and building society credit ratings. Changes are reported to Cabinet as part of the Business Management & Monitoring Report. The approved lending list may also be further restricted by officers, in response to changing conditions and perceived risk. There were no changes to the lending list in 2023/24.

Investment Income Received in 2023/24

17. Temporary surplus cash balances include: developer contributions; council reserves and balances; and various other funds to which the Council pays interest at each financial year end. The budgeted return on these in-house balances for 2023/24 was 3.00% and assumed an average in-house cash balance of £379.144m.
18. The actual average daily balance of temporary surplus cash invested in-house was £490.107m in 2023/24 and the average in-house return was 3.96%, producing gross interest receivable of £19.617m. Gross distributions from pooled funds totalling £4.747m were also realised in year, bringing total investment income to £24.364m. This compares to budgeted investment income of £14.863m, giving a net overachievement of £9.501m. The net overachievement was as a result of a combination of higher than forecast average cash balances, interest rates peaking higher than forecast, and higher than forecast distributions from pooled funds. £7.819m of the investment income received was used to fund the indexation of Section 106 funding held by the council.
19. Cash balances for the year were lower than they otherwise would have been as a result of negative High Needs DSG balances which increased from £41.1m at 1 April 2023 to £55.8m at 31 March 2024. The impact of this is an estimated opportunity cost of £2.23m in unearned interest during 2023/24. The cumulative impact of this to 31 March 2024 is £2.98m.
20. The Council operates a number of instant access call accounts and money market funds to deposit short-term cash surpluses. During 2023/24 the average balance held on instant access was £58.524m.
21. At 31 March 2024 the total value of pooled fund investments was £97.805m. The values as at 31 March 2024 represented a book value gain of £2.448m compared to the value at 31 March 2023.
22. The statutory override which requires councils to hold changes in fair value to external funds on the balance sheet is due to expire in March 2025. If the override is not extended, changes in fair value of the funds will be taken to the revenue account, which could cause an unfunded pressure. To mitigate against such potential pressures in future years, a reserve has been created with an initial contribution of £5m to smooth out any fluctuations in pooled fund values.

23. At 31 March 2024, the Council's investment portfolio of £537.181m comprised £399.700m of fixed term deposits, £39.675m at short term notice in money market funds and £97.805m in pooled funds with a variable net asset value. Annex 4 provides an analysis of the investment portfolio at 31 March 2024.
24. During 2023/24 the Council entered into a new Revolving Credit Facility (RCF) of £10m with Yorkshire Housing Ltd. None of the RCFs in place during the year were utilised. Non utilisation fees for the facilities produced £0.065m interest for the year.
25. The Council's Treasury Management Strategy Team regularly monitors the risk profile of the Council's investment portfolio. An analysis of the credit and maturity position of the portfolio at 31 March 2024 is included at Annex 3.

Prudential Indicators for Treasury Management

26. The strategy for the year included treasury limits and prudential indicators in relation to debt and interest rate exposure, as a way to limit the risk the council is exposed to.
27. During the financial year, the Council operated within the treasury limits and Prudential Indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24. The outturn for the Prudential Indicators is shown in Annex 4.

External Performance Indicators and Statistics

28. The Council's treasury management advisors Link Treasury Services benchmark the Council's investment performance against its other clients on a quarterly basis. The results of the quarter 4 benchmarking to 31 March 2024 are included in Annex 5.
29. The benchmarking results show that the Council was achieving lower than average interest on deposits at 31 March 2024 compared to the benchmark group. This is as result of placing deposits with institutions that are of higher than average credit quality, coupled with a lag on average returns due to on-going historic loans taken out before the period of global economic volatility.

Financial Implications

30. This report is mostly concerned with finance and the implications are set out in the main body of the report.

Comments checked by:

Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer ,
kathy.wilcox@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

31. The report meets the requirements of both the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA

Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. The Council is required to comply with both Codes through Regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003. There are no other legal implications.

Comments checked by:

Paul Grant, Head of Legal, paul.grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Sustainability Implications

32. This report is not expected to have any negative impact with regards to the Council's zero carbon emissions commitment by 2030.

Lorna Baxter

Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer

Contact officer: Tim Chapple, Treasury Manager

Telephone Number: 07917 262935

June 2024

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL DEBT PROFILE 31 MARCH 2024

LOAN No	£m	RATE %	Start Date	End Date
483469	3.000	4.250	12/11/1999	22/11/2024
483659	2.000	4.250	25/11/1999	30/04/2025
487777	4.000	4.650	16/05/2003	01/05/2028
488562	7.650	4.700	19/03/2004	16/03/2030
488563	1.733	4.700	19/03/2004	16/03/2030
488989	6.000	4.850	16/08/2004	13/07/2030
489168	6.000	4.700	22/10/2004	01/03/2030
489287	6.000	4.600	22/11/2004	01/04/2032
489429	6.000	4.550	02/12/2004	01/06/2032
489856	5.000	4.600	06/05/2005	01/05/2033
490105	5.000	4.450	23/05/2005	01/12/2033
491669	4.000	4.450	23/05/2006	14/06/2026
491948	5.000	4.650	16/08/2006	31/12/2026
491957	4.000	4.500	18/08/2006	31/12/2031
491958	4.000	4.500	18/08/2006	30/09/2031
491959	2.000	4.600	21/08/2006	30/04/2027
491960	10.000	4.600	21/08/2006	30/09/2026
492021	5.000	4.350	25/08/2006	22/11/2031
492063	5.000	4.450	31/08/2006	31/03/2028
492064	5.000	4.450	31/08/2006	30/04/2027
492088	4.000	4.350	04/09/2006	02/03/2032
492117	4.000	4.450	07/09/2006	02/03/2037
492371	13.000	4.500	31/10/2006	31/12/2026
492375	10.000	4.200	01/11/2006	31/12/2036
492376	10.000	4.200	01/11/2006	31/03/2037
492386	2.000	4.350	03/11/2006	01/04/2027
492535	10.000	4.200	29/11/2006	30/06/2037

LOAN No	£m	RATE %	Start Date	End/Call Date
492561	6.000	4.250	07/12/2006	30/06/2032
492598	8.000	4.500	18/12/2006	30/04/2027
492599	6.000	4.500	18/12/2006	31/05/2027
492789	6.000	4.500	24/01/2007	31/01/2032
492990	6.000	4.450	06/03/2007	31/03/2032
492807	4.000	4.250	25/01/2007	30/06/2053
493378	4.000	4.900	11/06/2007	30/06/2032
493638	6.000	4.550	02/08/2007	30/09/2052
493803	4.000	4.650	23/08/2007	20/09/2032
493822	6.000	4.450	23/08/2007	30/09/2053
494069	6.000	4.500	21/11/2007	30/09/2052
494171	6.000	4.480	27/12/2007	31/03/2052
494200	6.000	4.420	04/01/2008	31/03/2057
494703	6.000	4.460	04/08/2008	13/07/2058
494747	10.000	4.390	15/08/2008	26/03/2058
497549	5.000	4.190	08/07/2010	14/06/2054
PWLB Total	244.383			
MM Loan 1	5.000	3.950	31/05/2005	29/05/2065
MM Loan Total	5.000			
LOBO 07	5.000	4.500	27/04/2005	27/10/2023
LOBO 09	5.000	3.680	23/11/2005	24/11/2025
LOBO 10	5.000	3.800	31/07/2006	29/07/2023
LOBO 11	5.000	3.840	31/07/2006	31/07/2026
LOBO 12	5.000	3.825	02/10/2006	04/10/2027
LOBO 13	5.000	4.010	02/10/2006	02/10/2024
LOBO 15	5.000	3.720	21/09/2006	13/10/2027
LOBO Total	35.000			
GRAND TOTAL	284.383			

Long-term debt that Matured in 2023/24

Date	Amount £m	Rate %	Repayment Type	Loan Type
30/04/2023	2.000	5.625	Maturity	PWLB
22/05/2023	2.000	5.625	Maturity	PWLB
01/11/2023	8.000	5.000	Maturity	PWLB
27/10/2023	5.000	4.290	Maturity	LOBO
31/08/2023	5.000	3.820	Maturity	LOBO
Total	22.000			

Repayment Types

Maturity – Full amount of principal is repaid at the final maturity date

EIP – Equal Instalments of Principal are repaid every 6 months until the final maturity date

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO 31/03/2024

Fixed term deposits held at 31/03/2024

Counterparty	Principal Deposited	Maturity Date
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council	£2,000,000.00	10/04/2024
Ashford Borough Council	£5,000,000.00	23/04/2024
Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside	£5,000,000.00	24/04/2024
North Lanarkshire Council	£5,000,000.00	24/04/2024
Ashford Borough Council	£5,000,000.00	24/04/2024
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council	£5,000,000.00	26/04/2024
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council	£5,000,000.00	26/04/2024
Gravesham Borough Council	£2,500,000.00	26/04/2024
Gravesham Borough Council	£1,800,000.00	26/04/2024
Gravesham Borough Council	£2,400,000.00	26/04/2024
Rushmoor Borough Council	£5,000,000.00	10/05/2024
London Borough of Newham Council	£5,000,000.00	13/05/2024
London Borough of Newham Council	£5,000,000.00	13/05/2024
Gloucester City Council	£7,000,000.00	15/05/2024
Cheshire East Council	£5,000,000.00	15/05/2024
West Dunbartonshire Council	£5,000,000.00	16/05/2024
The Highland Council	£3,000,000.00	17/05/2024
Rushmoor Borough Council	£5,000,000.00	21/05/2024
North Lanarkshire Council	£5,000,000.00	21/05/2024
South Ayrshire Council	£5,000,000.00	24/05/2024
Worcestershire County Council	£5,000,000.00	06/06/2024
Manchester City Council	£5,000,000.00	17/06/2024
Worcestershire County Council	£5,000,000.00	27/06/2024
Bradford Metropolitan District Council	£5,000,000.00	28/06/2024
The Highland Council	£5,000,000.00	01/07/2024
Conwy County Borough Council	£5,000,000.00	03/07/2024
North Lanarkshire Council	£5,000,000.00	05/07/2024
Isle of Wight Council	£5,000,000.00	05/07/2024
North Lanarkshire Council	£5,000,000.00	05/07/2024
Isle of Wight Council	£5,000,000.00	05/07/2024
Conwy County Borough Council	£5,000,000.00	09/07/2024
Monmouthshire County Council	£5,000,000.00	10/07/2024
Plymouth City Council	£5,000,000.00	19/07/2024
London Borough of Lambeth Council	£5,000,000.00	22/07/2024
Bradford Metropolitan District Council	£5,000,000.00	24/07/2024
London Borough of Newham Council	£10,000,000.00	30/07/2024
Blackpool Council	£5,000,000.00	31/07/2024
Cheshire East Council	£5,000,000.00	01/08/2024
Cambridgeshire County Council	£5,000,000.00	15/08/2024
West Dunbartonshire Council	£5,000,000.00	15/08/2024

London Borough of Brent Council	£5,000,000.00	15/08/2024
Plymouth City Council	£5,000,000.00	04/09/2024
London Borough of Haringey Council	£5,000,000.00	05/09/2024
The Highland Council	£5,000,000.00	25/09/2024
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council	£5,000,000.00	30/09/2024
Falkirk Council	£5,000,000.00	01/10/2024
Great Yarmouth Borough Council	£8,000,000.00	08/10/2024
Orkney Islands Council	£5,000,000.00	10/10/2024
The Highland Council	£7,000,000.00	16/10/2024
London Borough of Haringey Council	£5,000,000.00	18/10/2024
West Dunbartonshire Council	£5,000,000.00	23/10/2024
Fife Council	£5,000,000.00	24/10/2024
Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire	£5,000,000.00	28/10/2024
Fife Council	£5,000,000.00	31/10/2024
Worthing Borough Council	£3,000,000.00	19/11/2024
Aberdeen City Council	£5,000,000.00	19/11/2024
Aberdeen City Council	£5,000,000.00	19/11/2024
Aberdeen City Council	£5,000,000.00	20/11/2024
Cambridgeshire County Council	£5,000,000.00	22/11/2024
Blackpool Council	£5,000,000.00	22/11/2024
Cheshire East Council	£5,000,000.00	22/11/2024
Moray Council	£5,000,000.00	26/11/2024
Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside	£5,000,000.00	11/12/2024
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	£5,000,000.00	27/12/2024
Falkirk Council	£5,000,000.00	03/01/2025
Aberdeen City Council	£5,000,000.00	03/01/2025
Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire	£5,000,000.00	06/01/2025
South Ayrshire Council	£3,000,000.00	08/01/2025
East Dunbartonshire Council	£5,000,000.00	29/01/2025
Falkirk Council	£5,000,000.00	31/01/2025
West Dunbartonshire Council	£5,000,000.00	06/02/2025
Fife Council	£5,000,000.00	14/02/2025
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council	£5,000,000.00	14/02/2025
Fife Council	£5,000,000.00	18/02/2025
Short Term Deposit Total	£364,700,000.00	
Counterparty	Principal Deposited	Maturity Date
Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire	£5,000,000.00	14/04/2025
Kirklees Council	£5,000,000.00	15/08/2025
Derbyshire County Council	£5,000,000.00	26/08/2025
North East Lincolnshire Council	£5,000,000.00	21/11/2025
Worthing Borough Council	£5,000,000.00	21/11/2025
Derbyshire County Council	£5,000,000.00	25/08/2026
Kirklees Council	£5,000,000.00	22/01/2027
Long Term Deposit Total	£35,000,000.00	
Total Deposits	£399,700,000.00	

Money Market Funds

Counterparty	Balance at 31/03/24 (£)	Notice period
Aberdeen Liquidity Fund	50,000.00	Same day
Goldman Sachs Sterling Liquid Fund	0.00	Same day
Deutsche Sterling Liquid Fund	0.00	Same day
Federated Sterling Liquidity Funds	14,600,000.00	Same day
Legal & General Sterling Liquidity Fund	25,000,000.00	Same day
CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund	9,036.94	Same day
Morgan Stanley Sterling Liquid Fund	1,000.00	Same day
Total	39,660,036.94	

Notice / Call Accounts

Counterparty	Balance at 31/03/24 (£)	Notice period
Santander Call Account	3,643.29	Same day
Barclays Current	9,325.51	Same day
Handlesbanken	2,383.99	Same day
Total	15,401.12	

Strategic Bond Funds

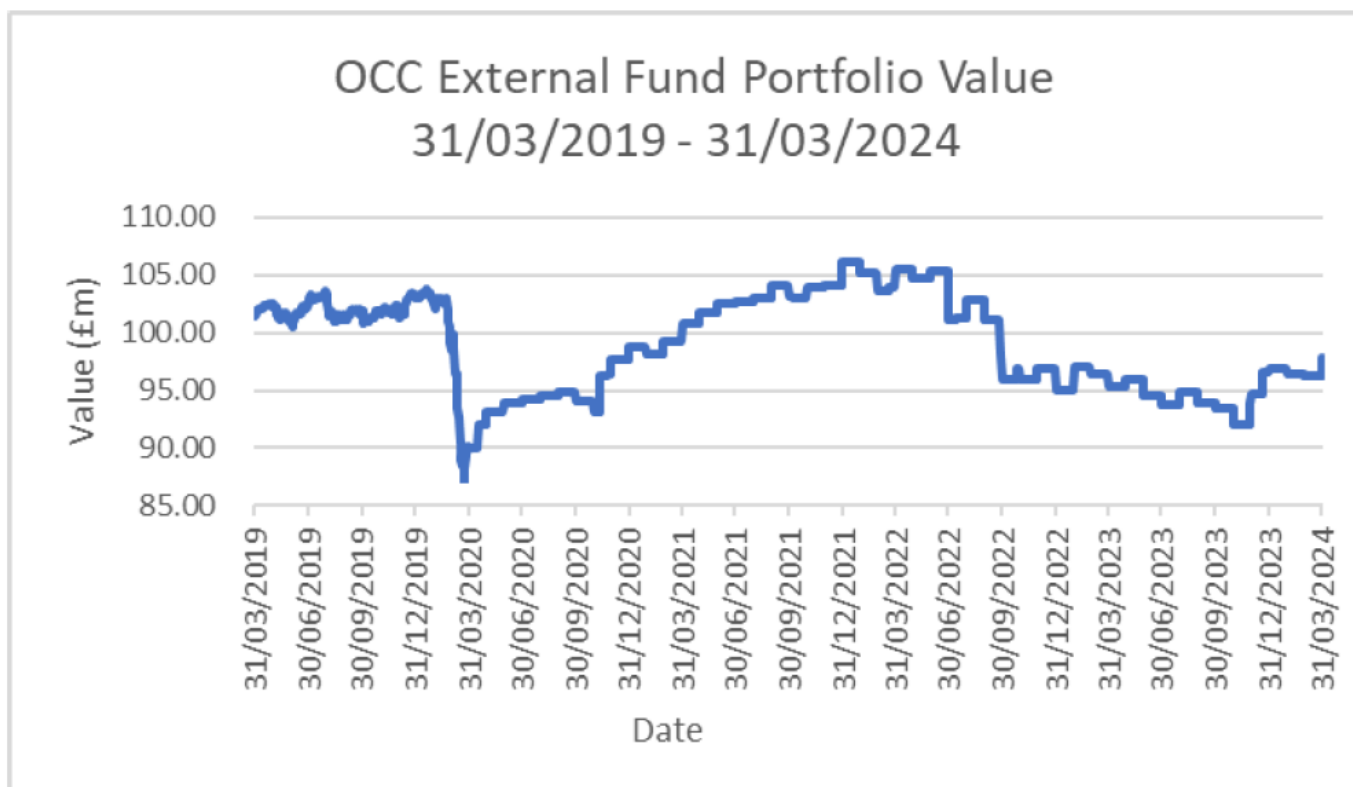
Fund	Balance at 31/03/24 (£)	Notice period
Threadneedle strategic bond fund (income)	12,387,459.53	4 days
Threadneedle Global Equity Income Fund	17,004,032.10	4 days
Kames Diversified Income	9,371,045.78	4 days
Ninety One Diversified Income	8,944,158.16	4 days
M&G Strategic Corporate Bond Fund	11,417,673.11	4 days
Schroder Income Maximiser	10,863,994.88	4 days
CCLA Better World Cautious Fund	4,925,710.94	4 days
Total	74,914,074.50	

Property Funds

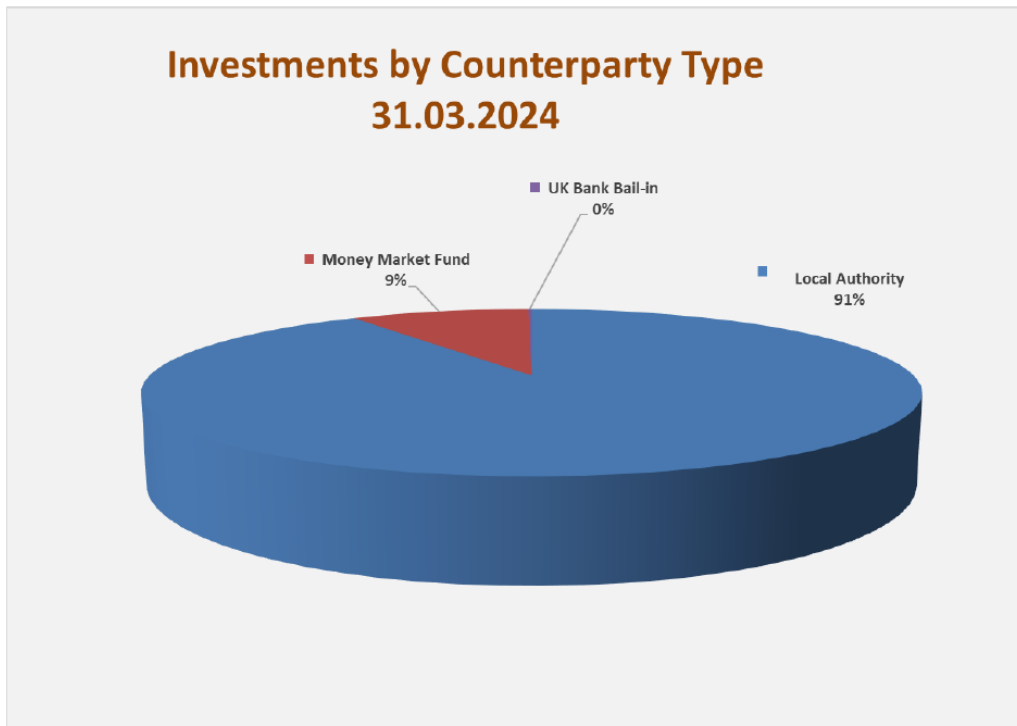
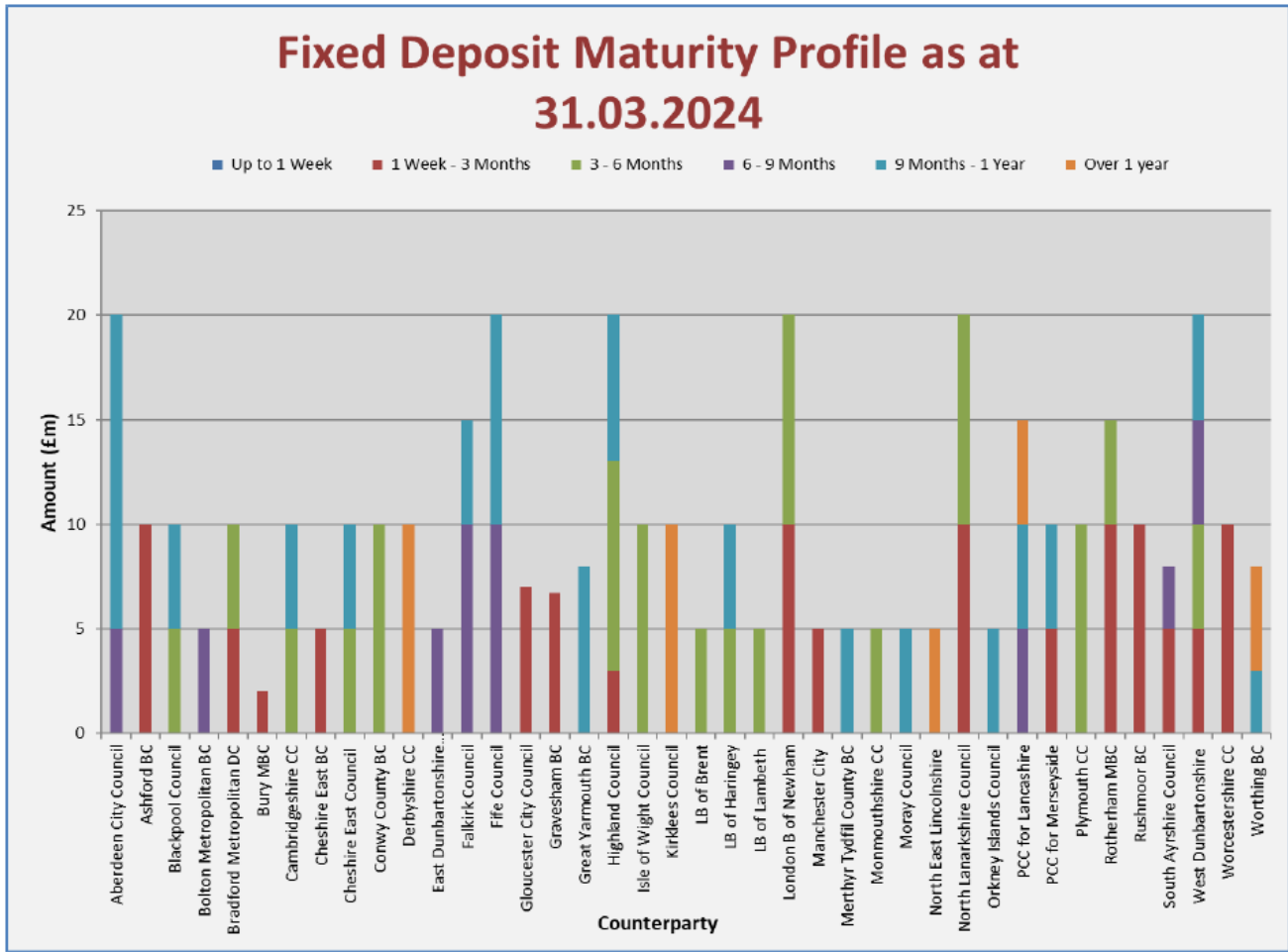
Fund	Balance at 31/03/24 (£)	Notice period
CCLA Local Authorities Property Fund	22,891,899.31	6 Monthly
Total	22,891,899.31	

Total Strategic Pooled Funds **£97,805,973.81**

Strategic Pooled Fund Portfolio Value Over Time



Investment portfolio risk profile at 31/03/24



Prudential Indicators Outturn 31 March 2024**Authorised and Operational Limit for External Debt**

Authorised Limit for External Debt	£555,000,000
Operational Limit for External Debt	£570,000,000
Actual External Debt at 31 March 2024	£301,382,618

Fixed Interest Rate Exposure

Fixed Interest Net Borrowing limit	£350,000,000
Actual at 31 March 2024	-£135,317,382

Variable Interest Rate Exposure

Variable Interest Net Borrowing limit	0
Actual at 31 March 2024	-£85,481,411

Sums Invested over 364 days

Total sums invested for more than 364 days maximum limit	£215,000,000
Actual sums invested for more than 364 days at 31 March 2024	£35,000,000

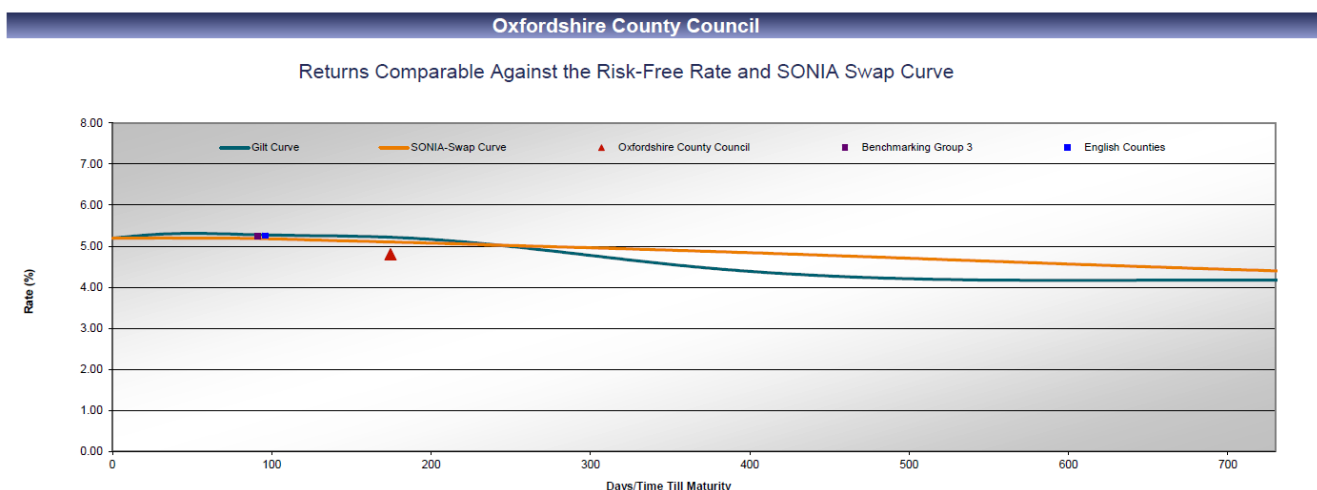
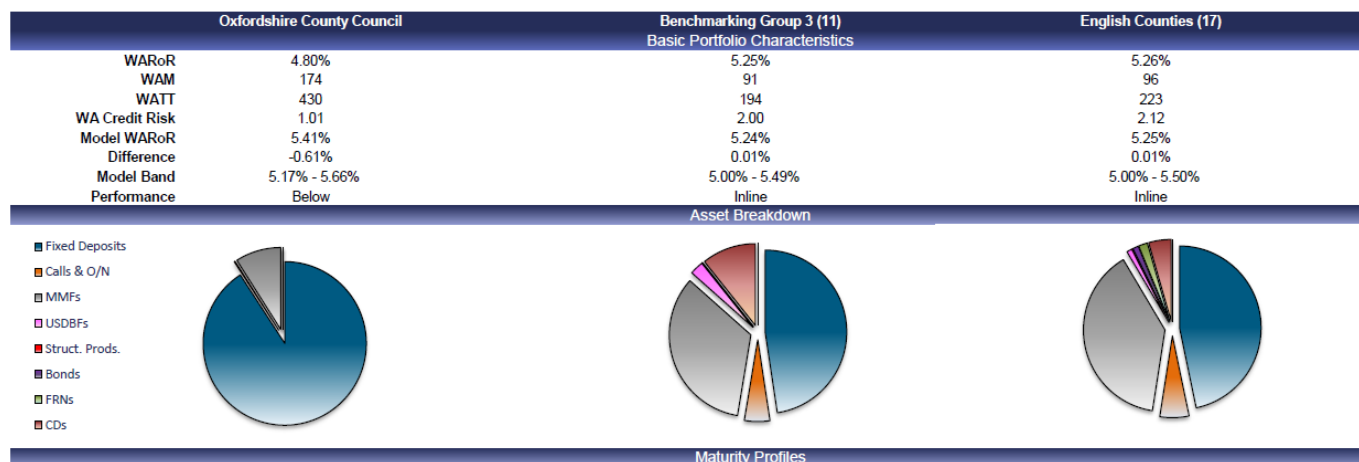
Maturity Structure of Borrowing at 31/03/24

	Limit %	Actual %
From 01/04/23		
Under 12 months	0 - 20	3.52
12 – 24 months	0 - 25	1.05
24 months – 5 years	0 - 35	20.04
5 years – 10 years	5 - 40	30.02
10 years +	40 - 95	45.36

The Prudential Indictors for maturity structure are set with reference to the start of the financial year. The actual % shown above relates to the maturity period remaining at 01/04/23 on loans still outstanding at 31/03/24.

Benchmarking

Weighted Average Return



	WARoR	WAM	WATT	WARisk	Gilt	SONIA-Swap	Difference		Model Bands	Performance
							Gilt	SONIA-Swap		
Oxfordshire County Council	4.80%	174	430	1.01	5.22%	5.10%	-0.42%	-0.30%	5.17% - 5.66%	Below
Benchmarking Group 3	5.25%	91	194	2.00	5.28%	5.19%	-0.03%	0.06%	5.00% - 5.49%	Inline
English Counties	5.26%	96	223	2.12	5.27%	5.18%	-0.01%	0.08%	5.00% - 5.50%	Inline

Oxfordshire County Council had a lower return compared to peers as at 31/03/2024, though with a much lower credit risk. The lower return was as a result of interest lag due to some historic loans.

Divisions Affected - All

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

17 July 2024

Statement of Accounts 2023/24

Report by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to**
 - (a) Consider and approve the draft Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 at Annex 1.
 - (b) Note the update on the outstanding information on the back stop arrangements for the Statement of Accounts for 2022/23.

Executive Summary

2. This report sets out the latest position on the preparation and audit of the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts including:
 - Authorisation of the draft Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 and period of public inspection.
 - An update on the external audit of the 2023/24 accounts as well as the backstop arrangements for the Statement of Accounts for 2022/23.

Publication of the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24

3. The Draft accounts for 2023/24 were required by Regulation to be published by the end of May 2024 so the public inspection period could begin in June 2024.
4. However, as set out in the update to Audit & Governance Committee in March 2024, the completion of the audit of the 2021/22 accounts in January 2024 and the impact of the delay to the publication of the 2022/23 accounts means it was not possible to publish draft accounts for 2023/24 by 31 May 2024.
5. The draft Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 was authorised for issue on 28 June 2024 and published on the [Annual accounts and audit](#) page of the County

Council's website. The period of public inspection commenced on 1 July 2024 and will conclude on 9 August after 30 working days.

6. The Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24, which is available elsewhere on the agenda, will be published on the County Council's website following consideration by Audit & Governance Committee.

Consultation: Addressing the local audit backlog in England

7. In early February DLUHC issued a [consultation](#) with the aim of clearing the backlog of local audits in England. The consultation sought views on amending the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as part of a package of cross-system measures to clear the backlog and put the system on a sustainable footing for the future.
8. The consultation closed on 7 March 2024 but the outcome is still awaited.
9. The external audit of the draft statement of accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 has not been commenced by the council's external auditors, EY LLP. The council had previously been informed that due to the backlog of open audits, work on 2022/23 would not begin until early 2024.
10. The audit of the Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 has begun and is expected to continue until the autumn.
11. Depending on the outcome of the consultation the council is likely to receive a qualified opinion on the Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 as the audit work will not be completed by 30 September 2024. That means there will be a continuing impact on 2023/24 as a result of the opening balances brought forwards from 2022/23 being subject to qualification.

Financial Implications

12. There are no financial implications arising directly from the report.
13. However, the Council is required to pay its external auditor for conducting the audit of the Statement of Accounts each year. The fees are set by Public Sector Auditor Appointments Ltd, as the auditor appointing body. Further information on the fees for 2022/23 and 2023/24 is awaited.

Comments checked by:

Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Kathy.Wilcox@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

14. There are no legal implications arising directly from the measures set out. However, the Council will need to ensure that arrangements are put in place to comply with any amendments to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and statutory guidance, including the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in England and Wales.

Comments checked by:
Paul Grant, Head of Legal & Deputy Monitoring Officer,
Paul.Grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk (Legal)

LORNA BAXTER
Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

Annex 1: Statement of Accounts 2023/24

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance and Deputy
Section 151 Officer
kathy.wilcox@oxfordshire.gov.uk

July 2024



DRAFT

Oxfordshire County Council

Statement of Accounts

2023/24



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

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Narrative Report by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer Introduction

The purpose of this narrative report is to provide information on the Council, its main objectives and strategies and the principal risks it faces. It sets out information to help readers understand the Council's performance and financial position during 2023/24.

Oxfordshire County Council provides services to residents, businesses and communities across the whole county. Our core services in 2023/24 included:

- Children, Education and Families (including the safeguarding of children, looked after children, services to vulnerable children and young people and their families, adoption and fostering services and some education services).
- Adult Social Care (commissioning and providing services which keep adults safe and provide the support our residents need for independent living).
- Services for public health including mental well-being.
- Highways maintenance and transport planning.
- Strategic spatial planning including major infrastructure, inward investment and housing growth.
- Strategic environmental management including carbon emissions reduction, energy efficiency and waste disposal.
- Community safety including Fire and Rescue and Trading Standards.
- Cultural Services including libraries, museums and the Music Service.
- Coroners' and Registration services.

These services are either provided directly by the Council or are commissioned from and delivered by other organisations. Most of these services are mandatory, meaning that the Council must provide them because it is under a statutory duty to do so.

Vision for Oxfordshire

The Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025 sets out our vision to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county.



We want to make sure that everyone in Oxfordshire can take advantage of what the county has to offer. Our strategic plan explains our nine cross-cutting priorities and commitments to achieve our vision and sets out our areas of focus.

Our nine priorities are:

1. Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work.
2. Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire.
3. Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents.
4. Support carers and the social care system.
5. Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network.
6. Preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces.
7. Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.
8. Play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy.
9. Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit.

Our performance

Throughout 2023/24 we have reported on each month's performance to internal managers, councillors and the public. The Business Management and Monitoring Reports bring together information on performance, finance and leadership risk, giving a balanced picture of how the Council is doing and providing audiences with greater insight into our business than in previous years.

In our monthly reports we show the latest assessment of our performance indicators. Most are given a Red, Amber or Green (RAG) rating, signifying whether or not progress is on track. In deciding RAG ratings we consider data on current performance and an assessment of progress. As at 31 March 2024 the indicators were assessed as follows:

Green	Amber	Red	Data monitoring	Data Unavailable	Total Indicators
58 (68%)	10 (12%)	8 (10%)	7 (8%)	2(2%)	85

Risk Management

During 2023/24 we continued to strengthen our risk management activities. This helped us to ensure that we continued to identify and address any uncertainties relating to the achievement of our priorities.

Updates on 9 strategic risks were reported to Cabinet in our bi-monthly Business Management and Monitoring Reports. A strategic risk is a risk to the council's strategic priorities or long-term outcomes; or a risk with a significance that has an impact at the corporate level.

Directorates and teams within the Council also maintained operational risk registers to ensure that individual services, projects or areas of business remained on course. Operational risks which become more severe can be escalated to the Leadership level for management.

Our financial operating model

The Council sets a revenue budget, medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) and capital programme in the February preceding the start of the financial year. These are underpinned by:

- Financial Strategy,
- Capital & Investment Strategy,
- Treasury Management & Investment Strategy, and
- A risk assessment of the level of general balances required.

Construction of the budget and budget proposals are subject to challenge by the Council's Management Team and Strategic Leadership Team. Councillors review and challenge the proposals through engagement sessions and member presentations and also take account of feedback from engagement and consultation. The Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the budget proposals at its meetings in December and January before Cabinet propose the budget, MTFS and capital programme in February.

Revenue Budget & Draft Outturn 2023/24

At the end of 2023/24 there was a directorate overspend of £6.6m (1.1%). This includes the on-going impact of inflation and demand pressures for Childrens' social care, as well as workforce shortages.

	Final Budget 2023/24 £m	Net Expenditure 2023/24 £m	Variance March 2024 £m
Directorate Budgets:			
Adult Services	229.7	229.7	0.0
Children's Services	172.3	180.0	7.7
Environment & Place	75.3	72.2	-3.2
Public Health	4.1	3.9	-0.2
Community Safety	27.0	27.7	0.7
Resources and Law & Governance	73.3	74.9	1.5
Total Directorate Budgets	581.8	588.4	6.6

The directorate overspend was offset by an underspend on contingency held for risk and additional interest received on cash balances. The overall position for the council was an underspend of £12.3m or -2.1% of the Net Operating Budget of £578.8m agreed in February 2023.

Narrative Report

	Final Budget 2023/24 £m	Net Expenditure 2023/24 £m	Variance March 2024 £m
Budgets Held Centrally:			
Capital Financing Costs	19.0	19.4	0.5
Interest on Balances	-7.2	-15.1	-7.9
Contingency	10.9	0.0	-10.9
Un-ringfenced Specific Grants	-45.2	-46.5	-1.3
Insurance	1.4	1.4	0.0
Contributions to (+)/ from (-) reserves	10.9	11.6	0.7
Contributions to (+)/ from (-) balances	7.1	7.1	0.0
Total Budgets Held Centrally	-3.0	-22.0	-19.0
Net Operating Budget	578.8	566.5	-12.3
Business Rates & Council Tax Funding	-578.8	-578.7	0.0
Total Year End Position	0.0	-12.3	-12.3

The [annual report](#) reflects the highlights and achievements over the last 12 months against the priorities of the council.

Through our continued commitment to the Climate emergency, Oxfordshire County Council won best decarbonisation initiative for its role in the partnership Project Local Energy Oxfordshire. We delivered an externally funded food waste recycling project, calling at over 13,000 households across the county to encourage residents to recycle their food waste. We were again named the top performing county council waste disposal authority.

As part of our commitment to tackling inequality across Oxfordshire we spent £1m on our new Residents Support Scheme, providing over 5,000 vulnerable households in financial crisis support with food and energy costs, and essential household items. We spent £1.6m making a £450 cost of living payment to over 3,500 people on low incomes who were not eligible for the equivalent national payments. We spent a further £3.2m ensuring families of children entitled to free school meals received support with food costs during the school holidays.

We worked with a range of community groups and consulted over 1,000 residents to develop a new Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Oxfordshire. Working with partners across Oxfordshire, we trained 348 staff and volunteers to use the Making Every Contact Count approach to opportunistically speak to people about their health and wellbeing. Through outreach to communities, we enabled those residents who experience the greatest barriers to walking and cycling to actively travel more. 74% of Active Travel project participants report having increased the frequency that they walk, cycle, or wheel after having taken part in the project.

Supporting carers and the social care system through our transformation programme – the Oxfordshire Way – we continued to have a positive impact on adult social care assessments and reviews, achieving a 31 per cent decrease in the number of people on waiting lists and a 46 per cent reduction on April 2021 waiting times. Between April 2023 and February 2024, we supported 1667 Carers with a direct payment to support them to have some time to look after their own wellbeing, an increase of 4.2% on previous year's performance.

We have increased the Oxfordshire Together programme to around 130 FixMyStreet (FMS) 'SuperUsers' covering 95 parishes across the county. Across the calendar year they reported and directly instructed repairs to 1379 defects to potholes and kerbing on county roads. Our pilot Flood Warden scheme now has 11 volunteers covering two parishes and one town.

To support Nature and Green Spaces we have cleared 320 km of vegetation to improve the county's public rights of way network. We repaired 48 bridges and replaced 58 more across Oxfordshire. We also continued our highly successful partnership with Community Action Groups, supporting over 100 groups to take grassroots action on environmental issues across Oxfordshire which was featured as best practice in a national report.

As part of the priority Creating opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential, we completed all the phase transfers (primary to secondary) for over 500 children with EHCPs within the agreed timeframe. Thanks to DfE and Capital Funding, five new children's homes are due to open in Oxfordshire within the next 18 months.

As part of our priority Playing a part in vibrant and participatory local democracy, we enabled people of all ages to address our council and cabinet meetings, welcoming over 115 public speakers, 97 public questions and 6 petitions. Including facilitating over 30 public speakers at October 2023 Cabinet. We have also established the new Education & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Through Working with local businesses and partners our trading standards Inspectors of Weights and Measures tested and verified over 700 pieces of weighing and measuring equipment. The trading standards team conducted over 1,790 interventions with Oxfordshire businesses, providing advice and support, testing products and procedures. Our small team of highly skilled fire safety professionals have engaged with existing and new build commercial premises in Oxfordshire to create a safe environment for those who live and work in the county. This includes 450 Fire Safety Audit of commercial premises and 692 Fire Safety Building Regulations consultations.

Migration Support Development delivered a £1.2m employment investment programme to support Ukrainians into meaningful work, with wider benefits being created for other migrant groups wherever possible. A range of county council services have worked closely with the District / City Councils to provide support and challenge to the hotel providers accommodating over 550 asylum seekers in four contingency hotels commissioned by the Home Office to ensure their statutory safeguarding needs are being met, the children are able to attend school, and all can access our libraries.

Basis of Preparation and Presentation

The Council produces a Statement of Accounts to provide transparency about the Council's finances, to give assurance to stakeholders that public money has been properly accounted for and that the financial standing of the Council is on a secure basis.

The accounts bring together all the Council's financial statements for the year 2023/24 and show its financial position as at 31 March 2024. The statements reflect both revenue and capital elements for the General Fund, including transactions relating to joint operations with other local authorities and health bodies. The County Council is the administering authority for the Oxfordshire Local Government Pension Fund. As such, the Fund accounts are included as a disclosure within the Council's accounts.

The Statement of Accounts must provide a 'true and fair' view of the Council's financial position as at 31 March 2024 and of its income and expenditure for the 2023/24 financial year. When preparing the accounts consideration is given to the materiality of information. Disclosure of information is made where omitting it could be misleading or inhibit the true and fair view.

The strong and prudent level of general balances, combined with Earmarked Reserves (Note 44) and action being taken to ensure we can manage the capital programme within the available resources, are sufficient to ensure that the County Council is able to continue to meet the cost of the provision of services over the medium term. Therefore, the accounts are prepared on a 'going concern' basis.

