

Accounting Policies

(i) General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Authority's transactions for the financial year and its position at the end of the reporting period. The Authority is required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper accounting practices.

These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom ('the Code') for the relevant reporting period, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The accounting convention adopted in the Statement of Accounts is principally historical cost, modified by the revaluation of certain categories of non-current assets and financial instruments.

(ii) Property, Plant and Equipment

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

Recognition

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the Authority, that the cost of the item can be measured reliably, and that it exceeds the Authority's de minimis threshold. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

The Authority applies a de minimis level of £10,000 for the capitalisation of expenditure on Property, Plant and Equipment. Items of expenditure below this de minimis level are charged to the relevant service within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the reporting period it is incurred. A lower de minimis of £2,000 applies to expenditure funded by the Devolved Formula Capital Grant, as per the West Sussex Scheme for Financing Schools.

Recognition - Schools

The Code confirms that local authority maintained schools (and the governing bodies thereof) are to be treated as entities for control purposes, and that the transactions of said schools shall be consolidated into the local authority single entity financial statements.

Non-current assets attributed to schools are therefore recognised in the Authority's balance sheet, subject to the Authority (or the school's governing body) having control over the asset and it being probable that future service potential will flow to the Authority (or to the school).

The Authority's policy is therefore to recognise the non-current assets of its maintained community and voluntary controlled schools on its balance sheet. The balance of control and service potential is considered to reside with independent trustees for foundation and voluntary aided schools, and so these assets are not consolidated into the Authority's balance sheet (the Council retains the statutory responsibility for land at voluntary aided schools, so this is recognised as an asset of the Authority).

A number of schools in the County now hold academy status. Academies are managed completely independently of the Authority, and funding is provided directly by central government. Whilst the Authority retains the freehold of the land, premises are leased to

the academy on a finance-lease basis (typically for a 125 year term). Therefore academy buildings are derecognised from the Authority's balance sheet, and land is retained at a nominal value reflecting its restricted use.

Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

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

The Authority does not capitalise borrowing costs.

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

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

- Infrastructure and short-lived assets such as vehicles, plant and equipment – depreciated historical cost
- Assets under construction – historical cost
- Surplus assets – fair value, estimated at the highest and best use from a market participant's perspective
- All other assets – current value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use.

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.

Highways infrastructure assets are generally measured at depreciated historical cost. However, this is a modified form of historical cost – opening balances for highways infrastructure assets were originally recorded in Balance Sheets at amounts of capital undischarged for sums borrowed as at 1 April 1994, which was deemed at that time to be historical cost.

The Code requires that assets included in the Balance Sheet at current value are revalued with sufficient regularity to ensure that their carrying amount does not materially differ from their current value at year-end, but as a minimum every five years. The Authority undertook a full revaluation of all its non-current assets at 1 April 2013, and has subsequently adopted a rolling approach to revaluations to ensure that all assets are subject to revaluation at least once every five years. Assets not subject to revaluation in any given year are tested for indexation to ensure that the carrying value does not become materially misstated between formal valuations.

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 Provision of Services where they arise from the reversal of a loss previously charged to that service).

Where decreases in value are identified, they 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 service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

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

Impairment

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

Where impairment losses are identified, they are accounted for 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 service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

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

Depreciation

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

New assets are depreciated from 1 April of the year that follows the date of initial recognition. Depreciation is calculated on the following bases:

- Buildings – on a straight line basis over the remaining useful life of the property as estimated by the external valuer (initially 60 years)
- Vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment – individual useful life on a straight line basis as estimated by a suitably qualified officer
- Infrastructure – straight line basis over a period of 25 years for major road developments and 15 years for structural maintenance of carriageways and bridges (useful lives for other infrastructure assets to be estimated by a suitably qualified officer).

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

Where an item of Property, Plant and Equipment has major components whose cost is significant in relation to the total cost of the item, the components are depreciated separately (subject to this having a material impact on in-year or cumulative depreciation charges).

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.

The asset is revalued immediately before reclassification and then carried at the lower of this amount and fair value less costs of sale. Where there is a subsequent decrease to fair value less costs to sell, the loss is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Gains in fair value are recognised only up to the amount of any previously recognised losses in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services. Depreciation is not charged on Assets Held for Sale.