Notes to the accounts

The Notes to the Accounts explain and provide further detail behind the key items and entries within the Financial Statements. They consist of:

- Expenditure and Funding Analysis – Compares the net expenditure as funded by taxation with the accounting cost of providing services as presented in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.
- Notes to the Accounts – Which explain some of the key items and disclosures in the accounts.
- Pension Fund Accounts – These are the accounts of the Pension Fund, which is operated for employees of the County Council, district councils and other bodies.
- Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts – Outlines the key responsibilities in respect of the accounts, together with statements from the Chief Finance Officer and Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee.

The objective of the Expenditure and Funding Analysis is to demonstrate to Council taxpayers how the funding available to the Council (i.e. government grants, council tax and business rates) for the year has been used in providing services in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by the Council in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices.

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between the Council's directorates. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Annual Governance Statement

The Audit & Governance Committee is expected to approve the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) at its meeting on 17 July 2024. The AGS summarises the governance framework that has been in place in the Council during 2023/24.

Conclusion

Through careful planning and management, Oxfordshire County Council has ensured that we achieved or made good progress with our priorities for the year. We have delivered vital services to the residents and communities of Oxfordshire and have reached the end of the business year in a robust financial position.

Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts

The County Council's Responsibilities

The County 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. For Oxfordshire County Council, that officer is the Director of Finance
- Manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets

The Audit & Governance Committee has examined these accounts and authorised the Chairman to approve the statement of accounts on its behalf.

Signed:

Date

ROZ SMITH

Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee

The Responsibilities of the Director of Finance

The Director of Finance is responsible for the preparation of the County Council's Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24 ('the Code of Practice').

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

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

The Director of Finance has also

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

Certificate

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

Signed:

Date

LORNA BAXTER

Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

Independent Auditor's Report to Members of Oxfordshire County Council

Once the accounts have been audited the Independent Auditor's Report to Members of Oxfordshire County Council will be added here.

Expenditure and Funding Analysis

A description of the purpose of this note is included in the Narrative Report. Please note that this is not a Primary Financial Statement.

2022/23				2023/24		
Expenditure chargeable to the County Fund £'000	Adjustments between funding and accounting basis £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000		Expenditure chargeable to the County Fund £'000	Adjustments between funding and accounting basis £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000
59,584	33,239	92,823	Environment and Place	71,492	33,785	105,277
173,026	96,688	269,714	Children's Services	180,025	56,863	236,888
218,412	26,724	245,136	Adult Services	229,726	4,821	234,547
28,421	2,948	31,369	Public Health	31,624	946	32,570
67,353	6,035	73,388	Customers, Culture and Corporate Services	74,889	12,780	87,669
	1,688	1,688	Other Corporate Costs	0	2,459	2,459
546,796	167,322	714,118	Service Costs	587,756	111,654	699,410
-530,094	-155,458	-685,552	Other Income and Expenditure not charged to services	-607,063	-110,369	-717,432
16,702	11,864	28,566	Surplus (-) or Deficit (+) on Provision of Services	-19,306	1,285	-18,022
39,344			Opening County Fund Balance at 1 April	22,642	(Note 4)	
-16,702			Add surplus (+) or deficit (-) on the County Fund for the year	19,306		
22,642			Closing County Fund Balance at 31 March	41,948		

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

2022/23					2023/24		
Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure		Notes	Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure
£'000	£'000	£'000			£'000	£'000	£'000
126,311	-33,488	92,823	Environment and Place		142,776	-37,499	105,277
577,127	-307,414	269,713	Children's Services		566,888	-330,000	236,888
323,243	-78,108	245,135	Adult Services		325,258	-90,711	234,547
69,063	-37,695	31,368	Public Health		70,015	-37,445	32,570
121,668	-48,279	73,389	Customers, Culture and Corporate Services		115,448	-27,779	87,669
7,136	-5,448	1,688	Other Corporate Costs		7,080	-4,621	2,459
1,224,548	-510,432	714,116	Cost of Services		1,227,464	-528,055	699,410
14,690	-1,569	13,121	Other Operating Expenditure	14	12,986	-1,427	11,559
51,507	-9,089	42,418	Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	15	30,598	-21,655	8,943
0	-741,091	-741,091	Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income	20	0	-737,932	-737,932
1,290,745	-1,262,181	28,564	Surplus (-) or Deficit (+) on Provision of Services	5	1,271,048	-1,289,070	-18,022
			Items that will not be reclassified to the Surplus (-) or Deficit (+) on the Provision of Services				
		44,508	Surplus or Deficit on revaluation of non-current assets	49			-27,016
		428	Impairment losses on non-current assets charges to the revaluation reserve	49			1,015
		-684,318	Remeasurements of the net defined benefit liability (asset)	18			-169,331
		-639,382					-195,332
			Items that may be reclassified to the Surplus (-) or Deficit (+) on the Provision of Services				
		0	Other gains or losses				0
		0					0
		-639,382	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure				-195,332
		-610,818	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure				-213,355

Movement in Reserves Statement

	Notes	County Fund Balance	Earmarked Reserves	Capital Receipts Unapplied	Capital Grants and Contbns Unapplied	Total Usable Reserves	Total Unusable Reserves	Total Reserves
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance at 31 March 2022		39,344	183,562	30,103	181,110	434,119	-5,175	428,944
Movement in reserves during 2022/23								
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		-28,563	0	0	0	-28,563	639,382	610,819
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding								
basis under statutory provisions	6	21,267	0	1,568	37,238	60,073	-60,073	0
Transfers to / from earmarked reserves	44	-9,406	19,436	0	0	10,030	-10,030	0
Increase (+) or Decrease (-) In Year		-16,702	19,436	1,568	37,238	41,540	569,279	610,819
Balance at 31 March 2023		22,642	202,998	31,671	218,348	475,659	564,104	1,039,763
Movement in reserves during 2023/24								
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		18,022	0	0	0	18,022	195,333	213,355
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding								
basis under statutory provisions	6	-3,558	0	1,403	3,586	1,431	-1,431	0
Transfers to / from earmarked reserves	44	4,843	7,372	0	0	12,215	-12,215	0
Increase (+) or Decrease (-) In Year		19,307	7,372	1,403	3,586	31,668	181,687	213,355
Balance at 31 March 2024		41,949	210,370	33,074	221,934	507,327	745,791	1,253,118

Balance Sheet

As at 31 March 2023 £'000		Notes	As at 31 March 2024 £'000
Long Term Assets			
1,260,482	Infrastructure, Property, Plant and Equipment	22	1,344,412
25,900	Investment Property	23	25,685
1,085	Intangible Assets	25	1,459
69,700	Long Term Investments	34	35,000
10,921	Long Term Debtors	35	11,302
1,368,088	Total Long Term Assets		1,417,858
Current Assets			
1,470	Assets Held for Sale	24	124
145,854	Debtors	36	141,144
463,908	Short Term Investments	34	471,254
16,864	Cash and Cash Equivalents	37	34,946
628,096	Total Current Assets		647,468
Current Liabilities			
-35,351	Short Term Borrowing	34	-22,296
-114,001	Short Term Creditors and Revenue Receipts in Advance	39	-120,967
-4,519	Provisions due within one year	40	-5,187
-740	Short Term Finance Liability	28,34	-836
-15,741	Short Term Capital Grants Receipts in Advance	43	-3,134
-170,352	Total Current Liabilities		-152,420
Long Term Liabilities			
-30,030	Long Term Creditors and Revenue Receipts in Advance	39	-34,942
-2,197	Provisions due over one year	40	-4,389
-274,383	Long Term Borrowing	34	-266,383
-290,583	Pension Liability	18	-129,642
-14,997	Long Term Finance Liability	28,34	-14,161
-3,349	Deferred Income	41	-2,518
-170,530	Long Term Capital Grants Receipts in Advance	43	-207,753
-786,069	Total Long-Term Liabilities		-659,788
1,039,763	Net Assets (+) / Net Liabilities (-)		1,253,118
Financed from:			
475,659	Usable Reserves	42,44-46	507,327
564,104	Unusable Reserves	47-53	745,791
1,039,763	Total Reserves		1,253,118

I certify that the statement of accounts gives a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council at 31 March 2024 and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Lorna Baxter

Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer

Date:

Cash Flow Statement

2022/23 £'000		Notes	2023/24 £'000
28,564	Net (surplus) or deficit on the provision of services		-18,023
-111,695	Adjust net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	54	-66,195
133,861	Adjust for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities	55	89,704
50,730	Net cash flows from Operating Activities		5,486
-32,396	Investing activities	56	-46,307
7,664	Financing activities	57	22,740
25,998	Net increase (-) or decrease (+) in cash and cash equivalents		-18,082
42,864	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		16,864
16,866	Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		34,946



Notes to the Statement of Accounts



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

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1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies General

The Statement of Accounts summarises the County Council's transactions for the 2023/24 financial year and its position at the year-end 31 March 2024. It has been compiled in accordance with *The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24* (the Code), published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

Going Concern

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

Accruals of Income and Expenditure

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

Where income and expenditure has been recognised, but the cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recognised in the Balance Sheet. Where it is doubtful that debts will be settled, the balance of debtors is reduced, and a charge is made to revenue for the income that might not be recoverable.

Government Grants and Contributions

Government grants and third-party contributions are accounted for on an accrual basis and are recognised in the Statement of Accounts when there is reasonable assurance that the County Council will comply with the conditions attached to their payment and that the grants or contributions will be received.

Grants and contributions relating to capital and revenue expenditure are recognised immediately in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as income, except to the extent that the grant or contribution has a condition that the County Council has not satisfied. Conditions are stipulations that require the grant or contribution to be returned to the provider if the terms of the grant or contribution are not met.

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

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

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 any conditions that would require repayment of the grant or contribution if not met, and the grants and contributions will be received.

Grants and contributions are credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when recognised as due to the Council (i.e., specific revenue grants and contributions are credited to the relevant service line in the Cost of Services, and capital grants and contributions and non-ring-fenced grants are credited to Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income and Expenditure).

Where specific revenue grants and contributions are credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, but the associated expenditure has not yet been incurred, the grant is set aside in an Earmarked Revenue Reserve so that it can be matched with the expenditure in a subsequent year.

Capital grants and contributions are reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement and are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account (if the grant eligible expenditure has been incurred) or to the Capital Grants Unapplied Account.

Revenue grants and contributions that have been credited to the relevant directorate line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement that remain unapplied as at the Balance Sheet Date and are required to meet committed expenditure in future years are transferred to an earmarked reserve through the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Council tax and business rates income

The council tax and business rates income included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) for the year is the accrued income for the year. The difference between the income included in the CIES and the amount required by regulation to be credited to the County Fund is taken to the Collection Fund Adjustment Account and included as an adjusting item in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The district councils in Oxfordshire are acting as agents of the County Council in collecting council tax and business rates. The cash collected from council tax payers and business rates payers belongs proportionately to the district councils and the major preceptors. There is, therefore, a debtor/creditor position between each district council and the County Council to recognise that the net cash paid to the County Council in the year is not the same as its share of cash collected. The County Council recognises its share of Council Tax and business rates debtor and creditor balances, impairment allowances for doubtful debts and provisions for losses on appeal in its Balance Sheet. The Cash Flow Statement of the County Council includes the net council tax and business rates cash received from the Collection Fund in the year.

Employee Benefits

Benefits Payable during Employment

Short-term employee benefits are recognised as an expense in the year in which employees render service to the Council.

Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are charged, on an accrual basis, to the relevant service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement 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.

Post-Employment Benefits

The County Council participates in four pension schemes:

- The Local Government Pension Scheme
- The Fire-fighters' Pension Scheme
- The Teachers' Pension Scheme and
- The NHS Pension Scheme

These schemes provide defined benefits to members, however, the arrangements for the Teachers' Pension Scheme and the NHS Pension Scheme mean that liabilities for these benefits cannot be identified to the County Council. These schemes are, therefore, accounted for as if they are defined contribution schemes – no liability for future payment of benefits is recognised in the Balance Sheet and the relevant service lines in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement are charged with the employer's contributions payable in the year.

The County 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 are accounted for on the same basis as defined benefit schemes.

For the schemes treated as defined benefit schemes the Cost of Services includes:

- Current service cost – the increase in the present value of a scheme's liabilities resulting from employee service in the current period. This is included in the relevant directorate line within the Cost of Services.
- Past service cost – the increase in the present value of the scheme liabilities for employee service in prior periods, resulting from a scheme amendment or curtailment. This is included in Other Corporate Costs within the Cost of Services.
- Gain/loss on settlement – changes in liabilities relating to actions that relieve the County Council of primary responsibility for a pension obligation. This is included in Other Corporate Costs within the Cost of Services.

The net interest on the defined benefit liability (asset) – the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability (asset) that arises from the passage of time - is included in the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Remeasurements comprising 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 actuary has updated their assumptions – and the return on scheme assets, excluding amounts included in net interest on the net defined liability (asset), are recognised in Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Scheme assets attributable to the County Council are measured at fair value as at the Balance Sheet date. Scheme liabilities attributable to the County Council are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method. The net pensions liability is recognised in the Balance Sheet.

The amount chargeable to the County Fund for providing pensions for employees is the amount payable for the year in accordance with the statutory requirements governing each particular pension scheme. Where this amount does not match the amount charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services for the year the difference is taken to the Pensions Reserve via the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Fire-Fighters injury awards are disability benefits paid by the County Council that do not form part of the Fire-Fighters Pension Scheme. However, the measurement of these long-term benefits is subject to the same degree of uncertainty as the measurement of fire-fighters post-employment benefits and therefore they are accounted for in the same way as Fire-Fighters post-employment benefits.

Property, Plant and Equipment

Assets that have a physical substance and are held for use in the production or supply of goods or services, or for administrative purposes and that are expected to be used during more than one financial year are classified as Property, Plant and Equipment. These include operational land and buildings, vehicles, plant and equipment, surplus assets, assets under construction and infrastructure.

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment is capitalised on an accrual basis, provided that it is probable that future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the County Council and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. This excludes expenditure on routine repairs and maintenance, which is charged directly to service revenue accounts as an expense when incurred.

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 (this only applies when the County Council has an obligation to carry out such activities when the item is acquired, constructed or installed)

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

Property, Plant and Equipment is subsequently carried in the Balance Sheet using the following measurement bases:

- Infrastructure, community assets and assets under construction – depreciated historic cost
- Other Property, Plant and Equipment assets (excluding surplus assets) – current value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use

Surplus assets – fair value (at highest and best use), determined as the price that would be received to sell such an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date

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

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

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

A *de minimis* level of £20,000 is applied for land and buildings and £15,000 for vehicles and plant, other than for schools local capital spend where a *de minimis* of £2,000 is applied.

Revaluations of property assets are undertaken on a three-year rolling programme as shown below. Material changes to asset valuations are adjusted in the interim periods

		Date of Last Revaluation	Date of Next Revaluation
Year 1	Secondary and Special Schools, Other Educational Premises (Children's, Youth and Sports Centres), Surplus Assets and properties not re-valued in other years.	2021/22	2024/25
Year 2	Primary, Nursery, Junior and Infant Schools	2022/23	2025/26
Year 3	Social Care Premises, Libraries, Museums and Adult Learning, Fire & Rescue Service Premises, Community Safety, Staff Housing, Central Offices and Highways Depot	2023/24	2026/27

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 directorate.

Decreases in valuations are accounted for as follows:

- 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 directorate in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

Assets are assessed each year as to whether there is an indication of impairment. Where indications exist and the recoverable amount of the asset is materially lower than the carrying amount, an impairment loss is recognised for the shortfall. Where impairment losses are identified they are accounted for in the same way as decreases in valuations.

Where an impairment loss is reversed subsequently, the reversal is credited to the relevant directorate, up to the amount of the original loss, adjusted for depreciation that would have been charged if the loss had not been recognised.

Depreciation of Property, Plant and Equipment

Depreciation is provided for on all Property, Plant and Equipment with a finite life, which is determined at acquisition or revaluation. Assets under construction are not depreciated until they are brought into use. Depreciation is an estimation technique that is calculated using the straight-line method with the following asset lives:

- Buildings: 60 years (or less if specified by the valuer)
- Vehicles, plant and equipment: between 5 and 30 years
- IT equipment and infrastructure: between 3 and 5 years
- Infrastructure (roads and bridges): 35 years

Land is determined to have an infinite life and is not depreciated.

Where an item of Property, Plant and Equipment asset has major components whose cost is significant in relation to the total cost of the item, the components are depreciated separately.

Revaluation gains are also depreciated, with an amount equal to the difference between current value depreciation charged on assets and the depreciation that would have been chargeable based on their historic cost being transferred each year from the Revaluation Reserve to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Infrastructure Assets

Infrastructure assets are recognised in the Balance Sheet under Property, Plant and Equipment and include carriageways, structures (e.g. bridges), footways and cycle tracks, street lighting and street furniture which together form a single integrated network.

Expenditure on the acquisition or replacement of components of the network is capitalised on an accruals basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefits associated with the item will flow to the Council and the cost of the item can be measured reliably.

Infrastructure assets are generally measured at depreciated historical cost.

Where impairment losses are identified they are accounted for by writing down the carrying amount of the asset to the recoverable amount.

Depreciation is charged on a straight-line basis on parts of the infrastructure network assets that are subject to deterioration or depletion.

When a component of the infrastructure network is disposed of or decommissioned, the carrying amount of the component in the Balance Sheet is written off to Other Operating Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. Receipts from disposals, if any, are credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal.

The written off value of disposal is appropriated to the Capital Adjustment Account from the County Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement so that there is no charge against the Council Tax.

Charges to Revenue for Property, Plant and Equipment

The County Council is not required to raise council tax to fund depreciation or revaluation/impairment losses. However, it is required to make an annual contribution from revenue towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement (referred to as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)). Depreciation and revaluation/impairment losses are therefore replaced by the MRP contribution in the County Fund Balance by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Disposals and Non-current Assets Held for Sale

When it becomes probable that the carrying amount of an asset will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through its continuing use, it is

reclassified as an Asset Held for Sale. To be classified as an Asset Held for Sale the asset must meet the following criteria:

- Available for immediate sale in its present condition
- The sale must be highly probable
- Actively marketed at a reasonable sale price
- The sale should be expected to be completed within 1 year

Assets Held for Sale are measured at the lower of their carrying value and fair value less costs to sell at initial reclassification. Gains in fair value are recognised only up to the amount of any previously recognised losses in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services. Decreases in fair value less costs to sell are recognised in Other Operating Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Depreciation is not charged on Assets Held for Sale.

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

Assets that are to be abandoned or scrapped are not reclassified as Assets Held for Sale.

When an asset is disposed of, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet is written off to Other Operating Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. Receipts from disposals are credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. Any revaluation gains in the Revaluation Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Receipts from the disposal of assets in excess of £10,000 are categorised as capital receipts. Capital receipts are appropriated to the Capital Receipts Unapplied reserve from the County Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The written off value of assets disposed of is appropriated to the Capital Adjustment Account from the County Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement so that there is no charge against the Council Tax.

Investment Property

Investment properties are those that are used solely to earn rentals and/or for capital appreciation.

Investment properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value (at highest and best use), being the price that would be received to sell such an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. Investment properties are not depreciated and are revalued annually according to market conditions. Gains and losses on revaluation are posted to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Gains and losses on disposal are posted to Other Operating Expenditure. The gains and losses are reversed out of the County Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account (or Capital Receipts Unapplied for disposal receipts over £10,000) in the Movement in Reserves Statement so that they do not impact on Council Tax.

Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute

Capital expenditure on non-current assets not owned by the County Council and grants given by the County Council for capital purposes are charged to the relevant directorate in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. In accordance with statutory provisions this expenditure is transferred from the County Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement, such that there is no impact on Council Tax.

Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and similar contracts (service concession arrangements)

PFI type contracts involve a private sector entity (the operator) constructing or enhancing property used in the provision of a public service and operating and maintaining that property for a specified period of time. The operator is paid for its services over the period of the arrangement. Where the County Council controls or regulates the services provided by the operator and controls the residual interest in the property at the end of the term of the arrangement the contract meets the tests for accounting as a service concession arrangement.

Properties used in service concession arrangements are recognised as Property, Plant and Equipment of the County Council. The original recognition of the assets at fair value (based on the cost to purchase the assets) is matched by the recognition of liabilities for amounts due to the operators to pay for the assets and deferred income where the operator part funds the assets from income from third parties. Once recognised on the Balance Sheet these assets are revalued and depreciated in the same way as other Property, Plant and Equipment owned by the County Council.

The amounts payable to the service concession arrangement operators each year are analysed into five elements:

- The value of services received during the year – charged to the relevant directorate in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- Finance costs – an interest charge on the outstanding finance liability – charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- Payments towards the finance liability – applied to write down the Balance Sheet liability towards the operator
- Contingent rents – inflationary increases in the amounts to be paid for the property arising during the contract – charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Note for the County Council's current service concession arrangement there is no inflation applied to the elements of the contract payments relating to the property build costs and, therefore, there are no contingent rents.
- Lifecycle replacement costs – recognised as a capital prepayment in the Balance Sheet and transferred to Property, Plant and Equipment when capital works are undertaken.

Deferred income is released to the relevant directorate in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on a straight-line basis over the service concession period.

Leases

Leases are classified as finance leases where the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the property, plant or equipment from the lessor to the lessee. All other leases are classified as operating leases.

Where a property lease covers both land and buildings, the land and buildings elements are considered separately for lease classification.

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

Where the County Council is the lessee, property, plant and equipment held under a finance lease is recognised on the Balance Sheet at the commencement of the lease at its fair value 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. 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. The lease payments are apportioned between a charge for the acquisition of the interest in the asset – applied to writing down the liability, and a finance charge – charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Once recognised on the Balance Sheet, assets recognised under finance leases are accounted for in the same way as other Property, Plant and Equipment, subject to depreciation being charged over the lease term if this is shorter than the asset's estimated useful life.

Rentals paid by the Council under operating leases are charged to the relevant directorate in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on a straight-line basis over the lease period except where the contractual payment terms are considered to be a more systematic and appropriate basis.

Where the County Council leases an asset to others under a finance lease, the asset is written out of the Balance Sheet as a disposal. At the commencement of the lease, the carrying amount of the asset is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. A gain, representing the County Council's net investment in the lease, is credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal, matched by a long-term debtor in the Balance Sheet. Finance lease rentals receivable are apportioned between a charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property – applied to write down the long-term debtor (together with any premiums received), and finance income credited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The gain credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on disposal is required under statute to be treated as a capital receipt. Where a premium has been received, this is posted out of the County Fund Balance to the Capital Receipts Unapplied reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Where the amount due in relation to the lease asset is to be settled by the payment of rentals in future years, this is posted out of the County Fund Balance to the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When the future rentals are received, the element for the capital receipt for the disposal of the asset is used to write down the long-term debtor and the deferred capital receipts are transferred to the Capital Receipts Unapplied reserve. The written-off carrying

amount of the asset on disposal is appropriated to the Capital Adjustment Account from the County Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement so that there is no impact on Council Tax.

Where the County Council leases an asset to others under an operating lease, the asset is retained on the Balance Sheet. Rental income is credited to the relevant directorate in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on a straight-line basis over the lease period (including any premiums received at the commencement of the lease).

Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and bank deposits repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are short-term, highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value. The County Council treats the following as cash equivalents:

- Instant Access Call Accounts
- Instant Access Short Term Funds
- Deposits with one working day to maturity from date of deposit

Financial Assets

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

- Financial assets are classified into three types:
- Amortised cost
- Financial assets at fair value through Other Comprehensive Income
- Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss

Financial Assets at Amortised cost are initially measured at fair value and carried in the Balance Sheet at their amortised cost. Credits to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for external interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset, multiplied by the effective interest rate for the instrument. For the majority of the County Council's investments, the effective interest rate is the same as the actual interest receivable in accordance with the loan agreement. Short duration receivables with no stated interest rates (e.g. debtors) are measured at original invoice amount.

The Council recognises expected credit losses on all its financial assets held at amortised cost.

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

Where risk has not increased significantly or remains low, losses are assessed on the basis of 12-month expected losses.

The expected credit loss model also applies to lease receivables. Lifetime losses are recognised for trade receivables (debtors) held by the Council.

The County Council has made a number of loans to clients and other organisations at less than market interest rates or zero rate (referred to in the Code as soft loans). For the County Council there are no material differences between the fair value and the nominal value of such loans and no adjustments are made on initial recognition of these loans.

Where assets are identified as impaired because of a likelihood arising from a past event that payments due under the contract will not be made, the carrying value of the asset is reduced through the use of an allowance account and a charge made to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Any gains and losses arising on the derecognition of assets are credited/debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Financial assets at fair value through Other Comprehensive Income are initially measured and carried in the Balance Sheet at fair value. Where the asset has fixed or determinable payments, credits to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest receivable are based on the amortised cost of the asset multiplied by the effective interest rate for the instrument. Where there are no fixed or determinable payments, income is credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when it becomes receivable.

Assets are maintained in the Balance Sheet at fair value. Values are based on:

- 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 County 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

Changes in fair value are balanced by an entry in the Financial Instruments Adjustment Account and the gain/loss recognised in Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure (except for impairment losses).

Where assets are identified as impaired because of a likelihood arising from a past event that payments due under the contract will not be made, the asset is written down through the use of an allowance account and a charge made to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Any gains and losses arising on the derecognition of assets are credited/debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, along with any accumulated gains/losses recognised in the Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve.

Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss are initially measured and carried in the Balance Sheet at fair value. Movements in fair value are balanced by posting gains and losses to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive

Income and Expenditure Statement as they arise. Any residual gains and losses arising on derecognition are also credited/debited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The basis of fair value and the inputs to the measurement techniques is the same as for Financial assets at fair value through Other Comprehensive Income.

The carrying amounts of individual financial assets are separated into their current (short-term) and non-current (long-term) elements for presentation within the Balance Sheet.

Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the County Council becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the financial instrument. Financial liabilities are initially measured at fair value and are carried at their amortised cost.

Interest is charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, based on the carrying amount of the liabilities, multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instruments. This means that:

- The amount included in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable, plus accrued interest; and
- Interest charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount payable for the year according to the loan agreement.

Financial liabilities are de-recognised when the obligation is discharged, cancelled or expires.

Debt Redemption

The County Council complies with legislation to charge a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) to the County Fund revenue account for the repayment of debt by making a straight-line charge of the outstanding pre-2008 capital expenditure as at 1 April 2017 calculated over a 50-year period and making provision for repayment of prudential borrowing in equal instalments over the estimated life of the asset for which the borrowing is undertaken. In addition, the provision for repayment of debt includes an amount equal to the amount that is taken to the Balance Sheet to reduce the liabilities in respect of PFI and similar contracts and for the prepayment of lifecycle costs relating to these contracts, and an amount equal to the amount that is taken to the Balance Sheet to reduce liabilities in respect of finance leases.

Provisions

Provisions are made where the County Council has a present obligation (legal or constructive) as a result of a past event 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 reviewed annually and are adjusted to reflect the current best estimate against the appropriate directorate in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. When payments are eventually made they are charged directly to the provision.

Insurance

The County Council has a policy of self-insurance of claims across its main insurance categories. In accordance with the Code the insurance provision is set aside to cover insurance claims actually received and awaiting resolution that have been advised to the County Council and which it has been decided to be insured internally rather than externally. Subject to identified contingent liabilities there are no significant unfunded risks.

Contingent liabilities

Contingent liabilities are possible obligations arising from past events and whose existence will be confirmed by one or more uncertain events occurring in the future and are not wholly under the County Council's control. Contingent liabilities also arise in circumstances where a provision would otherwise be made but either it is not probable that there will be a transfer of economic benefits or where the obligation cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

Financial guarantee contracts come under the definition of financial instruments and are initially recognised in the accounts at fair value. This only applies to guarantees entered into after 1 April 2006. Any entered into before that date continue to be recognised as contingent liabilities. If payment under the guarantee becomes probable the liability would be determined in accordance with the requirement for provisions.

Reserves

A reserve, whether capital or revenue, results from events that have allowed monies to be set aside, surpluses, or decisions causing anticipated expenditure to have been postponed or cancelled. These can be spent or earmarked at the discretion of the County Council. Earmarked revenue reserves can be used to set aside available monies for major anticipated capital schemes, for projects or service arrangements that the County Council may wish to carry out, business unit surpluses, service efficiency savings and contingent liabilities where a provision is not required.

Reserves are established and used for different reasons. These include:

- Usable reserves - reserves that can be used at the County Council's discretion to fund either revenue or capital spend.
- Unusable reserves - reserves relating to unrealised gains, such as the Revaluation Reserve, that are not "cash backed" and cannot be used to fund future capital or revenue spending and reserves relating to differences between accounting policy and statutory requirements, such as the Capital Adjustment Account.

Earmarked reserves are created by appropriating amounts from the County Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred it is charged to the appropriate directorate. The reserve is then appropriated back into the County Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement so that there is no net charge against Council Tax for the expenditure.

The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020 No 1212) require DSG deficits to be held in a separate reserve in local authorities' accounts. These regulations, which require the negative balance to be held in an unusable reserve, will come to an end on 31 March 2026.

Group Accounts

The County Council is required to prepare group accounts where it has interests in subsidiaries, associates and/or joint ventures, subject to consideration of materiality. For 2023/24 the County Council did not have any such interests that are considered material and therefore prepared these accounts only as a single entity rather than as group accounts.

The County Council participates in a number of joint operations (e.g. pooled budget arrangements with the health sector). The County Council accounts directly (in its single entity accounts) for its part of the assets, liabilities, income, expenditure and cash flows held within or arising from such an arrangement.

There are a number of circumstances where the County Council exercises limited influence, and these are disclosed as related parties. Under these circumstances, transactions with these bodies are charged against the appropriate service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, and balances owed by them or to them are included in debtors and creditors.

From 31 March 2024, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) ceased to have official recognition and existing LEP functions were transferred to upper-tier local authorities or combined authorities, where they exist. From 1 April 2024 the County Council has a controlling interest in OxLEP Ltd and is the sole member. Group accounts for 2024/25 will be prepared on that basis.

Schools

Under the Code, local authority-maintained schools are considered to be separate entities with the balance of control lying with the Council. The Code requires that the income, expenditure, assets and liabilities of maintained schools be accounted for in the single entity accounts of the Council rather than requiring consolidation in the Group Accounts.

In accordance with the Education Reform Act 1988, the scheme of Local Management of Schools provides for the carry forward of individual school surpluses and deficits. These are held as usable earmarked reserves and are committed to be spent on schools.

Taxation

The County Council is exempt from income tax, corporation tax and from capital gains tax.

Value Added Tax is excluded from both revenue and capital in terms of both income and expenditure except where the County Council is not able to recover VAT on expenditure.

The County Council incurs landfill tax, which is charged on a tonnage basis to the County Council by its waste disposal contractors.

In addition, the County Council incurs stamp duty land tax on the acquisition of property freeholds and leaseholds, climate change levy on its energy bills and insurance premium tax on its insurance costs. Also, the County Council incurs employer's National Insurance contributions based on a percentage of staff salaries.

Where the County Council incurs tax, this cost is charged to directorates in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Rounding

In preparing the Statement of Accounts all numbers, including totals, have been rounded independently to avoid unacceptable rounding errors. This may mean that some tables do not cross cast. Also, Sometime the notes will have opposite signs to the numbers on the balance sheet, because they show the counterpart of the transaction.

2. Critical judgements in applying accounting policies

In applying the accounting policies set out in Note 1, the County 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:

- The County Council has made an assessment of the balance sheet treatment of schools' non-current assets in accordance with IAS 16 Property, Plant and Equipment and IAS 17 Leases. Where assets are owned by the Council and used by maintained schools, the economic benefits and service potential of the asset is considered to be within the control of the Council and therefore the assets are recognised on the Council's balance sheet. Where they are owned by trustees and used by maintained schools (in most cases Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled schools) the Council has assessed that the trustees permit the assets to be used for voluntary education and have not reassigned rights to the assets to the school or governing body. Therefore, the assets are not recognised on the Council's balance sheet. In some cases school sites are part owned by the Council and part by trustees. These assets are treated in line with the above. In accordance with the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, ownership of playing fields rests with the Council and these are therefore recognised on the Council's balance sheet (subject to de-minimis valuations). The property valuers (an MRICS qualified County Council employee and Sanderson Weatherall) are informed of changes to the ownership of County Council assets by the County Council's Legal Services department, and any adjustments to the value of assets as a consequence are reflected in the County Council's balance sheet.
- School land and buildings that have transferred to academy trusts under 125 year leases (or where the freehold has transferred) have been written out of the County Council's Balance Sheet based on an assessment in accordance with IAS 17 Leases and IAS 16 Property, Plant and Equipment. Newly constructed School land and buildings that are the subject of short-term lease/license agreements with academy trusts but are expected to transfer under 125 year leases have also been written out of the County Council's Balance Sheet based on this assessment.
- An assessment under IFRIC 12 Service Concession Arrangements concluded that the County Council controls the residential care services provided under the agreement with Oxfordshire Care Partnership (OCP) and the residual value of all but one of the homes at the end of the agreement. This includes Chilterns Court Care Centre which came into operation during 2016/17. Except for the home where the residual value at the end of the contract rests with OCP, the accounting policies for PFI and similar contracts have been applied to the arrangement and the homes are recognised as Property, Plant and Equipment on the Balance Sheet, see note 22. A finance liability has been recognised on the Balance Sheet for the amounts due to be paid under the contract for the new homes built by OCP.

- The County Council is the Accountable Body for the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP). OxLEP became a company Limited by Guarantee (Not for Profit) in April 2015 (Company Registration Number 09519056). It is a business led organisation that works for all of its stakeholders in business, academia and local authorities. The Board has 19 members from across the private and public sector and is led by a private sector Chairman. It is supported by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership; a Joint Committee which brings together local authority partners who are also members of the OxLEP Board in a collective decision-making structure. The Leader of the County Council is a member of the OxLEP Board. The Business representation comes from across all sectors and all sizes of business. It exists to drive the economic growth of Oxfordshire and the creation of jobs for our communities.
- In accounting for OxLEP as at 31 March 2024 it has been assessed that the County Council is acting as the principal in accordance with IAS 18 Revenue and therefore transactions have been included in the County Council's accounts. OxLEP's expenditure is largely funded by government grants for which the County Council is the accountable body, and the Council remains exposed to risks such as the repayment of grants in the event of non-compliance. In addition, the County Council plans to undertake borrowing totalling £50.7m on behalf of OxLEP to deliver planned infrastructure improvements in Oxfordshire. This will be funded through retained business rates from the Science Vale UK Enterprise Zone. A further £3.8m was taken in 2023/24 to make a total to date of £26.0m. This borrowing generates a requirement to increase the Council's Capital Financing Requirement. Because of that the Council is not simply acting as an intermediary by passporting funds to OxLEP and is acting beyond the remit of an agent.
- In respect of revenue, the Council received £0.250m core funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) on behalf of OxLEP in 2023/24. £1.6m retained business rates funding from the Science Vale UK Enterprise Zone 1 was also received by the council and passed on to OxLEP. Further revenue grant funding of £0.458m received in 2023/24 was for Innovation Support to Businesses and £0.266m from the UK Trade and Investment Programme.
- OxLEP is preparing financial accounts for 2023/24, along with the Letter of Representation, which are expected to be considered by the OxLEP Board in due course. The Board expects to formally adopt these financial accounts at the company's Annual General Meeting in September 2024.
- Based on an assessment in accordance with IFRS 10 Consolidated Financial Statements and IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements, and taking into account materiality, the County Council has concluded that it does not have control, joint control or significant influence of any other entities as at 31 March 2024. Therefore, the County Council has no subsidiaries, joint ventures or associates and there is no requirement to prepare group accounts for 2023/24.
- From 31 March 2024, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) ceased to have official recognition and existing LEP functions were transferred to upper-tier local authorities or combined authorities, where they exist. From 1 April 2024 the County Council has a controlling interest in OxLEP Ltd and is the sole member. Group accounts for 2024/25 will be prepared on that basis.

- The County Council has two pooled budgets with the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB), the successor body to the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) and one with Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. These pooled budgets operate to deliver better outcomes for people supported by Adult Social Care. Based on an assessment in accordance with IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements and FRS 15 Revenue (in relation to principal and agent transactions), the Pooled Budgets are considered to be joint operations. This means that only expenditure and income attributable to the County Council (and equal to the authority's contribution as set out in Note 8) is included in the Council's accounts.
- The BOB ICB is the Accountable Body for Oxfordshire's allocation of the Better Care Fund and will be held to account by NHS England for the appropriate use of the resources locally. The Better Care Fund allocation received by BOB ICB forms part of its contribution to the Better Care Fund Pooled Budget and as such is reported within their accounts.
- In accordance with IAS 32 Financial Instruments: Presentation, the County Council determines the short term/long term categorisation of borrowing by reference to the earliest date on which the lender can require payment. The right to increase the interest rate payable without limit, as in a 'Lender Option, Borrower Option' (LOBO) loan, is treated as a right to require repayment. Consequently, LOBOs are classified as short-term where option dates are due within 12 months of the balance sheet date.

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

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

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

Property, Plant and Equipment

The financial year 2023/24 was year three of a three-year revaluation cycle. The County Council's Property, Plant and Equipment assets have been valued on one of the following three bases under IFRS: Fair Value (Existing Use Value (EUV)) – method used to value operational property assets other than specialised property assets. Depreciated Replacement Cost (DRC) - method used to value operational property assets of a specialised nature. Fair Value (Market Value) – method used to value property assets held as investments, surplus or for sale. Buildings are depreciated over useful lives that are dependent on assumptions about the level of repairs and maintenance of those buildings. Reductions in the budget for repairs and maintenance spending brings into doubt the useful lives assigned to buildings. If the useful life of buildings is reduced, depreciation increases and the carrying amount of the building falls.

Pensions Liability

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 and pensions are projected to increase and mortality rates. The assumptions used are set out in the Retirement Benefits Note 17. The County Council uses a firm of actuaries, Hymans Robertson LLP, to provide expert advice about the assumptions to be applied. The discount rate used is based on corporate bond yields that reflect the duration of the employer's liabilities.

The effects on the net pension liability of changes in the discount rate or mortality rates are provided in the sensitivity analysis table in the Retirement Benefits Note 17. The IAS 19 balance sheet is based on financial market values and future market expectation indicators as at 31 March 2024 to comply with the accounting standard.

The actuary made assumptions regarding the impact arising from Legal and regulatory uncertainty. The actuary has allowed for the McCloud/Sargeant judgement in the calculation of the latest funding valuation results. The Employer's funding valuation results are used as the starting point for the accounting roll forward calculations and therefore an allowance is included in the accounting disclosure.

The actuary has also allowed for the impact of full Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) indexation in the calculation of the latest funding valuation results. The Employer's funding valuation results are used as the starting point for the accounting roll forward calculations and therefore an allowance for full GMP indexation has already been included in the accounting disclosure. However, as further ruling is unlikely to have a significant impact on the pension obligations of a typical employer, and the historic individual member data we would need to assess the impact is not readily available. As a result, the actuary has not made any allowance for this within our calculations at the Accounting Date.

Furthermore, following the Goodwin judgement the actuary has previously carried out some approximate analysis across the actuary LGPS clients to understand the potential impact of implementing a solution to correct the past underpayment of spouses' benefits. The remedy is still uncertain, but the actuary estimates the potential impact of this to be very small for a typical Fund (c0.1% of obligations). They therefore do not believe it is necessary or appropriate to make an adjustment to account for this at the moment, given the level of additional work and fees that would be involved for the Employer (and indeed the highly approximate nature of applying an unknown remedy).

There are two further court cases which could potentially impact on the valuation of the net pension liability:

- Walker
- O'Brien

In all two cases, the actuary does not consider the judgements are likely to have a significant impact on the Council's pension obligations.

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

4. Adjustments in the Expenditure and Funding Analysis

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

2022/23				2023/24			
Adjustments for Capital Purposes (Note A)	Net Charge for the Pensions Adjustments (Note B)	Other Differences (Note C)	Total Adjustments	Adjustments for Capital Purposes (Note A)	Net Charge for the Pensions Adjustments (Note B)	Other Differences (Note C)	Total Adjustments
£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
28,052	5,461	-274	33,239	Environment and Place	36,843	102	33,785
63,897	21,853	10,938	96,688	Children's Services	47,600	-2,811	56,863
13,028	7,686	6,010	26,724	Adult Services	7,890	-3,211	4,822
1,108	3,464	-1,625	2,947	Public Health	2,026	975	945
3,117	10,916	-7,997	6,036	Customers, Culture and Corporate Services	7,666	4,910	12,780
-39	2,295	-568	1,688	Other Corporate Costs	15	2,140	2,459
109,163	51,675	6,484	167,322	Service Costs	102,040	13,728	111,654
-162,569	22,131	-15,020	-155,458	Other Income and expenditure not charged to services	-117,543	-5,331	-110,369
-53,406	73,806	-8,536	11,864	Surplus (-) or Deficit (+)	-15,503	8,397	1,285

Note A - Adjustments for Capital Funding and Expenditure Purposes

Service lines have been adjusted to:

- Add in depreciation, amortisation, impairment and revaluation gains/losses and capital expenditure on third party assets which is not recognised on the County Council's balance sheet.
- Remove capital expenditure funded from revenue and finance lease/service concession principal repayments which are not chargeable to service expenditure under generally accepted accounting practice.
- Transfer expenditure and income for the disposal of assets to 'Other income and expenditure not charged to services'.

Other income and expenditure not charged to services has been adjusted to:

- Add in income on disposal of assets and the amounts written off those assets, the movement in the fair value of investment property and capital grants and contributions receivable in the year without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied during the year.
- Remove the statutory charge for capital financing i.e. Minimum Revenue Provision which is not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices

Note B - Net change for the removal of pension contributions and the addition of pension (IAS19) related expenditure and income

Service lines have been adjusted to remove employer pension contributions made by the County Council in accordance with statute and replace with current service costs, past service costs/curtailments and settlements.

Other income and expenditure not charged to services has been adjusted to add in the net interest on the defined benefit liability and adjust for the fire-fighters pension fund top-up grant.

Note C - Other Differences

Service lines have been adjusted to:

- Add in expenditure for staff holiday entitlement.
- Remove transfers to/from earmarked reserves which did not form part of service expenditure under generally accepted accounting practice.
- Transfer expenditure and income for trading operations and financing costs to, and other corporate service costs/income from, the 'Other income and expenditure not charged to services' line.
- Remove expenditure recharged from one service to another within the County Council

Other income and expenditure not charged to services has been adjusted to:

- Add in the difference between the amount received under statutory regulations for Council Tax and Business Rates notified when the budget was set and the income recognised under generally accepted accounting practices. This is a timing difference as any difference will be brought forward in future Surpluses or Deficits on the Collection Fund.
- Remove corporate transfers to/from earmarked reserves which are not recognised as expenditure under generally accepted accounting practice.

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

5. Analysis of income and expenditure by nature

2022/23 £'000	Income and Expenditure	2023/24 £'000
-83,555	Fees, charges and other service income	-97,436
-693,317	Government grants and contributions	-655,232
-6,389	Interest and investment income	-20,278
-477,350	Income from council tax and non-domestic rates	-514,697
-1,569	Proceeds from the disposal of non-current assets	-1,427
-1,262,180	Total Income	-1,289,070
454,618	Employee benefits expenses	415,674
709,933	Other service expenses	762,155
59,028	Depreciation, amortisation, impairments and revaluations	50,715
27,773	Interest payable and similar charges	16,600
24,703	Net interest expense on the pension defined liability	13,771
14,690	Costs from the disposal of non-current assets	12,134
1,290,745	Total Expenditure	1,271,049
28,565	Surplus (-) or Deficit (+) on the Provision of Services	-18,021

A segmental analysis of fees, charges and other service income is shown in the following table.

2022/23 £'000	Fees and Charges by Directorate	2023/24 £'000
-17,536	Environment and Place	-20,515
-10,730	Children's Services	-12,400
-47,330	Adult Services	-56,414
-83	Public Health	-141
-7,306	Commercial Development, Assets & Investment	-7,432
0	Customers, Organisational Development & Resources	0
-571	Corporate	-534
-83,556	Total Fees and Charges	-97,436

Notes to the Statements of Accounts

6. Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations

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

2022/23						2023/24				
County Fund Balance	Ear-marked Reserves	Capital Receipts Unapplied	Capital Grants & Contbns Unapplied	Unusable Reserves		County Fund Balance	Ear-marked Reserves	Capital Receipts Unapplied	Capital Grants & Contbns Unapplied	Unusable Reserves
£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
					Adjustments to Revenue Resources					
73,804				-73,804	Pension Costs transferred to (or from) the Pensions Reserve	8,390				-8,390
-2				2	Financial instruments transferred to the Financial Instrument Adjustment Account	-2				2
10,168				-10,168	Gain or Loss on the valuation of pooled investment funds	-2,448				2,448
9,785				9,785	Council Tax and Business Rates transferred to the Collection Fund Adjustment Account	5,817				-5,817
489				-489	Holiday pay transferred to the Accumulated Balances Account	188				-188
127,627				-127,627	Reversal of entries included in the Surplus of Deficit on the Provision of Services in relation to capital expenditure to the Capital Adjustment Account	119,820				-119,820
					Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources					
-1,569		1,569			Transfer of non-current asset sale proceeds to the Capital Receipts Unapplied Reserve	-1,403		1,403		
-1,954				1,954	Statutory provision for the repayment of debt transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account	-14,238				14,238
-63,989			-63,890	127,879	Capital expenditure financed from revenue balances transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account	-2,216				2,216
-			101,128		Capital grants and contributions applied	-71,007			-42,872	113,880
101,128					Capital gains and contributions receivable not applied to finance capital expenditure	-46,459			46,459	
				0	Adjustments to Capital Resources					
		0		0	Repayment of loans			0		0
21,268	0	1,569	37,238	-60,075	Total	-3,558	0	1,403	3,587	-1,431

Notes to the Statements of Accounts

7. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

The County Council's expenditure on schools is funded primarily by grant monies provided by the Department for Education. An element of DSG is recouped by the Department to fund academy schools in the County Council's area. DSG is ringfenced and can only be applied to meet expenditure properly included in the schools Budget, as defined in the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023. The school Budget includes elements for a range of educational services provided on an authority-wide basis and for the Individual Schools Budget (ISB), which is divided into a budget share for each maintained school. DSG income and expenditure is part of the Children's Services Directorate. Details of the deployment of DSG receivable for 2023/24 (with comparators) are as follows:

2022/23 Central Expenditure £'000	ISB £'000	Total £'000		2023/24 Central Expenditure £'000	ISB £'000	Total £'000
		585,596	Final DSG before Academy & high needs recoupment			629,313
		-337,220	Less Academy & high needs figure recouped for the year			-365,710
		248,376	Total DSG after Academy & high needs recoupment			263,602
		0	Brought forward from previous year			0
		0	Less carry forward to next year agreed in advance			0
78,794	169,582	248,376	Agreed initial budgeted distribution	90,927	172,674	263,602
	76	76	In year adjustments	331	740	1,071
	0	0	Prior year adjustments		0	0
78,794	169,658	248,452	Final budget distribution	91,258	173,414	264,674
-90,792		-90,792	Less actual central expenditure	-107,876		-107,876
	-168,889	-168,889	Less Actual ISB deployed to schools		-170,211	-170,211
1,200	0	1,200	County Council contribution	1,200	0	1,200
-89,592	-168,889	-258,481	Total Actual Expenditure	-106,676	-170,211	-276,887
-10,798	769	-10,029	In year carry forward	-15,418	3,204	-12,213
		-23,581	DSG unusable reserve at the beginning of the year			-33,610
		-33,610	Carry forward to next year			-45,824

**The statutory reporting requirements for the 2023/24 accounts require the closing deficit balance on Dedicated Schools Grant to be held within unusable reserves in a Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account. The unusable reserve exists for 3 years within statute until 31 March 2026. Is intended to give Local Authorities and the government time to look at strategies to reduce the deficit. The County Council is continuing to take action to manage the deficit, but this is continuing to increase. Within the total held at 31 March 2024 the accumulated deficit for High Needs DSG is £55.8m

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

8. Partnership schemes under section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006

Oxfordshire County Council, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (formerly Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group) and Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust are working together to improve services and support for the people of Oxfordshire. Under Section 75 of the National Health Services Act 2006, the Council has existing and long-standing agreements to pool resources and deliver shared objectives. The overarching intention is that working together across service areas will lead to better outcomes for service users, more effective decision making, and better use of pooled resources.

Pooled Budget		Age Well Pool		Live Well Pool		Mental Health Provider Pool	
Partner	Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB)		Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB)		Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust		
Purpose	Commissions services for older people including care home placements, services supporting community resilience and hospital avoidance (eg. care at home and daytime services), prevention and carer support.		Commissions services for adults of working age with a learning disability, physical disability or mental health assessed needs along with support for people with an acquired brain injury. Services include supported living, residential care placements and hospital avoidance. Some service users receive direct payments and organise their own care.		Provides integrated health and social care support to adults with Mental Health needs.		
Lead Partner	Oxfordshire County Council		Oxfordshire County Council		Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust		
	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	
Total Gross Expenditure	259,273	285,131	244,497	301,745	11,810	12,374	
Funded by:							
Council Contribution *	-79,273	-89,072	-131,357	-129,635	-1,802	-1,802	
Partner Contribution	-86,330	-98,110	-88,114	-146,627	-10,008	-10,572	
Service User Contributions	-36,772	-44,979	-5,823	-6,604			
Better Care Fund	-46,696	-49,339	0	0			
Other External Contribution	0	0	-19,197	-18,872			
Other Income **	-10,202	-3,631	-6	-7			
Total Gross Income	-259,273	-285,131	-244,497	-301,745	-11,810	-12,374	

*Note that the Authority's Contribution to the Live Well Pooled Budget 2023/24 includes £1,802k (the same as 2022/23) which is passported to the Mental Health Provider Pool. The Council does not make any other contributions to the Mental Health Provider Pool.

9. Members' Allowances

Under the Council's constitution, councillors are entitled to receive annual allowances for their role. These include basic allowance payable to all councillors and special responsibility allowances where councillors undertake specific roles such as chair of a committee.

	2022/23	2023/24
Members' Allowances	£'000	£'000
Allowances	1,146	1,209
Travel and Subsistence	11	14
Total	1,157	1,223

10. Audit Fee

The County Council's external auditors are Ernst & Young LLP. The following fees were incurred relating to external audit and grant certification work. This expenditure is part of the Resources Directorate.

	2022/23	2023/24
Audit and Inspection Fees	£'000	£'000
Code of Practice Audit Work	84	292
Other Fees for Prior Years	0	177
Certification of grant claims and Returns	15	15
Total	99	484

11. Senior Officers' Remuneration

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require disclosure of remuneration for senior staff. Remuneration for these purposes includes all sums paid to or receivable by an employee including expense allowances chargeable to tax and non-taxable termination payments including enhancement, redundancy and pay in lieu of notice.

Two sets of disclosures are required. Firstly, the number of employees whose total remuneration (excluding employer pension contributions) exceeded £50,000. Secondly, individual remuneration details (including employer pension contributions) for each senior employee, as defined by the regulations, whose salary is more than £50,000 per year (pro-rata for part-time staff). Senior employees whose salary is over £150,000 are disclosed by name, the remaining senior employees are disclosed by post title.

The number of employees whose remuneration (excluding employer pension contributions) exceeded £50,000 is set out in the following table. In accordance with the 2015 regulations, the figures exclude senior employees whose remuneration is disclosed separately.

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

Band	Number of Employees					
	2022/23			2023/24		
£	School	Non School	Total	School	Non School	Total
50,000-54,999	40	182	222	82	288	370
55,000-59,999	40	158	198	33	187	220
60,000-64,999	24	57	81	32	89	121
65,000-69,999	20	53	73	25	55	80
70,000-74,999	23	18	41	25	39	64
75,000-79,999	7	7	14	14	22	36
80,000-84,999	10	9	19	5	13	18
85,000-89,999	5	31	36	7	9	16
90,000-94,999	3	3	6	2	17	19
95,000-99,999	0	1	1	4	5	9
100,000-109,999	1	8	9	1	2	3
110,000-119,999	0	8	8	0	2	2
120,000-129,999	0	0	0	0	3	3
130,000-139,999	0	6	6	1	6	7
140,000-149,999	0	2	2	0	1	1
150,000-159,999	0	1	1	1	1	2
160,000-169,999	0	0	0	0	1	1
170,000-179,999	0	0	0	0	4	4
180,000-189,999	0	1	1	0	1	1
190,000-199,999	0	0	0	0	2	2
200,000-209,999	0	0	0	0	2	2
210,000-219,999	0	1	1	0	0	0
220,000-229,999	0	0	0	0	0	0
230,000-239,999	0	0	0	0	0	0
240,000-249,999	0	1	1	0	0	0
Total	173	547	720	232	749	981

Notes to the Statements of Accounts

2023/24						
Post Holder Information	Salary (Including Fees & Allowances)	Expense Allowances and Other Emoluments	Compensation for Loss of Employment	Total Remuneration Excluding Pension Contributions	Employers Pension Contribution	Total Remuneration Including Pension Contributions
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Chief Executive - Martin Reeves	232,875	0	0	232,875	46,342	279,217
Executive Director of People - Stephen Chandler	172,969	0	0	172,969	34,421	207,390
Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer - Lorna Baxter	153,820	0	0	153,820	32,017	185,837
Corporate Director for Customers and Organisational Development and Resources - Claire Taylor*	22,734	0	0	22,734	4,524	27,258
Corporate Director for Adult Social Care - Karen Foster	144,124	0	0	144,124	28,681	172,805
Director for Childrens Services - Kevin Gordon**	26,131	0	67,362	93,493	5,200	98,693
Director for Childrens Services - Lisa Lyons***	33,319	0	0	33,319	6,630	39,949
Corporate Director for Environment and Place - Bill Cotton	161,181	0	0	161,181	32,075	193,256
Director for Public Health - Ansaf Azhar	141,181	0	0	141,181	20,302	161,483
Director of Law and Governance - Anita Bradley	141,181	0	0	141,181	28,095	169,276
Chief Fire Officer - Rob MacDougall	166,108	0	0	166,108	47,839	213,947
Total	1,395,624	0	67,362	1,462,986	286,125	1,749,111

*Claire Taylor left post and Oxfordshire County Council on 31 May 2023

**Kevin Gordon left post and Oxfordshire County Council on 27 May 2023

***Lisa Lyons started post on 8th January 2024

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

2022/23								
Post Holder Information	Salary (Including Fees & Allowances)	Expense Allowances and Other Emoluments	Compensation for Loss of Employment	Total Remuneration Excluding Pension Contributions	Employers Pension Contribution	Total Remuneration Including Pension Contributions	Contribution to (+) from (-) Cherwell District Council	Cost to Oxfordshire County Council
	£	£	£	£	£	£		£
Chief Executive - Martin Reeves*	18,750	0	0	18,750	3,731	22,481	0	22,481
Interim Executive Director for People, Transformation & Performance - Stephen Chandler**	188,303	0	0	188,303	37,472	225,775	0	225,775
Corporate Director for Customers and Organisational Development and Resources - Claire Taylor *** §	136,406	0	0	136,406	27,224	163,630	-18,893	144,737
Interim Corporate Director for Adult Social Care - Karen Fuller****	140,266	0	0	140,266	27,913	168,179	0	168,179
Corporate Director for Children's Services - Kevin Gordon	136,406	0	0	136,406	27,145	163,551	0	163,551
Corporate Director for Environment and Place - Bill Cotton	155,730	0	0	155,730	30,990	186,720	0	186,720
Corporate Director for Commercial Development & Asset Management - Steve Jorden***** §§	83,434	0	159,409	242,843	15,853	258,696	-17,703	240,993
Corporate Director for Public Health and Community Safety - Ansaf Azhar §§	136,406	0	0	136,406	19,615	156,021	-1,647	154,374
Director of Finance (S.151) - Lorna Baxter	136,736	0	0	136,736	41,832	178,569	0	178,569
Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer – Anita Bradley	136,406	0	0	136,406	27,211	163,617	0	163,617
Chief Fire Officer - Rob MacDougall	145,252	0	0	145,252	41,980	187,232	0	187,232
Total	1,414,095	0	159,409	1,573,504	300,966	1,874,471	-38,243	1,836,228

*Started the post on 1 March 2023 **Stephen Chandler was acting Temporary Chief Executive from 1 March 2022 - 8 March 2023 and started in this post on 9 March 2023

Employed by Cherwell District Council until 31 May 2022 and Stated the post at Oxfordshire County Council 1 June 2022 *Seconded to Corporate Director of Adult and Housing post from 7 March 2022, prior to this, Karen was Deputy Director Adult Social Care *****Finished Post and Left Oxfordshire County Council on 8 August 2022

Several senior officer roles at Oxfordshire County Council were joint posts under the Partnership Agreement with Cherwell District Council: § denotes staff employed by Cherwell District Council and the County Council is charged a share of their salary costs: Corporate Director Customers, Organisational Development & Resources 70%

§§ denotes staff employed by the County Council and a charge is made to Cherwell District Council for a share of the salary costs: Director of Law & Governance 20% & Corporate Director of Public Health 10%

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

12. Exit Packages

The number of exit packages agreed in the year and the cost of those packages is given in the tables below. Exit packages include compulsory and voluntary redundancy costs, pension contributions in respect of added years and costs of early retirements without actuarial reduction in benefits, ex-gratia payments and other departure costs. Ill-health retirements are excluded because they do not meet the Code's definition of termination benefits.

The bandings in the tables include exit packages in the year they were individually agreed. The bandings are based on HR records for leavers in the year adjusted for accruals. Where there is a difference between the accrued amount and the actual payment in the following year this is shown as a reconciling adjustment at the foot of the table – in some instances the actual payment was higher than the accrued amount and in other instances the actual payment was lower. The bandings exclude exit packages provided for as part of redundancy provision in the year the provision was created – the individual exit packages charged against redundancy provisions are included in the bandings in the year of departure.

Exit packages Band (£)	2022/23						2023/24					
	Compulsory		Other		Total		Compulsory		Other		Total	
	No.	£'000	No.	£'000	No.	£'000	No.	£'000	No.	£'000	No.	£'000
0 - 19,999	9	67	13	100	22	167	11	79	28	220	39	299
20,000 - 39,999	3	111	2	43	5	154	5	122	5	127	10	249
40,000 - 59,999	2	108	0	0	2	108	0	0	0	0	0	0
60,000 - 79,999	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	137	2	137
80,000 - 99,999	2	169	0	0	2	169	0	0	0	0	0	0
100,000 - 149,999	2	263	0	0	2	263	0	0	0	0	0	0
150,000 - 199,999	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
200,000 - 249,999	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
250,000 - 299,999	1	279	0	0	1	279	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	19	997	15	143	34	1140	16	201	35	484	51	685
Adjust for differences between payments and accruals						247						
Total cost of exit packages in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement						1,387						
												685

13. Operating Leases

From time to time, the County Council acquires assets under operating leases. The minimum lease payments and contingent rents charged, and sublease payments received for the year, together with future commitments and future sublease payments receivable are set out below, together with comparative figures for 2023/24

County Council as Lessee	2022/23 Plant, vehicles & equipment £'000	Land and buildings £'000	Total £'000	2023/24 Plant, vehicles & equipment £'000	Land and buildings £'000	Total £'000
Minimum lease payments charged in year	1,717	2,020	3,737	1,603	1,979	3,583
Contingent rents charged in year	200	155	355	130	182	311
Sublease payments received in year	0	-550	-550	0	532	532
Future minimum lease payments:						
Within 1 year	1,427	841	2,267			
Within 2nd - 5th years	844	2,498	3,342	1,017	1,192	2,209
6th year and beyond	0	1,413	1,413	162	2,947	3,109
Total commitments	2,271	4,751	7,022	2	1,207	1,209
Total future sublease payments receivable	0	-517	-517	0	-517	-517

The County Council leases out property under operating leases for the provision of accommodation for services, such as Homes for Older People, pre-schools and waste re-cycling centres. Contingent rents include backdated rent increases.

County Council as Lessor	2022/23 Plant, vehicles & equipment £'000	Land and buildings £'000	Total £'000	2023/24 Plant, vehicles & equipment £'000	Land and buildings £'000	Total £'000
Minimum lease payments receivable in year	0	2,077	2,077	0	1,732	1,732
Contingent rents receivable in year	0	1,111	1,111	0	1,277	1,277
Future minimum lease payments receivable:						
Within 1 year	0	1,617	1,617	0	1,361	1,361
Within 2nd - 5th years	0	4,923	4,923	0	4,736	4,736
6th year and beyond	0	33,811	33,811	0	31,510	31,510
Total Receivable	0	40,351	40,351	0	37,607	37,607

14. Other Operating Expenditure

Other Operating Expenditure comprises the gain or loss on the derecognition of non-current assets. The gain or loss is the amount by which the disposal proceeds (if any) are more (gain) or less (loss) than the amount which the non-current asset is held on the balance sheet together with the costs of disposal. To comply with statutory/proper practices, the entry is reversed in the Movement in Reserves Statement leaving the cost of disposals chargeable to revenue net of other receipts as a charge against the County Fund. Regulations permit disposal costs of up to 4% of the sale proceeds to be charged against the capital receipt.

Other Operating Expenditure	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Capital Receipts	-1,583	-1,437
Disposal costs charged against capital receipts	13	33
Net Capital Receipts	-1,570	-1,404
Other Receipts	0	-23
Total Receipts	-1,570	-1,427
Carrying value of non-current assets derecognised	14,690	12,986
Disposal costs charged to the General Fund	0	0
Total Disposal costs	14,690	12,986
Other Operating Expenditure	13,120	11,559
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis	-13,120	-11,582
Net Charge to the General Fund	0	-22

15. Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure

A breakdown of the items within the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is as follows:

Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Interest payable and similar charges	17,605	15,634
Gain or Loss on the valuation of pooled investment funds	10,168	-2,448
Interest receivable and similar income	-6,389	-16,863
Income and Expenditure in relation to investment properties and change in their fair value	-1,096	116
Net pensions interest expense	24,703	13,771
Net fire-fighters Pension Fund Top-Up Grant	-2,573	-1,267
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	42,418	8,943
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis	-31,201	-10,173
Net Charge to the General Fund	11,217	-1,230

16. Financial Instruments - Income, Expenses, Gains or Losses

Financial instruments include bank deposits, investments, debtors (excluding statutory debtors and prepayments), long-term debtors (excluding lifecycle prepayments), creditors (excluding statutory creditors), borrowings, finance leases and the finance liability element of service concession arrangements. The Code requires financial instruments to be classified into defined categories of assets and liabilities. These are explained in the Summary of Significant Accounting Policies in Note 1. The income, expenses, gains and losses recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in relation to financial instruments are as follows.

	2022/23 Financial Liabilities					2023/24 Financial Assets				
	Liabilities at amortised cost £'000	Assets at amortised cost £'000	Assets at fair value through Other Comprehensive Income £'000	Assets at fair value through profit and loss £'000	Total £'000	Liabilities at amortised cost £'000	Assets at amortised cost £'000	Assets at fair value through Other Comprehensive Income £'000	Assets at fair value through profit and loss £'000	Total £'000
Page 130	15,959			0	15,959	Interest Expense	15,010		0	15,010
				10,168	10,168	Decreases in fair value			967	967
		1,646		0	1,646	Impairment Losses	623		0	623
			0	0	0	Fee expense		0	0	0
	15,959	1,646	0	10,168	27,773	Total expense in Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	15,010	623	0	967
		-2,101		-4,288	-6,389	Interest Income	-12,116		-4,747	-16,863
			0	0	0	Increases in fair value		0	-3,416	-3,416
	0	-2,101	0	-4,288	-6,389	Total income in Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	0	-12,116	0	-8,163
					21,384	Net gain (-) / loss (+) for the year				-3,679

17. Retirement Benefits

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its employees, the County Council offers retirement benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until employees retire, the County Council has a commitment to make the payments that need to be disclosed at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.

The County Council participates in four pension schemes. Only a small number of Public Health staff that transferred from the NHS when the service became a County Council function in April 2013 participate in the NHS Pension Scheme and this is therefore excluded from the disclosures below.

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

This is a defined benefit statutory scheme administered in accordance with the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (as amended) and provides benefits based on final salary and length of service on retirement (for benefits accrued up to 31 March 2019) and career average revalued salary (for benefits accrued from 1 April 2019).

The County Council is the Administering Authority for the Fund. The Pension Fund Committee oversees the management of the Fund whilst the day-to-day fund administration is undertaken by teams within the County Council. Where appropriate some functions are delegated to the Fund's professional advisers. The accounts of the Oxfordshire Local Government Pension Fund are included after the Notes to Accounts.

As Administering Authority to the Fund, the County Council, after consultation with the Fund Actuary (Hymans Robertson LLP) and other relevant parties, is responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the Funding Strategy Statement and the Statement of Investment Principles. These are amended when appropriate based on the Fund's performance and funding.

The LGPS is a funded scheme, meaning that the County Council and employees pay contributions into a Fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liabilities with investment assets. The County Council may also grant additional benefits to LGPS members on retirement under the Discretionary Payment Regulations which are not paid from the Fund – these are referred to as LGPS unfunded benefits below.

Employer contributions are set every 3 years as a result of the actuarial valuation of the Fund required by regulations. The actuarial valuation at 31 March 2024 set the contribution rates for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024. There are no minimum funding requirements in the LGPS but the contributions are generally set to target a funding level of 100% using the actuarial valuation assumptions. The total contributions expected to be made by the County Council to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) in 2023/24 are £38.496m for funded benefits (£36.320m was expected for 2022/23).

The pensions liability has decreased from March 2023 (£290.583m) to March 2024 (£129.642m). This is partly due to the difference between the accrual of new benefits and benefits paid out during the year for scheme participants.

The County Council currently participates in the Oxfordshire County Council pool with various other employers with admissions agreements in order to share experience of risks they are exposed to in the Fund. At the 2022 valuation, the deficit on the whole pool was calculated and allocated to each employer, along with the costs of future benefits of the combined membership of the pool, such that all employers within the pool shared the same overall contribution rate. The next re-allocation will be carried out at the 2025 valuation, should the employer remain in the pool.

Should the County Council withdraw from the Fund, a cessation valuation would be carried out in accordance with Regulation 64 of the LGPS Regulations 2013 which would determine the termination

contribution due by the County Council on a set of assumptions deemed appropriate by the Fund Actuary.

Curtailment costs arise as a result of the payment of unreduced pensions on early retirement. The capitalised cost of the additional benefits relative to those reserved for under IAS 19 is £0.064m for 2023/24 (£0.053m for 2022/23). As a result of some members of the Oxfordshire Pension Fund transferring to/from another employer over the year, liabilities have been settled at a cost different to the amount reserved for under IAS19. The capitalised gain of this settlement for 2023/24 is £1.060m (£0 2022/23).

The Fire-Fighters Pension Schemes

There are five separate schemes relating to Fire-Fighters pensions – the 1992 scheme, the 2006 scheme, the 2015 scheme, the Retained Modified scheme and the fire-fighters compensation scheme for injury benefits and ill health retirements. Each of these are defined benefit statutory schemes administered in accordance with the Fire-Fighters' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014 and Fire Pension Orders 1992 and 2006 and provide benefits based on final salary and length of service on retirement, other than the 2015 scheme which provides benefits accrued from 1 April 2019 based on career average revalued salaries.

The County Council is the Administering Authority for each of the schemes. The day-to-day administration is undertaken by teams within the County Council. Where appropriate some functions are delegated to the schemes' professional advisers.

The 1992, 2006, 2015 and the Retained Modified schemes are unfunded schemes, meaning that there are no investment assets built up to meet the pensions liabilities and cash has to be generated to meet actual pension payments as they fall due. The County Council and employees pay contributions into a fund account and where these are not sufficient to meet pension payments for the year, the deficit is met by a Central Government top-up grant. Any surplus in the pension fund in the year is paid back to Central Government. Employer contributions are set every four years as a result of the combined actuarial valuation of the fire-fighters' pension schemes required by the Home Office on behalf of the Secretary of State. The last completed actuarial valuation was at 31 March 2022 and set contributions for the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2025.

The fire-fighters' compensation scheme injury benefits and ill health retirements are paid on a pay as you go basis. There are no assets held to back the liabilities of the scheme.

For ease of presentation the figures for all the fire-fighters schemes have been combined within the tables in this note. Most of the firefighters defined benefits liabilities relate to the 2015 scheme.

The total of contributions (including government top-up grant) and injury/ill health retirement benefit payments expected to be made by the County Council in 2023/24 is £7.4m (£8.2m in 2022/23).

The Teachers' Pension Scheme

This is a defined benefit scheme administered in accordance with the Teachers' Pensions Regulations 2014 and provides benefits based on final salary and length of service (for benefits accrued up to 31 March 2015) and career average revalued salary (for benefits accrued from 1 April 2015). The Scheme is administered by Capita on behalf of the Department for Education. The Scheme is an unfunded pension scheme, in which payments from the Scheme are funded by contributions from current employees and employers with the difference between these contributions and Scheme expenditure financed by the Exchequer.

The County Council contributes towards the costs of the scheme by making contributions based on a percentage of members' pensionable salaries as set by the Secretary of State for Education, taking advice from the Scheme's actuary. The total expected payments to beneficiaries for 2023/24 is £6.213m (£6.029m 22/23).

The Teachers' Pension Scheme is a defined benefit scheme, but because of the way the scheme is centrally managed the County Council is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities of the scheme and it is therefore classified as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes. Charges are included in the Surplus or Deficit in the Provision of Services but there are no liabilities to disclose in the Balance Sheet with the exception of all pension payments relating to added years which the County Council has awarded to teachers under the Discretionary Payment Regulations. As the County Council is responsible for funding these added years payments on a pay as you go basis they are treated as a defined benefit scheme.

Risk

The County Council is exposed to a number of risks from participating in the pension schemes accounted for as defined benefit schemes outlined above. Risks common to all of the schemes are:

Interest rate risk – the liabilities are assessed using market yields on high quality corporate bonds to discount the liabilities. Given the volatile nature of market yields the yield on high quality corporate bonds could fall leading to an increase in the liabilities.

Inflation risk – the benefits are linked to inflation and so increased costs may emerge if inflation is higher than expected.

Longevity risk – in the event that the members live longer than assumed more benefits will be paid out than expected. There are also other demographic risks.

As a funded scheme, the LGPS gives exposure to other additional risks:

Investment risk – The Fund holds investment in asset classes, such as equities, which have volatile market values and while these assets are expected to provide real returns over the long-term, the short-term volatility can cause additional funding to be required if a deficit emerges.

Interest rate risk – The Fund's liabilities are assessed using market yields on high quality corporate bonds to discount the liabilities. As the Fund holds assets such as equities the value of assets and liabilities may not move in the same way.

Inflation risk – deficits may emerge to the extent that the assets are not linked to inflation.

In addition, as many unrelated employers participate in the Oxfordshire County Council Pension Fund, there is an 'orphan liability risk' where employers leave the Fund but with insufficient assets to cover their pension obligations so that the difference may fall on the remaining employers.

All of the risks above may also benefit the County Council, for example higher than expected investment returns or employers leaving the funds with excess assets which would eventually get inherited by the remaining employers, market yields may rise or inflation be less than expected reducing the value of the liabilities and ongoing cost of benefit accrual. The cost of retirement benefits arising from defined benefit schemes are recognised in the Cost of Services when they are earned by employees rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge the County Council is required to make against the County Fund (and hence Council Tax) is based on cash payable in the year so the real cost of pension benefits is reversed out in the Movement in Reserves Statement. The following table sets out the transactions that have been made in the accounts.

Notes to the Statements of Accounts

Pension Fund Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	Local Government Pension Scheme & Teacher's Added Years		Fire Fighters' Pension Schemes		Total	
	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost of Services						
Current Service Cost	88,708	40,642	5,600	2,000	94,308	42,642
Past Service Costs	1,028	22	0	0	1,028	22
(Gain) / Loss from settlements	0	-1,060	0	0	0	-1,060
Administration Expenses	905	1,342	0	0	905	1,342
Financing and Investment Income & Expenditure						
Net Interest Expense	16,747	3,771	8,200	10,000	24,947	13,771
Government Top-Up Grant / Surplus payable to Government	0	0	-2,573	-1,267	-2,573	-1,267
Surplus / Deficit on the Provision of Services	107,388	44,717	11,227	10,733	118,615	55,450
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure						
Return on plan assets	100,817	-115,871	0	0	100,817	-115,871
Actuarial gains (-) and losses (+) from demographic assumptions	-41,595	-10,999	-3,600	-100	-45,195	-11,099
Actuarial gains (-) and losses (+) from financial assumptions	-783,632	-89,100	-101,800	-5,800	-885,432	-94,900
Experience gains (-) and losses (+)	138,340	50,233	4,500	0	142,840	50,233
Other actuarial gains (-) and losses (+)	-466	3,052	332	-746	-134	2,306
Total retirement benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-479,148	-117,968	-89,341	4,087	-568,489	-113,881
Movement in Reserves Statement						
Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services for retirement benefits in accordance with the code	-66,581	-1,744	-7,468	-6,646	-74,048	-8,390
Actual amount charged against the General Fund Balance for pensions in the year	40,807	42,973	3,759	4,087	44,567	47,060

Notes to the Statements of Accounts

The net liabilities set out in the following table show the underlying long-term commitments that the County Council has to pay retirement benefits.

Pension Liability	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Present value liabilities:		
Local Government Pension Scheme funded benefits	1,534,481	1,547,293
Local Government Pension Scheme unfunded benefits	13,469	12,603
Fire Fighters' Pension Schemes	211,800	211,800
Teachers' Added Years	35,388	31,743
Total Present value liabilities	1,795,139	1,803,440
Fair value of assets in the Local Government Pension Scheme	1,504,556	1,673,798
Net Liabilities in the scheme:		
Local Government Pension Scheme funded	29,926	-126,504
Local Government Pension Scheme unfunded	13,469	12,603
Fire Fighters' Pension Schemes	211,800	211,800
Teachers' Added Years	35,388	31,743
Total Net Liabilities	290,583	129,642

It should be noted however that the pension liability valuation in accordance with accounting requirements is only a snapshot in time and will likely fluctuate year on year. The statutory arrangements for funding the deficit ensure that:

- The deficit on the Local Government Pension Scheme will be made good by increased contributions over the remaining working life of employees, as assessed by the scheme actuary
- The rates of employee and employer contributions for the Fire-fighters' Pension Schemes will be reviewed regularly by actuaries acting on behalf of the government to ensure that they reflect the true cost of accruing pensions
- Finance is only required to be raised to cover teachers added years benefits and fire-fighters injury pensions and unfunded ill health retirements when they are actually paid

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 schemes have been assessed by Hymans Robertson LLP, an independent firm of actuaries using estimates based on the latest full valuation of the scheme - at 31 March 2022 for the Local Government Pension Scheme and 31 March 2021 for the Fire-fighters Pension Schemes.

A reconciliation of the opening and closing balances of the present value of scheme liabilities is shown on the following table.

Notes to the Statements of Accounts

Liabilities	Local Government Pension Scheme & Teacher's Added Years		Fire Fighters' Pension Schemes		Total	
	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Opening Balance at 1 April	2,171,401	1,583,339	304,900	211,800	2,476,301	1,795,139
Revised Opening Balance	17,984	0	0	0	17,984	0
Revised Opening Balance at 1 April	2,153,417	1,583,339	304,900	211,800	2,458,317	1,795,139
Current Service Cost	89,613	41,984	5,600	2,000	95,213	43,984
Interest Expense	58,714	74,828	8,200	10,000	66,914	84,828
Contributions by scheme participants	12,223	11,884	1,500	1,700	13,723	13,584
Actuarial gains and losses - demographic assumptions	-12,227	-10,999	-3,600	-100	-15,827	-11,099
Actuarial gains and losses - financial assumptions	-785,201	-89,100	-101,800	-5,800	-887,001	-94,900
Experience gains and losses	122,947	50,233	4,500	0	127,447	50,233
Other actuarial gains and losses	0	0	332	-746	332	-746
Benefits Paid	-57,175	-68,277	-5,259	-5,787	-62,434	-74,064
Past Service Costs	1,028	22	0	0	1,028	22
(Gain) / Loss from settlements	0	-2,274	0	0	0	-2,274
Fire Fighters pension scheme top-up grant	0	0	-2,573	-1,267	-2,573	-1,267
Closing balance at 31 March	1,583,339	1,591,640	211,800	211,800	1,795,139	1,803,440

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

The Fire-fighters' Pension Schemes and Teachers Added Years have no assets to cover liabilities. Assets in the Local Government Pension Scheme are valued at fair value, principally market value of investments. Cash contributions from other partners in the Pension Pool mean that the asset values in the County Council's accounts differ to those in the actuarial report. A reconciliation of the fair value of assets in the Local Government Pension Scheme is shown on the following table:

Assets at Fair Value	Local Government Pension Scheme (funded)	
	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Opening Balance at 1 April	1,575,205	1,504,556
Revised Opening Balance	-8,936	0
Revised Opening Balance as at 1 April	1,566,269	1,504,556
Interest Income	42,211	71,057
Return on plan assets	-100,245	115,871
Other actuarial gains and losses	466	-3,052
Administration expenses	0	0
Employer Contributions	36,320	38,496
Contributions by scheme participants	12,223	11,884
Benefits Paid	-52,688	-63,800
Settlements received / (paid)	0	-1,214
Closing balance at 31 March	1,504,556	1,673,798

Notes to the Statements of Accounts

The assets in the Local Government Pension Scheme consist of the following categories:

Assets	At 31 March 2023			At 31 March 2024		
	£'000	£'000	%	£'000	£'000	%
Equities						
Consumer	0			0		
Manufacturing	0			0		
Energy and Utilities	0			0		
Financial Institutions	0			0		
Health and Care	0			0		
Information and Technology	0			0		
		0	0%		0	0%
Debt Securities						
UK Government	19,388			21,568		
Other	7,919			8,810		
		27,307	2%		30,378	2%
Derivatives (quoted in an active market)						
Foreign exchange	69			77		
		69	0%		77	0%
Cash and cash equivalents						
Cash	22,730			25,287		
		22,730	2%		25,287	2%
Private Equity						
All	70,624			78,568		
		70,624	5%		78,568	5%
Investment Funds and Unit Trusts						
Equities	839,771			934,233		
Infrastructure	51,869			57,704		
Bonds	96,269			107,098		
Other	395,917			440,453		
		1,381,827	92%		1,539,488	92%
Total		1,504,556	100%		1,673,798	100%

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

The main assumptions used in the retirement benefit calculations are as follows:

	Local Government Pension Scheme (funded)		Local Government Pension Scheme (unfunded)		Fire-fighters' Pension Schemes		Teachers Added Years	
	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24
Longevity Assumptions:								
Base Table (Explanation on next page)	Fund's Vita Curves	Fund's Vita Curves	Fund's Vita Curves	Fund's Vita Curves	S2NMA/S2NFA with a 110% multiplier	S2NMA/S2NFA with a 110% multiplier	Fund's Vita Curves	Fund's Vita Curves
Men:								
Rate of improvement	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%
Longevity from 65 (currently aged 65) (yrs)	22	21.9	22	21.9	25.9	25.8	22	21.9
Longevity from 65 (currently aged 45) (yrs)	22.8	22.6	22.8	22.6	27.3	27.2	22.8	22.6
Women:								
Rate of improvement	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%
Longevity from 65 (currently aged 65) (yrs)	24.7	24.5	24.7	24.5	28.5	28.7	24.7	24.5
Longevity from 65 (currently aged 45) (yrs)	26	25.8	26	25.8	29.8	30	26	25.8
Financial Assumptions:								
Retail Price Index (RPI) increases	3.20%	3.10%	3.20%	3.10%	3.20%	3.10%	2.95%	3.10%
Consumer Price Index (CPI) increases	2.95%	2.75%	2.95%	2.75%	3.20%	3.10%	2.95%	2.75%
Rate of increases in salaries	2.95%	2.75%	2.95%	2.75%	2.95%	2.75%	2.95%	2.75%
Rate of increases in pensions and deferred pensions	2.95%	2.75%	2.95%	2.75%	2.95%	2.75%	2.95%	2.75%
Rate for discounting scheme liabilities	4.75%	4.85%	4.75%	4.85%	4.75%	4.85%	4.75%	4.85%

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

In addition, the following assumptions have been made for the Local Government Pension Scheme:

- Members will exchange half of their commutable pension for cash at retirement.
- Members will retire at one retirement age for all tranches of benefit, which will be the pension weighted average tranche retirement age.
- The proportion of the membership that had taken up the option to pay 50% of contributions for 50% of benefits at the previous valuation date will remain the same.

For the Fire-Fighters Scheme:

- Members will exchange 90% of the maximum tax-free cash up to HMRC limits of their commutable pension for cash at retirement.
- Members will retire at the earliest age they are able to do so without reduction.
- The effect of an increase or decrease in the assumptions used to calculate the pension liability is set out below.

	Local Government Pension Scheme (funded)		Fire-Fighters' Pension Scheme	
	Approximate % increase to Employer Liability	Approximate monetary amount (£'000)	Approximate % increase to Employer Liability	Approximate monetary amount (£'000)
0.5% decrease in Real Discount Rate	2%	135,400	10%	21,210
0.5% increase in Pension Increase Rate	4%	128,800	8%	16,930
0.5% increase in Salary Increase Rate	0%	9,155	1%	1,200
1 year increase in member life expectancy	2%	63,666	3%	6,350

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18. Pension Reserve

The movements on the Pension Reserve are set out in the following table:

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Pension Reserve		
Balance as at 1 April	-901,096	-290,583
Revision to Opening Balance	9,048	0
Revised Balance as at 1 April	-892,048	-290,583
Net charge made for retirement benefits in accordance with IAS19	-73,804	-8,390
Remeasurements of the new defined liability	675,270	169,331
Balance as at 31 March	-290,583	-129,642

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

19. Grant Income

The County Council recognised the following grants in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Grant issuing body		2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	Credited to Services		2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	Credited to Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income						
	Business Rate Top Up Grant	40,546	39,976				
	Business Rate Reconciliation Grant	8,331	-	Improved Better Care Fund		10,705	10,705
	Business Rates Retention Levy Surplus	-	1,326				
	Section 31 Grant for Business Rate Compensation	-	19,098				
	New Homes Bonus	2,924	1,749	Homes for Ukraine Tariff Grant		23,247	1,787
	Expanded Troubled Families Scheme - PBR	1,031	-	Homes for Ukraine Sponsor Grant		2,580	2,286
	Domestic Abuse Services Grant	1,144 4,960	1,167 2,910				
Department of Health and Social Care	Independent Living Fund Grant	3,454	-	Public Health Grant		32,569	33,632
	Adult Social Care Support Grant (inc. Independent Living Fund)	17,916	32,684	Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund - Workforce Fund		-	3,485
	Trailblazer Funding	1,184	-	Fair Cost of Care Fund		1,547	-
	Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Grant	-	1,370	Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund Adult Social Care Discharge Fund		- 1,910	5,366 1,501
	Supporting Families Grant	-	1,106	Dedicated Schools Grant		248,447	264,341
Department for Education				Pupil Premium Grant		7,807	8,305
				PE and Sports Grant		2,268	2,216
				Universal Infant Free School Meals		3,889	4,046
				Adoption Support Fund		1,637	1,626
				Holidays & Activities Grant		1,367	1,894
				Teachers' Pay Additional Grant		-	1,430
				Delivering Better Value in SEND		-	1,000
				Early Years Supplementary Funding Supplementary Funding		- 3,550	2,978 4,285
Department for Transport				Bus Reform		-	1,294
Department for Culture, Media and Sport				Music Grant		843	866
Home Office				Fire (additional pension contributions) Asylum Seekers		1,362 5,599	1,362 7,028
Various	Other Revenue Grants	3,594	4,212	Other Revenue Grants		9,025	8,739
Various	Capital Grants	129,837	83,957	Capital Grants		-	-
Various	Developer Contributions	8,097	24,524				
Various	Other Capital Contributions	26,224	9,157				
Non Covid Grants	Total	249,242	223,236	Total		358,352	370,172

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

Grant issuing body	Credited to Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income	2022/23	2023/24	Credited to Services	2022/23	2023/24
		£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	Business Rates Relief Grant	13,512	-			
	COVID-19 Support Grant	-	-			
	Local Council Tax Support Grant	-546	-			
	Additional Section 31 Grant	-	-			
	Sales Fees & Charges Grant	-	-			
Department of Health and Social Care				Household Support Fund	6,845	3,351
				Infection Control Grants	54	-
				Workforce Recruitment & Retention Fund	38	-
Department for Education Various				Recovery Premium	1,195	1,111
	Other Revenue Grants	917	-	Other Revenue Grants	1,364	343
COVID Grants	Total	13,883	-	Total	9,496	4,805
All Grants	Total	263,125	223,236	Total	367,848	374,977

20. Taxation and Non - Specific Grant Income

A breakdown of the items in the Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income line within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is:

	2022/23	2023/24
Taxation & Non-Specific Grant Income	£'000	£'000
Council Tax Income	447,961	478,674
Non-Domestic Rates	29,389	36,024
Non Ringfenced Government Grants	99,583	105,598
Capital Grants and Contributions	164,158	117,638
Total	741,091	737,934

21. Related Party Transactions

The County Council is required to disclose material transactions with related parties – bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the County Council or to be controlled or influenced by the County Council. Disclosure of these transactions allows the reader of the accounts to assess the extent to which the County Council might have been constrained in its ability to operate independently or might have limited another party's ability to pursue its interests independently.

Central government is responsible for the statutory framework within which all local authorities operate and provides the majority of the Council's funding in the form of general and specific grants (as set out in Note 19).

Pension Fund
The County Council administers the Oxfordshire Pension Fund and this is a related party. During the year ended 31 March 2024, the County Council made employer contributions totalling £38.227m to the Fund. The County Council charged the Fund £1.682m for expenses incurred in administering the Fund. As at 31 March 2024 £4.289m was due to the Pension Fund and £0.187m by the Pension Fund.

Officers
No related parties

Elected Members
Councillor Roz Smith is a member of the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel.
Three Councillors are trustees of Oxfordshire Buildings Trust. The Council paid £0.017m to the trust during 2023/24.
One Councillor is a trustee of Experience Oxfordshire and one Councillor resigned as trustee in October 2023. The Council paid £0.004m to the trust during 2023/24.
Two Councillors are trustees of The Ark-T Centre. The Council paid £0.017m to the trust during 2023/24.
One Councillor is a trustee of Headington Action. The Council paid £0.001m to the trust during 2023/24.
One Councillor is Chairman Oxford Community Action. The Council paid £0.003m to the trust during 2023/24.
One Councillor is a trustee of Wantage Literary Festival. The Council paid £0.001m to the trust during 2023/24.
One Councillor is a trustee of the Acer Trust. The Council paid £0.283m to the trust during 2023/24.
One Councillor is a trustee, and one Councillor is a director of Oxford Preservation Trust. The Council paid £300 to the trust during 2023/24.
One Councillor is a director and shareholder of Total Pest Control UK Ltd. The Council paid £0.029m to the company during 2023/24.
One Councillor is a Local Councillor on Islip Parish Council. The Council paid £0.009m to the Parish Council during 2023/24.

Cont. Elected Members

One Councillor is a Local Councillor on Kidlington Parish Council. The Council paid £0.002m to the Parish Council during 2023/24.

One Councillor is a Local Councillor on Didcot Town Council. The Council paid £0.005m to the Town Council during 2023/24.

Two Councillors are Local Councillors on Bicester Town Council. The Council paid £0.0001m to the Town Council during 2023/24.

One Councillor is a Local Councillor on Witney Town Council. The Council paid £0.001m to the Town Council during 2023/24.

One Councillor is a Local Councillor on Banbury Town Council. The Council paid £0.0002m to the Town Council during 2023/24.

One Councillor is a Local Councillor on Abingdon Town Council. The Council paid £0.015m to the Town Council during 2023/24.

One Councillor is a Local Councillor on Carterton Town Council. The Council paid £0.008m to the Town Council during 2023/24.

One Councillor is a Local Councillor on Thame Town Council. The Council paid £0.08m to the Town Council during 2023/24.

Thirty-One County Councillors were also District Councillors within 2023-24

Commercial Relationships

The County Council incurred costs of £0.454m in 2023/24 for three interim directors and one interim programme manager contracted through Tile Hill Interim Executives.

The County Council incurred costs of £0.007m in 2023/24 for one interim strategic finance business partner contracted through Flexy Corporation.

The County Council incurred costs of £0.120m in 2023/24 for one interim finance business partner contracted through Flexy Corporation.

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP have been contracted to support the County Council with its Transformation programme. In 2023/24 the Council paid PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP £1.575m.

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

22. Movement in Property, Plant & Equipment (PPE)

2023/24	Other Land & Buildings	Vehicles, Plant, Furniture & Equipment	Surplus Assets	Assets Under Construction	Total Property Plant & Equipment	Service Concession assets included in PPE
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost or valuation as at 1 April	522,923	37,886	5,086	121,781	687,676	47,715
Additions	5,444	3,510	57	43,745	52,756	638
Donation	0	0	0	0	0	0
Revaluation increases (decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	16,110	0	2,867	0	18,977	11,313
Revaluation increases (decreases) recognised in the Surplus / Deficit on the Provision of Services	-8,738	0	-192	0	-8,930	221
Derecognition - disposals	0	-79	0	0	-79	0
Derecognition - other	-11,110	0	0	-854	-11,964	-638
Assets reclassified to / from Held for Sale	0	0	-125	0	-125	0
Assets reclassified to / from Investment Property	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assets reclassified to / from Surplus assets and vehicles, plant and equipment	0	0	0	-521	-521	0
Transfers *	7,080	-2,638	-57	-28,493	-24,108	0
Other movements in cost or valuation	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cost or valuation as at 31 March	531,709	38,679	7,636	135,658	713,682	59,249
Depreciation and impairment as at 1 April	-11,888	-20,772	-20	0	-32,679	-3,530
Depreciation charge	-12,899	-4,132	-63	0	-17,094	-1,472
Depreciation and impairment written out to the Revaluation Reserve	8,031	0	8	0	8,039	3,751
Depreciation and impairment written out to the Surplus / Deficit on Provision of Services	4,010	0	45	0	4,055	735
Impairment losses / (reversals) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	-1,015	0	0	0	-1,015	0
Impairment losses / (reversals) recognised in the Surplus / Deficit on Provision of Services	-438	0	0	0	-438	0
Derecognition - disposals	0	53	0	0	53	0
Derecognition - other	499	-28	0	0	471	0
Assets reclassified to / from Held for Sale	0	0	1	0	1	0
Assets reclassified to / from Investment Properties	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transfers	-353	353	0	0	0	0
Other movements in depreciation and impairment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Depreciation and impairment as at 31 March	-14,053	-24,526	-29	0	-38,607	-517
Net book Value at 31 March 2023	511,035	17,114	5,066	121,781	654,997	44,185
Net book Value at 31 March 2024	517,656	14,153	7,607	135,658	675,075	58,732

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

2022/23	Other Land & Buildings	Vehicles, Plant, Furniture & Equipment	Surplus Assets	Assets Under Construction	Total Property Plant & Equipment	Service Concession assets included in PPE
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost or valuation as at 1 April	610,480	34,818	5,367	92,272	742,937	47,715
Additions	5,699	3,038	0	49,297	58,034	1,000
Donation	0	0	0	0	0	0
Revaluation increases (decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	-56,023	0	673	0	-55,350	0
Revaluation increases (decreases) recognised in the Surplus / Deficit on the Provision of Services	-26,549	0	156	0	-26,393	0
Derecognition - disposals	0	-49	0	0	-49	0
Derecognition - other	-13,826	0	0	-5,463	-19,289	-1,000
Assets reclassified to / from Held for Sale	-1,470	0	0	0	-1,470	0
Transfers *	2,090	79	-1,110	-14,260	-13,201	0
Other movements in cost or valuation	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cost or valuation as at 31 March	522,923	37,886	5,086	121,781	687,676	47,715
Depreciation and Impairment as at 1 April	-19,200	-17,334	-26	0	-36,560	-2,265
Depreciation charge	-9,404	-3,488	-161	0	-13,053	-1,265
Depreciation and impairment written out to the Revaluation Reserve	10,809	0	33	0	10,842	0
Depreciation and impairment written out to the Surplus / Deficit on Provision of Services	6,342	0	34	0	6,376	0
Impairment losses / (reversals) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	-428	0	0	0	-428	0
Impairment losses / (reversals) recognised in the Surplus / Deficit on Provision of Services	-532	0	0	0	-532	0
Derecognition - disposals	0	50	0	0	50	0
Derecognition - other	542	0	83	0	625	0
Assets reclassified to / from Held for Sale	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assets reclassified to / from Investment Properties	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transfers	-17	0	17	0	0	0
Other movements in depreciation and impairment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Depreciation and impairment as at 31 March	-11,888	-20,772	-20	0	-32,680	-3,530
Net book Value at 31 March 2022	591,280	17,484	5,341	92,272	706,377	45,450
Net book Value at 31 March 2023	511,035	17,114	5,066	121,781	654,996	44,185

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Infrastructure Assets		
Net Book Value(modified historical cost) at 1 April	553,916	605,486
Additions	63,591	67,587
Transfers	13,201	24,108
Depreciation charge	-25,222	-27,843
Net Book Value at 31 March	605,486	669,338

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Reconciliation to Balance Sheet		
Infrastructure Assets	605,486	669,338
Other Property, Plant and Equipment	654,996	675,075
Total Property, Plant and Equipment-per Balance Sheet	1,260,482	1,344,413

23. Investment Properties

	2022/23 Non- current £'000	Current £'000	2023/24 Non- current £'000	Current £'000
Investment Properties				
Opening Balance at 1 April	27,416	0	25,900	0
Additions	4	0	0	0
Disposal/Derecognition	0	0	0	0
Net gain (+) / losses from fair value adjustments	1,002	0	-215	0
Assets reclassified to / from Investment Properties	-2,522	0	0	0
Other changes	0	0	0	0
Closing balance at 31 March	25,900	0	25,685	0

None of the investment properties are held under operating leases. There are no restrictions on the realisability of investment property or the remittance of income and proceeds of disposal. Classification in the fair value hierarchy, together with additional information for property classified as level 3 within the hierarchy is provided in the table overleaf.

The fair value for the agricultural properties has been based on the market approach using current market conditions and recent sales prices and other relevant information for similar assets in the local authority area. 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 at Level 2 in the fair value hierarchy.

The office and commercial units located in the local authority area are measured using the income approach where the expected cash flows from the properties are discounted (using a market-derived all risks discount rate) to establish the present value of the net income stream.

The Council's office and commercial units are therefore categorised as Level 3 in the fair value hierarchy as the measurement technique used significant unobservable inputs to determine the fair value measurements (and there is no reasonably available information that indicates that market participants would use different assumptions).

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

	Fair Value Level	Fair Value at 31 March 2024 £'000	Additional Information for level 3 properties Valuation technique	Unobservable inputs	Range (weighted average used)	Sensitivity
Agricultural units & other level 2 assets	2	18,314				
Office units	3	560	Income approach using an all risks discount rate to assess capital value	Discount Rate	8% - 11% (10%)	Significant changes in market conditions will effect the discount rate and will result in a significantly lower or higher fair value
Commercial units	3	6,812	Income approach using an all risks discount rate to assess capital value	Discount Rate	5% - 6% (5%)	Significant changes in market conditions will effect the discount rate and will result in a significantly lower or higher fair value
		25,685				

The movement for investment properties categorised at level 3 in the hierarchy as follows:

The fair value of the County Council's investment property is measured annually at each reporting date. All valuations are carried out internally, in accordance with the methodologies and bases for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. The County Council's valuations experts work closely with finance officers reporting directly to the chief financial officer on a regular basis regarding all valuation matters.

Level 3	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Balance at 1 April	7,926	7,532
Net gains (+) / losses (-) from fair value adjustments	1,147	-161
Disposals/de-recognition	0	0
Assets reclassified to / from Investment Properties	-1,541	0
Additions	0	0
	7,532	7,372

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

24. Assets Held for Sale

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Balance at 1 April	1,489	1,470
Assets newly classified as held for sale:		
Property, Plant and Equipment	0	124
Investment property	1,470	0
Revaluation gains / (losses)	0	0
Impairment losses	0	0
Assets declassified as held for sale:		
Property, Plant and Equipment	0	0
Assets derecognised	-1,489	-1,470
Additions	0	0
Balance at 31 March	1,470	124

25. Intangible Assets

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Gross Carrying value at 1 April	2,169	2,641
Additions	0	137
Transfers from Assets Under Construction	472	701
Derecognition	0	0
Gross Carrying value at 31 March	2,641	3,479
Amortisation and Impairment at 1 April	-1,351	-1,556
Amortisation for the year	-205	-464
Derecognition	0	0
Amortisation and Impairment at 31 March	-1,556	-2,020
Net Book Value at 1 April	818	1,085
Net Book Value at 31 March	1,085	1,459

26. Heritage Assets

Heritage assets are assets that are intended to be preserved in trust for future generations because of their cultural, environmental, or historical associations. This category of assets excludes assets with heritage characteristics that are used by the County Council in the provision of services - these are accounted for as operational assets within Property, Plant and Equipment.

The main heritage assets held by the County Council comprise museum collections, history centre collections and archaeological sites.

Information is not available on the cost of the heritage assets held by the County Council, other than for a very small number of items, as the majority have been donated or acquired by excavation. The County Council considers that obtaining valuations for the museum and history centre collections would involve a disproportionate cost in comparison to the benefits to the users of the accounts and therefore does not recognise these assets on the Balance Sheet. The County Council does not consider that reliable valuation information can be obtained for the archaeological sites because of the diverse nature of the sites and lack of comparable market values, and therefore does not recognise these assets on the Balance Sheet.

Although current valuation information is not available to recognise the heritage assets on the Balance Sheet, contents insurance of £3.191m for the Museum Service and the Oxfordshire

History Centre (based on historic valuations) provides an indication of the value of these items not recognised on the Balance Sheet.

27. Valuation of non-current assets

It is the policy of the County Council to revalue land, buildings and component assets within Property, Plant and Equipment on a three-year rolling programme set out in Note 1. In addition, material changes in asset valuations are adjusted for in the interim periods.

Investment properties valuations are reviewed annually. Assets held for sale are revalued at the point of reclassification to that category.

Property valuations are conducted by the County Council's internal and external property valuers. They provide an annual valuation report and valuation certificate which give details of their opinion of the value of specific assets, basis of valuation, assumptions made and details of the rolling programme, additional and ad-hoc valuations. Valuations have been undertaken in accordance with the RICS Valuation Standards published by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. The basis of valuations is set out in Note 1.

28. Private Finance Initiative (PFI and similar contracts – Homes for Older People)

The County Council has one PFI type contract (service concession arrangement) with an external operator, The Oxfordshire Care Partnership, relating to the provision of residential care homes and care services. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care represents the Council's interests as a director of the Partnership.

Provision of residential care services was originally in 19 homes across Oxfordshire under a 25-year contract with The Oxfordshire Care Partnership which came into operation in 2001. The County Council had an average of 70% of the beds in these homes. Under this arrangement, nine of the homes are subject to long term leases and these assets had previously been excluded from the County Council's Balance Sheet. A further ten homes were transferred to the contractor but with short term leases as the homes did not meet required property standards. These have now all been re-provided through a redevelopment programme.

The operator has built nine new homes and four extra care housing schemes through the redevelopment programme, whilst thirteen homes have been closed. The Oxfordshire Care Partnership also operate the new Chilterns Court Care Centre built by the County Council, which was completed in 2016/17 and replaces the former care home in Henley. Under the Code, the County Council is required to recognise homes that meet tests in respect of control of services and control of the residual interest in property on its Balance Sheet. All homes under the contract are included on the County Council's Balance Sheet, with exception of one home that does not meet the control tests specified in the Code. At the end of the contract, all properties currently on the Balance Sheet revert to County Council ownership.

The council's original 25-year agreement with Oxfordshire Care Partnership will end in 2026/27, however The Oxfordshire Care Partnership will continue to operate the homes until the end of 2031/32. There is no requirement for the County Council to purchase a set number or value of beds during the years 2027/28 to 2031/32 other than the obligation of both parties to maintain existing placements as at 31 March 2028. It has not yet been agreed on what basis any beds will be purchased after 31 March 2027.

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

The value of assets recognised under service concession arrangements at each Balance Sheet date and the movements in value during the year are provided as a memorandum to the movement in Property Plant and Equipment (Note 22).

The financial liabilities arising from the service concession arrangement and an analysis of movements in the year are set out below:

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Balance at 1 April	16,390	15,735
Liability repaid in the year	-655	-740
Balance at 31 March	15,735	14,996

Details of payments due to be made under the service concession arrangement are as follows, with comparative figures for 2023/24 below.

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	Service Costs £'000	Principal Repayments £'000	Interest Costs £'000	Lifecycle Replacement Payments £'000	Total £'000
2023/24					
Within 1 year	21,655	836	1,974	1,083	25,547
2-5 years	94,313	14,161	3,608	2,297	114,379
Total	115,968	14,997	5,581	3,380	139,926
2022/23					
Within 1 year	20,655	740	2,070	1,041	24,505
2-5 years	85,062	14,997	5,581	3,380	109,020
Total	105,717	15,736	7,651	4,421	133,525

The service concession arrangement forms part of the finance liability recorded on the Balance Sheet, together with finance leases and forward deals on investments. A reconciliation of the service concession liability to the total finance liability is as follows:

	Long-Term		Current	
	At 31 March 2023 £'000	At 31 March 2024 £'000	At 31 March 2023 £'000	At 31 March 2024 £'000
Service Concession Arrangement	14,997	14,161	740	836
Finance Leases	0	0	0	0
Total Finance Liability	14,997	14,161	740	836

29. Capital Spending

Details of the expenditure are set out in the tables below.

Capital Spending by Scheme	2023/24 £'000
ED955 St Edburg's - Exp to 3 Forms of Entry	11,347
Woodstock Expansion to 2 Forms of Entry	2,546
ED954 Lord Willaims 1 Forms of Entry Expansion	2,345
ED933 Blessed George Napier	2,965
ED929 NE Didcot Sires Hill - New Primary	4,153
ED945 Shrivenham - New Primary (relocated)	5,805
Programmes & Projects <£1m	7,628
Pupil Place Plan	36,789
Kennington Bridge - Replacement	3,644
ZEBRA Zero Emission Bus Reg Areas	8,641
North Oxford Corridor - Kidlington	1,278
Banbury Tramway Rd accessibility imp	1,049
A4095-B4100 Roundabout NW Bicester	2,420
Access to Witney (Shore Green)	1,523
North Oxford Corridor A44 Corr imp Peartree-Cassington Growth Deal	8,934
Wantage Eastern Link Rd (Growth Deal)	4,166
Watlington Relief Rd (Growth Deal)	1,747
Benson Relief Rd	1,147
Highways Infrastructure 2 A40 Westbound bus lane	2,544
Highways Infrastructure 1 Clifton Hampden bypass	1,074
Highways Infrastructure 1 Culham river crossing	3,633
A40 Science Transit (project derivatives)	12,726
Programmes & Projects <£1m	7,185
Major Infrastructure	61,711
20mph Speed Limit	1,626
Accessibility and Rd Safety Schemes project	1,407
Carriageways Prog Budget	10,474
Footway and Cycleway Works Prog Budget	2,329
Surface Treatments Prog Budget	7,162
Structural Highway Improvement Prog Budget	5,829
Drainage Improvements Prog Budget	2,095
Street Light LED replacement	10,859
Bridges Packaged Structural Maintenance	3,199
Programmes & Projects <£1m	8,235
Highways Asset Management Plan	53,217
Green Homes Grant	1,768
Oathill, Enstone Children's Home	1,057
Aston Children's Home (ED932)	1,567
Programmes & Projects <£1m	5,244
Property and Investment	9,636
Rural Gigabit Connectivity Hub Sites	1,972
End User Computing Refresh	1,144
Programmes & Projects <£1m	1,746
ICT Strategy	4,862
Better Care Funding Disabled Facilities Grant	7,240
Programmes & Projects <£1m	1,446
Passport Funding	8,686
Capitalised purchase of vehicles	471
Capitalised purchase of Equipment	553
Vehicles and Equipment	1,024
Total Capital Spending	175,924

Capital Spending by Asset Class	2023/24 £'000
Property, Plant and Equipment	119,705
Intangible Assets	317
Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute	55,902
Capital Loans	0
Repayment of capital grants and contributions	0
Total Capital Spending	175,924

30. Capital Financing

The capital expenditure has been financed from the following sources:

Capital Financing	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Prudential and other unsupported borrowing	41,704	59,845
Capital Receipts	0	0
Grants & Contributions	127,879	113,863
Revenue	2,577	2,216
Total	172,160	175,924

31. Capital Financing Requirement

The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) is a measure of the capital expenditure incurred historically by the County Council that has yet to be financed (including assets acquired under finance leases and service concession arrangements). The movements on the CFR for the year are as follows:

Capital Financing	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Capital Financing Requirement as at 1 April	390,556	420,867
New unsupported borrowing	41,704	59,845
Service Concession arrangements - lifecycle prepayments	1,001	1,041
Loan repayments and other adjustments	0	-89
Minimum Revenue Provision for the year	-12,394	-14,238
Increase (+) / decrease (-) in Capital Financing Requirement	30,311	46,559
Capital Financing Requirement at 31 March	420,867	467,426

32. Capital Commitments

As at 31 March 2024 the Council was contractually committed to £66.444m (£47.205m as at 31 March 2023) on the following schemes:

Capital Commitments by Scheme	£'000
Pupil Places	
Shrivenham - 1.5 Forms of Entry Primary School (ED945)	1,359
ED892 Relocate Oxford Hospital Sch	684
NE Didcot, Sires Hill - 2 Forms of Entry Primary Schol (ED929)	982
BGN – 2 Forms of Entry Expansion (ED933)	835
Woodstock Expansion to 2FE	610
St Edburg's Primary School - Expansion to 3FE (ED955)	892
Grove Airfield - Secondary School (ED965)	22,997
SEND Free School - Faringdon (ED985)	1,114
Bloxham Grove SEND Free School (ED986)	533
Below £500k	2,859
	32,865
Major Infrastructure and Highways	
Highways Infrastructure 1 Culham river crossing	3,227
Highways Infrastructure 1 Clifton Hampden bypass	2,049
Highways Infrastructure 2 A40 Westbound bus lane	644
Highways Infrastructure 2 A40 dualing Witney Eynsham	1,900
Benson Relief Rd (Growth Deal)	3,339
Wantage Eastern Link Rd (Growth Deal)	1,791
Accessibility and Rd Safety projects	580
A4095-B4100 Roundabout NW Bicester	6,332
North Oxford Corridor - Kidlington	1,910
USVF Road Safety - RAF Barford	1,020
Kennington Bridge - Replacement	882
Below £500k	6,078
	29,752
Property and Investments	
Below £0.5m	2,237
	2,237
ICT & Passported Funding	
ICT - End User	656
Below £500k	934
	1,590
Total Capital Commitments	66,444

33. Financial Instrument Carrying Values

Financial assets comprise long-term and short-term investments, long-term and short-term debtors (excluding statutory debtors and prepayments) and cash & cash equivalents. Financial liabilities comprise long-term and short-term borrowing, creditors (excluding statutory creditors), finance leases, the finance liability element of service concession arrangements and forward deals on investments. The Code specifies the categorisation of these assets (see Note 1 Summary of Significant Accounting Policies). For each category, the financial instruments disclosed in the Balance Sheet are carried at the following values:

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

	Long-Term		Current	
	At 31 March	At 31 March	At 31 March	At 31 March
	2023	2024	2023	2024
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Financial assets at Amortised Cost	74,879	40,158	426,035	449,206
Financial assets at fair value through profit and loss	0	0	113,796	137,466
Total Financial assets	74,879	40,158	539,831	586,672
Financial Liabilities at amortised cost	289,379	280,544	106,871	97,287
Total Financial Liabilities	289,379	280,544	106,871	97,287

Statutory debtors and creditors, receipts in advance and the capital prepayment account are not considered to be financial instruments and are therefore excluded from the above carrying values.

The County Council has not pledged any collateral for liabilities or contingent liabilities and, as at 31 March 2024, there were no defaults or breaches relating to loans payable.

34. Financial Instrument Fair Values

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. Financial assets classified as assets at fair value through profit and loss and all derivative assets and liabilities are carried in the Balance Sheet at fair value. For most assets, including shares in money market funds and other pooled funds, the fair value is taken from the market price. Financial assets at amortised cost and all non-derivative financial liabilities are carried in the Balance Sheet at amortised cost. Their fair values have been estimated by calculating the net present value of the remaining contractual cash flows at 31 March 2024, using the following methods and assumptions:

- Loans borrowed by the Council have been valued by discounting the contractual cash flows over the whole life of the instrument at the appropriate market rate for local authority loans.
- The value of “Lender’s Option Borrower’s Option” (LOBO) loans have been increased by the value of the embedded options. Lenders’ options to propose an increase to the interest rate on the loan have been valued according to a proprietary model for Bermudan cancellable swaps. Borrower’s contingent options to accept the increased rate or repay the loan have been valued at zero, on the assumption that lenders will only exercise their options when market rates have risen above the contractual loan rate.
- The fair values of other long-term loans and investments have been discounted at the market rates for similar instruments with similar remaining terms to maturity on 31st March.
- The fair values of finance lease liabilities and of service concession liabilities have been calculated by discounting the contractual cash flows (excluding service charge elements) at the rate for new PWLB borrowing.
- No early repayment or impairment is recognised for any financial instrument, other than short-term debtors.
- The fair value of short-term instruments, including trade payables and receivables, is assumed to approximate to the carrying amount given the low and stable interest rate environment.

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

Fair values are shown in the table below, split by their level in the fair value hierarchy:

- **Level 1** – fair value is only derived from quoted prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities, e.g. bond prices
- **Level 2** – fair value is calculated from inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the asset or liability, e.g. interest rates or yields for similar instruments
- **Level 3** – fair value is determined using unobservable inputs, e.g. non-market data such as cash flow forecasts or estimated creditworthiness

Financial Liabilities	Fair Value Level	Balance Sheet At 31 March 2023 £'000	Fair Value At 31 March 2023 £'000	Balance Sheet At 31 March 2024 £'000	Fair Value At 31 March 2024 £'000
Financial liabilities held at amortised cost:					
Long-term loans from PWLB*	2	246,573	245,478	244,834	245,478
Long-term LOBO/money market loans*	2	30,442	26,222	25,344	26,222
Short-term LOBO/money market loans*	2	20,466	18,549	15,455	18,549
Finance lease payables and service concession liabilities	3	15,736	740	14,997	836
Total		313,217	290,989	300,630	291,085
Liabilities for which fair value is not disclosed **		83,033		86,408	77,201
Total Financial Liabilities		396,250		377,831	
Recorded on balance sheet as:					
Short-term creditors		70,781		74,155	
Short-term borrowing		35,351		22,296	
Short-term finance liabilities		740		836	
Long-term borrowing		274,383		266,383	
Long-term finance liabilities		14,997		14,161	
Total Financial Liabilities		396,252		377,831	

The fair value of financial liabilities held at amortised cost is higher than their balance sheet carrying amount because the authority's portfolio of loans includes a number of loans where the interest rate payable is higher than the current rates available for similar loans as at the Balance Sheet date. Similarly the discount rate implied in the service concession arrangement and finance leases is higher than the rates available for new borrowing at the Balance Sheet date.

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

Financial Assets	Fair Value Level	Balance Sheet At 31 March 2023 £'000	Fair Value At 31 March 2023 £'000	Balance Sheet At 31 March 2024 £'000	Fair Value At 31 March 2024 £'000
Financial assets held at fair value:					
Money market funds	1	18,438	18,438	39,660	39,660
Bond, equity and property funds	1	95,358	95,358	97,806	97,806
Financial assets held at amortised cost:					
Long-term loans to local authorities*	2	70,112	88,430	35,546	34,972
Long-term debtors	3	5,179	5,179	5,158	5,158
Total		189,087	207,405	178,170	177,596
Assets for which fair value is not disclosed **		425,623		448,660	
Total Financial Assets		614,710		626,830	
Recorded on balance sheet as:					
Long-term debtors		5,179		5,158	
Long-term investments		69,700		35,000	
Short-term debtors		59,060		80,471	
Short-term investments		463,908		471,254	
Cash and cash equivalents		16,865		34,947	
Total Financial Assets		614,712		626,830	

* For the purpose of fair value comparison accrued interest on long term investments has been classified as long term in the balance sheet total.

**The fair value of short-term financial assets including trade receivables is assumed to approximate to the carrying amount.

The fair value of financial assets held at amortised cost is higher than their balance sheet carrying amount because the interest rate on similar investments is now lower than that obtained when the investment was originally made.

35. Long Term Debtors

An analysis of long-term debtors is set out as follows:

	At 31 March 2023 £'000	At 31 March 2024 £'000
Key Worker Loans	226	226
Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act loans	1,532	1,272
Children's Act: Loans to foster carers	547	515
Other	2,874	3,145
	5,179	5,158
Capital Prepayment Account	5,742	6,144
Total	10,921	11,302

Key Worker loans, Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act loans and Children's Act loans to foster carers are soft loans in that they are contracted at interest rates below market rates (zero in most cases).

The Capital Prepayment Account holds prepayments for lifecycle replacement costs relating to the service concession arrangement. As lifecycle replacements actually take place the value of the works is transferred to Property, Plant and Equipment in 2023/24 is £0.638m (£1.000m was transferred in 2022/23). For one property that the County Council has control over the residual interest but not control over the services (and therefore does not meet the tests of a service concession arrangement), the account also holds an amount for the excess of the expected fair value of the property at the end of the arrangement over the amount the County Council is required to pay upon reversion. This is built up from payments made by the County Council over the life of the arrangement.

36. Debtors

Amounts falling due to the County Council in less than a year are set out as follows:

	At 31 March 2023 £'000	At 31 March 2024 £'000
Government Departments	24,278	18,351
Other Local Authorities	22,342	16,788
Health Authorities	19,379	25,545
Payments in Advance	24,098	18,359
Bodies external to general government (i.e. all other bodies)	78,877	86,167
	168,974	165,210
Less Impairment Allowance Account	-23,120	-24,066
Total	145,854	141,144

Under the arrangements for accounting for financial instruments, all financial assets are assessed for impairment. The Code permits the reduction in the carrying amount of financial assets to be held within an allowance account rather than adjusting the value of the financial asset directly. The movement in the debtor impairment allowance account is as follows:

Impairment Allowance	2022/23	2023/24
	£'000	£'000
Balance at 1 April	-20,038	-23,120
Decrease in allowance	-764	688
Increase in allowance	-2,319	-1,634
Balance at 31 March	-23,121	-24,066

37. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise the amount of cash balances held at the bank and in County Council establishments (excluding monies held on behalf of third parties), balances held in call accounts and monies held in Money Market Funds.

An analysis of cash and cash equivalents held by the County Council shows:

	At 31	At 31
	March	March
	2023	2024
	£'000	£'000
Cash at bank and in hand(+)/Overdrawn (-)	-1,589	-4,729
Call Accounts	15	15
Money Market Funds	18,438	39,660
Total	16,864	34,946

38. Risks arising from financial instruments

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

- Credit risk – the possibility of financial loss stemming from other parties no longer being able to make payments or meet contractual obligations to the County Council
- Liquidity risk – the possibility that the County Council might not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments when they fall due.
- Market risk – the possibility that the County Council may suffer a financial loss as a result of changes in such measures as interest rates and movements in financial markets.

The County Council's risk management of financial instruments is carried out by the Treasury Management Team, under policies approved by full Council in the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy.

The Treasury Management Strategy sets out the approach to managing any borrowings the County Council may be required to undertake to meet the needs of the capital programme.

The Annual Investment Strategy sets out the County Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments, including the treasury limits in force to limit the treasury risk and activities of the County Council.

Credit Risk

Credit risk arises from deposits with banks and financial institutions, as well as credit exposure to the County Council's debtors. Deposits are restricted to institutions that meet the County Council's minimum credit rating criteria. Deposits are not made to banks or building societies with a FITCH short-term credit rating below F1, long-term rating below BBB-, unless there are other exceptional circumstances including Government ownership or Government guarantee.

Longer-term deposits of 1 year or more are restricted to the higher rated institutions with a minimum short-term FITCH rating of F1+, long-term rating AA-, or other Government bodies (e.g. other Local Authorities).

Receivables are collectively assessed for credit risk in the following groupings:

	Allowance set aside based on historic rate	At 31 March 2023		At 31 March 2024	
		Gross Receivable £000	Loss allowance £000	Gross Receivable £000	Loss allowance £000
Corporate Debtors:					
Trade receivables under £10k after 120 days	60%	409	227	409	228
		409	227	409	228
Adult Social Care debtors:					
Debtors with an account balance under £20k after 6 months	50% of total customer balance	4,392	2,473	4,823	2,722
		4,392	2,473	4,823	2,722
Total		4,801	2,700	5,232	2,950

The following receivables are individually assessed for impairment:

The following receivables are individually assessed for impairment:	At 31 March 2023		At 31 March 2024	
	Gross Receivable £000	Loss allowance £000	Gross Receivable £000	Loss allowance £000
Corporate Debtors:				
Individuals and sole traders - all debts over £10k after 120 days	413	227	573	237
Organisations - all debts over £10k after 120 days	277	223	412	202
	690	450	985	439
Adult Social Care debtors:				
Adult social care debtors with an account balance over £20k after 6 months	3,568	2,255	4,823	2,722
	3,568	2,255	4,823	2,722
Total	4,258	2,705	5,808	3,161

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

The next table summarises the nominal value (excluding accrued interest) of the Council's investment portfolio at 31 March 2024 and confirms that all investments were made in line with the Council's approved credit rating criteria at the time of placing the investment. The table includes money market funds and call accounts classed as cash and cash equivalents at 31 March 2024.

Aged Debtors	At 31 March 2023 £000	At 31 March 2024 £000
Less than 1 month	13,861	18,687
Between 1 and 3 months	3,344	5,090
Between 3 and 6 months	4,418	4,812
Between 6 month and 1 year	2,787	3,654
Between 1 and 3 years	7,320	8,495
Over 3 years	3,378	3,615
Total	35,110	44,354

Page	Counterparty	Credit Rating Criteria Met when Investment Placed? YES / NO	Credit Rating Criteria Met on 31 March 2024? YES / NO	Balance Invested as at 31 March 2024						Total £000
				Up to 1 month £000	≥ 1 month and < 3 months £000	≥ 3 months and < 6 months £000	≥ 6 months and < 12 months £000	≥ 12 months and < 24 months £000	≥ 24 months and < 36 months £000	
				£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
61	Banks									
	UK	Yes	Yes							0
	Banks non-UK									
	Australia	Yes	Yes							0
	Netherlands	Yes	Yes							0
	Singapore	Yes	Yes							0
	Total Banks			0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Local Authorities and Police Authorities	Yes	Yes	38,700	70,000	110,000	146,000	25,000	10,000	399,700
	Notice Accounts			0						0
	Bond Funds	Yes	Yes	74,914						74,914
	Property Funds	Yes	Yes	22,892						22,892
	Money Market Funds	Yes	Yes	39,660						39,660
	Call Accounts	Yes	Yes	15						15
	Total			176,181	70,000	110,000	146,000	25,000	10,000	537,181

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

The analysis below shows that all deposits outstanding as at 31 March 2024 met the County Council's credit rating criteria at that date.

Within the £176.181m short-term debtors included in financial assets at amortised cost, £38.700m were past due at 31 March 2023 (£37.990m at 31 March 2023). The past due amount can be analysed by age as follows:

None of these past-due short-term debtors have been individually impaired. An impairment allowance of £1.634m has been provided for past due debtors that are financial instruments based on past and current experience (£2.319m at 31 March 2023). This is the County Council's estimate of maximum exposure to uncollectable debts. £24.066m of the debtor impairment allowance is based on collective assessments of debtors with similar characteristics. Individual impairment allowances have been provided for monies owed from a home support provider that went into liquidation (£0.288m) and for overdue library fines (£0.135m). The past due debtors analysis and impairment allowance quoted above exclude those for statutory debtors as these are not considered to be financial instruments.

The key worker, Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act and Children's Act loans are long term debtors and are secured on property.

Liquidity Risk

As the County Council has access to borrowings from the Public Works Loans Board, there is no significant risk that it will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments under financial instruments. Instead, the risk is that the County Council may be bound to replenish a significant proportion of its borrowings at a time of unfavourable interest rates. The strategy is to spread the maturity dates of fixed debt so that a significant proportion of the portfolio does not mature in any one year.

The maturity analysis of borrowing and financial liabilities is as follows:

Amount at 31 March 2023		Amount at 31 March 2024			Total £000
		Fixed Rate £000	Variable Rate £000	Other Finance Liabilities £000	
£000					
36,092	Less than 1 year	17,566	16,654	836	35,056
8,836	Between 1 and 2 years	12,909	5,689	944	19,542
91,161	Between 2 and 5 years	94,861	15,639	13,217	123,717
85,383	Between 5 and 10 years	117,139	0	-	117,139
104,000	More than 10 years	151,176	0	0	151,176
325,472		393,651	37,982	14,997	446,630

All trade and other payables are due to be paid in less than one year.

Market Risk

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

- Borrowings at variable rates – the interest expense charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services will rise
- Borrowings at fixed rates – the fair value of the long-term borrowings will fall
- Investments at variable rates – the variation in the interest income credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services will be dependent upon the nature and proportion of structured products
- Investments at fixed rates – the fair value of the long-term assets will fall

The County Council has a number of strategies for managing interest rate risk. For example, use of Lender's Option Borrowers Option (LOBO) loans is restricted to 20% of the debt portfolio.

In response to the environment of increasing interest rates, the Council sets fixed and variable rate interest rate exposure limits through its Treasury Management Strategy. These are designed to ensure that the County Council is not exposed to interest rate rises which could adversely impact on the revenue budget.

The Treasury Management Strategy Team regularly review the debt and investment portfolios and the impact of interest rate changes on the annual budget.

If the return on investments had been 1% higher, with all other variables held constant, the financial effect would be as follows:

If the return on investments had been 1% higher, with all other variables held constant, the financial effect would be as follows:

2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
0	0
0	0
-2,251	-1,915
-405	-27
-2,656	-1,942
Impact on CIES	

If the return on investments had been 1% lower, with all other variables held constant, the financial effect would be as follows:

2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
0	0
0	0
2,229	1,915
385	27
2,614	1,942
Impact on CIES	

Where prevailing rates were below 1% for new debt or investments, zero return has been assumed where a reduction in interest rates by 1% would imply a negative return. Negative return is applicable to available for sale assets.

Price Risk

The County Council does not generally invest in equity shares but does have investments in externally managed pooled funds which may invest in instruments sensitive to price movements. The fund managers monitor price fluctuations and have strategies for limiting the impact of adverse price movements of underlying investments within the pooled funds.

The Council's investment in a pooled property fund is subject to the risk of falling commercial property prices. A 5% fall in commercial property prices at 31 March 2024 would result in a £1.2m (31 March 2023: £1.2m) charge to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services which is then transferred to the Pooled Investment Funds Adjustment Account.

The Council's investment in pooled equity funds is subject to the risk of falling share prices. A 5% fall in share prices at 31 March 2024 would result in a £3.8m (31 March 2023: £3.3m) charge to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services which is then transferred to the Pooled Investment Funds Adjustment Account.

This risk is limited by the Council's maximum exposure to pooled funds of 50% of the total investment portfolio.

Foreign Exchange Risk

The council's deposits and debt instruments are denominated in sterling.

39. Creditors

A breakdown of the items within the creditors category on the Balance Sheet is given in the following table:

	At 31 March 2023 £'000	At 31 March 2024 £'000
Receipts in Advance		
Government Departments	5,145	7,019
Other Local Authorities	1,431	1,579
Health Authorities	18	50
Bodies external to general government (i.e. all other bodies)	9,546	7,165
	16,140	15,813
Creditors		
Government Departments	10,510	9,252
Other Local Authorities	8,422	8,042
Health Authorities	4,298	8,919
Bodies external to general government (i.e. all other bodies)	74,631	78,941
	97,861	105,154
Short Term Creditors and RIA	114,001	120,967
Long Term Receipts in Advance	30,030	34,942
Total	144,031	155,909

Long Term Receipts in Advance relate to contributions received which have conditions attached to them that are not expected to be satisfied within the next 12 months.

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

40. Provisions

A breakdown of the items within the Provisions category on the Balance Sheet is set out below, analysed between those due within 1 year and those due after 1 year, together with the movements for the year is as follows:

	Balance at 31 March 2023 £'000	Reclassification between short and long term £'000	Additional provisions made in 2023/24 £'000	Amounts used in 2023/24 £'000	Unused amounts reversed in 2023/24 £'000	Balance at 31 March 2024 £'000
Provision due within 1 year						
Insurance	970	1,045	990	-846	-1,028	705
Pooled Budgets	0	0	0	0	0	0
Redundancy	0	0	0	0	0	0
MMI Scheme of Arrangement	80	0	125	-3	0	202
Business Rates	3,469	0	4,280	0	-3,469	4,280
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
	4,519	1,045	5,395	-849	-4,497	5,187
Provision due after 1 year						
Insurance	2,197	-1,045	3,175	-315	-50	4,389
	2,197	-1,045	3,175	-315	-50	4,389
Total	6,716	0	8,570	-1,164	-4,547	9,576

	Balance at 31 March 2022 £'000	Reclassification between short and long term £'000	Additional provisions made in 2022/23 £'000	Amounts used in 2022/23 £'000	Unused amounts reversed in 2022/23 £'000	Balance at 31 March 2023 £'000
Provision due within 1 year						
Insurance	957	1,736	776	-850	-1,648	970
Pooled Budgets	1,850	0	0	-1,850	0	0
Redundancy	0	0	0	0	0	0
MMI Scheme of Arrangement	130	0	13	-7	-55	80
Business Rates	4,456	0	3,469	0	-4,456	3,469
Joint Use	0	0	0	0	0	0
	7,393	1,736	4,258	-2,707	-6,159	4,519
Provision due after 1 year						
Insurance	3,741	-1,736	860	99	-768	2,197
	3,741	-1,736	860	99	-768	2,197
Total	11,134	0	5,118	-2,608	-6,927	6,716

Details of the provisions held at 31 March 2024 are as follows:

- Insurance claims are managed by the County Council's Insurance Team, working with external insurers and legal advisors to achieve a satisfactory outcome. The time required to settle these claims will depend upon the complexity of each case and the approach adopted by each claimant, but the expectation is that the majority of these cases will be settled within 18 months to two years. In a small number of cases where the final liability is dependent on a long-term medical prognosis, the claim may take longer to settle to ensure all the medical facts are known.
- The County Council has claims outstanding with Municipal Mutual Insurance (MMI) Plc. In November 2012 the directors of MMI triggered a process to wind up the business. This means the County Council may have to repay all or part of the insurance claims settled since the company ceased to trade, as well as fund any outstanding claims. The current levy of 25% has been paid against settled claims, therefore as at 31 March 2024 the Council has a potential liability of £3.621m remaining on previously settled claims, plus the value of any outstanding and future claims.
- Under the Business Rates Retention Scheme the County Council is required to account for its share of the billing authorities' provision for appeals on business rates valuations.

41. Deferred Income

The deferred income balance of £2.518m at 31 March 2024 (£3.349m at 31 March 2023) relates to lease premiums received under the service concession arrangement with Oxfordshire Care Partnership and in relation to two other leases, which are being released to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement over the lives of the arrangements.

42. County Fund Balance

The balance on the County Fund at 31 March 2024 was £41.949m (£22.642m at 31 March 2023) as shown in Movement in Reserves Statement.

43. Capital Grants Receipts in Advance

The balance on this account represents capital grants and contributions which have been received but not yet recognised as income as they have conditions attached to them that require the monies to be returned to the provider if not used for the purposes specified. The movement on the account, split between short term and long term is as follows:

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2022/23 Capital Grants £'000	Developer Contributions £'000	Other Contributions £'000	Total £'000	2023/24					
				Capital Grants £'000	Developer Contributions £'000	Other Contributions £'000	Total £'000		
Page 167	Short Term:								
	15,218	5,272	0	20,490	Balance as at 1 April	10,344	5,397	0	15,741
	7,352	6,290	0	13,642	Received/refunded during the year	8,360	-4,652	0	3,708
	-13,026	-20,121	0	-33,147	Transferred to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement during the year	-3,515	-27,029	0	-30,544
	800	13,956	0	14,756	Transfer between short and long term	0	14,229	0	14,229
	10,344	5,397	0	15,741	Balance at 31 March	15,189	-12,055	0	3,134
	Long Term:								
	800	158,762	65	159,627	Balance as at 1 April	500	169,965	65	170,530
	500	35,002	0	35,502	Received/refunded during the year	0	45,633	0	45,633
	0	-13,162	0	-13,162	Transferred to Capital grants unapplied	0	861	0	861
	0	3,319	0	3,319	Interest	0	4,958	0	4,958
	-800	-13,956	0	-14,756	Transfer between short and long term	0	-14,229	0	-14,229
	500	169,965	65	170,530	Balance at 31 March	500	207,188	65	207,753
10,844	175,362	65	186,271	Total Balance at 31 March	15,689	195,133	65	210,887	

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

44. Earmarked Reserves

	Balance at 31 March 2022 £'000	In year movement 2022/23 £'000	Balance at 31 March 2023 £'000	In year movement 2023/24 £'000	Balance at 31 March 2024 £'000
School Reserves	14,518	-1,591	12,927	215	13,142
Vehicle and Equipment Reserve	2,681	767	3,448	663	4,111
Revenue Grants and Contribution Reserve	24,691	12,158	36,849	-3,291	33,558
Government Initiatives	3,449	-1,103	2,345	808	3,153
Trading Accounts	460	-249	211	-132	79
Council Elections	189	195	384	188	571
Partnership Reserves	2,397	-528	1,870	184	2,053
On Streetcar Parking	3,970	975	4,945	1,560	6,506
Zero Emissions Zone Reserve	0	503	503	698	1,201
Transformation Reserve	2,187	-716	1,470	365	1,835
Demographic Risk Reserve	9,000	4,000	13,000	4,000	17,000
Youth Provision Reserve	262	0	262	-240	22
Budget Prioritisation Reserve	18,534	-7,104	11,430	-683	10,747
Insurance Reserve	11,726	1,159	12,884	-2,597	10,287
Business Rates Reserve	4,130	5,354	9,484	2,180	11,664
Capital Reserve	47,840	20,390	68,230	12,834	81,064
Redundancy Reserve	3,283	-926	2,357	1	2,358
Investment Prime Pumping Reserve	2,000	0	2,000	-1,880	120
Council Tax Collection Fund Reserve	6,000	-3,000	3,000	0	3,000
Covid-19 Reserve	26,247	-10,847	15,400	-7,500	7,900
Total Earmarked Reserves	183,562	19,436	202,998	7,372	210,370

School Reserves

In accordance with the Education Reform Act 1988, the scheme of Local Management of Schools provides for the carry forward of individual school surpluses and deficits. These reserves are committed to be spent on schools. The following table provides an analysis of school surplus and deficits:

	Balance at 31 March 2023		Balance at 31 March 2024	
	No. of schools	Balance £'000	No. of schools	Balance £'000
Primary Schools				
Schools in surplus	113	13,557	109	14,570
Schools in deficit	16	-1,269	20	-1,572
Secondary Schools				
Schools in surplus	0	0	0	0
Schools in deficit	1	-1,142	1	-1,108
Special Schools				
Schools in surplus	4	1,784	3	1,393
Schools in deficit	0	0	1	-142
Sub-Total Revenue	134	12,929	134	13,142
Closed schools and schools contingency		0		0
Schools Forum & miscellaneous activities		0		0
Total	134	12,929	134	13,142

Insurance Reserve

An independent actuary, Arthur J Gallagher, carries out a full valuation of the County Council's employers and public liability, motor, property and personal accident liability every three years using generally accepted actuarial methods. Interim valuations take place annually in between. The last full valuation was completed as at 31 March 2021.

The actuaries projected the standard claims arising in future years in respect of the period up to 31 March 2024 at £1.924m. In addition to these claims the actuaries have also highlighted an amount in respect of Municipal Mutual Insurance Plc (MMI) clawback and non-standard claims (for example exceptional and latent claims) which in total has been assessed at £1.740m. The sum of £0.581m has been included in the reserves to cover MMI clawback noted as a contingent liability.

	At 31 March 2023 £'000	At 31 March 2024 £'000
Standard claims likely to be received as at 31 March	1,884	1,924
Additional Incurred but not reported/Latent claims as assessed by Actuarial review	1,786	1,740
Municipal Mutual Insurance clawback as assessed by actuarial review	544	581
Risk management	8,671	6,042
Total	12,885	10,287

45. Usable Capital Receipts

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Balance at 1 April	30,103	31,672
Net receipts from sale of assets	1,582	1,437
Net receipts from repayment of loans	0	0
Receipts applied to finance capital expenditure	-13	-33
Balance at 31 March	31,672	33,076

This reserve has been established for the purpose of financing capital expenditure in future years. Unutilised capital receipts at 31 March 2024 have been earmarked for future schemes. An analysis of the net capital receipts from the sale of assets is set out in the following table:

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Net Capital Receipts from the sale of assets		
Other receipts from the sale of assets under £500,000	0	23
Total	0	23

46. Capital Grants and Contributions Unapplied

The balance on this account represents grants and contributions which have been recognised as income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement but not yet applied to finance capital expenditure.

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Balance at 1 April	181,120	218,358
Applied during the year	-63,890	-42,872
Repaid during the year	-107	-25
Interest	1,265	1,943
Recognised as income but not applied during the year	96,496	45,402
Transfers from Capital grants received in advance	3,474	-861
Balance at 31 March	218,358	221,945

47. Unusable Reserves

A breakdown of reserves within the unusable reserves category on the Balance Sheet is set out in the following table.

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Unusable Reserves		
Pooled Fund Adjustment Account	-4,902	-2,454
Pensions Reserve	-290,583	-129,642
Revaluation Reserve	158,223	177,234
Capital Adjustment Account	721,293	738,797
Financial Instruments Adjustment Account	-230	-228
Collection Fund Adjustment Account	17,183	11,366
Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account	-33,610	-45,824
Accumulated Absences Account	-3,270	-3,459
Total	564,104	745,790

48. Pooled Funds Adjustment Account

The Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve holds gains /losses arising from the movement in fair value of assets held within the Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income assets category.

2022/23 £'000		2023/24 £'000
5,265	Balance at 1 April	-4,903
0	Increase in value of assets held at Fair Value through Profit and Loss	3,416
-10,168	Decrease in value of assets held at Fair Value through Profit and Loss	-967
0	Amounts transferred to the General Fund on disposal	0
-4,903	Balance at 31 March	-2,454

49. Revaluation Reserve

The Revaluation Reserve contains the gains made by the County Council arising from increases in the value of Property, Plant and Equipment. The balance is reduced when assets with accumulated gains are revalued downwards or impaired, consumed through depreciation or disposed. The Reserve contains only revaluation gains accumulated since 1 April 2007, when the Reserve was created. Accumulated gains arising before that date are consolidated into the balance on the Capital Adjustment Account.

2022/23		Revaluation Reserve	2023/24	
£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
	214,793	Balance as at 1 April		158,223
-55,352		Revaluation of assets	18,977	
-428		Impairment of assets	-1,015	
10,137		Write back of accumulated depreciation on revaluations	7,528	
705		Write back of accumulated impairment on revaluations	511	
	-44,938	Surplus or deficit on revaluation of non current assets not posted to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services		26,001
	463	Asset Transfers		0
-3,846		Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation	-3,747	
-8,249		Accumulated gains on assets sold or scrapped	-3,243	
	-12,095	Amounts written off to the Capital Adjustment Account		-6,990
	158,223	Total Balance at 31 March		177,234

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

50. Capital Adjustment Account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences between accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction, or enhancement of those assets under statutory provisions. The account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or enhancement as depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations 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 County Council as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction, or enhancement. The account also contains revaluation gains accumulated on Property, Plant and Equipment before 1 April 2007, the date the Revaluation Reserve was created to hold such gains.

2022/23		Capital Adjustment Account	2023/24	
£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
	695,061	Balance as at 1 April		721,291
		Reversal of Items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES):		
-38,273		Charges for depreciation for non-current assets	-44,937	
-532		Charges for impairment for non-current assets	-438	
-20,017		Revaluation losses / subsequent gains on Property, Plant and Equipment	-4,875	
-204		Amortisation of Intangible Assets	-462	
-49,449		Revenue Expenditure funded from capital under statute	-55,904	
-18,665		Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/ loss on derecognition	-11,518	
0		Removal of finance liability on derecognition of assets held under finance leases	0	
	-127,140			-118,134
		Adjusting amounts written out of the Revaluation Reserve:		
3,845		Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation	3,747	
6,759		Accumulated gains on assets sold or scrapped	3,243	
-463		Balance on reclassification of Investment Properties to PPE	0	
	10,141			6,990
		Capital Financing applied in year:		
63,989		Capital grants and contributions credited to the CIES that have been applied to capital financing	71,007	
63,890		Application of grants to capital financing from the Capital Grants Unapplied account	42,872	
0		Reversal of grants and contributions applied in previous years	0	
12,394		Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment charged against the County Fund balance	14,239	
1,954		Capital expenditure charged against the County Fund balance	2,216	
	142,227			130,334
	1,002	Movements in the market value of Investment Properties debited or credited to the CIES		-215
0		Amounts of Investment Properties written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on derecognition		0
1,489		Accumulated gains on Assets held for Sale or scrapped		0
-1,489		Amounts of Assets held for Sale written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on derecognition		-1,470
721,291		Total Balance at 31 March		738,796

51. Collection Fund Adjustment Account

The account holds the difference between the accrued Council Tax income and accrued Business Rates income included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) and the amount required by regulations to be credited to the County Fund.

The movement on the account is as follows:

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Collection Fund Adjustment Account		
Balance as at 1 April	7,397	17,183
Decrease in Council Tax and Business Rate surpluses/increases in deficits	-3,370	477
Increases in Council Tax and Business Rate surpluses/reductions in deficits	13,156	-6,294
Amount by which Council Tax and Business Rate income credited to the CIES is different from the income for the year calculated in accordance with statutory requirements	9,786	-5,817
Balance as at 31 March	17,183	11,366

52. Accumulated Absences Account

The Accumulated Absences Account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the County Fund balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year. Statutory provisions require that the impact on the County Fund balance is neutralised by transfers to or from the account.

The balance at 31 March 2024 relates to teachers' accumulated holiday pay, no accruals have been made for non-teaching staff in 2023/24 as the amounts involved are not considered to be material to the accounts.

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Accumulated Absences Account		
Balance as at 1 April	-2,781	-3,271
Settlement or cancellation of previous year's accrual	2,780	3,271
Amount accrued at the end of the current year	-3,270	-3,459
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement differs from remuneration chargeable in the year under statute	-490	-188
Balance as at 31 March	-3,271	-3,459

53. Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account

The statutory reporting requirements for the 2023/24 accounts require the closing deficit balance on Dedicated Schools Grant to be held within unusable reserves in a Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account. The unusable reserve exists for 3 years within statute until 31 March 2026. Is intended to give Local Authorities and the government time to look at strategies to reduce the deficit. The County Council is continuing to take action to manage the deficit but this is continuing to increase. Within the total held at 31 March 2024 the accumulated deficit for High Needs DSG is £55.8m.

	2022/23	2023/24
DSG Adjustment Account	£'000	£'000
Balance as at 1 April	-23,581	-33,611
Contributions to / from reserve	-10,029	-12,213
Balance as at 31 March	-33,610	-45,824

54. Cash Flow Statement – Non-Cash Movements

The table below provides a reconciliation between the movements on the Balance Sheet during the year and net cash flows from financing activities in the Cash Flow Statement:

	2022/23	2023/24
Non-cash Movements	£'000	£'000
Depreciation/amortisation of fixed assets	-38,480	-45,401
Impairment charges/revaluation losses (-) Gains (+)	-20,549	-5,313
Retirement benefit adjustments	-73,805	-8,390
Debt write-offs and Impairment allowances	9,075	20,019
Donated assets	0	0
Other financial instrument adjustments	2	2
Movement in provisions in the year	4,416	-2,860
Deferred income released	1,044	831
Movement in value of Pooled Funds	-10,167	2,447
Movement in value of investment properties	1,002	-215
Carrying amount of non-current assets sold	-20,152	-12,989
Transfers from Capital Grants Receipts in Advance	46,309	29,683
Previous years capitalised spend written-off	0	0
Other non-cash adjustment	-1	0
Increase/decrease (-) in debtors	5,367	-24,594
Increase (-)/decrease in creditors	-15,756	-19,415
Total adjustments for non-cash movements	-111,695	-66,195

55. Cash Flow - Adjust for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities.

	2022/23	2023/24
	£'000	£'000
Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	1,570	1,427
Gains on loans & receivables	0	0
- Capital grants received	132,291	88,277
-Cash adjustment	0	0
Total	133,861	89,704

56. Cash Flow Statement – Investing Activities

	2022/23	2023/24
Investing Activities	£'000	£'000
Purchase of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	123,259	127,250
Purchase of short-term and long-term investments	368,555	373,454
Other payments for investing activities	-1,001	-1,041
Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	-1,570	-1,427
Capital grants	-184,754	-142,576
Proceeds from short-term and long-term investments	-339,718	-403,390
Other receipts from investing activities	2,833	1,422
Total adjustments for investing activities	-32,396	-46,307

Notes to the Statement of Accounts

57. Cash Flow Statement – Reconciliation of Liabilities Arising from Financing Activities

The table below provides a reconciliation between the movements on the Balance Sheet during the year and net cash flows from financing activities in the Cash Flow Statement:

31 March 2022	Financing Cashflows	Other Cashflows	Non-Cash Transactions	31 March 2023		31 March 2023	Financing Cashflows	Other Cashflows	Non-Cash Transactions	31 March 2024
£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
-35,456	105			-35,351	Short term borrowing	-35,351	-945	14,000	0	-22,296
-281,383	7,000			-274,383	long term borrowing	-274,383	8,000		0	-266,383
-662	662	-740		-740	Short term finance liability	-740	740	-836		-836
-15,740	3	740		-14,997	long-term finance liability	-14,997	0	836		-14,161
0				0	liabilities	0				0
0				0	Short term receivables	0				0
					Short term payables	0				0
-333,241	7,770	0	0	-325,471		-325,471	7,795	14,000	0	-303,676

Financing Activities	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Cash payments for the reduction of the outstanding liabilities relating to finance leases and on-balance sheet service concession arrangements	664	740
Short and long-term borrowings raised	-5,000	19,000
Repayments of short- and long-term borrowing	12,000	3,000
Total adjustments for financing activities	7,664	22,740

58. Contingent Liabilities

The County Council has claims outstanding with Municipal Mutual Insurance (MMI) Plc. In November 2012 the directors of MMI triggered a process to wind up the business. This means the County Council may have to repay all or part of the insurance claims settled since the company ceased to trade, as well as fund any outstanding claims. The current levy of 25% has been paid against settled claims, therefore as at 31 March 2024 the Council has a potential liability of £3.621m remaining on previously settled claims, plus the value of any outstanding and future claims. On Actuarial advice a further 15% of the total known liability has been secured against future clawback over the longer term. A small short-term provision of £0.129m recognised at year end for the 25% levy which will be due on outstanding claims figures.

59. Events after the Reporting Period

The accounts were authorised for issue on 28 June 2024. Events taking place after this date are not reflected in the financial statements or notes. Where events taking place before this date provided information about conditions existing at 31 March 2024, the figures in the financial statements and notes have been adjusted in all material respects to reflect the impact of this information.

60. Accounting standards issued but not adopted

The County Council is required to disclose information relating to the impact of an accounting change on the financial statements as a result of the adoption by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code).

Several accounting changes are being adopted by the Code in 2023/24, but none will have a material impact on the Council's financial statements.

The International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) has issued International Financial Reporting Standard 16 Leases (IFRS 16) which, when adopted, will require the Council to recognise most of the assets it has secured the use of through a lease arrangement on its Balance Sheet as 'right of use' assets, together with the corresponding lease liabilities. This differs from the current practice of only recognising the assets and liabilities associated with the finance leases entered into by the Council on its Balance Sheet. The Council is required to adopt IFRS 16 from 1 April 2024 and the Statement of Accounts for 2024/25 will include an update in the note cover operating lease (Note 13).

61. Authorisation of the Accounts

The draft Statement of Accounts was authorised for issue by Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance on 28 June 2024. These statements may be subject to amendment following the conclusion of the audit.

Trust Funds

The County Council acts as a trustee for the various funds below. The funds are invested in the Stock Market and with the County Council. They do not form part of the Balance Sheet.

Trust Funds where Oxfordshire County Council acts as sole trustee		2022/23 Value of Fund £'000	2023/24 No. of funds	Value of Fund £'000
Children's	Funds for the Development of Hill End Residential Centre	61	1	38
	Criminal Injuries Compensation Awards	0	1	0
	Other (under £10,000)	1	1	1
CDAI	Bequest of Property at Watlington	84	1	88
Total		146	4	127

Trust Funds where Oxfordshire County Council acts as joint trustee		2022/23 Value of Fund £'000	2023/24 No. of funds	Value of Fund £'000
Children's	Other (under £10,000)	1	1	1
Adults	Junior Citizens Trust	12	1	7
Total		13	2	9

Other Funds		2022/23 Value of Fund £'000	2023/24 No. of funds	Value of Fund £'000
Children's	City Lectureship Scholarship	19	1	19
	Other (under £10,000)	25	6	26
Adults	Other (under £10,000)	6	1	5
Total		49	8	51



The Local Government Pension Fund Accounts

The Local Government Pension Fund Accounts

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The Local Government Pension Fund Accounts

Fund Account	Notes	2023 £'000	2024 £'000
Contributions and Benefits			
Contributions Receivable	6	-114,312	-135,929
Transfers from Other Schemes	7	-14,980	-17,260
Other Income		-22	-21
Income Sub Total		-129,314	-153,210
Benefits Payable	8	103,572	114,793
Payments to and on Account of Leavers	9	10,681	12,131
Expenditure Sub Total		114,253	126,924
Net (Additions)/Withdrawals From Dealings With Members		-15,061	-26,286
Management Expenses	10	16,857	22,676
Net (Additions)/Withdrawals From Dealings With Members Including Management Expenses		1,796	-3,610
Returns on Investments			
Investment Income	11	-20,338	-24,257
Profits and Losses on Disposal of Investments and Changes in Market Value of Investments	14a	138,543	-343,413
Less Taxes on Income	11	14	-2
Net returns on Investments		118,219	-367,672
Net (Increase)/Decrease in the Net Assets Available for Benefits During the Year		120,015	-371,282
Opening Net Assets of the Scheme		3,290,167	3,170,152
Closing Net Assets of the Scheme		3,170,152	3,541,434

Net Assets Statement	Notes	2023 £'000	2024 £'000
Investment Assets			
Equities	14b	145,099	177,643
Pooled Investments	14b	2,684,400	2,967,703
Pooled Property Investments	14b	276,454	315,717
Derivative Contracts	14c	0	0
Cash Deposits	14d	11,952	5,753
Other Investment Balances	14c	1,888	2,093
Long-Term Investment Assets	14b	840	840
Investment Liabilities			
Derivative Contracts	14c	0	0
Other Investment Balances	14c	-66	-4
Total Investments		3,120,567	3,469,745
Assets and Liabilities			
Current Assets	15	51,818	74,514
Current Liabilities	16	-2,643	-3,235
Net Current Assets		49,175	71,279
Long-Term Assets	17	410	410
Net Assets of the scheme available to fund benefits at year end		3,170,152	3,541,434

The Fund's financial statements do not take account of liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits after the period end. The actuarial present value of promised retirement benefits is disclosed at Note 24.

Note 1 – Description of the fund

This description of the Fund is a summary only. Further details are available in the Fund's 2023/24 Annual Report and in the underlying statutes.

General

The Oxfordshire County Council Pension Fund is part of the Local Government Pension Scheme, which is a statutory, funded, defined benefit pension scheme. Oxfordshire County Council is the administering body for this pension fund. The scheme covers eligible employees and elected members of the County Council, District Councils within the county area and employees of other bodies eligible to join the Scheme.

The scheme is governed by the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and is administered in accordance with the following secondary legislation:

- The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (as amended)
- The Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014 (as amended)
- The Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2016.

This defined benefit scheme provides benefits related to salary for its members. Pensions paid to retired employees, their dependants, and deferred benefits are subject to mandatory increases in accordance with annual pension increase legislation. The amount is determined by the Secretary of State.

Membership

The majority of fund employers are required to automatically enrol eligible jobholders into the LGPS under the government's auto-enrolment legislation, employees may then choose to opt-out of the scheme. Some employers will have the option of whether to auto-enrol eligible jobholders into the LGPS or another qualifying scheme.

Members are made up of three main groups. Firstly, the contributors - those who are still working and paying money into the Fund. Secondly, the pensioners - those who are in receipt of a pension and thirdly, by those who have left their employment with an entitlement to a deferred benefit on reaching pensionable age.

Organisations participating in the Oxfordshire County Council Pension Fund include:

- Scheduled Bodies – Local authorities and similar bodies, such as academies, whose staff are automatically entitled to become members of the Fund.
- Admitted Bodies – Organisations that participate in the Fund under an admission agreement between the Fund and the organisation. Admitted bodies include voluntary, charitable and similar bodies or private contractors undertaking a local authority function following outsourcing to the private sector.

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- Admitted Bodies can be split in to two groups:
 - Community Admission Bodies – these are typically employers that provide a public service on a not-for-profit basis and often have links to scheduled bodies already in the Fund. Housing Corporations fall under this category.
 - Transferee Admission Bodies – these are bodies that provide a service or asset in connection with the exercise of a function of a scheme employer. Typically this will be when a service is transferred from a scheme employer and is to allow continuing membership for staff still involved in the delivery of the service transferred.

Full definitions are contained in The Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) Regulations 2008

The table below details the composition of the Fund's membership:

	As at 31-Mar-23	As at 31-Mar-24
Number of Contributory Employees in Scheme		
Oxfordshire County Council	8,512	8,375
Other Scheduled Bodies	12,643	13,391
Admitted Bodies	433	442
	21,588	22,208
Number of Pensioners and Dependants		
Oxfordshire County Council	10,447	10,858
Other Scheduled Bodies	6,855	7,267
Admitted Bodies	1,210	1,263
	18,512	19,388
Deferred Pensioners		
Oxfordshire County Council	16,268	16,303
Other Scheduled Bodies	13,623	14,137
Admitted Bodies	1,265	1,243
	31,156	31,683

Unprocessed leavers are included as Deferred Pensioners.

Funding

The Oxfordshire County Council Pension Fund is financed by contributions from employees and employers, together with income earned from investments. The contribution from employees is prescribed by statute, and for the year ending 31 March 2023 rates ranged from 5.5% to 12.5% of pensionable pay.

Employers' contribution rates are set following the actuarial valuation, which takes place every three years. The latest actuarial valuation took place in 2022 and determined the contribution rates to take effect from 01 April 2023. Employer contribution rates currently range from 9.6% to 37.3% of pensionable pay.

Benefits

Prior to 1 April 2014, pension benefits under the LGPS were based on final pensionable pay and length of pensionable service as summarised below.

	Service Pre 1 April 2008	Service Post 31 March 2008
Pension	Each full-time year worked is worth $1/80 \times$ final pensionable salary.	Each full-time year worked is worth $1/60 \times$ final pensionable salary.
Lump Sum	Automatic lump sum of $3 \times$ pension. In addition, part of the annual pension can be exchanged for a one-off tax-free cash payment. A lump sum of £12 is paid for each £1 of pension given up.	No automatic lump sum. Part of the annual pension can be exchanged for a one-off tax-free cash payment. A lump sum of £12 is paid for each £1 of pension given up.

From 1 April 2014 the scheme became a career average scheme, where members accrue benefits based on their pensionable pay in any given year at an accrual rate of $1/49^{\text{th}}$. Accrued pension is indexed annually in line with the Consumer Prices Index. The normal retirement age is linked to each individual member's State Pension Age.

There are a range of other benefits provided under the scheme including early retirement, disability pensions and death benefits. Scheme members are now also able to opt to pay 50% of the standard contributions in return for 50% of the pension benefit.

Note 2 – Basis of Preparation

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24.

Regulation 5(2)(c) of the Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 1998 (SI 1998 No 1831) prohibits administering authorities from crediting Additional Voluntary Contributions to the Pension Fund. In consequence Additional Voluntary Contributions are excluded from the Net Assets Statement and are disclosed separately in Note 21.

The accounts summarise the transactions of the Pension Fund and detail the net assets of the Fund. The accounts do not take account of the obligation to pay future benefits which fall due after the year-end. The Code gives administering authorities the option to disclose this information in the net assets statement, in the notes to the accounts or by appending an actuarial report prepared for this purpose. The pension fund has opted to disclose this information in Note 24.

The accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis. The Fund's cashflow monitoring shows that cashflows from dealings with members continue to be positive each month and are currently running at around +£0.5m per month on average. Even if the cashflow position from dealing with members turns negative the Fund generates investment income that can also be used to pay pensions without the need to sell assets at a potentially suboptimal time. The Fund has a level of assets that would be able to cover pension payments for over a decade at current pension payment levels even if no further income was received. The Fund is subject to an actuarial valuation every three years so any deterioration in the funding position leading up to the valuation would be factored in when setting contribution rates for employers to ensure the fund is able to meet all its future obligations. The funding level of the Pension Fund as assessed by the Fund's actuary at the

2022 valuation was 111%. Therefore, management are assured the pension fund remains a going concern.

Note 3 – Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

Investments

1. Investments are shown in the accounts at market value, which has been determined as follows:
 - a) The majority of listed investments are stated at the bid price or where the bid price is not available, the last listed traded price, as at 31 March 2024.
 - b) Unlisted securities are included at fair value, estimated by having regard to the latest dealings, professional valuations, asset values and other appropriate financial information;
 - c) Pooled Investment Vehicles are stated at bid price for funds with bid/offer spreads, or single price where there are no bid/offer spreads, as provided by the investment manager.
 - d) Where appropriate, investments held in foreign currencies have been valued on the relevant basis and translated into sterling at the rate ruling on 31 March 2024.
 - e) Fixed Interest stocks are valued on a 'clean' basis (i.e. the value of interest accruing from the previous interest payment date to the valuation date has been included within the amount receivable for accrued income).
 - f) Derivatives are stated at market value. Exchange traded derivatives are stated at market values determined using market quoted prices. For exchange traded derivative contracts which are assets, market value is based on quoted bid prices. For exchange traded derivative contracts which are liabilities, market value is based on quoted offer prices.
 - g) Forward foreign exchange contracts are valued by determining the gain or loss that would arise from closing out the contract at the reporting date by entering into an equal and opposite contract at that date.
 - h) All gains and losses arising on derivative contracts are reported within 'Changes in Market Value of Investments'.

Foreign Currencies

2. Balances denominated in foreign currencies are translated at the rate ruling at the net assets statement date. Asset and liability balances are translated at the bid and offer rates respectively. Transactions denominated in foreign currencies are translated at the rate ruling at the date of transaction. Differences arising on investment balance translation are accounted for in the change in market value of investments during the year.

Contributions

3. Employee normal contributions are accounted for when deducted from pay. Employer normal contributions that are expressed as a rate of salary are accounted for on the same basis as employees' contributions, otherwise they are accounted for in the period they are due under the Schedule of Contributions. Employer deficit funding contributions are accounted for on the due dates on which they are payable in accordance with the Schedule of Contributions and recovery plan under which they are being paid or on receipt if earlier than the due date.

Employers' pensions strain contributions are accounted for in the period in which the liability arises. Any amount due in year but unpaid will be classed as a current financial asset. Amounts not due until future years are classed as long-term financial assets.

The Actuary determines the contribution rate for each employer during the triennial valuations of the Fund's assets and liabilities. Employees' contributions have been included at rates required by the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations.

Benefits, Refunds of Contributions and Transfer Values

4. Benefits payable and refunds of contributions have been brought into the accounts on the basis of all amounts known to be due at the end of the financial year. Any amounts due but unpaid are disclosed in the net assets statement as current liabilities. Transfer values are those sums paid to, or received from, other pension schemes and relate to periods of previous pensionable employment. Transfer values have been included in the accounts on the basis of the date when agreements were concluded.

In the case of inter-fund adjustments provision has only been made where the amount payable or receivable was known at the year-end. Group transfers are accounted for in accordance with the terms of the transfer agreement.

Investment Income

5. Dividends and interest have been accounted for on an accruals basis. Dividends from quoted securities are accounted for when the security is declared ex-div. Interest is accrued on a daily basis. Investment income is reported net of attributable tax credits but gross of withholding taxes. Irrecoverable withholding taxes are reported separately as a tax charge. In the majority of cases, investment income arising from the underlying investments of the Pooled Investment Vehicles is reinvested within the Pooled

Investment Vehicles and reflected in the unit price. It is reported within 'Changes in Market Value of Investments'. Foreign income has been translated into sterling at the date of the transaction. Income due at the year-end was translated into sterling at the rate ruling at 31 March 2024.

Investment Management and Scheme Administration

6. A proportion of relevant County Council officers' salaries, including salary on-costs, have been charged to the Fund on the basis of time spent on scheme administration and investment related business. The fees of the Fund's general investment managers have been accounted for on the basis contained within their management agreements. Investment management fees are accounted for on an accruals basis.

Expenses

7. Expenses are accounted for on an accruals basis.

Cash

8. Cash held in bank accounts and other readily accessible cash funds is classified under cash balances as it is viewed that these funds are not held for investment purposes but to allow for effective cash management. Cash that has been deposited for a fixed period and as such as an investment, has been included under cash deposits.

Listed Private Equity

9. The fund holds a number of investments in listed private equity companies. These are included under equities as the investment is in a company that undertakes private equity related activities rather than an investment in a specific fund that makes private equity investments. This is consistent with the treatment of other equity investments as the fund does not split out any other categories from within equities, for example retail stocks.

Management Fees

10. Management fees have been accounted for based on the latest guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy. Fees have been accounted for where the pension fund has a direct contractual obligation to pay them. This means where fees are deducted in a pooled fund they have been accounted for, but in a fund of funds the fees for the underlying funds are not included, only those the pension fund pays to the fund of funds manager.

Note 4 – Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies

Unquoted Private Equity Investments

Determining the fair value of unquoted private equity investments is highly subjective in nature. Unquoted private equity investments are valued by the investment managers using various valuation techniques and this involves the use of significant judgements by the managers. The value of unquoted private equity, private debt and infrastructure investments at 31 March 2024 was £496.162m (£389.596m at 31 March 2023).

Pension Fund Liability

The pension fund liability is calculated every three years by the Fund's actuary, with annual updates in the intervening years. Methods and assumptions consistent with IAS19 are used in the calculations. Assumptions underpinning the valuations are agreed with the actuary and are summarised in Note 24. The estimate of the liability is therefore subject to significant variances based on changes to the assumptions used.

Note 5 – Assumptions Made About the Future and Other Major Sources of Estimation Uncertainty

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

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The key judgements and estimation uncertainties that have a significant risk of causing material adjustments to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year are:-

Item	Uncertainties	Potential Impact
Actuarial Present Value of Promised Retirement Benefits	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 fund assets. The fund engages an actuarial firm to provide expert advice on the assumptions to be applied.	<p>The actuarial present value of promised retirement benefits included in the financial statements is £3,290m. There is a risk that this figure is under, or overstated in Note 24 to the accounts.</p> <p>Sensitivities to the key assumptions are as follows:</p> <p>A 0.1% p.a. increase in the pension increase rate would result in an approximate 2% increase to liabilities (£58m).</p> <p>A 0.1% p.a. increase in the salary increase rate would result in an approximate increase to liabilities of 0.1% (£2m).</p> <p>A 0.1% decrease in the real discount rate would result in an approximate 2% increase to liabilities (£60m).</p> <p>A one-year increase in member life expectancy would approximately increase the liabilities by 4% (£132m).</p>
Unquoted Private Equity	Unquoted private equity and infrastructure investments are valued at fair value using recognised valuation techniques. Due to the assumptions involved in this process there is a degree of estimation involved in the valuation.	Unquoted private equity, private debt and infrastructure investments included in the financial statements total £496.162m. There is a risk these investments are under, or overstated in the accounts. The Pension Fund relies on specialists to perform the valuations and does not have the information (i.e. the assumptions that were used in each case) to produce sensitivity calculations. Further details are included in Note 25.

Note 6 – Contributions

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Employers		
Normal	-75,718	-88,354
Augmentation	0	0
Deficit Funding	-8,721	-16,040
Costs of Early Retirement	-857	-207
	-85,296	-104,601
Members		
Normal & Additional*	-29,016	-31,328
Total	-114,312	-135,929

*Local Government Scheme Additional Employees contributions are invested within the Fund, unlike AVCs which are held separately, as disclosed in Note 21.

Lump sum pre-payments in respect of contributions for the period 01/04/23-31/03/24 totalling £10.780m were received during 2023/24.

Deficit recovery contributions are paid by employers based on the maximum 22 year recovery period set out in the Funding Strategy Statement. Where appropriate, the Actuary

The Local Government Pension Fund Accounts

has shortened the recovery period for some employers to maintain as near stable contribution rates for those employers, in line with the Regulations.

	Employer Contributions		Members Contributions	
	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Oxfordshire County Council	-36,321	-38,227	-12,072	-12,733
Scheduled Bodies	-41,908	-58,818	-14,468	-16,052
Resolution Bodies	-4,191	-5,161	-1,623	-1,652
Community Admission Bodies	-1,490	-1,168	-373	-401
Transferee Admission Bodies	-1,386	-1,227	-480	-490
Total	-85,296	-104,601	-29,016	-31,328

Note 7 – Transfers In

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Individual Transfers In from other schemes	-14,980	-17,260
Group Transfers In from other schemes	0	0
Total	-14,980	-17,260

Note 8 – Benefits

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Pensions Payable	85,687	95,768
Lump Sums – Retirement Grants	14,892	16,071
Lump Sums – Death Grants	2,993	2,954
Total	103,572	114,793

	Pensions Payable		Lump Sums	
	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Oxfordshire County Council	41,566	46,254	7,827	6,933
Scheduled Bodies	37,041	41,255	7,509	8,897
Resolution Bodies	1,343	1,706	1,171	1,822
Community Admission Bodies	4,467	5,042	844	996
Transferee Admission Bodies	1,270	1,511	534	377
Total	85,687	95,768	17,885	19,025

Note 9 – Payment to and on account of leavers

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Refunds of Contributions	218	652
Payments for members joining state scheme	-2	-3
Group Transfers Out to other schemes	0	0
Individual Transfers Out to other schemes	10,465	11,482
Total	10,681	12,131

Note 10 – Management Expenses

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Administrative Costs	2,086	2,906
Investment Management Expenses	12,803	18,140
Oversight & Governance Costs	1,968	1,630
Total	16,857	22,676

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Within oversight and governance costs are fees paid to the Pension Fund's external auditors of £0.025m (2022/23 £0.025m) for the audit of the Pension Fund's Annual Report and Accounts.

A further breakdown of Investment Management Expenses is in Note 12.

Note 11 – Investment Income

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Bonds	-578	0
Equity Dividends	-4,084	-4,295
Pooled Property Investments	-6,877	-7,061
Pooled Investments – Unit Trusts & Other Managed Funds	-7,744	-10,034
Interest on cash deposits	-1,055	-2,867
	-20,338	-24,257
Irrecoverable withholding tax – equities	14	-2
Total	20,324	-24,259

Note 12 – Investment Management Expenses

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Management Fees	12,751	18,091
Custody Fees	52	49
Total	12,803	18,140

Investment Management & Custody Fees are generally calculated on a fixed scale basis with applicable rates applied to the market value of the assets managed. See Note 3 for details of the accounting treatment of management fees.

Note 13 – Related Party Transactions

The Pension Fund is required to disclose material transactions with related parties, and bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Pension Fund, or to be controlled or influenced by the Pension Fund. Disclosure of these transactions allows readers to assess the extent to which the Pension Fund 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 Pension Fund.

Members of the Pension Fund Committee and the post of Service Manager (Pensions) are the key management personnel involved with the Pension Fund. During 2023/24, the Committee consisted of five County Councillors (voting members), four employer representatives and a scheme member representative. Members of the Pension Fund Committee are disclosed in the Pension Fund Report and Accounts. An amount of £0.126m was paid to Oxfordshire County Council in respect of key management compensation during the financial year as follows:

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Short Term Benefits*	106	108
Long Term/Post Retirement Benefits	17	18
Total	123	126

*Includes allowances paid to the Chairman of the Pension Fund Committee

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These figures represent the relevant proportion of the salary and employer pension contributions for the key Council staff, reflecting their work for the Pension Fund.

As the County Council is the designated statutory body responsible for administering the Oxfordshire Pension Fund, it is a related party.

For the 12 months ended 31 March 2024, employer contributions to the Pension Fund from the County Council were £38.227m (2022/23 £36.321m). At 31 March 2024 there were receivables of in respect of contributions due from the County Council of £4.289m (2022/23 £4.049m) and payables due to the County Council of £0.187m (2022/23 £0.336m).

The County Council was reimbursed £1.936m (2022/23 £1.682m) by the Pension Fund for administration costs incurred by the County Council on behalf of the Pension Fund.

	Value at 31 March 2023 £'000	Value at 31 March 2024 £'000
Investment Assets		
Equities	145,099	177,643
Pooled Funds:		
Fixed Income	152,779	135,566
Index Linked	167,642	229,819
Global Equity	1,226,423	1,596,696
UK Equity	497,259	359,128
Private Equity	218,892	246,528
Private Debt	40,443	68,410
Infrastructure Funds	130,261	181,224
Diversified Growth Fund	116,201	0
Multi Asset Credit Fund	134,500	150,332
Pooled Property Investments	276,454	315,717
Cash Deposits	11,952	5,753
Long-Term Investments	840	840
Investment Income Due	1,888	1,979
Amounts Receivable for Sales	0	114
Total Investment Assets	3,120,633	3,469,749
Investment Liabilities		
Management Expenses Due	-66	-4
Amounts Payable for Purchases	0	0
Total Investment Liabilities	-66	-4
Net Investment Assets	3,120,567	3,469,745

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Brunel Pension Partnership Ltd (Company Number 10429110)

Brunel Pension Partnership Ltd (BPP Ltd) was formed on the 14 October 2016 and oversees the investment of pension fund assets for the following LGPS funds: Avon, Buckinghamshire, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Environment Agency, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, and Wiltshire. Each of the nine Administering Authorities, including Oxfordshire County Council, and the Environment Agency own 10% of BPP Ltd. Pension Fund transactions with BPP Ltd are as follows:

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Income	0	0
Expenditure	1,182	1,313
Receivables	0	0
Payables	0	0

Note 14 – Investments

Note 14a – Reconciliation of Movements in Investments and Derivatives

	Value at 1 April 2023 £'000	Purchases at Cost & Derivative Payments £'000	Sales Proceeds & Derivative Receipts £'000	Change in Market Value £'000	Cash Movement £'000	Increase in Receivables / (Payables) £'000	Value at 31-Mar-24 £'000
Equities	145,099	3,319	-16,279	45,504			177,643
Pooled Investments	2,684,400	500,902	-533,351	315,752			2,967,703
Pooled Property Investments	276,454	100,158	-43,227	-17,668			315,717
Long-Term Investments	840	0	0	0			840
<u>Derivative Contracts</u>							
FX	0	2		-2			0
Futures	0	0		0			0
Other Investment Balances							
Cash Deposits	11,952	33,565	-39,470	-173	-121		5,753
Amounts Receivable for Sales of Investments	0	0	0	0		114	114
Investment Income Due	1,888	0	0	0		91	1,979
Amounts Payable for Purchases of Investments & Management Expenses	-66	0	0	0		62	-4
Total	3,120,567	637,946	-632,327	343,413	-121	267	3,469,745

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Transaction costs are borne by the scheme in relation to transactions in pooled investment vehicles. However, such costs are taken into account in calculating the bid/offer spread of these investments and are not therefore separately identifiable.

There have been no employer-related investments at any time during the year

	Value at 1 April 2022	Purchases at Cost & Derivative Payments	Sales Proceeds & Derivative Receipts	Change in Market Value	Cash Movement	Increase in Receivables / (Payables)	Value at 31-Mar-23
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Bonds	80,934	34,495	-98,362	-17,067			0
Equities	164,113	2,813	-12	-21,815			145,099
Pooled Investments	2,684,178	120,155	-90,803	-29,130			2,684,400
Pooled Property Investments	273,869	108,030	-32,974	-72,471			276,454
Long-Term Investments	840						840
<u>Derivative Contracts</u>							
FX	-428	2,299	-1,687	-184			0
Futures	203	3,248	-5,133	1,682			0
Other Investment Balances							
Cash Deposits	6,626	62,228	-56,215	441	-1,128		11,952
Amounts Receivable for							
Sales of Investments	34	0	0			-34	0
Investment Income Due	2,134	0	0	1		-247	1,888
Amounts Payable for Purchases of							
Investments & Management Expenses	-548	0	0	0		482	-66
Total	3,211,955	333,268	-285,186	-138,543	-1,128	201	3,120,567

The Local Government Pension Fund Accounts

Note 14b – Analysis of Investments (excluding Derivative Contracts, Cash Deposits and Other Investment Balances)

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Long-Term Investment Assets		
Brunel Pension Partnership Ltd	840	840
Total	840	840

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Equity Investments		
UK Equities	135,423	177,319
North American Equities	9,343	
European Equities	333	324
Total	145,099	177,643

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Pooled Investment Vehicles		
UK Registered Managed Funds – Property	86,893	105,841
Non-UK Registered Managed Funds – Property	49,637	51,895
UK Registered Managed Funds – Other	2,044,102	2,346,147
Non-UK Registered Managed Funds – Other	640,298	621,556
UK Registered Property Unit Trusts	97,605	99,305
Non-UK Registered Property Unit Trusts	42,319	58,676
Total	2,960,854	3,283,420

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Total Investments (excluding Derivative Contract, Cash Deposits and Other Investment Balances)	3,106,793	3,461,903

Note 14c – Other Investment Balances

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Receivables		
Sale of Investments	0	114
Dividend & Interest Accrued	1,659	1,750
Inland Revenue	229	229
	1,888	2,093
Payables		
Management Fees	-61	0
Custodian Fees	-5	-4
	-66	-4
Total	1,822	2,089

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Note 14d - Cash Deposits

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Non-Sterling Cash Deposits	11,952	5,753
Total	11,952	5,753

The following investments represent more than 5% of the net assets of the scheme

	2022/23 £'000	% of Total Fund	2023/24 £'000	% of Total Fund
Brunel UK Equity Fund	497,259	15.69	359,128	10.14
FTSE PAB Developed Equity Index Fund	496,833	15.67	628,606	17.75
Brunel HG ALP GLB EQ	336,236	10.61	352,516	9.95
Brunel GBL Sustainable Mutual Fund	311,965	9.84	615,574	17.38
Blackrock Aquila Life Fund	140,978	4.45	229,819	6.49

Note 15 - Current Assets

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Receivables:		
Employer Contributions	6,853	7,828
Employee Contributions	2,331	2,627
Rechargeable Benefits	1,065	1,215
Transferred Benefits	1,883	2,115
Cost of Early Retirement	110	87
Inland Revenue	18	197
Other	222	1,525
Cash Balances	39,336	58,920
Total	51,818	74,514

Note 16 - Current Liabilities

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Transferred Benefits	-186	-260
Benefits Payable	-865	-1,156
Inland Revenue	-1,190	-1,519
Employer Contributions	-1	-2
Staff Costs	-135	-155
Consultancy	-50	-21
Other	-216	-122
Total	-2,643	-3,235

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Note 17 – Long-Term Assets

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Employer Contributions	410	410
Total	410	410

Note 18 - Assets under External Management

The market value of assets under external fund management amounted to £3,217.788m as at 31 March 2024. The table below gives a breakdown of this sum and shows the market value of assets under management with each external manager.

Fund Manager	31/03/2023		31/03/2024	
	Market Value £'000	%	Market Value £'000	%
Brunel Pension Partnership	2,625,431	89.65	3,131,009	97
Legal & General	84,129	2.87	0	0
Insight	116,201	3.97	0	0
Adams Street Partners	63,600	2.17	57,317	1.8
Partners Group	39,314	1.34	29,462	0.9
Total	2,928,675	100	3,217,788	100

Note 19 – Top 5 Holdings

Value of the Fund's Top Five Holdings at 31 March 2024	£'000	% of Fund
HG Capital Trust Plc	92,471	2.61
Aberdeen Private Equity Opportunities Trust Plc	27,420	0.77
3i Group Plc	26,641	0.75
CT Private Equity Trust Plc	20,478	0.58
ICG Enterprise Trust Plc	10,128	0.29

Note 20 – Taxation

The scheme is a 'registered pension scheme' for tax purposes under the Finance Act 2004. As such the Fund is exempt from UK income tax on interest received and from capital gains tax on the proceeds of investments sold. However, the Fund cannot reclaim certain amounts of withholding taxes relating to overseas investment income which are suffered in the country of origin.

Note 21 – Additional Voluntary Contributions

Market Value 31 March 2023 £'000	Market Value 31 March 2024 £'000
12,278	12,452

AVC contributions of £1.134m were paid directly to the Fund's AVC providers during the year (2022/23 - £1.044m).

The AVC provider to the Fund is Legal & General. The assets of these investments are held separately from the Fund. The AVC provider secures additional benefits on a money purchase basis for those members electing to pay additional voluntary contributions. Members participating in this arrangement each receive an annual statement confirming the amounts held in their account and the movements in the year. The Administering Authority does not handle these monies. Instead, if employees decide to pay AVCs their employer (the member body) sends them to Legal & General.

Note 22 – Contingent Liabilities and Capital Commitments

As at 31 March 2024 the fund had outstanding capital commitments (investments) totalling £237.493m (31 March 2023 - £313.060m). These commitments relate to outstanding call payments due on unquoted limited partnership funds held in the pooled investments and pooled property fund elements of the investment portfolio. The amounts 'called' by these funds are irregular in both size and timing from the date of the original commitment due to the nature of the investments.

Note 23 – Investment Strategy Statement

Oxfordshire County Council Pension Fund has an Investment Strategy Statement. This is published in the Pension Fund Annual Report and Accounts which is circulated to all scheme employers and is also available on the Council's webpage.

Note 24 - Actuarial Present Value of Promised Retirement Benefits

	2023 £m	2024 £m
Present Value of Funded Obligation	3,278	3,290

The movement from March 2023 can in part be explained by the normal changes over the year as new benefits are accrued and previous benefits paid out. This explains an increase in the present value of the Funded Obligation of £226m (2023 - £431m increase).

There has been a decrease in the present value of the Funded Obligation of £214m (2023 - £1,686m decrease) reflecting changes in the financial assumptions used by the actuary as a consequence of changes in the financial markets. The key changes in financial assumptions were:

- A decrease in the assumed level of CPI, and therefore pension increase, from 3.0% to 2.75% (net effect a decrease in Present Value of Funded Obligation)
- A decrease in the assumed level of salary increases from 3.0% to 2.75% (net effect a decrease in Present Value of Funded Obligation)
- An increase in the discount rate to 4.85% from 4.75% (net effect a decrease in Present Value of Funded Obligation).

When the LGPS benefit structure was reformed in 2014, transitional protections were applied to certain older members close to normal retirement age. The benefits accrued from 1 April 2014 by these members are subject to an 'underpin' which means that they cannot be lower than what they would have received under the previous benefit structure.

The underpin ensures that these members do not lose out from the introduction of the new scheme, by effectively giving them the better of the benefits from the old and new schemes.

In December 2018 the Court of Appeal upheld a ruling (“McCloud/Sargeant”) that similar transitional protections in the Judges’ and Firefighters’ Pension Schemes were unlawful on the grounds of age discrimination. The implications of the ruling are expected to apply to the LGPS (and other public service schemes) as well. The UK Government requested leave to appeal to the Supreme Court but this was denied at the end of June 2019. LGPS benefits accrued from 2014 may therefore need to be enhanced so that all members, regardless of age, will benefit from the underpin. Alternatively, restitution may be achieved in a different way, for example by paying compensation. In either case, the clear expectation is that many more members would see an enhanced benefit rather than just those currently subject to these protections. There will therefore be a retrospective increase to members’ benefits, which in turn will give rise to a past service cost for the Fund employers.

Quantifying the impact of the judgement at this stage is very difficult because it will depend on the compensation awarded, members’ future salary increases, length of service and retirement age, and whether (and when) members withdraw from active service. Salary increases in particular can vary significantly from year to year and from member to member depending on factors such as budget restraint, job performance and career progression. The Government Actuary’s Department (GAD) has estimated that the impact for the LGPS as a whole could be to increase active member liabilities by 3.2%, based on a given set of actuarial assumptions. A full description of the data, methodology and assumptions underlying these estimates is given in GAD’s paper, dated 10 June 2019.

The Fund’s actuary has adjusted GAD’s estimate to better reflect the Oxfordshire County Council Pension Fund’s local assumptions, particularly salary increases and withdrawal rates. The revised estimate is that total liabilities (i.e. the increase in active members’ liabilities expressed in terms of the employer’s total membership) could be 0.5% higher as at 31 March 2021, an increase of approximately £6m.

These numbers are high level estimates based on scheme level calculations and depend on several key assumptions.

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Note 25 - Financial Instruments

Note 25a – Classification of Financial Instruments

The following table analyses the carrying amounts of financial assets and liabilities by category and net assets statement heading. No financial assets were reclassified during the accounting period.

		2022/23			2023/24		
		Fair Value through	Financial Assets at	Financial Liabilities	Fair Value through	Financial Assets at	Financial Liabilities
		Profit & Loss	Amortised Cost	at Amortised Cost	Profit & Loss	Amortised Cost	at Amortised Cost
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Financial Assets							
Equities		145,099			177,643		
Pooled Investments		2,684,400			2,967,703		
Pooled	Property	276,454			315,717		
Investments							
Derivatives		0			0		
Cash			51,288			64,673	
Long-Term Investments		840			840		
Other	Investment	1,659			1,864		
Balances							
Receivables			96			1,003	
		3,108,452	51,384	0	3,463,767	65,676	0
Financial Liabilities							
Derivatives		0			0		
Other	Investment	-66			-4		
Balances							
Payables				-194			-256
		-66	0	-194	-4	0	-256
Total		3,108,386	51,384	-194	3,463,763	65,676	-256

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Note 25b – Net Gains and Losses on Financial Instruments

	31-Mar-23 £'000	31-Mar-24 £'000
Financial Assets		
Fair Value through Profit and Loss	-138,985	343,586
Loans and Receivables	0	0
Financial Assets at Amortised Cost	442	-173
Financial Liabilities		
Fair Value through Profit and Loss	0	0
Financial Liabilities Measured at Amortised Cost	0	0
Total	-138,543	343,413

Note 25c – Valuation of Financial Instruments Carried at Fair Value

Financial instruments have been classified in to one of the following three categories to reflect the level of uncertainty in estimating their fair values:

Level 1

Fair value is derived from quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets or liabilities.

Level 2

Fair value is based on inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable either directly (i.e., from prices) or indirectly (i.e., derived from prices).

Level 3

Fair value is determined by reference to valuation techniques using inputs that are not observable in the market.

Level 2 includes pooled funds where the valuation is based on the bid price, where bid and offer prices are published, or the net asset value provided by the issuing fund. Within Level 2 there are also listed private equity investments where the market for the security is not deemed active; for these investments the valuation is based on the most recently available bid price in the market.

Included within Level 3 are pooled private equity investments made in Limited Liability Partnerships where fair value is determined using valuation techniques which involve significant judgements by fund managers due to the unquoted nature of the underlying fund investments. The valuations are obtained from the audited financial statements of the issuing funds and are normally adjusted for cashflows where data does not cover the full financial year for the Pension Fund.

Some listed private equity investments have been included within Level 3 of the hierarchy where it has been determined that the market for the fund is inactive. These listed private equity investments are valued using the most recently available bid price in the market.

Categorisation of financial instruments within the levels is based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement of the instrument.

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The following table presents the Fund's financial assets and liabilities within the fair value hierarchy.

Value at 31 March 2024	Level 1 £'000	Level 2 £'000	Level 3 £'000	Total £'000
Financial Assets				
Financial Assets at Fair Value through Profit & Loss	28,505	2,471,707	963,555	3,463,767
Financial Assets at Amortised Cost	65,676	0	0	65,676
Total Financial Assets	94,181	2,471,707	963,555	3,529,443
Financial Liabilities				
Financial Liabilities at Fair Value through Profit & Loss	-4	0	0	-4
Financial Liabilities at Amortised Cost	-256	0	0	-256
Total Financial Liabilities	-260	0	0	-260
Net Financial Assets	93,921	2,471,707	963,555	3,529,183

Value at 31 March 2023	Level 1 £'000	Level 2 £'000	Level 3 £'000	Total £'000
Financial Assets				
Financial Assets at Fair Value through Profit & Loss	31,021	2,275,363	802,069	3,108,453
Financial Assets at Amortised Cost	51,383	0	0	51,383
Total Financial Assets	82,404	2,275,363	802,069	3,159,836
Financial Liabilities				
Financial Liabilities at Fair Value through Profit & Loss	-66	0	0	-66
Financial Liabilities at Amortised Cost	-194	0	0	-194
Total Financial Liabilities	-260	0	0	-260
Net Financial Assets	82,144	2,275,363	802,069	3,159,576

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Reconciliation of Movement in Level 3 Financial Instruments

	UK Equities	Pooled Private Equity Funds	Pooled Property Funds	Pooled Infrastructure Funds	Pooled Private Debt Funds	Multi Asset Credit Funds	Long-Term Investments
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Market Value 31 March 2023	679	218,892	276,454	130,261	40,443	134,500	840
Transfers In	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transfers Out	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Purchases	0	61,376	65,019	57,268	29,239	0	0
Sales	0	-36,444	-8,476	-7,288	-847	0	0
Unrealised Gains/(Losses)	-175	-16,431	-16,291	1,088	-425	15,832	0
Realised Gains/(Losses)	0	19,135	-989	-105	0	0	0
Market Value 31 March 2024	504	246,528	315,717	181,224	68,410	150,332	840

	UK Equities	Pooled Private Equity Funds	Pooled Property Funds	Pooled Infrastructure Funds	Pooled Private Debt Funds	Multi Asset Credit Funds	Long-Term Investments
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Market Value 31 March 2022	722	197,765	273,869	101,507	12,641	139,284	840
Transfers In	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transfers Out	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Purchases	0	37,412	79,009	29,608	29,197	0	0
Sales	0	-29,384	-32,680	-11,006	-227	0	0
Unrealised Gains/(Losses)	-43	-1,787	-46,108	16,293	-1,168	-4,784	0
Realised Gains/(Losses)	0	14,886	2,364	-6,141	0	0	0
Market Value 31 March 2023	679	218,892	276,454	130,261	40,443	134,500	840

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Level 3 Sensitivities

Level 3 Investments	Valuation Range +/-	Value at 31 March 2024 £'000	Valuation on Increase £'000	Valuation on Decrease £'000
UK Equities	10%	504	555	454
Pooled Private Equity Funds	10%	246,528	271,181	221,875
Pooled Property Funds	3%	315,717	325,189	306,246
Pooled Infrastructure Funds	5%	181,224	190,285	172,162
Pooled Private Debt Funds	5%	68,410	71,831	64,990
Multi Asset Credit Funds	5%	150,332	157,848	142,815
Long-Term Investments	0%	840	840	840

Level 3 Investments	Valuation Range +/-	Value at 31 March 2023 £'000	Valuation on Increase £'000	Valuation on Decrease £'000
UK Equities	10%	679	747	611
Pooled Private Equity Funds	10%	218,892	240,781	197,003
Pooled Property Funds	3%	276,455	284,749	268,161
Pooled Infrastructure Funds	5%	130,261	136,774	123,748
Pooled Private Debt Funds	5%	40,443	42,465	38,421
Multi Asset Credit Funds	5%	134,500	141,225	127,775
Long-Term Investments	0%	840	840	840

Note 26 - Risk

The Pension Fund is subject to risk in terms of its key responsibility to meet the pension liabilities of the scheme members as they become due. These risks relate to the value of both the assets and the liabilities of the Fund and the timing of when the payment of the liabilities becomes due.

At a strategic level, the main tools used by the Pension Fund to manage risk are:

- The triennial Fund Valuation which reviews the assets and liabilities of the Fund, and resets employer contribution rates to target a 100% Funding Level. The 2022 Valuation estimated that the current Funding Level is 111%.
- The Investment Strategy Statement which sets out the Fund's approach to the investment of funds, and sets out the approach to the mitigation of investment risk.
- The review of the Strategic Asset Allocation to ensure it is appropriately aligned to the Fund's liability profile and to ensure compliance with the Investment Strategy Statement.
- The regular review of the performance of all Fund Managers.

Key elements of the approach to managing the investment risk as set out in the Investment Strategy Statement include:

- Maintaining an element of the asset allocation in assets such as fixed income securities, the behaviour of which closely mirrors that of the Fund's liabilities. The allocation to liability matching assets is regularly reviewed with the intention that the allocation will increase as the maturity of the fund increases, as was the case following the 2016 valuation. Whilst the Fund maintains a high

proportion of active members where the payment of liabilities is not due for many decades and remains cashflow positive, the Fund can afford to seek the higher investment returns associated with the more volatile and illiquid asset classes.

- Maintaining an element of the asset allocation in passive equity funds which removes the risk associated with poor manager performance (though retaining the market risk).
- Ensuring a diversification amongst asset classes, and in particular an allocation to alternative asset classes for which performance has historically not correlated to equity performance.
- Ensuring a diversification of Fund Managers and investment styles (e.g. some with a growth philosophy, some with a value philosophy) to mitigate the risk of poor manager performance impacting on asset values.
- The Fund's policy on ensuring Environmental Social & Governance factors are taken into account in investment decisions. During 2019/20 the Fund developed a Climate Change Policy dealing with how it will manage climate change related risks and opportunities. The policy was developed as the Fund sees climate change as single most significant risk to long-term investment performance given its systemic nature.

The key risks associated with the level of liabilities stem from the level of initial pension benefit payable, the indexation of this benefit and the time the benefit is in payment for. These risks largely lie outside the control of the Pension Fund. Changes to the scheme were made in 2014 with the aim of making the scheme more sustainable including; linking the normal retirement age to future estimates of life expectancy to bring stability to the length of time benefits are in payment, a change in the calculation of benefits to career average revalued earnings to avoid the sudden hike possible in final benefits possible under a final salary scheme, and a switch in the basis of indexation to CPI which is generally lower than the RPI alternative.

The Actuary, when completing the 2022 Valuation, undertook sensitivity analysis calculations to look at the impact on potential liabilities and the funding level. A variation of 0.1% per annum in the discount rate would move the calculated funding level from 111% down to 109% or up to 113%. A change in the CPI assumption of 0.2% per annum would lead to a reduction in the funding level to 108% or an increase to 115%. A change to the rate of mortality improvement of 0.25% would move the funding level down to 110% or up to 112%.

In terms of the investment in the various Financial Instruments open to the Pension Fund, the Fund is exposed to the following risks:

- Credit risk – the possibility of financial loss stemming from other parties no longer being able to make payments or meet contractual obligations to the Pension Fund.
- Liquidity Risk – the possibility that the Pension Fund might not have the funds available to meet its payment commitments as they fall due.
- Market Risk – the possibility that the Pension Fund may suffer financial loss as a consequence of changes in such measures as interest rates, market prices, and foreign currency exchange rates.

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Credit Risk

The Pension Fund's credit risk is largely associated with the Fund's investments in Fixed Interest and Index Linked Securities, Cash Deposits and Short Term Loans, where there is a risk that the other parties may fail to meet the interest or dividend payments due, or fail to return the Fund's investment at the end of the investment period.

At 31 March 2024 the Fund's exposure to credit risk predominantly related to the following investments:

Investment Category	31-Mar-23 £'000	31-Mar-24 £'000
UK Government Gilts	15,350	0
UK Corporate Bonds	127,160	135,566
UK Index Linked Gilts	167,642	229,819
Overseas Government Bonds	10,269	0
Multi Asset Credit Funds	134,500	150,332
Non-Sterling Cash Deposits	11,952	5,753
Cash Balances	39,336	58,920
Total	506,209	580,390

The Pension Fund manages the credit risk by ensuring a diversification of investments both in terms of product and in terms of redemption dates, whilst limiting investments made to sub-investment grade bonds to those made through pooled funds. Corporate Bonds are held through a pooled fund vehicle and up to 15% of holdings can be invested in sub-investment grade bonds. Cash held in sterling at 31 March 2024 was deposited in short-term notice cash accounts and money market funds as shown in the table below:

	Rating	Balance at 31 March 2023 £'000	Rating	Balance at 31 March 2024 £'000
Money Market Funds				
Aberdeen Standard	AAA	14,465	AAA	7,420
State Street Global Advisors	AAA	33,389	AAA	56,181
Bank Current Accounts				
Lloyds Bank Plc	A+	2,507	A+	340
Santander UK Plc	A+	0	A+	5
State Street Bank & Trust Co	AA+	927	AA+	727
Total		51,288		64,673

The Pension fund has no experience of default against which to quantify the credit risk against the current investments.

Liquidity Risk

Liquidity risk represents the risk that the Fund will be unable to meet its financial obligations as they fall due. At the present time, the liquidity risk is seen, relatively, as the

greatest threat to the Pension Fund, although the absolute risk itself is still seen to be very low, particularly in the short term.

During 2023/24 the Pension Fund received/accrued income related to dealings with members of £153.2m (2022/23 £129.3m) and incurred expenditure related to dealings with members of £149.6m (2022/23 £131.1m). There were further receipts/accruals of £24.3m (2022/23 £20.3m) in respect of investment income, against which need to be set taxes of £0m (2022/23 £0m). The net inflow was therefore £27.9m (2022/23 £12.1m).

The figures show that the Fund is still cashflow positive at the whole fund level. A cash flow forecast is maintained for the Fund to understand and manage the timing of the Fund's cash flows. On a daily basis, the Fund holds a minimum of £40m of cash in call accounts and money market funds to meet benefit payments due, drawdowns from fund managers, and other payments due from the Fund. The Fund has also looked at longer-term cashflow forecasts to gain a greater understanding of when the balance of pension payments and contributions may become negative so as to consider how this may affect the Fund's investment strategy in the future. The Fund has already taken some steps in this regard including allocating to the Secured Income portfolio offered by Brunel Pension Partnership.

The Fund would need to experience a significant change in either the levels of contributions received, and/or the levels of benefits payable, as well as the loss of all current investment income, before it might be required to liquidate assets at financial loss.

There are risks in this area going forward as a result of continuing reductions in public expenditure, and the resulting impact on active scheme membership. The reductions in public sector expenditure will impact on the liquidity of the Pension Fund both in terms of a reduction in contributions receivable as the workforce shrinks, as well as an increase in benefits payable as staff above the age of 55 are made redundant and become entitled to early payment of their pension. There are changes to the Scheme being consulted on that could impact on scheme membership levels although these changes would be expected to impact gradually over time. In addition, some employers are adopting models that have the potential to reduce scheme membership.

However, as noted above, for the Fund to reach a position where it is forced to sell assets and therefore face a potential financial loss, (as well as to forego future investment returns which have been assumed to meet pension liabilities in the future), the net movement in cash would need to be of a scale deemed unlikely in the medium-term. The Pension Fund will seek to mitigate these risks through working with employers to understand the potential for any significant membership changes and by monitoring the fund's cashflows. The fund will also provide advice to the Government on the impact of any proposals for change, as well providing clear communication to current scheme members of the on-going benefits of scheme membership and the personal risks to their future financial prospects of opting out at this time.

Market Risk

The whole of the Pension Fund's investment asset base is subject to financial loss through market risk, which includes the impact of changes in interest rates, movements in market prices and movements in foreign currency rates. However, as noted above under the liquidity risk, these financial losses are not automatically realised, as all assets held by the

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Pension Fund are done so on a long-term basis. Subject to the liquidity risk above, it is likely to be many years into the future before any assets will be required to be realised, during which time market risk will have the opportunity to even itself out.

Market risk is generally managed through diversification of investments within the portfolio in terms of asset types, geographical and industry sectors, and individual securities.

Whilst widespread recession will drive down the value of the Fund's assets and therefore funding level in the short term, this will have no direct bearing on the long-term position of the Fund, nor the contribution rates for individual employers. Under the LGPS Regulations, the Fund Actuary is required to maintain as near stable contribution rate as possible, and as such the Valuation is based on long term assumptions about asset values, with all short-term movements smoothed to reflect the long-term trends.

Interest Rate Risk

The direct exposure of the fund to interest rate risk and the impact of a 100 basis point movement in interest rates are presented in the table below. This analysis assumes that all other variables remain constant:

Asset Type	Carrying Amount as at 31 March 2024	Change in Year in the Net Assets Available to Pay Benefits	
		1% £'000	-1% £'000
Cash and Cash Equivalents	5,753	58	-58
Cash Balances	58,920	589	-589
Bonds	365,385	3,654	-3,654
Multi Asset Credit Funds	150,332	1,503	-1,503
Total Change in Assets Available	580,390	5,804	-5,804

Asset Type	Carrying Amount as at 31 March 2023	Change in Year in the Net Assets Available to Pay Benefits	
		1% £'000	-1% £'000
Cash and Cash Equivalents	11,952	120	-120
Cash Balances	39,336	393	-393
Bonds	320,421	3,204	-3,204
Multi Asset Credit Funds	134,500	1,345	-1,345
Total Change in Assets Available	506,209	5,062	-5,062

In the short term, interest rate risk is difficult to quantify in that it impacts directly on both the price of fixed interest and index linked securities as well as the discount factor used to value liabilities. Increases in interest rates which will drive down security prices and asset values will also reduce the future pension liabilities and therefore improve funding levels rather than worsen them.

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Currency Risk

Currency risk concerns the risk that the fair value of future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate due to changes in foreign exchange rates. The Fund is exposed to foreign exchange risk on financial instruments that are denominated in currencies other than the Fund's functional currency (£GBP).

The table below shows the impact a 10.0% weakening/strengthening of the pound against the various currencies would have on the assets available to pay benefits.

This analysis assumes that all other variables remain constant

Currency Exposure - Asset Type	Asset Values as at 31 March 2024 £'000	Change in Year in the Net Assets Available to Pay Benefits	
		10.00% £'000	-10.00% £'000-
Overseas Equities	324	32	-32
Pooled Global Equities	1,596,696	159,670	-159,670
Pooled Private Equity (LLPs)	193,353	19,336	-19,336
Pooled Property	63,541	6,354	-6,354
Infrastructure	51,910	5,191	-5,191
Cash	5,753	575	-575
Total Change in Assets Available	1,911,577	191,158	-191,158

Currency Exposure - Asset Type	Asset Values as at 31 March 2023 £'000	Change in Year in the Net Assets Available to Pay Benefits	
		10.00% £'000	-10.00% £'000
Overseas Equities	9,677	968	-968
Pooled Global Equities	1,226,423	122,642	-122,642
Pooled Private Equity (LLPs)	168,224	16,822	-16,822
Pooled Property	63,725	6,373	-6,373
Infrastructure	34,204	3,420	-3,420
Cash	11,952	1,195	-1,195
Total Change in Assets Available	1,514,205	151,420	-151,420

Other Price Risk

Other price risk represents the risk that the value of financial instruments will fluctuate as a result of changes in market prices, other than those arising from interest rate risk or foreign exchange risk.

All investments in securities present a risk of loss of capital. The maximum risk is the fair value of the financial instrument.

The effect of various movements in market price are presented in the table below along with the effect on total assets available to pay benefits assuming all other factors remain constant:

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	Value as at 31 March 2024	Percentage Change	Value on Increase	Value on Decrease
Asset Type	£'000	%	£'000	£'000
UK Equities	177,319	10	195,051	159,587
Pooled UK Equities	359,128	10	395,040	323,215
Global Equities	324	10	356	292
Pooled Global Equities	1,596,696	10	1,756,366	1,437,027
Pooled Corporate Bonds	135,566	5	142,344	128,788
Infrastructure	181,224	5	190,285	172,162
Pooled Private Equity (LLPs)	246,528	10	271,181	221,875
Pooled Property	315,717	3	325,188	306,245
Multi Asset Credit Fund	150,332	5	157,848	142,815
Index Linked Pooled Fund	229,819	5	241,310	218,328
Private Debt	68,410	5	71,831	64,990
Long-Term Investments	840	0	840	840
Cash	64,673	0	64,673	64,673
Total Assets Available to Pay Benefits	3,526,576		3,812,313	3,240,837
	Value as at 31 March 2023	Percentage Change	Value on Increase	Value on Decrease
Asset Type	£'000	%	£'000	£'000
UK Equities	135,423	10	148,965	121,881
Pooled UK Equities	497,259	10	546,984	447,533
Global Equities	9,676	10	10,644	8,708
Diversified Growth Fund	116,201	3	119,688	112,716
Pooled Global Equities	1,226,423	10	1,349,065	1,103,781
Pooled Corporate Bonds	127,160	5	133,518	120,802
Infrastructure	130,261	5	136,774	123,748
Pooled Private Equity (LLPs)	218,892	10	240,781	197,003
Pooled Property	276,454	3	284,748	268,160
Multi Asset Credit Fund	134,500	5	141,225	127,775
Index Linked Pooled Fund	167,642	5	176,024	159,260
Private Debt	40,443	5	42,465	38,421
Long-Term Investments	840	0	840	840
Cash	51,288	0	51,288	51,288
Pooled UK Fixed Interest Bonds	15,350	5	16,118	14,583
Pooled Overseas Bonds	10,269	5	10,782	9,755
Total Assets Available to Pay Benefits	3,158,081		3,409,909	2,906,254

Note 27 - Actuarial Valuation

The contribution rates within the 2023/24 Pension Fund Accounts were determined at the actuarial valuation carried out as at 31 March 2022.

This valuation showed that the required level of contributions to be paid to the Fund by the County Council for the year ended 31 March 2024 was 19.9% of Pensionable Pay. The

The Local Government Pension Fund Accounts

corresponding rates of contribution that are required from the major participating employers for this period are:

	% Pay	Additional Monetary Amounts £'000
South Oxfordshire District Council	17.8	411
West Oxfordshire District Council	17.6	746
Cherwell District Council	15.9	-
Oxford City Council	13.4	-
Vale of White Horse District Council	17.8	767
Oxford Brookes University	19.2	-

The funding policy of the scheme is set out in the Funding Strategy Statement and can be summarised as follows:-

- To enable Employer contribution rates to be kept as stable as possible and affordable for the Fund's Employers.
- To make sure the Fund is always able to meet all its liabilities as they fall due.
- To manage Employers' liabilities effectively.
- To enable the income from investments to be maximised within reasonable risk parameters.

The actuarial method used to calculate the future service contribution rate for Employers was a risk-based approach. The risk-based approach uses an Asset Liability Model to project each employer's future benefit payments, contributions and investment returns into the future under 5,000 possible economic scenarios. Future inflation (and therefore benefit payments) and investment returns for each asset class (and therefore asset values) are variables in the projections.

By projecting the evolution of an employer's assets and benefit payments 5,000 times, a contribution rate can be set that results in a sufficient number of the future projections being successful i.e. meeting the funding target by the funding time horizon.

The market value of the Fund's assets at the 2022 valuation date was £3,280m representing 111% of the Fund's accrued liabilities, allowing for future pay increases. The Actuary has certified contribution rates for all Fund employers from 1 April 2023 which, subject to the financial assumptions contained in the valuation, would result in the deficit being recovered over a period of no more than 20 years.

The main financial assumptions were as follows:

Assumptions for the 2022 Valuation	Annual Rate %
Pension Increases	2.7
Salary Increases	2.7
Discount Rate	4.6

Assumptions are also made on the number of leavers, retirements and deaths. One of the important assumptions is the mortality of existing and future pensioners. Mortality rates have been based on up to date national standard tables adjusted for the recent experience

of the Oxfordshire County Council Pension Fund and make allowance for an expectation of further improvements in mortality rates in the future.



Fire Fighters’ Pension Fund Accounts



Fire Fighters' Pension Fund

Fund Account	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Contributions Receivable		
From Employer:		
Normal	-3,281	-3,474
Early Retirements	0	0
Other (ill health retirement contribution)	-200	-132
From members	-1,506	-2,037
	<u>-4,987</u>	<u>-5,643</u>
Transfers In	-17	0
Benefits Payable		
Pensions	6,031	6,631
Commutations and lump sum retirement benefits	352	400
Lump sum death benefits	1,012	970
Other (ill health lump sums)	13	15
	<u>7,408</u>	<u>8,016</u>
Payments to and on account of leavers		
Individual transfers out to other schemes	16	0
Miscellaneous		
Annual Allowance Charge	153	0
Unauthorised Payment Charge	0	0
Taxable Refunds	0	0
Adjustment from 2019/20	0	0
	<u>153</u>	<u>0</u>
Net amount payable/receivable for the year before top-up grant receivable / payable to sponsoring department	2,573	2,373
Top-up grant receivable	-2,573	-2,373
Net amount payable / receivable for the year	0	0

Net Assets Statement	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Net Current Assets and Liabilities		
Contributions due from employer	0	0
Pension top-up grant receivable from sponsoring department	0	0
Other current Assets	0	0
Pension top-up grant payable to sponsoring department	747	-1,267
Other current liabilities (other than liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits in the future)	-52	45
Cash balance	-695	1,222
Total	0	0

Basis of Preparation

The fund reflects the financial arrangements relating to the 1992, 2006, 2015 and Retained Modified Firefighters Pension Schemes and the redress payments arising from the employee contribution holiday provision.

Fire Fighters' Pension Fund

The financial arrangements for the Firefighters Pension Scheme 1992 were made in exercise of the power conferred by section 26 of the Fire Services Act 1947, for the Firefighters Pension Scheme 2006 and the Firefighters Pension Scheme 2015 by the power conferred by section 34 of the Fire Services Act 2004. The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the above powers.

Payment of the employers and employees' contributions towards pension liabilities

Fire & Rescue Authorities are required to make a payment into their pension fund of 4x average pensionable pay in respect of all higher tier ill health retirements and 2x average pensionable pay in respect of all lower tier ill-health retirements. As the number of firefighters who retire on grounds of ill health varies from year to year and will cause financial volatility authorities are required to spread the charges over a period of 3 years.

Central government top-up grant

The fund is operated on the principle that employer and employee contributions together meet the full cost of pension liabilities accrued from future employment and central government (Home Office) meet the costs of paying pensions to retired Fire-fighters, net of the employee and employer contributions, by means of a top-up grant.

There are no investment assets held by the fund and where employer and employee contributions paid into the pension fund are not sufficient to meet pension payments for that year, the deficit will be met by central government top-up grant. Any surplus in the pension fund is paid back to central government.

Administration and Management

The fund is administered and managed by Oxfordshire County Council staff whose time is not rechargeable to the fund.

Benefits

The funds accounts do not take account of liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits after the year end.

Membership

The following summarises the membership of the fund as at 31 March 2024.

Membership numbers	1992 Scheme	2006 Scheme	2015 Scheme
Contributors	0	0	557
Preserved Pensions	36	460	428
Pensioners	333	80	14
Total	369	540	999

Long-term pension obligations

Details of the County Council's long-term pension obligations in respect of fire-fighters can be found in the Retirement Benefits Note 17 to the core financial statements.



Annual Governance Statement 2023/24



Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

Not published until signed at Audit & Governance Commitment in July 2024

Actuarial gains and losses

These are changes in deficits or surpluses that arise because either actual experience or events have not been exactly the same as the assumptions adopted at the previous valuation (experience gains and losses) or the actuarial assumptions have changed.

Amortised

Written off over a period of time.

Bond Fund

A fund primarily invested in government and corporate bonds. The value of the investment changes as the market value of assets held by the fund changes.

Budget Equalisation Reserve

This reserve is used to manage the cash flow implications of variations to the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Budget Prioritisation Reserve

This reserve is to help support the implementation of directorate business strategies and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Business Rates Reserve

This reserve is being used to smooth out any volatility in the business rates collected by the District Councils on behalf of the County Council.

Call Account

A call account is a deposit account with a financial institution without a fixed maturity date.

Capital Receipts

Receipts from the sale of capital assets.

Capital Reserve

This reserve has been established for the purpose of financing capital expenditure in future years.

Cash Equivalent

Short-term, highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

Cash Flow

The movement of money into or out of the County Council during the financial year.

Collection Fund

A fund maintained by each district council to receive all income raised through the Council Tax and Business Rates. The County Council precepts the district councils to receive its share of Council Tax receipts.

Commutation Factor

Factor used to determine the amount of lump sum payable from the amount of annual pension commuted.

Contingent Asset

A possible asset arising from past events and whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the County Council's control.

Contingent Liability

A condition which exists at the balance sheet date, where the outcome will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the County Council's control, or where it is not probable that an outflow of resources will be required to settle the obligation.

Contingent Rent

The portion of a lease payment that is not fixed at the start of the lease but is based on the future amount of a factor that changes other than with the passage of time (e.g. amount of future use, future price indices).

Council Elections Reserve

This reserve has been established to meet the cost of County Council Elections.

County Fund

The main revenue fund of the County Council into which precept income and Government grants are paid and from which day-to-day payments are made.

Creditors

Amounts owed by the County Council for work done, goods received, or services rendered within the financial year for which payment has not yet been made.

Current Asset

An asset which will be used up during the next accounting period e.g. cash.

Curtailement

Early retirement costs calculated in accordance with accounting standard IAS19.

Debtors

Amounts owed to the County Council for services carried out during the financial year but not yet received.

Deferred Income

Prepaid income credited to the Balance Sheet and amortised to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to match the benefit of the receipts over the term of the contractual arrangement.

Depreciation

The systematic write-off of the reduction in value of a tangible fixed asset due to wear and tear, passing of time and technological changes over its economic useful life.

Derecognition

Removal of an asset or liability from the Balance Sheet.

Equity instrument

A contract such as an equity share in a company.

Fair value

Fair value is defined as 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

Financial asset

A right to future economic benefits controlled by the County Council that is represented by cash, an equity instrument of another entity, a contractual right to receive cash (or another financial asset) from another entity or a contractual right to exchange financial assets/liabilities with another entity under conditions that are potentially favourable to the County Council.

Financial liability

An obligation to transfer economic benefits controlled by the County Council that is represented by a contractual obligation to deliver cash (or another financial asset) to another entity, or a contractual obligation to exchange financial assets/liabilities with another entity under conditions that are potentially unfavorable to the County Council.

Financial instruments

A financial instrument is any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another. Financial instruments include bank deposits, investments, debtors, long-term debtors, creditors, temporary loans and borrowings.

Financial Year

The County Council's accounts cover the period from 1 April in one year to 31 March in the next year.

Fixed Asset

A tangible asset that yields benefit to the County Council and the services it provides for a period of more than one year.

General Government Grants

These are general grants paid by central government in aid of local authority services as opposed to specific grants which may only be used for a specific purpose. The main general grant is Revenue Support Grant.

Government Initiatives Reserve

This reserve is used to hold underspends on budgets funded by un-ringfenced grants held that relate to specific agreed outcomes or the implementation of Government initiatives.

Grants and Contributions Reserve

This reserve has been set up to hold the net overspent or underspent grants and contributions committed to be spent or recovered in future years.

Hedge Fund

A hedge fund is a form of investment partnership.

Impairment

A reduction in the carrying value of an asset arising from physical damage, obsolescence or a significant decline in market value.

Inventories

Raw materials and stores which the County Council has bought and holds in stock for use as required.

Intangible Asset

An asset that does not have physical substance but is identifiable and controlled by the organisation through custody or legal rights e.g. software licenses.

International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)

These are issued by the International Accounting Standards Board and provide standards for the preparation of financial statements.

-

A method of financing capital expenditure where a rental charge is paid for an asset for a specified period of time.

-

A party to a lease agreement who makes payment to use an asset.

Insurance Reserve

This reserve covers the County Council for insurance claims that, based on the previous experience of the County Council, are likely to be received, as well as a number of insurance related issues.

Lessor

A party to a lease agreement who receives payment for the use of an asset.

Liabilities

Amounts owed by the County Council which will be paid at some time in the future.

Limited Liability Partnership

A partnership in which some or all partners have limited liabilities.

Long Term Investments

Investments that are not due to mature within the next 12 months.

Money Market Fund

Funds are invested in short-dated assets including certificates of deposits, government securities and commercial papers making them highly liquid. Money Market Funds must be AAAMf rated, invest in high credit quality assets and maintain a weighted average maturity of 60 days or fewer. Investments have a stable net asset value and dividends are paid to investors on their investment.

Mortality Assumptions – Abbreviations

S1NA, S1PA and S2PA - mortality tables issued as part of the "S1" and "S2" series of mortality tables produced by the Continuous Mortality Investigation. The "S1" mortality tables are based on mortality experience from UK self-administered pension schemes between 2000 and 2006. The "S2" mortality tables are based on mortality experience from UK self-administered pension schemes between 2004 and 2011.

Net Debt

The County Council's borrowings and finance liabilities less cash and liquid resources.

Net Operating Expenditure

The amount which it costs to provide services after any specific grants and/or income from fees and charges is taken into account, but ignoring general government grant and local taxation.

Non-current Asset

A long-term asset that is not expected to be used up or realised within the next 12 months e.g. Property, Plant and Equipment.

Non-Domestic Rate

A levy on businesses based on a national rate in the pound set by the government multiplied by the 'rateable value' of the premises they occupy.

Non-Derivative Financial Asset/Liability

Asset/Liability whose value does not depend on the value of another asset/liability such as a currency. Examples of non-derivative financial asset/liability consist of trade and other receivables, cash and cash equivalents, and long-term debt.

Partnership Reserves

This reserve holds funds relating to partnership arrangements.

Pooled Fund

Funds from individual investors are aggregated for the purposes of investment and returns are apportioned between investors according to the size of the investment.

Pooling

Where services benefit larger areas than the local authorities which provide them, the expenditure is sometimes pooled according to a formula which reflects usage of the service.

Precept

The levy made by the precepting authority (the County Council) on billing authorities (the district councils in Oxfordshire) requiring the latter to collect income from council taxpayers on their behalf.

Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

A scheme to encourage private sector investment in the public sector. Typically these involve a private sector operator building or enhancing property and operating services on behalf of a public sector organisation.

Professional Fees

The fees paid by the County Council for professional services such as those of architects and quantity surveyors.

Provision

An amount of money put aside in the accounts for anticipated liabilities which cannot be accurately estimated e.g. insurance provision for claims awaiting resolution.

Observable Inputs

Inputs that are developed using market data, such as publicly available information about actual events or transactions, and that reflect the assumptions that market participants would use when pricing the asset or liability

On-Street Car Parking Reserve

This surplus has arisen under the operation of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (Section 55). The purposes for which these monies can be used are defined by statute.

Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)

A central government agency which provides long and shorter term loans to local authorities at interest rates slightly higher than those at which the government itself can borrow. Local authorities are able to borrow a proportion of their requirement to finance capital spending from this source.

Reserves

Amounts of money put aside to meet certain categories of expenditure in order to avoid fluctuations in the charge to the County Fund.

Revenue Expenditure

The County Council's day-to-day expenditure on items which include wages, supplies and services and interest charges.

Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute

Capital expenditure as defined by statute that does not result in the acquisition, creation or enhancement of fixed assets and is charged to the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement in accordance with the accounting policy.

RIA

Receipts received in advance.

School Reserves

In accordance with the Education Reform Act 1988, the scheme of Local Management of Schools provides for the carry forward of individual school surpluses and deficits

Segregated Mandate Fund

Funds from individual investors are invested on a segregated basis so that the holdings can be directly attributed to investors.

Settlement (Retirement Benefits)

Settlement relates to a bulk transfer out of the Fund as a result of functions transferring to another organisation. It reflects the difference between the liability transferred (calculated in accordance with accounting standard IAS19) and the assets transferred to settle the liability.

Specific Grants

Grants paid by the Government in respect of specific services.

Strategic Measures

This comprises interest on balances and capital financing charges. The former involves surplus cash from the County Fund which is either invested or used to reduce the need to borrow externally. The interest received is credited to the County Fund. Capital financing charges include the minimum revenue provision required and interest on outstanding debt, together with a general revenue contribution to finance capital spending.

Trading Accounts Reserve

This reserve holds funds relating to trading activities to help manage investment.

Transformation Reserve

This reserve is to fund the Council's transformation programme.

Vehicle and Equipment Reserve

This reserve is to fund future replacements of vehicles and equipment.

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AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

17 JULY 2024

INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER 2024/25

Report by Executive Director of Resources

RECOMMENDATION

The committee is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) **Approve the Internal Audit Charter.**
- b) **Note the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme.**

Executive Summary

1. This report presents both the Internal Audit Charter and the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme for 2024/25. These are subject to annual review.

Internal Audit Charter

2. The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) came into force on 1 April 2013. (Updated 1 April 2017). These Internal Audit standards apply across the whole public sector. The PSIAS requires that an Internal Audit Charter is in place for each local authority. The Oxfordshire County Council Internal Audit Charter is included within Appendix 1.
3. The Internal Audit Charter sets out the purpose, authority and responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council's Internal Audit function, in accordance with the PSIAS. The Internal Audit Charter establishes the position of Internal Audit within the organisation, access and reporting requirements. It also outlines the key responsibilities of the Audit & Governance Committee.
4. This Internal Audit Charter is subject to approval by the Audit & Governance Committee of Oxfordshire County Council on an annual basis, in line with PSIAS requirements. There have been no material changes made since the Internal Audit Charter was last approved by the Committee in July 2023.
5. The Internal Audit Charter will be subject to review and amendment during 2024/25, in light of the introduction of the new Global Internal Audit Standards which will be effective from January 2025. In response to the new global

standards, the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards Advisory Board (IASAB) are reviewing the standards with a view to identifying and producing any sector specific interpretations and guidance material. The effective date of implementation of the new material developed by the IASAB will be 1 April 2025. Until then we are advised to continue to operate in accordance with the existing Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

Quality Assurance Improvement Programme (QAIP)

6. The PSIAS require that the internal audit activity maintain a Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP). This is included within Appendix 2.
7. The Chief Internal Auditor is required to communicate to senior management and the Audit & Governance Committee on the internal audit activity's quality assurance and improvement programme, including results of ongoing monitoring at least annually, internal assessments upon completion and external assessments conducted at least every five years. The QAIP details what will be reported to the Audit & Governance Committee and the frequency.
8. For 2023/24 the QAIP included four opportunities for improvement within the internal audit activity. Implementation of those improvements are as follows:

Opportunities for improvement – previously identified for 2023/24:

Opportunity for improvement	Lead Officer	Target Date	Update
<p>Data analytics - to be embedded into the Internal Audit and Counter Fraud assurance activities.</p> <p>This will include the development of a documented Data Analytics Strategy.</p> <p>The Counter Fraud Intelligence & Data Officer's job role has already been redefined to assist with the implementation of data analytics across the Internal Audit & Counter Fraud Service. The</p>	<p>Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor / Katherine Kitashima, Audit Manager.</p> <p>Nick Stokes, Intelligence & Data Officer to support</p>	<p>Data Analytics Strategy for Internal Audit and Counter Fraud in place by 01/09/23.</p> <p>Improvements to assurance activities embedded throughout 2023/24.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Several audits were completed utilising data analytics and full population testing approaches – this led to improvements in the assurance activities.</p>

team's digital maturity will be assessed and any gaps addressed / there will be a continued focus on improved awareness and application across the team.			
Practice standards – we will implement a programme of briefings / training with the team covering PSIAS and key internal audit practice themes. (For example engagement planning, conflicts of interest, code of ethics, risk scanning).	Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor / Katherine Kitashima, Audit Manager.	Quarterly, commencing Summer 2023. (Already covered in monthly team meetings – however recognise would be an improvement to formalise training / briefing plan)	Complete
Data Protection – we will review arrangements for internal audit and counter fraud compliance, including electronic document retention and data sharing arrangements.	Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor / Katherine Kitashima, Audit Manager. Emma Vickers, Assistant Auditor to support.	01/09/23	Complete
Management Action Follow Up System – we are required by the current supplier of the software used to monitor the implementation of management actions to upgrade to a new version. We will use this as an opportunity to undertake necessary housekeeping of how directorates are structured / how officers are set up, and to review whether there are any improvements required to our reporting and follow up processes.	Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor / Katherine Kitashima, Audit Manager. Emma Vickers, Assistant Auditor to support.	New version implemented before 31/03/24.	Upgrade undertaken in June 2024 – complete.

9. Opportunities for improvement for 2024/25 have been included within the QAIP in Appendix 2. Progress in implementation of these will be reported back to the Audit & Governance Committee.

PSIAS – Self Assessment / External Assessment Update

10. Internal Audit received a CIPFA external assessment against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) during November 2023. This was reported to the Audit & Governance Committee in January 2024. The results of the assessment were very positive, with an overall conclusion that Oxfordshire County Council's Internal Audit Service FULLY CONFORMS to the requirements of the standards. There were no areas of either partial or non-conformance with the standards identified and no recommendations arising.
11. There is a requirement for an annual self-assessment against PSIAS to be completed (with external assessment scheduled every 5 years). The self-assessment will be scheduled for quarter 4 of 2024/25, considering any changes in relation to the implementation of the new Global Internal Audit Standards and subsequent guidance issued by the UK Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards Advisory Board.

Financial Implications

12. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by: Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources
lorna.baxter@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

13. There are not direct legal implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by: Paul Grant, Head of Law & Governance & Deputy Monitoring Officer
paul.grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

14. There are no direct staff implications arising from this report.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

15. There are no direct equality and inclusion implications arising from this report.

Sustainability Implications

16. There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

17. There are no direct risk management implications arising from this report.

NAME: Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources

Annex:	Annex 1:	2024/25 Internal Audit Charter
	Annex 2:	2024/25 Internal Audit Quality Assurance Improvement Programme

Contact Officer:	Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor, sarah.cox@oxfordshire.gov.uk
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July 2024

Oxfordshire County Council Internal Audit Charter

Introduction

The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) came into force on 1 April 2013. (Updated 1 April 2017). These are the first Internal Audit standards to apply across the whole public sector. The PSIAS requires that an Internal Audit Charter is in place for each local authority.

The Standards form part of the wider mandatory elements of the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF) which includes the mission, core principles, definition of Internal Audit and Code of Ethics.

This Charter sets out the purpose, authority and responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council's Internal Audit function, in accordance with the PSIAS and additional requirements for Local Government which are published via the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)

This Internal Audit Charter has been drawn up in line with the PSIAS requirements and replaces all previous Internal Audit Terms of Reference.

This Internal Audit Charter is subject to approval by the Audit & Governance Committee of Oxfordshire County Council on an annual basis, in line with PSIAS requirements.

Definition of Internal Audit

Oxfordshire County Council has adopted the PSIAS definition of internal auditing as follows:

"Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisations operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes".

Mission of Internal Audit

The mission of Internal Audit is to enhance and protect organisational value by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice and insight.

Core Principles

To achieve Internal Audit's mission the following core principles for the professional practice of Internal Auditing are present and applied by Internal Audit:

- Demonstrates integrity.
- Demonstrates competence and due professional care.
- Is objective and free from undue influence (independent).
- Aligns with the strategies, objectives, and risks of Oxfordshire County Council.
- Is appropriately positioned and adequately resourced.
- Demonstrates quality and continuous improvement.
- Communicates effectively.
- Provides risk-based assurance.
- Is insightful, proactive, and future-focused.
- Promotes organisational improvement.

Code of Ethics

Oxfordshire County Council Internal Audit has adopted the PSIAS Code of Ethics:

Integrity

- The integrity of internal auditors establishes trust and thus provides the basis for reliance on their judgement

Objectivity

- Internal Auditors exhibit the highest level of professional objectivity in gathering, evaluating and communicating information about the activity or process being examined. Internal Auditors make a balanced assessment of all the relevant circumstances and are not unduly influenced by their own interests or by others in forming judgements.

Confidentiality

- Internal Auditors respect the value and ownership of information they receive and do not disclose information without appropriate authority unless there is a legal obligation to do so.

Competency

- Internal auditors apply the knowledge, skills and experience needed in the performance of internal auditing services.

Internal Audit will also have a regard to the Committee on Standards of Public Life's Seven Principles of Public Life as contained within Oxfordshire County Councils Constitution and Officer's Code of Conduct

- Selflessness
 - Integrity
 - Objectivity
 - Accountability
 - Openness
 - Honesty
 - Leadership
-

Statutory Requirement

Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires that authorities "make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall ensure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs." In Oxfordshire County Council, that officer is the Director of Finance.

Specific requirements are detailed in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, in that a relevant body must undertake an adequate and effective internal audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal control in accordance with the proper practices in relation to internal control. Any officer or member of a relevant body must, if the body requires:

- a. make available such documents and records as appear to that body to be necessary for the purposes of the audit; and
- b. supply the body with such information and explanation as that body considers necessary for that purpose.

In accordance with these regulations, internal audit staff should have access to any financial or non-financial records maintained by the council, or its partners in delivering council services, that are relevant to the audit activity being performed.

Definition of the Chief Audit Executive (CAE)

Chief Audit Executive describes a person in a senior position responsible for effectively managing the internal audit activity in accordance with the internal audit charter and the mandatory elements of the International Professional Practices Framework. Within

Definition of the Board

The PSIAS lays out the role of a Board in relation to specific standards. In a local authority the role of the Board may be satisfied by an Audit Committee. In Oxfordshire Council the Audit & Governance Committee, for the purposes of the key duties laid out in the PSIAS, is the Board.

The key duties of the Board (Audit & Governance Committee) as laid out in the PSIAS are as follows:

- Approve the Internal Audit charter
- Receive the risk based Internal Audit plan including the Internal Audit resource plan
- Receive communications from the Chief Internal Auditor on internal audit's performance relative to its plan and other matters
- Receive an annual confirmation from the Chief Internal Auditor with regard to the organisational independence of the internal audit activity
- Receive the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme from the Chief Internal Auditor.
- Make appropriate enquiries of the management and the Chief Internal Auditor to determine whether there are inappropriate scope or resource limitations.

Definition of Senior Management

The PSIAS anticipates the role of Senior Management includes the following:

- Input to the risk based Internal Audit plan
- Receive periodic reports from the Chief Internal Auditor on internal audit activity, that includes follow up reports
- Receive the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme from the Chief Internal Auditor

Within Oxfordshire Council 'Senior Management' is defined as the Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance)

Professionalism

Oxfordshire County Council Internal Audit will govern itself by adherence to The Institute of Internal Auditors' mandatory guidance including the Definition of Internal Auditing, the Code of Ethics, and the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing (Standards). This mandatory guidance constitutes principles of the fundamental requirements for the professional practice of internal

auditing and for evaluating the effectiveness of the internal audit activity's performance.

Oxfordshire County Council Internal Audit maintains an Audit Procedures Manual which is consistent with PSIAS requirements. These procedures are applied for all audit engagements.

Authority

Oxfordshire County Council Internal Audit, with strict accountability for confidentiality and safeguarding records and information, is authorised full, free, and unrestricted access to any and all of the organisation's records, physical properties, and personnel pertinent to carrying out any engagement. All employees are required to assist the internal audit activity in fulfilling its roles and responsibilities. The internal audit activity will also have free and unrestricted access to, and communicate and interact directly with, the Audit & Governance Committee.

Organisation

The Chief Internal Auditor will report functionally to the Audit & Governance Committee, for example approving the charter and internal audit plan, and administratively to the Director of Finance & Assistant Director of Finance, such as approving the internal audit activity's HR administration and budgets.

The Chief Internal Auditor will communicate and interact directly with the Audit & Governance Committee, including in executive sessions and between meetings as appropriate.

Independence and objectivity

The internal audit activity within Oxfordshire County Council will remain free from interference by any element in the organisation, including matters of audit selection, scope, procedures, frequency, timing, or report content to permit maintenance of a necessary independent and objective mental attitude.

Internal auditors will have no direct operational responsibility or authority over any of the activities audited within Oxfordshire County Council. Accordingly, they will not implement internal controls, develop procedures, install systems, prepare records, or engage in any other activity that may impair internal auditor's judgment.

Internal Audit will ensure through the planning and resourcing process that any potential conflicts of interest are recognised and addressed through internal audit staff not undertaking an audit for at least two years in an area where they have had previous

operational roles and/or undertaken consulting activity and that responsibilities for audit assignments are rotated periodically within the internal audit team.

Internal auditors must exhibit the highest level of professional objectivity in gathering, evaluating, and communicating information about the activity or process being examined. Internal auditors must make a balanced assessment of all the relevant circumstances and not be unduly influenced by their own interests or by others in forming judgments. Internal auditors will disclose any impairment of independence or objectivity, in fact or appearance, to the appropriate parties.

The Chief Internal Auditor will confirm to the Audit & Governance Committee, at least annually, the organisational independence of the internal audit activity.

The Chief Internal Auditor will disclose to the Audit & Governance Committee any interference and related implications in determining the scope of internal auditing, performing work, and communicating results.

Responsibility- Scope & Objectives

Internal audit is an assurance service that provides an independent and objective opinion to the council on the entire control environment comprising risk management, performance, control and governance by evaluating the effectiveness in achieving the organisation's objectives. Internal Audit objectively examine, evaluate and report on the adequacy of the control environment as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources.

Internal Audit Services is accountable to the Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) for the terms of reference, scope and coverage of its audit activities. In addition there is a responsibility to those charged with corporate governance being the council (through the Audit & Governance Committee and Audit Working Group) and the Head of Paid Service to give an annual opinion on the whole system of internal control and to support the Monitoring Officer in respect of matters of standards/ legality.

The council's external auditor relies on Internal Audit to undertake a continuous programme of audits of key corporate controls. Also, due priority needs to be given to the key strategic risks of the council including the requirements of the Section 151 Officer. Audit work is included to ensure an opinion can be given on the whole of the control environment. These priorities constitute most of the Annual Plan the balance being risks identified by Internal Audit. The Chief Internal Auditor collates an annual report on the effectiveness of the council's internal control environment.

Internal audit may perform consulting and advisory services related to governance, risk management and control as appropriate for the organisation. It may also evaluate specific operations at the request of the Audit & Governance Committee or management, as appropriate.

Based on its activity, Internal audit is responsible for reporting significant risk exposures and control issues identified to the Audit & Governance Committee and to

Senior Management, including fraud risks, governance issues, and other matters needed or requested.

Internal audit plan

At least annually, the Chief Internal Auditor will submit to the Audit and Governance Committee an internal audit plan for review and approval. The Chief Internal Auditor will communicate the impact of resource limitations and significant interim changes to senior management and the Audit & Governance Committee.

The internal audit plan will be developed based on a prioritisation of the audit universe using a risk-based methodology, including input of senior management, including the Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Directors, Deputy Directors and Finance Business Partners. It will be developed in accordance with the Internal Audit Charter and will link to the strategic objectives and priorities of Oxfordshire County Council. Prior to submission to the Audit & Governance Committee for approval, the plan may be discussed with appropriate senior management. Any significant deviation from the approved internal audit plan will be communicated through the periodic activity reporting process.

The audit plan is dynamic in nature and will be reviewed and realigned on a regular basis to take account of new, emerging and changing risks and priorities. It will be based on a risk assessment that covers financial materiality and business risks as well as any suspected or detected fraud, corruption or impropriety that has come to the attention of the Chief Internal Auditor.

Internal Audit will consult with the Council's external auditor and with other relevant inspection/assurance and review bodies, as required, in order to co-ordinate effort, ensure adequate coverage and minimise any duplication.

As part of the planning process, the Chief Internal Auditor will identify other potential sources of assurance and will include in the risk based plan the approach to using other sources of assurance and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.

For each audit assignment, Internal Auditors will develop and document a plan including the objectives of the review, the scope, and timing and resource allocations. In planning the assignment, auditors will consider, in conjunction with the auditees, the objectives of the activity being reviewed, significant risks to the activity and the adequacy and effectiveness of the activity's governance, risk management and control processes.

Reporting and monitoring

A written report will be prepared and issued by the Chief Internal Auditor or designee following the conclusion of each internal audit engagement and will be distributed as appropriate. Internal audit results will also be communicated to the Audit & Governance Committee. The internal audit report will include an opinion on the adequacy of controls in the area that has been audited.

The draft report will be discussed with the auditees and management actions agreed for the weaknesses identified, along with timescales for implementation. The final report will be issued to the relevant Director, Director of Finance and other officers in line with directorate protocols.

The internal audit activity will be responsible for appropriate follow-up on engagement findings and monitoring and reporting on the implementation of management actions.

Arrangements for appropriate resourcing

Internal Audit must be appropriately staffed in terms of numbers, grades, qualification levels and experience, having regard to its objectives and to the standards. All Internal Auditors will hold a professional qualification or be training towards a professional qualification.

In the event that the risk assessment, carried out to prepare the annual plan, identifies a need for more audit work than there are resources available, the Chief Internal Auditor will identify the shortfall and advise the Director of Finance followed by the Audit & Governance Committee as required to assess the associated risks or to recommend additional resources are identified.

The audit plan will remain flexible to address unplanned work including responding to specific control issues highlighted by senior management during the year.

Internal audit work is prioritised according to risk, through the judgement of the Chief Internal Auditor, informed by the Council's risk registers and in consultation with senior management and External Audit.

All internal auditors have a personal responsibility to undertake a programme of continuing professional development (CPD) to maintain and develop their competence. This is fulfilled through the requirements set by professional bodies and through the Council's appraisal and development programme.

Fraud and Corruption

The County Council is one of the largest business organisations in Oxfordshire. In administering its responsibilities; the Council has a duty to prevent fraud and corruption, whether it is attempted by someone outside or within the Council such as another organisation, a resident, an employee or Councillor. The Council is committed to an effective Anti-Fraud and Corruption culture, Internal Audit fully considers the risk of fraud and corruption when undertaking its activities by promoting high ethical standards and encouraging the prevention and detection of fraudulent activities.

The Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, sets out responsibilities in this area.

Internal Audit – Counter Fraud Team within Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for developing and implementing the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and monitoring the investigation of any reported issues. To ensure that all suspected or reported irregularities are dealt with promptly and in accordance with this strategy and that action is identified to improve controls and reduce the risk of recurrence. Internal Audit - Counter Fraud Team maintains the fraud log for Oxfordshire County Council. Internal Audit – Counter Fraud Team undertakes investigations into potential financial irregularities. In some circumstances this may be delegated to the service itself following an assessment of risk and financial impact.

Internal Audit – Counter Fraud Team also facilitates Oxfordshire County Council's participation in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) in which data from the Council's main systems are matched with data supplied from other Local Authorities and external agencies to detect potentially fraudulent activity.

Definition of Assurance Services

The PSIAS defines assurance services as follows: *"An objective examination of evidence for the purpose of providing an independent assessment on governance, risk management and control processes for the organisation."*

Internal Audit provide this assurance across all parts of the Council reviewing the Council's "control environment" comprising risk management, control and governance, this enables the Chief Internal Auditor to provide an annual opinion on the effectiveness of these arrangements. This opinion supports the Council's Annual Governance Statement.

Definition of Consulting Services

The PSIAS defines consulting services as follows: *“Advisory and related client service activities, the nature and scope of which are agreed with the client, are intended to add value and improve an organisation’s governance, risk management and control processes without the internal auditor assuming management responsibility. Examples include counsel, advice, facilitation and training.”*

The PSIAS requires that approval must be sought from the Audit & Governance Committee for any significant additional consulting services not already included in the audit plan, prior to accepting the engagement. Within Oxfordshire County Council significant is defined as any single assignment equivalent to 5% of annual planned days; these will be brought to the Audit & Governance Committee for approval.

Quality assurance and improvement programme

The internal audit activity will maintain a quality assurance and improvement programme that covers all aspects of the internal audit activity and evaluates the activity’s conformance with the Standards and application of the Code of Ethics. As such, the programme assesses the efficiency and effectiveness of the internal audit activity and identifies opportunities for improvement.

The Chief Internal Auditor will communicate to senior management and the Audit & Governance Committee on the internal audit activity’s quality assurance and improvement programme, including results of ongoing monitoring at least annually, internal assessments upon completion and external assessments conducted at least every five years. Disclosure will include:

- The scope and frequency of both internal and external assessments.
- The qualifications and independence of the assessor(s) or assessment team, including potential conflicts of interest.
- Conclusions of assessors.
- Corrective action plans.

The results of the quality assurance and improvement programme and progress against any improvement plans must also be included in the annual report.

Signed by:

Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor
Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources
Councilor Roz Smith, Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee
Date approved: 17 July 2024 (Audit & Governance Committee)
Date of next review: July 2025



Oxfordshire County Council Internal Audit - Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme

Introduction

Internal Audit's Quality Assurance and Improvement Program (QAIP) is designed to provide reasonable assurance to the various stakeholders of Oxfordshire County Council Internal Audit Service that Internal Audit:

- Performs its work in accordance with its Charter, which is consistent with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, Definition of Internal Auditing and Code of Ethics;
- Operates in an efficient and effective manner;
- Is adding value and continually improving the service it provides.
- The Chief Internal Auditor is ultimately responsible for maintaining the QAIP, which covers all types of Internal Audit activities. The QAIP must include both internal and external assessments. Internal assessments are both ongoing and periodical and external assessments must be undertaken at least once every five years.

Internal Assessments

Internal Assessment is made up of both ongoing reviews and periodic reviews.

Ongoing Reviews

Ongoing assessments are conducted through:

- Supervision of audit engagements
- Regular, documented review of work papers during engagements by appropriate Internal Audit staff
- Applying relevant audit policies and procedures, including those set out in the Oxfordshire County Council Internal Audit Manual, to ensure applicable audit planning, fieldwork and reporting quality standards are met
- Review of all audit reports and agreed management actions by the Chief Internal Auditor prior to formal circulation.
- Feedback from Customer Satisfaction Questionnaires (CSQs) on individual audit assignments

- Established key performance indicators (KPIs) designed to improve Internal Audit's effectiveness and efficiency. These are signed off each year by the Audit & Governance Committee.
- In assigning audit work to an individual auditor consideration is given to their level of skills, experience and competence and an appropriate level of supervision exercised
- Feedback from CSQs, performance against KPIs and reviews of working papers and audit reports will form part of the discussion during regular meetings / 12:3:2 appraisal/121 discussions.

Periodic Reviews

Periodic assessments are designed to assess conformance with Internal Audit's Charter, the Standards, Definition of Internal Auditing, the Code of Ethics, and the efficiency and effectiveness of internal audit in meeting the needs of its various stakeholders. Periodic assessments will be conducted through:

- Chief Internal Auditor / Audit Manager file reviews to ensure performance in accordance with Internal Audit's Quality Procedures Manual.
- Review of internal audit Key Performance Indicators by the Chief Internal Auditor on a monthly basis, including elapsed time between start of audit and exit meeting, elapsed time between exit meeting and issue of draft report, elapsed time between receipt of management responses to draft report and issue of final report, % of planned activity completed and % of management actions implemented.
- Quarterly activity and performance reporting to the Audit and Governance Committee and Section 151 officer.
- Annual self-review of conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Any resultant action plans will be monitored by the Chief Internal Auditor on a quarterly basis.
- Independent annual review of the effectiveness of Internal Audit by the Council's Monitoring Officer, with results reported to and reviewed by the Audit and Governance Committee.

External Assessment

External assessments will appraise and express an opinion about Internal Audit's conformance with the Standards, Definition of Internal Auditing and Code of Ethics and include recommendations for improvement, as appropriate.

An external assessment will be conducted every 5 years by a qualified, independent assessor from outside the Council. The assessment will be in the form of a full external assessment, or a self-assessment with independent external validation. The format of the external assessment will be discussed with the Audit & Governance Committee.

Reporting

Internal Assessments – Quarterly activity and performance reporting to the Audit and Governance Committee and Section 151 officer.

External Assessments – results of external assessments will be reported to the Audit & Governance Committee and Section 151 officer at the earliest opportunity following receipt of the external assessor's report. The external assessment report will be accompanied by a written action plan in response to significant findings and recommendations contained in the report.

Follow Up - the Chief Internal Auditor will implement appropriate follow-up actions to ensure that action plans developed are implemented in a reasonable timeframe.

Opportunities for improvement – 2024/25

Opportunity for improvement	Lead Officer	Target Date
<p>Data analytics - to be embedded into the Internal Audit and Counter Fraud assurance activities.</p> <p>This opportunity for improvement was included within the QAIP for 2023/24. During 2023/24 we developed a documented Data Analytics Strategy for Internal Audit & Counter Fraud. The Counter Fraud Intelligence and Data Officer now works across the Internal Audit and Counter Fraud teams. Several audits were undertaken using data analytics and full population testing approach.</p> <p>This needs to be a continued focus, building awareness and application across the team. Members of the team are undertaking specific training, for example PowerBi.</p>	<p>Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor / Katherine Kitashima, Audit Manager.</p> <p>Nick Stokes, Intelligence & Data Officer to support</p>	<p>Improvements to assurance activities continue to be embedded throughout 2024/25.</p>
<p>Internal Audit Standards – New Global Internal Audit Standards will become effective from 9 January 2025.</p>	<p>Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor / Katherine Kitashima, Audit Manager.</p>	<p>New standards implemented across team by April 2025.</p>

As a result the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards are being reviewed. New material and guidance will start to be issued from September 2024, to be implemented by April 2025. We will need to review our processes within the team and make updates to the Internal Audit Charter, audit manual, etc.		
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Signed by:

Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor

Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources

Date approved: July 2024

Date of next review: July 2025

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AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

17 July 2024

COUNTER FRAUD PLAN AND UPDATE

Report by Executive Director of Resources

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to**
 - a) Note the summary of activity against the Counter Fraud Plan for 2023/24.
 - b) Approve the Counter Fraud Plan for 2024/25.

Executive Summary

2. This report presents a summary of activity against the Counter Fraud Plan for 2023/24, which was previously presented to the July 2023 Audit & Governance committee meeting.
3. The report also presents the Counter Fraud Plan for the coming year 2024/25.
4. The Counter Fraud plan supports the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy by ensuring that the Council has proportionate and effective resources and controls in place to prevent and detect fraud as well as investigate those matters that do arise.

Background

5. The Local Government Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy – Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally was launched in 2020. The Council's Counter-Fraud arrangements are focussed on their recommended five pillars of activity:
 - **Govern:** Having robust arrangements in place to ensure counter-fraud, bribery and corruption measures are embedded throughout the organisation.
 - **Acknowledge:** Understand fraud risk and maintain a robust anti-fraud response.
 - **Prevent:** Prevent and detect fraud taking place against the organisation.
 - **Pursue:** Carry out fraud investigations, apply sanctions to offenders and recover losses.
 - **Protect:** The overarching aim of protecting public funds from fraud and corruption.

6. The International Public Sector Fraud Forum has established five principles for public sector fraud:

The Forum has established 5 principles for public sector fraud.



1. There is always going to be fraud

It is a fact that some individuals will look to make gains where there is opportunity, and organisations need robust processes in place to prevent, detect and respond to fraud and corruption.

2. Finding fraud is a good thing

If you don't find fraud you can't fight it. This requires a change in perspective so the identification of fraud is viewed as a positive and proactive achievement.

3. There is no one solution

Addressing fraud needs a holistic response incorporating detection, prevention and redress, underpinned by a strong understanding of risk. It also requires cooperation between organisations under a spirit of collaboration.

4. Fraud and corruption are ever changing

Fraud, and counter fraud practices, evolve very quickly and organisations must be agile and change their approach to deal with these evolutions.

5. Prevention is the most effective way to address fraud and corruption

Preventing fraud through effective counter fraud practices reduces the loss and reputational damage. It also requires less resources than an approach focused on detection and recovery.

7. The Council has a Counter-Fraud Strategy which guides the Council's approach to its fraud response. The Strategy states that "the Council has a duty to prevent fraud and corruption, whether it is attempted by someone outside or within the Council such as another organisation, a resident, an employee or Councillor. The Council is committed to a **zero-tolerance** approach to fraud, corruption and theft."
8. The Counter-Fraud Team's purpose is therefore to apply and to promote the zero-tolerance approach to fraud by thoroughly investigating any instances of fraud; applying the appropriate sanctions; undertaking proactive and preventative work to prevent and detect fraud through training, awareness training, data matching and proactive reviews.

9. The Strategy was last updated in 2023 as part of its two-yearly review. Due to the introduction of legislation such as the Economic Crime & Transparency Act, the Strategy will be reviewed again in 2024.

Counter Fraud Team Update against the 2023/24 Plan

10. Counter-Fraud Service Resources Update

- The Counter Fraud Team comprises of a Counter Fraud Team Manager, Senior Counter Fraud Officer, Intelligence & Data Officer and an Apprentice Counter Fraud Officer.
- The Intelligence & Data Officer took on additional responsibilities 2023/24 in supporting with the development of a data analytics strategy and improving the use of data analytics in Internal Audit and Counter Fraud assurance activities. Their role continues to develop, working across both the Internal Audit and Counter Fraud activity.
- The Senior Counter Fraud Officer has recently qualified as a CIPFA Counter Fraud Specialist.
- In agreement with the Director of Law & Governance in 2021, the Counter Fraud Team took on the receipt, log, and triage of whistleblowing referrals for OCC via the Whistleblowing hotline and dedicated email address. This arrangement continues to provide a centralised approach to logging and tracking whistleblowing referrals, with arrangements to report to the Director of Law & Governance working successfully.
- During 2023/24 the team provided the Counter Fraud Service to Cherwell District Council. As previously reported to the committee, this arrangement has now ended (end of April 2024). The focus of the team's resources is now on Oxfordshire County Council counter fraud activities.

11. Case figures 2023/24 (figures at mid-June 2024):

During 2023/24 there were 17 cases received and logged by Counter Fraud of actual, suspected or alleged fraud of which 6 are still open and under investigation. A full breakdown is as follows: -

Total number of cases received in 2023/24	17 cases
Outcomes 2023/24 cases	Of the 17 cases received in 2023/24: 7 - still open and under investigation

	<p>10 - have been completed with the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four cases of Blue Badge misuse: two cases resulted in the blue badges being cancelled; one case resulted in a cautionary letter; and the fourth resulted in a successful prosecution. • One case of system misuse by an employee, resulting in disciplinary action. • One case of falsifying timesheets, resulting in disciplinary action. • One bank mandate fraud attempt which was prevented before any funds were lost. An investigation report was issued addressing control improvements for future prevention of bank mandate frauds. • One case of fraud by misrepresentation by a job applicant, resulting in a cautionary letter. • One case of alleged data misuse, resulting in a cautionary letter. • One case which identified unaccounted for cash in an FM office. Investigation report issued to improve controls.
Whistleblowing cases 2023/24	<p>13 allegations of whistleblowing were received. 9 were assessed by the Monitoring Officer to be dealt with under a different council policy (e.g. Grievance Procedure), and 4 were accepted to be investigated as whistleblowing. 2 cases are still open. One of these cases is being investigated by the Counter-Fraud Team and is included in the above figures.</p> <p>The whistleblowing cases are reported annually to the Audit & Governance Committee by the Monitoring Officer in a separate report.</p>
Outcomes of pre-2023 cases closed during the year 23/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A deprivation of assets case where fraud was proven in court and a repayment plan put in place to reimburse the Council for the care fees. • Interim payment received from liquidator dealing with a supplier overcharge made to the Council.

12. **Case Figures 2024/25 (figures as at end mid-June 2024):**

Indicator	Value
New Cases 2024/25 (April – May 2023)	2 cases
Current open cases (by year)	2024/25: 5 2023/24: 5 2022/23: 0 2021/22: 1 2020/21: 3
With the Police	2 cases under joint investigation with the police
New Cases by type	Contractor: 1 Blue Badge Misuse: 1 Employment: 2 Employee: 1
New Cases by referral source	Whistleblower: 1 Employee / Internal Control: 2 Other local authority: 2

Other updates

13. **Blue Badge Enforcement:**

Following the development of the Blue Badge Enforcement Strategy in December 2021 and implementation of new operating procedures, the Team have continued with the on-street enforcement exercises during 2023/24.

In total 2 blue badges were seized following identified misuse. 1 case was dealt with by way of a warning letter issued to the blue badge holder.

The second case, involving the use of a stolen blue badge, was successfully prosecuted at Oxford Magistrates Court in May 2024. The team worked closely with both OCC Legal Services and External Communications to ensure a successful prosecution and positive press coverage in local media. The prosecution resulted in a fine of £770 being issued.

A program of on-street enforcement exercises is being planned for the year 2024/25. One blue badge exercise has already been completed in May 2024, with 1 badge seized. The Council's civil enforcement partner issued four Penalty Charge Notices (parking tickets) for contraventions of the Blue Badge Parking Scheme.

14. National Fraud Initiative:

The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) reports from the 2022/23 bi-annual data matching exercise were released in February 2023 and all reports have now been reviewed. There were a total of 33 reports and 30,934 matches. A full update on the completed reports was reported to the November 2023 Audit & Governance Committee, and an update on the completed matches relating to undeclared interests was reported to the March 2024 Audit & Governance Committee.

Since the March 2024 Audit & Governance Committee, the Payroll to Payroll matches have been reviewed in full. These matches identified employees of Oxfordshire County Council who were also listed on the payroll of another public sector organisation. None of the matches identified any cause for concern for the Council.

In total, the Cabinet Office's estimated future saving for the 2022-23 exercise is £574,403. This is broken down by the cancellation of 12 pensions from the 'Pensions to DWP Deceased' report (estimated saving = £175,974); the cancellation of 511 Blue Badges (estimated saving = £331,500); and the cancellation of 2,159 Concessionary Travel Passes (estimated saving = £66,929). 7 Pensions overpayments amounting to £18,123 have been fully recovered, with the recovery of the remaining 5, amounting to £30,948, still in progress.

15. Controls Improvement & Cases to Note:

Upon the conclusion of each investigation, where applicable, the control environment is reviewed, and a post investigation report issued. The report highlights any weaknesses identified and includes agreed actions to prevent, stop and minimise the risk of reoccurrence. The agreed action plan is monitored for implementation by the Counter Fraud Team.

Since the last update to the March 2024 Audit Committee, the team have issued one investigation report regarding improvements to be made to cash handling procedures at public facing offices. A second investigation report has been issued agreeing a management action plan regarding the way contracts are both awarded and managed within the Transport Team.

The Counter-Fraud Team previously investigated a case involving an overcharge by a supplier that is now in liquidation. An interim payment has been received from the company's liquidator of £64,878 in respect of an agreed claim.

The team is currently investigating a supplier of services to the Council who appears to have continued to invoice for a service no longer provided.

A further investigation is being carried out into an allegation that the Council has been provided with incorrect information regarding the residency of a client of Adult Social Care's family member, which materially affected the client contribution.

16. Update against the Counter-Fraud Plan 2023/24

Objective	Actions	Timescale	2023/24 End Update	Year
Govern: Have robust arrangements in place to ensure counter-fraud, bribery and corruption measures are embedded throughout the organisation.	1) Deliver awareness training sessions to a range of staff and members to include knowledge of fraud risks, their role in prevention activity and process to refer suspicions.	1) Ongoing.	1) Fraud awareness sessions delivered to School Business Managers, Headteachers, and Direct Payments Team.	
	2) Provide the Audit & Governance Committee with reports during the year about the arrangements in place to protect the council against fraud and the effectiveness of these.	2) July, November & March.	2) All Committee reports delivered.	
	3) Review the council's anti-fraud strategy and identify areas for development by reference to the Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally strategy.	3) End of quarter 3.	3) The Council's Anti-Fraud Strategy has been updated and published to the intranet and public website.	
Acknowledge: Understand fraud risk and maintain a robust anti-fraud response.	1) Undertake an assessment of the council's overall response to fraud and	1) End of quarter 3.	1) This was incorporated into the review of the Anti-Fraud and	

	2) identify any areas for improvement. Continue development of Council's fraud risk register.	2) End of quarter 3.	Corruption Strategy. 2) The Council's fraud risk register has been improved and is subject to ongoing development.
Prevent: Prevent and detect fraud taking place against the organisation, using proactive work and data analysis.	1) Fraud alerts to be provided to service areas as necessary. 2) Delivery of the NFI 2022/2023 exercise. 3) To complete Joint Internal Audit & Counter Fraud proactive reviews into Procurement Cards & Expenses (included in Internal Audit Plan 23/24). 4) To enhance data analytic capability to support potential areas of proactive work.	1) Ongoing. 2) End of quarter 3. 3) End of quarter 4. 4) Ongoing.	1) Fraud alerts are routinely shared with service areas as necessary. 2) The 2022/2023 exercise is now complete. 3) The proactive reviews have been completed and were reported to the Audit & Governance Committee under the audit update in May 2024. A&G have requested that the review of Procurement Cards is considered by the Audit Working Group July 2024 meeting. 4) The use of data analytics in proactive work is

			subject to ongoing development.
Pursue: Carry out fraud investigations, apply sanctions to offenders and recover losses.	1) Conduct investigations into suspected fraud and malpractice. 2) Continue enforcement activities against Blue Badge fraud and misuse by completing on-street exercises.	1) Ongoing. 2) One per quarter.	1) Ongoing. 16 cases opened in 2023/24. 2) Blue badge exercises continued throughout 2023/24, with a successful prosecution in May 2024.
Protect: Recognising the harm that fraud can cause in the community.	1) Review and share fraud trends and new threats with relevant service areas. 2) Respond to information requests from the Police, other Local Authorities and investigation bodies such as HMRC. 3) Continue to foster relations with other internal teams.	1) Ongoing. 2) Ongoing. 3) Ongoing.	1) Ongoing. 2) Ongoing and as required. 3) Ongoing. 11 new cases in 2023/24 were received from other internal teams / internal controls.

17. Counter Fraud Plan 2024/25

The 2024/25 Plan continues to be structured around the 5 pillars of anti-fraud activity in the Local Government Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy – Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally:

Objective	Actions	Timescale
Acknowledge: Understand fraud risk and maintain a robust anti-fraud response.	3) Continue development of Council's fraud risk register.	End of quarter 3.
Prevent: Prevent and detect fraud taking place against the organisation, using proactive work and data analysis.	5) Fraud alerts to be provided to service areas as necessary. 6) Upload of data for the new NFI 2024/2025 exercise. 7) Review of initial NFI match data once received in February 2025. 8) To complete Joint Internal Audit & Counter Fraud proactive reviews into Travel expenses (included in Internal Audit Plan 24/25). 9) To enhance data analytic capability to support potential areas of proactive work.	Ongoing. End of quarter 3. End of quarter 4. End of July 2024. Ongoing
Pursue: Carry out fraud investigations, apply sanctions to offenders and recover losses.	10) Conduct investigations into suspected fraud and malpractice (this includes participation in joint investigations with other enforcement authorities). 11) Continue enforcement activities against Blue Badge fraud and misuse by completing on-street exercises. 12) Respond to information requests from the Police, other Local Authorities and	Ongoing. 3-4 targeted exercises per financial year. Ongoing.

		investigation bodies such as HMRC.	
Protect: Recognising the harm that fraud can cause in the community.	13)	Review and share fraud trends and new threats with relevant service areas.	Ongoing.
	14)	Continue to foster relations with other internal and external teams (e.g. Gangmasters Authority, Anti-Slavery Coordinator, & Care Quality Commission).	Ongoing.

Financial Implications

18. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by: Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources
lorna.baxter@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

19. There are not direct legal implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by: Paul Grant, Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Paul.grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

20. There are no direct staff implications arising from this report.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

21. There are no direct equality and inclusion implications arising from this report.

Sustainability Implications

22. There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

23. There are no direct risk management implications arising from this report.

Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources

Contact Officers: Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor,
sarah.cox@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Declan Brolly, Counter Fraud Team Leader,
Declan.brolly@oxfordshire.gov.uk

July 2024.

AUDIT and GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE July 2024 RISK MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Report by Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to
 - To note the Risk Management Update

Executive Summary

1. This report sets out updates to Risk Management and an overview of the latest strategic risk register which contains the Council's most significant risks. The strategic risk register is closely managed by the Council Management Team and reported into the Strategic Leadership Team as part of the Council's Business Management and Monitoring Reports. These combined reports contain performance, risk and finance progress updates against the delivery of the current strategic plan priorities.

Introduction

2. The Oxfordshire County Council Risk Management strategy is the overarching framework of the strategic and operational risk management process across the council. The strategy is reviewed and updated on an annual basis. This annual review ensures the strategy is linked to the budget and business planning process, the strategic plan and captures any external influence that may impact on the risk management process. The strategy will be submitted for review and approval in September 2024.

3. The current 2022 – 2025 Strategic Plan includes nine priorities, leading positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county.

4. The Performance and Insight team are responsible for the management and reporting of strategic risks and continue to work with services to assess training needs and further embed the risk management process across the organisation.

Key updates

5. Councillor training to be held 17 July 2024 as part of the Audit and Governance Committee. This is a virtual session and will be recorded covering the key role aspects supporting the overarching strategy and linking to the council's strategic priorities.

6. The Strategic Leadership Team participate in the 6monthly review of current strategic risks, next review is September 2024 this includes a thorough review of all strategic risks

ensuring all risks continue to be relevant as a strategic risk, horizon scanning of other risks as part of the business planning process.

7. The recent internal audit concluded; the system of internal controls being maintained as Amber – generally good system of internal control. However, some action is required to improve controls. We are working through 9, priority 2 management actions with leaders across the services.

8. One of the key actions is to implement and embed health checks across all directorates, this paper went to CMT in June and the launch of the health check will be during September and October. This health check links to the Management of Risk practitioner training and guidance. The findings of this first health check will identify training and development needs which will be prioritised.

9. A number of training sessions have also happened at Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) sessions to review and discuss operational risk, awareness of the escalation process and strategic risks for their service area. This includes onboarding new colleagues who have joined OCC and are responsible for risk management.

10. The consistent approach of using the operational and strategic risk templates has been embedded more widely and updated templates are available to all on the intranet. These simple templates reflect the Strategic plan priorities to ensure all risks align appropriately to the relevant priority/outcomes. These templates and access will also be reviewed as part of the health check.

11. The Performance and Insight team (P&I) are implementing a new performance management system which will also capture strategic and operational risks. This will also link to the audit to ensure consistency in approach, reporting and escalation across the services. This will be live from November 2024.

12. The team continue to work closely with DLT's to discuss performance and risks and the proactive management of risk actions. Reporting of these areas has been made available in a performance and risk dashboard, also held on the performance system. Further training will be provided as the new system is launched.

13. The team are responsible for collating and reporting the Business Management and Monitoring report, which includes the three elements, performance, risk and finance. Two colleagues within the P&I team are now qualified Management of risk practitioners.

Strategic Risk Register

13. The term "Strategic risk" refers to both strategic risks (risks to the Council's strategic objectives) and operational or programme/project risks which have been escalated due to the severity of their likelihood and/or impact. It does not necessarily include risks to the community, which are managed through the Community Risk Register, overseen by the Local Resilience Forum, (of which the Council is a member).

14. The Strategic Risk Register records the risks identified as requiring the most senior management attention. The Strategic Risk Register is reviewed monthly by Council Management Team, and bi-monthly by Strategic Leadership Team, Informal

Cabinet, Cabinet and is also an agenda item for chairs of scrutiny committees as part of the Business Management and Monitoring reporting.

15. The high-level overview of the Strategic Risks will be reported publicly as part of the Business Management and Monitoring Report pack which goes to Cabinet.

16. There are currently 9 strategic risks listed below, this is included in the most recent Business Management and Monitoring Report at Cabinet 16 July.

17. Strategic Risk Register overview – May 2024

The table below provides an overview of the current strategic risk position. Strategic risks are reviewed monthly as part of the Business management and monitoring process. Risks can be added and escalated at any time during the year.

Risk Name	Risk Description	31 May 2024				
		Inherent Score	Previous Residual Risk Score	Current Residual Risk Score	Current Residual Risk Rating	Direction of Travel
01. Financial Resilience	The council is not financially sustainable in the immediate/medium term.	25	12	12	●	➡
02. Cyber security	A successful and significant Cyber-attack leading to disruption, damage or compromise of any of the council's computer services, information systems, infrastructure or data.	25	15	15	●	➡
03. HIF1&HIF2	HIF1 and HIF2 become undeliverable and/or potential financial risk to the council	16	12	12	●	➡
04. Managing Demand across Adult's and Children's Services	Fluctuating demand of community across Oxfordshire can result in varying requirements in resource.	15	12	8	★	↕
05. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)	Local area SEND partnership inspection outcomes found widespread systemic failure. Delay for children having their SEND needs met. Reputational damage (locally, regionally, and nationally).	20	12	12	●	➡
06. Oxford Core Schemes	Failure to deliver Oxford Core Schemes (Traffic Filters, Workplace Parking Levy, Zero Emissions Zone and associated city area schemes such as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods) with public support.	20	16	16	▲	➡
07. Strategic Workforce Planning	A risk that the county council's workforce does not have capacity, capability or resilience to deliver key functions, statutory services or transformational changes required to ensure the councils objectives and long-term priorities are met. Further, that the diversity of the workforce satisfies statutory requirements.	16	12	12	●	➡
08. Policy & Budget	Inability to seek agreement in relation to the policy and budget framework from a minority administration.	25	8	8	★	➡
09. Delivering the Future Together	Failure to deliver organisation wide transformation.	25	12	12	●	➡

Table 1: Strategic Risk Overview for May 2024.

18. The team are working with the climate change team regarding escalation of risk regarding resilience in the face of climate change, this is going to CMT for final sign off in July 24.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

2. The risk management process links to all nine of the strategic priorities. All templates include the link to the strategic priorities to ensure risks are identified with any effect to priorities possibly not being delivered.

Financial Implications

3. There are no significant financial implications from this paper

Comments checked by:

Ian Dyson, Assistant Director finance, ian.dyson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

4. There are no significant legal implications from this paper

Comments checked by:

Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Anita.Bradley@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Risk Management

5. There are no significant risk implications from this paper.

Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes.

Contact Officer: Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes
Louise.Tustian@oxfordshire.gov.uk

July 2024

Divisions Affected - All

Audit and Governance Committee

17 July 2024

AMENDMENTS TO THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION-APPEALS

Report of the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to:

- 1. Support the proposed changes to the appeals process in respect of employee relations matters and the resultant changes to the Council's Constitution to reflect the changes.**
- 2. Delegate to the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to draft the necessary changes to the Constitution for approval by Council.**

TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- 1. To approve amendments to the Officer Employment Procedure Rules in Part 8.4 of the Council's Constitution and any consequential amendments to the Constitution.**

1. Executive Summary

There is a need to change the approach to hearing and deciding on appeals in employment relations matters in respect of officers of the council to reflect best practice and to reduce delay in dealing with the appeals process.

As a result there will be a need to update the current Officer Employment Procedure Rules set out in Part 8.4 of the Council's Constitution and to amend other relevant clauses in the Constitution to reflect those changes.

2. Background

Currently, on average the Council manages 200 employment relations cases per month. Cases are investigated and heard by managers within the organisation. Should an appeal be raised (there are approximately 2 appeals per month), this is currently heard by a members' panel made up of 3 members. It has been identified that arranging the Panels for members to hear those appeals as a result of Members' availability leads to delays in those matters being decided, resulting in increased risk to the Council, lower employee morale and financial impact to the council.

The recommendation to change the approach to appeals in the council arises from:

- a) The drive to effectively manage risk in relation to employment procedures and the potential resultant Employment Tribunal claims. This is to ensure the best outcomes for the Council, and to protect the Council's reputation as well as to ensure that the public funds are spent in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

- b) To ensure fairness to and avoid delays for employees exercising their right to appeal
- c) It is recognised that Members have significant calls on their time and with the potential for a significant increase in the number of appeals in the current period of Organisational Change, it is considered prudent for the requirement for appeals to be heard by Members to be changed and the instances when Members hear appeals to be reduced.
- d) The need to modernise the Council's processes and embrace best employment practice in line with the Council's ambition to become an Employer of Choice.

It is recognised that appeal procedures in employment processes are essential for ensuring fair and consistent treatment of employees in any organisation, however, amending the Council's procedures (and enshrining the change in the Council's Constitution) would lead to the following positive outcomes:

- a) ensure that the appeal process is fair, impartial, and consistent.
- b) reduce both reputational and financial risk to the Council.
- c) enable Members to focus on their strategic role
- d) ensure that officers undertake their appropriate managerial responsibilities at an operational level contributing towards the Council's ambition to become and Employer of Choice.

3. Summary of Changes

It is proposed that an Appeals Sub Committee continues to hear and decide appeals against dismissal lodged by any Chief Officer of the council other than the Head of the Paid Service, the Section 151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer and where a separate process set out in legislation and the Constitution is followed. It is proposed that for all other roles any employees investigation, hearing and appeals process will at each stage be conducted by an independent suitably trained officer with appropriate technical competence. .

Further, a delegation to the Monitoring Officer is requested to make changes to the Constitution corresponding to the recommendations made in this report.

4. Consultation and approvals

Prior to finalising this paper, the following levels of consultation and approval have been obtained:

- UNISON has been consulted as the Council's recognised Trade Union on 15 May 2024, and on 29 May 2024 has agreed to this proposed change.
- The Head of Paid Service and Director of HR and Cultural Change have been consulted on the matters discussed in this report
- The Council's Management Team have been consulted on the principles of a new improved appeal process for officers (other than Chief Officers) and endorsed the proposal on 20 June 2024.

5. Financial Implications

There are no additional financial costs arising from the recommendations in this Report.

The recommendations are expected to result in leaner operation of personnel processes relating to grievances, conduct and capability appeals. As a result capacity in the Employment Relations team will be released for other priorities and more cases are expected to be resolved more quickly. This should lead to a reduction in costs, as outcomes are achieved more quickly and there is less risk of the need for employment tribunals, and in member allowances.

Comments checked by:

Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance
Kathy.wilcox@oxfordshire.gov.uk

6. Legal Implications

The recommendations in this report are consistent with the Council's duty under Section 9P of the Local Government Act 2000 to have a Constitution and keep it up to date.

The recommendations in this report are consistent with the ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures, and other relevant employment legislation. If approved, this will be more efficient more Appeals can be heard in a prompt and streamlined manner, and is endorsed by the ACAS statutory Code of Practice, which Employment Tribunals take into account.

The Officer Employment Procedure Rules will be amended and submitted to Council for approval to incorporate the provisions of The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 1993 ('the 1993 Regulations') and The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 ('the 2001 Regulations') as amended.

Comments checked by:

Paul Grant Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer.

7. Staff Implications

There are no direct staff implications arising from this report, other than it could be argued that personnel procedures being dealt by Officers may result in an alignment of the Council's values and their application in such procedures. It is likely that appeals will be heard and decided at a faster pace as it is easier to organise hearings when they only involve officers.

8. Equality & Inclusion Implications

Inclusive language will wherever possible (subject to the requirements of the legislation) be used in the proposed amendments to the Officer Employment Procedure Rules and any resultant guidance for employees. The proposed web presentation for the Constitution should make information more easily available to those with visual impairment.

9. Risk Management

The recommended change is likely to result in risk reduction by reducing delays in dealing with appeals including a potential reduction in Employment Tribunal proceedings.

ANITA BRADLEY

Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

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Oxfordshire Pension Fund

Provisional audit planning
report

Year ending 31 March 2024

9 July 2024

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Building a better
working world

Agenda Item 14



Oxfordshire Pension Fund
County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND

Dear Audit and Governance Committee Members

Provisional audit planning report

Attached is our provisional audit planning report for the forthcoming meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee. The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit and Governance Committee of Oxfordshire Pension Fund (the Fund) with a basis to review our proposed audit approach and scope for the 2023/24 audit, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office's 2020 Code of Audit Practice, the Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd, auditing standards and other professional requirements, but also to ensure that our audit is aligned with the Audit and Governance Committee's service expectations. Following full completion of our planning procedures we will update our risk assessment and communicate any changes to the Audit and Governance Committee.

This report summarises our initial assessment of the key risks driving the development of an effective audit for the Fund. We have aligned our audit approach and scope with these.

The Audit and Governance Committee, as the Fund's body charged with governance, has an essential role in ensuring that it has assurance over both the quality of the draft financial statements prepared by management and the Fund's wider arrangements to support the delivery of a timely and efficient audit. Where this is not done it will impact the level of resource needed to discharge our responsibilities.

We draw Audit and Governance Committee members and officers attention to the Public Sector Audit Appointment Limited's Statement of Responsibilities (paragraphs 26-28) which clearly set out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements (see Appendix A).

(continued)

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Audit and Governance Committee, and management, and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this report with you on 17 July as well as understand whether there are other matters which you consider may influence our audit.

Yours faithfully

Simon Mathers

Partner

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

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our 2023/24
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Appendices



Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the "Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies". It is available from the PSAA website (<https://www.psaa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies-from-2023-24-audits/>). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The "Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated July 2021)" issued by the PSAA (<https://www.psaa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/terms-of-appointment/terms-of-appointment-and-further-guidance-1-july-2021/>) sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This report is made solely to the **Audit and Governance Committee and management of Oxfordshire Pension Fund**. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the **Audit and Governance Committee and management of Oxfordshire Pension Fund** those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the **Audit and Governance Committee and management of Oxfordshire Pension Fund** for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



01

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

The following 'dashboard' summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters outlined in this report. It seeks to provide the Audit and Governance Committee with an overview of our initial risk identification for the upcoming audit and any changes in risks identified in the current year. We continue to assess risk throughout the audit. We will bring any changes in our risk assessment to the attention of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Audit risks and areas of focus

Risk / area of focus	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Misstatements due to fraud or error	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	<p>As identified in ISA 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that would otherwise appear to be operating effectively.</p> <p>In the prior year we identified the risk of manipulation of investment income and valuation as the most likely way management would seek to override controls and presented this as a specific fraud risk. We continue to consider this to be the most likely way management will override controls but will address this through the mandatory journal testing we undertake to address the generic risk of misstatements due to fraud and error.</p>
Risk of inappropriate posting of investment journals	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	<p>Investment valuations are manually input on the GL. Our judgement is that the Pension Fund's fraud risk relates to inappropriate journal posting of investments as reported by the custodian. This would affect the long-term investment portfolio value.</p>
Valuation of Level 3 investments	Significant risk	No change in risk or focus	<p>We consider the valuation of Level 3 investments to be a significant risk due to the unobservable inputs making up the valuations. Significant judgements are made by the investment managers or administrators to value these investments whose prices are not publicly available.</p> <p>Significant judgements are made by the Investment Managers or administrators to value these investments. The material nature of the investments means that any error in judgement could result in a material valuation error.</p> <p>Market volatility means such judgments can quickly become outdated, especially when there is a significant time-period between the latest available audited valuation information and the Fund year end. These variations could have a material impact on the financial statements.</p>

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

The following 'dashboard' summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters outlined in this report. It seeks to provide the Audit and Governance Committee with an overview of our initial risk identification for the upcoming audit and any changes in risks identified in the current year. We continue to assess risk throughout the audit. We will bring any changes in our risk assessment to the attention of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Audit risks and areas of focus

Risk / area of focus	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
IAS 26 - Actuarial present value of promised retirement benefits	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	We consider the valuation of IAS 26 to be of a higher degree of inherent risk because of the level of estimation uncertainty resulting from the calculation using a number of underlying assumptions. The actuary is required to make assumptions on salary increases, discount rates, pension rates, scheme member longevity and other variables.
Valuation of investments under Level 2 fair value hierarchy	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	<p>The valuation of investments under level 2 fair value hierarchy are based on observable inputs such as bid price in the market for similar instruments.</p> <p>There is a risk that the comparable inputs are not appropriate, and valuation could be misstated.</p>

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

Materiality

Planning materiality

£35.4m

Materiality for the Fund has been set at £35.4m, which represents 1% of net assets in the draft 2023/24 financial statements. We consider net assets, to be the appropriate basis of materiality for the Fund due to the scale and interest to users of the financial statements. This is the same basis as that used in the prior year.

Performance materiality

£26.6m

Performance materiality has been set at £26.6, which represents 75% of materiality. This is consistent with the prior year. Our assessment reflects the strong control environment present at the Fund and our expectation of a relatively low level of misstatements based on results from previous audits.

Audit differences

£1.8m

We will report all uncorrected misstatements relating to the primary statements (fund account and net asset statement) greater than £1.8m. Other misstatements identified will be communicated to the extent that they merit the attention of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

Audit scope

This Audit planning report covers the work that we plan to perform to provide you with:

- ▶ Our audit opinion on whether the financial statements of the Fund give a true and fair view of the financial transactions of the Fund during the year ended 31 March 2024 and the amount and disposition at that date of its assets and liabilities for 2023/24.
- ▶ Our opinion on the consistency of the Fund financial statements within the Fund annual report with the published financial statements of Oxfordshire County Council.

Our audit will also include the mandatory procedures that we are required to perform in accordance with applicable laws and auditing standards.

When planning the audit we take into account several key inputs:

- ▶ Strategic, operational and financial risks relevant to the financial statements;
- ▶ Developments in financial reporting and auditing standards;
- ▶ The quality of systems and processes;
- ▶ Changes in the business and regulatory environment; and,
- ▶ Management's views on all of the above.

By considering these inputs, our audit is focused on the areas that matter and our feedback is more likely to be relevant to the Fund.

Taking the above into account, and as articulated in this provisional audit planning report, our professional responsibilities require us to independently assess the risks associated with providing an audit opinion and undertake appropriate procedures in response to those risks. Our Terms of Appointment with PSAA allow them to vary the fee dependent on "the auditors assessment of risk and the work needed to meet their professional responsibilities". Therefore, to the extent any of these or any other risks are relevant in the context of the Fund's audit, we set those within this provisional audit planning report and we will continue to discuss these with management as to the impact on the scale fee.

Effects of climate-related matters on financial statements

Public interest in climate change is increasing. We are mindful that climate-related risks may have a long timeframe and therefore while risks exist, the impact on the current period financial statements may not be immediately material to the Fund. It is, nevertheless, important to understand the relevant risks to make this evaluation. In addition, understanding climate-related risks may be relevant in the context of qualitative disclosures in the notes to the financial statements.

We make inquiries regarding climate-related risks on every audit as part of understanding the entity and its environment. As we re-evaluate our risk assessments throughout the audit, we continually consider the information that we have obtained to help us assess the level of inherent risk.

Audit scope and approach

We intend to take a substantive audit approach.

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

Audit team

The audit will be led by Simon Mathers as the partner in charge for 2023/24. Simon will be supported by Kalthiemah Abrahams, manager, and Diva Bhagi, lead senior. See Section 05 for further details of the audit team and the areas where management and EY specialists are expected to provide input for the current year audit.

Timeline

Details of the planned timeline for delivery of the audit are set out in Section 06. We expect to have fully completed our risk assessment and work to walkthrough the Fund's key systems and processes, including work to comply with the enhanced requirements of ISA (UK) 315 (Revised), by the end of July 2024. Our detailed testing of balances and disclosure in the financial statements is expected to be complete by the end of October 2024, however our reporting and presentation to you of our final audit results report is yet to be confirmed as we need to take into account the Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Financial Reporting Council (FRC) measures to address local audit delays, and any associated impact on the Pension Fund audits.



02 Audit risks

Our response to significant risks

We have set out the significant risks (including fraud risks denoted by*) identified for the current year audit along with the rationale and expected audit approach. The risks identified below may change to reflect any significant findings or subsequent issues we identify during the audit.

Misstatements due to fraud or error*

What is the risk?

The financial statements as a whole are not free of material misstatements whether caused by fraud or error.

As identified in ISA (UK) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.

We identify and respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement.

What will we do?

We will undertake our standard procedures to address fraud risk, which include:

- ▶ Inquiry of management about risks of fraud and the controls put in place to address those risks.
- ▶ Understanding the oversight given by those charged with governance of management's processes over fraud.
- ▶ Consideration of the effectiveness of management's controls designed to address the risk of fraud.

Performing mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks, including:

- ▶ Testing the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements.
- ▶ Assessing accounting estimates for evidence of management bias.
- ▶ Evaluating the business rationale for significant unusual transactions.

We will utilise our data analytics capabilities to assist with our work.

We will include a focus on ensuring that the investment valuations provided through the custodian and fund managers are appropriately journaled into the financial statements, where we have identified the opportunity and incentive for override to occur.

Our response to significant risks

We have set out the significant risks (including fraud risks denoted by*) identified for the current year audit along with the rationale and expected audit approach. The risks identified below may change to reflect any significant findings or subsequent issues we identify during the audit.

Risk of inappropriate posting of investment journals*

What is the risk?

Investment valuations are manually input on the general ledger, so there is opportunity to manipulate the valuation of investments reported in the Net Asset Statement.

What will we do?

Our approach will focus on:

- ▶ testing of journals at year-end to ensure there are no unexpected or unusual postings;
- ▶ undertaking a review of reconciliations between the fund manager/ custodian reports/ valuer's reports and investigating any reconciling differences over a specified threshold;
- ▶ re-performance of the detailed investment note using the reports we have acquired directly from the custodian or fund managers; and
- ▶ checking the reconciliation of holdings included in the Net Assets Statement back to the source reports.

We will use our data analytics capabilities to assist with our work, including journal entry testing. We will assess journal entries for evidence of management bias and evaluate for business rationale.

Our response to significant risks (cont'd)

Valuation of Level 3 investments

What is the risk?

We consider the valuation of Level 3 investments to be of a higher degree of inherent risk due to the unobservable inputs making up the valuations. Significant judgements are made by the investment managers or administrators to value these investments whose prices are not publicly available.

The Fund's private debt and infrastructure investments are categorised as being at Level 3 in the fair value hierarchy.

What will we do?

We will:

- ▶ Agree the valuation of Level 3 investments appearing in the financial statements to valuation reports from the fund managers.
- ▶ Assess the competence of management experts (fund managers), including obtaining and reviewing internal control reports for fund managers to identify any internal control issues and assessing whether these would have an impact on the valuations provided.
- ▶ Obtain audited financial statements of the investments. Where audited financial statements supporting the investments are not available as at 31 March 2024 we will undertake alternative procedures to gain further assurance over the valuation reported in the financial statements.
- ▶ Test accounting entries have been correctly processed in the financial statements.

Other areas of audit focus

We have identified other areas of the audit, that have not been classified as significant risks, but are still important when considering the risks of material misstatement to the financial statements and disclosures and therefore may be key audit matters we will include in our audit report.

What is the risk/area of focus, and the key judgements and estimates?

IAS 26 (inherent risk)

We consider the valuation of IAS 26 to be of a higher degree of inherent risk because of the level of estimation uncertainty resulting from the calculation using a number of underlying assumptions. The actuary is required to make assumptions on salary increases, discount rates, pension rates, scheme member longevity and other variables.

Valuation of investments under Level 2 fair value hierarchy (inherent risk)

The Pension Fund held £2,275 million level 2 investments at 31 March 2023 and £2,471 million at 31 March 2024. These are assets where quoted market prices are not available; for example, where an instrument is traded in a market that is not considered to be active, or where valuation techniques are used to determine fair value.

Valuations are based on either evaluated prices provided by independent pricing services, closing bid price where bid and offer are published or estimated valuation reported by a counterparty.

Our response: Key areas of challenge and professional judgement

We will:

- ▶ Agree the disclosure to the IAS 26 actuarial statement and reporting requirements.
- ▶ Engage auditor's specialists to review the IAS 26 calculation approach and comment on the underlying assumptions.
- ▶ Review the work of the management specialist (the actuary) and auditor's specialist.

In order to address this risk we will carry out a range of procedures including:

- ▶ Where the funds are actively traded in listed markets/exchange, test the valuation by using the EY Investment Security Pricing Tool;
- ▶ Alternatively, inspecting quotations, financial statements of investees and other evidence of current value, cost or equity amount of investments and test that investments are classified, recorded and measured in accordance with the entity's accounting policies and applicable financial reporting framework;
- ▶ Perform triangulation work to agree amounts per the financial statements to Fund Manager and to Custodian; and
- ▶ Where Level 2 Investments are not listed, we may revert to Level 3 testing as detailed on page 14.

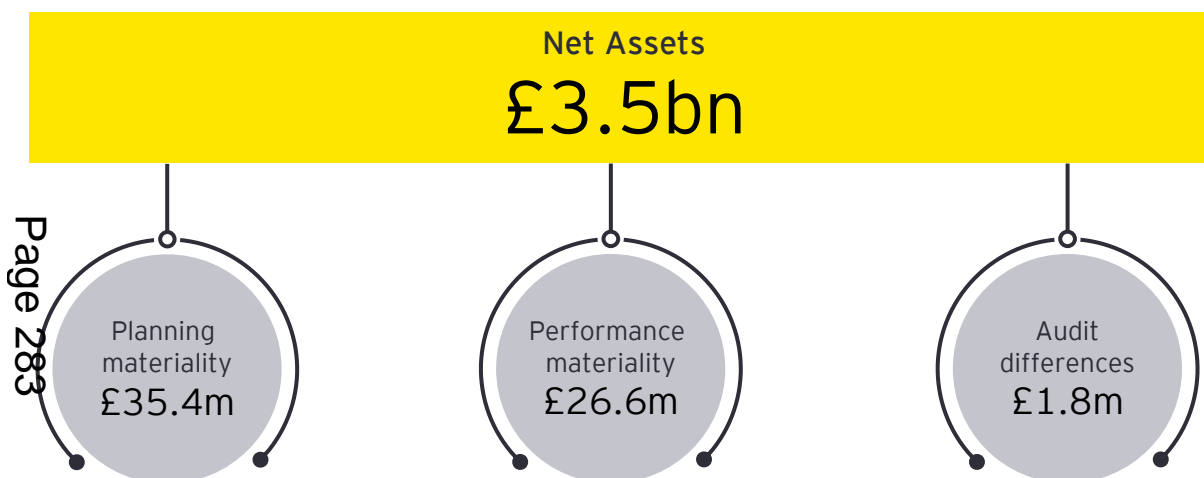


03 Audit materiality

Materiality

Fund Materiality

For planning purposes, materiality for 2023/24 has been set at £35.4m. This represents 1% of the Fund's net assets in the draft 23/24 financial statements. We consider net assets to be the appropriate basis of materiality for the Fund due to the scale and interest to users of the financial statements. We have provided supplemental information about audit materiality in Appendix D.



We request that the Audit and Governance Committee confirm their understanding of, and agreement to, these materiality and reporting levels.

Key definitions

Planning materiality – the amount over which we anticipate misstatements would influence the economic decisions of a user of the financial statements. This is consistent with the prior year.

Performance materiality – the amount we use to determine the extent of our audit procedures. We have set performance materiality at 75% of planning materiality. This is based on our expectation of few misstatements for the audit and consistent with the prior year.

Audit difference threshold – we propose that misstatements identified below this threshold are deemed clearly trivial. We will report to you all uncorrected misstatements over this amount. This was calculated as 5% of planning materiality, which is consistent year on year.

Other uncorrected misstatements, such as reclassifications and misstatements in the disclosures and corrected misstatements will be communicated to the extent that they merit the attention of the Audit and Governance Committee or are important from a qualitative perspective.



04 Scope of our audit

Audit process and strategy

Objective and Scope of our Audit scoping

Under the Code of Audit Practice, our principal objectives are to undertake work to support the provision of our audit report to the audited body and to satisfy ourselves that the audited body has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources to the extent required by the relevant legislation and the requirements of the Code.

We issue an audit report that covers:

Financial statement audit

Our opinion on the financial statements:

- whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial transactions of the Fund during the year ended 31 March 2024 and the amount and disposition at that date of its assets and liabilities for 2023/24; and
- whether the financial statements have been prepared properly in accordance with the relevant accounting and reporting framework as set out in legislation, applicable accounting standards or other direction.

Consistency statement:

Our opinion on the consistency of the Fund financial statements within the Fund annual report with the published financial statements of Oxfordshire County Council.

Our opinion on other matters:

- whether other information published together with the audited financial statements is consistent with the financial statements.

Procedures required by standards

- Addressing the risk of fraud and error;
- Significant disclosures included in the financial statements;
- Entity-wide controls;
- Reading other information contained in the financial statements and reporting whether it is inconsistent with our understanding and the financial statements; and
- Auditor independence.

Audit process and strategy

Audit Process Overview

Our audit involves:

- ▶ Identifying and understanding the key processes and internal controls;
- ▶ Substantive tests of detail of transactions and amounts;
- ▶ Reliance on the work of other auditors where appropriate; and
- ▶ Reliance on the work of experts in relation to areas such as disclosures based on actuarial reports.

Our initial assessment of the key processes across the Fund has not identified any processes where we will seek to test key controls, either manual or IT. Our audit strategy will, as in previous years, follow a fully substantive approach. This will involve testing the figures within the financial statements rather than looking to place reliance on the controls within the Fund's financial systems. We assess this as the most efficient way of carrying out our work and obtaining the level of audit assurance required to conclude that the financial statements are not materially misstated.

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Analytics

We will use our computer-based analytics tools to enable us to capture whole populations of your financial data, in particular journal entries. These tools:

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

We will report the findings from our process and analytics work, including any significant weaknesses or inefficiencies identified and recommendations for improvement, to management and the Audit and Governance Committee.

Internal audit

We will review internal audit plans and the results of their work. We will reflect the findings from these reports, together with reports from any other work completed in the year, where they raise issues that could have an impact on the financial statements.



05 Audit team

Audit team

Audit team structure :



Use of specialists

When auditing key judgements, we are often required to use the input and advice provided by specialists who have qualifications and expertise not possessed by the core audit team. The areas where management and EY specialists are expected to provide input for the current year audit are:

Area	Specialists
IAS 26 disclosure	Management Specialist - Hymans Robertson EY Specialist - PwC as consulting actuary and EY Pensions team (leveraging off the work performed by the County Council)

In accordance with Auditing Standards, we will evaluate each specialist's professional competence and objectivity, considering their qualifications, experience and available resources, together with the independence of the individuals performing the work.

We also consider the work performed by the specialist in light of our knowledge of the Fund's business and processes and our assessment of audit risk in the particular area. For example, we would typically perform the following procedures:

- ▶ Analyse source data and make inquiries as to the procedures used by the specialist to establish whether the source data is relevant and reliable
- ▶ Assess the reasonableness of the assumptions and methods used
- ▶ Consider the appropriateness of the timing of when the specialist carried out the work
- ▶ Assess whether the substance of the specialist's findings are properly reflected in the financial statements



06

Audit timeline

Timetable of communication and deliverables

Timeline

Below is a draft timetable showing the key stages of the audit and the deliverables we have agreed to provide to you through the audit cycle in 2023/24. From time-to-time matters may arise that require immediate communication with the Audit and Governance Committee and we will discuss them with the Audit and Governance Committee Chair as appropriate. We will also provide updates on corporate governance and regulatory matters as necessary.

Audit phase	2024 Timetable	Deliverables
Planning: Risk assessment and setting of scopes	June/July	This audit planning report to be presented to the 17 July 2024 meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee.
Walkthrough of key systems and processes	June/July	
Execution of audit procedures on the financial statements	September - October	
Audit Completion procedures	September - October	Draft audit results report shared with management and, in turn, the Audit and Governance Committee.
Audit Conclusion	November	Audit opinion and completion certificates.

* The final timetable is yet to be confirmed as we need to take into account the Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Financial Reporting Council (FRC) measures to address local audit delays, and the consequent impact on the Council and Pension Fund audits.



07

Independence

Introduction

The FRC Ethical Standard and ISA (UK) 260 'Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance', requires us to communicate with you on a timely basis on all significant facts and matters that bear upon our integrity, objectivity and independence. The Ethical Standard, as revised in December 2019, requires that we communicate formally both at the planning stage and at the conclusion of the audit, as well as during the course of the audit if appropriate. The aim of these communications is to ensure full and fair disclosure by us to those charged with your governance on matters in which you have an interest.

Required communications

Planning stage

- ▶ The principal threats, if any, to objectivity and independence identified by Ernst & Young (EY) including consideration of all relationships between you, your affiliates and directors and us;
- ▶ The safeguards adopted and the reasons why they are considered to be effective, including any Engagement Quality review;
- ▶ The overall assessment of threats and safeguards;
- ▶ Information about the general policies and process within EY to maintain objectivity and independence.

Final stage

- ▶ In order for you to assess the integrity, objectivity and independence of the firm and each covered person, we are required to provide a written disclosure of relationships (including the provision of non-audit services) that may bear on our integrity, objectivity and independence. This is required to have regard to relationships with the entity, its directors and senior management, its affiliates, and its connected parties and the threats to integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence that these create. We are also required to disclose any safeguards that we have put in place and why they address such threats, together with any other information necessary to enable our objectivity and independence to be assessed;
- ▶ Details of non-audit/additional services provided and the fees charged in relation thereto;
- ▶ Written confirmation that the firm and each covered person is independent and, if applicable, that any external experts used have confirmed their independence to us;
- ▶ Details of any non-audit/additional services to a UK PIE audit client where there are differences of professional opinion concerning the engagement between the Ethics Partner and Engagement Partner and where the final conclusion differs from the professional opinion of the Ethics Partner
- ▶ Details of any inconsistencies between FRC Ethical Standard and your policy for the supply of non-audit services by EY and any apparent breach of that policy;
- ▶ Details of all breaches of the IESBA Code of Ethics, the FRC Ethical Standard and professional standards, and of any safeguards applied and actions taken by EY to address any threats to independence; and
- ▶ An opportunity to discuss auditor independence issues.

In addition, during the course of the audit, we are required to communicate with you whenever any significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place, for example, when accepting an engagement to provide non-audit services.

We ensure that the total amount of fees that EY and our network firms have charged to you and your affiliates for the provision of services during the reporting period, analysed in appropriate categories, are disclosed.

Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

We highlight the following significant facts and matters that may be reasonably considered to bear upon our objectivity and independence, including the principal threats, if any. We have adopted the safeguards noted below (where applicable) to mitigate these threats along with the reasons why they are considered to be effective. However, we will only perform non-audit services if the service has been pre-approved in accordance with your policy.

Overall Assessment

Overall, we consider that the safeguards that have been adopted appropriately mitigate the principal threats identified and we therefore confirm that EY is independent and the objectivity and independence of Simon Mathers, your audit engagement partner, and the audit engagement team have not been compromised.

Self-interest threats

A self-interest threat arises when EY has financial or other interests in the Fund. Examples include where we have an investment in the Fund; where we receive significant fees in respect of non-audit services; where we need to recover long outstanding fees; or where we enter into a business relationship with you. At the time of writing, there are no long outstanding fees.

We believe that it is appropriate for us to undertake those permitted non-audit/additional services set out in Section 5.40 of the FRC Ethical Standard 2019 (FRC ES), and we will comply with the policies that you have approved.

None of the services are prohibited under the FRC's ES and the services have been approved in accordance with your policy on pre-approval. In addition, when the ratio of non-audit fees to audit fees exceeds 1:1, we are required to discuss this with our Ethics Partner, as set out by the FRC ES, and if necessary agree additional safeguards or not accept the non-audit engagement. We will also discuss this with you.

At the time of writing, there are no non-audit fees associated with Oxfordshire Pension Fund. No additional safeguards are required.

A self-interest threat may also arise if members of our audit engagement team have objectives or are rewarded in relation to sales of non-audit services to you. We confirm that no member of our audit engagement team, including those from other service lines, has objectives or is rewarded in relation to sales to you, in compliance with Ethical Standard part 4. There are no other self-interest threats at the date of this report.

Self-review threats

Self-review threats arise when the results of a non-audit service performed by EY or others within the EY network are reflected in the amounts included or disclosed in the financial statements.

There are no self-review threats at the date of this report.

Management threats

Partners and employees of EY are prohibited from taking decisions on behalf of management of your company. Management threats may also arise during the provision of a non-audit service in relation to which management is required to make judgements or decision based on that work.

There are no management threats at the date of this report.

Other threats

Other threats, such as advocacy, familiarity or intimidation, may arise.

There are no other threats at the date of this report.



Other communications

EY Transparency Report 2023

EY has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained. Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the period ended 30 June 2023 and can be found here: [EY UK 2023 Transparency Report](#).



08 Appendices

Appendix A – PSAA Statement of Responsibilities

As set out on the next page our fee is based on the assumption that the Fund complies with PSAA's Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies. See <https://www.psaa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies-from-2023-24-audits/>. In particular the Fund should have regard to paragraphs 26-28 of the Statement of Responsibilities which clearly set out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements. We set out these paragraphs in full below:

Preparation of the statement of accounts

26. Audited bodies are expected to follow Good Industry Practice and applicable recommendations and guidance from CIPFA and, as applicable, other relevant organisations as to proper accounting procedures and controls, including in the preparation and review of working papers and financial statements.

27. In preparing their statement of accounts, audited bodies are expected to:

- prepare realistic plans that include clear targets and achievable timetables for the production of the financial statements;
- ensure that finance staff have access to appropriate resources to enable compliance with the requirements of the applicable financial framework, including having access to the current copy of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code, applicable disclosure checklists, and any other relevant CIPFA Codes.

assign responsibilities clearly to staff with the appropriate expertise and experience;

provide necessary resources to enable delivery of the plan;

maintain adequate documentation in support of the financial statements and, at the start of the audit, providing a complete set of working papers that provide an adequate explanation of the entries in those financial statements including the appropriateness of the accounting policies used and the judgements and estimates made by management;

- ensure that senior management monitors, supervises and reviews work to meet agreed standards and deadlines;
- ensure that a senior individual at top management level personally reviews and approves the financial statements before presentation to the auditor; and
- during the course of the audit provide responses to auditor queries on a timely basis.

28. If draft financial statements and supporting working papers of appropriate quality are not available at the agreed start date of the audit, the auditor may be unable to meet the planned audit timetable and the start date of the audit will be delayed.

Appendix B – Fees

The duty to prescribe fees is a statutory function delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

This is defined as the fee required by auditors to meet statutory responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice and supporting guidance published by the National Audit Office, the financial reporting requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting published by CIPFA/LASAAC, and the professional standards applicable to auditors' work.

As part of our reporting on our independence, we set out here a summary of the expected fees for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Scale fee variations are agreed when we incur work in addition to the planned level of work built into the scale fee.

For the Oxfordshire Pension Fund audit, whilst we believe that the current scale fee reflects the changes in the audit market and increases in regulation since the most recent PSAA tender exercise, we still expect to agree a minimal scale fee variation with management and PSAA for the 2023/24 audit, as per the Notes to the fee table below.

	Current Year 2023/24	Prior Year 2022/23
	Proposed fee £	Proposed fee £
Scale Fee - Code work	83,244	25,254
Scale Fee Variation - see Note 1	TBC	TBC
Requested rebased fee sub-total		
Valuation of Level 3 investments - see Note 2		4,014
IAS 19 standard work - see Note 2	-	3,370
Additional core fees for ISA 540		2,050
IAS 19 triennial valuation - see Note 2		6,440
ISA 315 enhanced requirements - see Note 3	TBC	4,800
Total fees	TBC	TBC

All fees exclude VAT

Note 1 - In order to meet regulatory and compliance audit requirements not present at the time of PSAA awarding the audit contract for audits up to and including the 2022/23 financial year, we assessed that the recurrent cost of additional requirements to carry out our 2022/23 audit should increase by £59,000. Therefore, we will expect to submit a rebasing request for 2022/23 similar to those in previous years, to request a rebased fee level of £84,254. This does not apply for 2023/24.

Note 2 - For 2022/23 we have included an initial estimate of the planned fee, as the audit is yet to be completed.

Note 3 - We expect the implementation of ISA315 (Revised) to require additional work to meet the enhanced requirements. The amount disclosed is an estimate and confirm this is not built into the PSAA's scale fee for either year. The key impacts and changes were communicated within our 2022/23 audit plan.

Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit and Governance Committee

We have detailed the communications that we must provide to the Audit and Governance Committee.

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the Audit and Governance Committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Our responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter.	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Planning and audit approach	<p>Communication of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The planned scope and timing of the audit ▶ Any limitations on the planned work to be undertaken ▶ The planned use of internal audit ▶ The significant risks identified <p>When communicating key audit matters this includes the most significant risks of material misstatement (whether or not due to fraud) including those that have the greatest effect on the overall audit strategy, the allocation of resources in the audit and directing the efforts of the engagement team.</p>	Audit planning report - 17 July 2024
Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures ▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit ▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management ▶ Written representations that we are seeking ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report ▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process 	Audit results report -November 2024

Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit and Governance Committee (cont'd)

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Going concern	<p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty ▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements ▶ The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements 	Audit results report November 2024
Misstatements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion, unless prohibited by law or regulation ▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods ▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected ▶ Material misstatements corrected by management 	Audit results report - November 2024
Subsequent events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiries of the Audit and Governance committee where appropriate regarding whether any subsequent events have occurred that might affect the financial statements 	Audit results report - November 2024
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiries of the Audit and Governance committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity ▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist ▶ Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the entity, any identified or suspected fraud involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Management; b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or c. Others where the fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements ▶ The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected ▶ Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to Audit and Governance Committee responsibility 	Audit results report - November 2024

Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit and Governance Committee (cont'd)

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Related parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties including, when applicable: ▶ Non-disclosure by management ▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions ▶ Disagreement over disclosures; ▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations ▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity 	Audit results report - November 2024
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, objectivity and independence</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The principal threats ▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness ▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards ▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence <p>Communication whenever significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place.</p>	<p>Audit planning report - July 2024</p> <p>Audit results report - November 2024</p>

Appendix C – Required communications with the Audit and Governance Committee (cont'd)

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations ▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures 	Audit results report - November 2024
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Subject to compliance with applicable regulations, matters involving identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, other than those which are clearly inconsequential and the implications thereof. Instances of suspected non-compliance may also include those that are brought to our attention that are expected to occur imminently or for which there is reason to believe that they may occur ▶ Enquiry of the Audit and Governance Committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the Audit and Governance Committee may be aware of 	Audit results report - November 2024
Internal controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit 	Audit results report - November 2024
Representations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance 	Audit results report - November 2024
Material inconsistencies and misstatements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise 	Audit results report - November 2024
Auditors report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report 	Audit results report - November 2024
Fee Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Breakdown of fee information when the audit plan is agreed ▶ Breakdown of fee information at the completion of the audit ▶ Any non-audit work 	Provisional audit planning report - July 2024 Audit results report - November 2024

Appendix D – Additional audit information

Regulatory update

Our objective is to form an opinion on the Fund's financial statements under International Standards on Auditing (UK) as prepared by you in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards as adopted by the UK, and as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.

Our responsibilities in relation to the financial statement audit are set out in the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies. We are responsible for forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of the Audit and Governance Committee. The audit does not relieve management or the Audit and Governance Committee of their responsibilities.

Other required procedures during the course of the audit

In addition to the key areas of audit focus outlined in section 2, we have to perform other procedures as required by auditing, ethical and independence standards, company law and other regulations. We outline the procedures below that we will undertake during the course of our audit.

Our responsibilities required by auditing standards

- ▶ Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion
- ▶ Obtaining an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Fund's internal control
- ▶ Evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management
- ▶ Concluding on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting
- ▶ Evaluating the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation
- ▶ Obtaining sufficient appropriate audit evidence to express an opinion on the financial statements. Reading other information contained in the financial statements, the Audit and Governance Committee reporting appropriately addresses matters communicated by us to the Audit and Governance committee and reporting whether it is materially inconsistent with our understanding and the financial statements
- ▶ Maintaining auditor independence

Appendix D – Additional audit information (cont'd)

Other required procedures during the course of the audit

Procedures required by the Audit Code

- ▶ Discharging our statutory duties and responsibilities as established by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Code of Audit Practice
- ▶ Reviewing, and reporting on as appropriate, other information published with the financial statements.

We have included in Appendix C a list of matters that we are required to communicate to you under professional standards.

Purpose and evaluation of materiality

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For the purposes of determining whether the accounts are free from material error, we define materiality as the magnitude of an omission or misstatement that, individually or in the aggregate, in light of the surrounding circumstances, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of the users of the financial statements. Our evaluation of it requires professional judgement and necessarily takes into account qualitative as well as quantitative considerations implicit in the definition. We would be happy to discuss with you your expectations regarding our detection of misstatements in the financial statements.

Materiality determines the level of work performed on individual account balances and financial statement disclosures.

The amount we consider material at the end of the audit may differ from our initial determination. At this stage, however, it is not feasible to anticipate all of the circumstances that may ultimately influence our judgement about materiality. At the end of the audit we will form our final opinion by reference to all matters that could be significant to users of the accounts, including the total effect of the audit misstatements we identify, and our evaluation of materiality at that date.

Appendix E - Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR)

Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations includes:

Any act or suspected act of omission or commission (intentional or otherwise) by the entity (including any third parties under the control of the entity such as subsidiaries, those charged with governance or management or an employee acting on behalf of the company), either intentional or unintentional, which are contrary to the prevailing laws or regulations

Page 305	Management Responsibilities: "It is the responsibility of management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity's operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations, including compliance with the provisions of laws and regulations that determine the reported amounts and disclosures in an entity's financial statements." ISA 250A, para 3	Auditor Responsibilities The International Ethics Standard Board of Accountants' International Code of Ethics (IESBA Code) section 360 sets out the scope and procedures in relation to responding to actual or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations. Professional accountancy organisations who are members of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) are required to adopt the IESBA Code of Ethics. We as your auditor are required to comply with the Code by virtue of our registration with ICAEW.
	"The directors' report must contain a statement to the effect that... so far as the director is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditor is unaware, and he has taken all the steps that he ought to have taken as a director in order to make himself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditor is aware of that information." ISA 250A, para 3	
	"Management is responsible for communicating to us on a timely basis, to the extent that management or those charged with governance are aware, all instances of identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations ..." Audit Engagement Letter	"If the auditor becomes aware of information concerning an instance of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, the auditor shall obtain: An understanding of the nature of the act and the circumstances in which it has occurred; and Further information to evaluate the possible effect on the financial statements The auditor shall evaluate the implications of the identified or suspected non-compliance in relation to other aspects of the audit, including the auditor's risk assessment and the reliability of written representations, and take appropriate action." ISA 250A, paras 19 and 22

Examples of Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR)	Matter	Implication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Suspected or known fraud or bribery▶ Health and Safety incident▶ Payment of an unlawful dividend▶ Loss of personal data▶ Allegation of discrimination in dismissal▶ HMRC or other regulatory investigation▶ Deliberate journal mis-posting or allegations of financial impropriety▶ Transacting business with sanctioned individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Potential fraud/breach of anti-bribery legislation▶ Potential breach of section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974▶ Potential breach of Companies Act 2006▶ Potential GDPR breach▶ Potential non-compliance with employment laws▶ Suspicion of non-compliance with laws/regulations▶ Potential fraud / breach of Companies Act 2006▶ Potential breach of sanctions regulations

Appendix E - Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR) (cont'd)

What are the implications of NOCLAR matters arising?

Depending on the nature and significance of the NOCLAR matter the following steps are likely to be required, involving additional input from both management and audit.

This can have an impact on overall achievability of audit timeline and fees.

Across our portfolio of audits we have seen a steady increase in NOCLAR matters that need to be addressed as part of the audit over the past 3 years



Management response:

Timely communication of the matter to auditors (within a couple of days)

Determine who will carry out any investigation into the matter - in-house or external specialists or mix of both

Scope the investigation, in discussion with the auditors

Evaluate findings and agree next steps

Determine effect on financial statements including disclosures

Prepare a paper, summarising the outcome of the investigation and management's conclusions

Communicate the outcome to Those Charged With Governance (TCWG) and to us as your auditors. Report to regulators where required.

Key Reminders:

- ▶ Make sure that all areas of the business are aware of what constitutes actual or potential non-compliance and associated requirements
- ▶ Communicate with us as your auditors on a timely basis - do not wait for scheduled audit catch-ups
- ▶ Engage external specialists where needed
- ▶ Ensure that your investigation assesses any wider potential impacts arising from the matter, not just the matter itself.
- ▶ Plan upfront and consider any impact on overall accounts preparation and audit timeline - discuss the implications with us as your auditor

Audit response:

Initial assessment of the NOCLAR matter and its potential impact

Initial consultation with risk team to determine responsive procedures and the involvement of specialists

Understand and agree scope of management's investigation with support from specialists as needed

Evaluate findings and undertake appropriate audit procedures

Determine audit related impact including accounting and disclosure and audit opinion implications

Document and consult on the outcome of our procedures

Communicate the outcome with management, TCWG and where necessary other auditors within the group or regulators

EY | Building a better working world

EY exists to build a better working world, helping to create long-term value for clients, people and society and build trust in the capital markets.

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AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME – 2024/25

18 September 2024

Training Session – Internal Audit & Counter Fraud – 45 minutes

1. Treasury Management Quarter 1 Performance Report 2024/2025 (Tim Chapple)
2. Monitoring Officer Annual Report (Anita Bradley)
3. RIPA Policy (Jody Kerman)
4. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review Report (Simon Harper)
5. Progression on Statement of Accounts 2024/2025 Audit (Richard Quayle)
6. Audit Working Group Update (Sarah Cox)
7. Health and Safety Annual Report (Paul Lundy)
8. Internal Audit 2023/24- Progress Report (Sarah Cox)
9. Ernst & Young Update (Stephen Reid /Adrian Balmer)
10. Audit & Governance Committee Work Programme

27 November 2024

Training Session – Treasury Management – 45 minutes

1. Counter Fraud Update (Sarah Cox)
2. Treasury Management Mid Term Review 2024/25 (Tim Chapple)
3. Oxford Fire & Rescue Service Statement of Assurance 2023-24 (Matt Schanck)
4. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service 2023/2024 Annual Report (Matt Schanck)
5. Risk Management Update (Louise Tustian)
6. Audit Working Group Update (Sarah Cox)
7. Annual Governance Statement 2023/24-Update on Actions (Anita Bradley)
8. Annual Report on Whistleblowing (Anita Bradley)
9. Ernst & Young Update (Stephen Reid /Adrian Balmer)
10. Audit & Governance Committee Work Programme

15 January 2025

Session with Internal Auditor – 30 minutes

Session with External Auditor – 30 minutes

1. Annual Governance Statement- Update on Actions (Anita Bradley)

2. Internal Audit 2024/25 Progress Report (Sarah Cox)
3. Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2025/26 (Tim Chapple)
4. Financial Management Code (Kathy Wilcox)
5. Audit Working Group Update (Sarah Cox)
6. Ernst & Young Update (Stephen Reid /Adrian Balmer)
7. Audit & Governance Committee Work Programme

12 March 2025

1. Counter Fraud Update (Sarah Cox)
2. Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report to Council (Sarah Cox)
3. Treasury Management Q3 Performance Report 2024/25 (Tim Chapple)
4. Risk Management Update (Louise Tustian)
5. 2021/22 Draft Audit Results Report (Maria Grindley/Adrian Balmer)
6. Audit Working Group Update (Sarah Cox)
7. Accounting Policies (Richard Quayle)
8. Ernst & Young Update (Stephen Reid /Adrian Balmer)
9. Audit & Governance Committee Work Programme