If an asset no longer meets the criteria to be classified as an Asset Held for Sale, it is reclassified back to non-current assets and valued at the lower of the carrying amount before it was classified as held for sale, adjusted for depreciation, amortisation or revaluations that would have been recognised had it not been classified as held for sale, and the recoverable amount at the date of the decision not to sell.

When an asset is disposed of or decommissioned, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet (whether Property, Plant and Equipment or Assets Held for Sale) is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. Receipts from disposals (if any) are credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal). Any revaluation gains accumulated for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Amounts received for a disposal in excess of £10,000 are categorised as capital receipts, while amounts below this are credited to revenue. The balance of receipts remains within the Capital Receipts Reserve, and can then only be used for new capital investment (or set aside to reduce the Authority's underlying need to borrow i.e. the Capital Financing Requirement). Receipts are appropriated to the Reserve from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Statutory arrangements allow costs of disposals to be financed by capital receipts, capped to 4% of the capital receipt. Costs incurred prior to the sale are carried forward and offset in the year of disposal.

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

The Code requires that, where expenditure is capitalised in relation to the replacement of a component of an item of Property, Plant and Equipment, the carrying amount of the replaced component shall be written out of the balance sheet as a disposal. For infrastructure assets, the Authority has determined the carrying value of any components replaced during the accounting period to be nil, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. Further detail regarding the accounting arrangements for infrastructure assets is provided at Note 4 Property, Plant and Equipment.

A direction provided by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities under the Local Government Act 2003 provides for additional flexibility on the use of capital receipts until March 2025. Under this direction, authorities may apply capital receipts received in the years to which the direction applies to meet the revenue costs of transformation projects which are designed to deliver ongoing savings and/or reduce costs or demand. The Authority's Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy is subject to annual approval by full Council. Where this flexibility is applied, capital receipts are transferred out of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance qualifying expenditure in accordance with the Code's requirements for the accounting of Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS).

(iii) Investment Property

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

Investment Properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value, being the price that would be received to sell such an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. As a non-financial asset, Investment Properties are valued at highest and best use. Properties are not depreciated but are revalued annually according to market conditions at the year-end. Gains or losses on revaluation are posted to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The same treatment is applied to gains and losses on disposal.

However, revaluation and disposal gains and losses are not permitted by statutory arrangements to have an impact on the General Fund balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account and (for any sale proceeds greater than £10,000) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

Rentals received in relation to Investment Properties are credited to the Financing and Investment income line and result in a gain for the General Fund balance.

(iv) Charges to Revenue for Non-Current Assets

Services are charged an accounting estimate of the cost of holding non-current assets during the year. This comprises:

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

The Authority is not required to raise council tax to fund depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisation. These transactions are therefore reversed out from the General Fund Balance via the Movement in Reserves Statement to the Capital Adjustment Account.

The Authority is however required by the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended) to make a prudent annual contribution from revenue towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement, the CFR (Capital Financing Requirement). This contribution is referred to as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

In accordance with statutory guidance issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities), the Authority adopts separate calculations for borrowing that was supported by central government and for unsupported, "self-financed" borrowing. The respective methodologies are as follows:

Supported Borrowing

The Authority adopted a revised MRP calculation for its supported borrowing (including pre-April 2008 unsupported borrowing) effective 1 April 2016. MRP is made on all such outstanding borrowing as at 31 March 2016 on a 2% annuity basis over a repayment period of 40 years from that date.

Unsupported Borrowing

The Authority has adopted the Asset Life (Annuity) Method (MHCLG guidance option 3b) for the repayment of unsupported borrowing undertaken since 1 April 2008. This method provides MRP on an annuity basis over a repayment period equal to the estimated life of the asset for which the borrowing was undertaken, up to a maximum of 50 years. The annuity rates applied are based upon the average Public Works Loan Board rates (for a loan duration equal to the asset life) in the year the borrowing was undertaken.

MRP – Finance Lease and PFI

In line with MHCLG regulations to mitigate the impact of the move to IFRS on the Council's revenue account, it is the policy of West Sussex County Council to make an annual MRP charge equal to the portion of the payment taken to the Balance Sheet to reduce the liability. However, where a lease premium is made (and immediately taken to write down the Balance Sheet liability), the Council spreads the MRP charge over the useful life of the asset.

(v) Government Grants and Contributions

Government grants and third party contributions and donations are recognised as due to the Authority where there is reasonable assurance that:

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

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

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

Where capital grants are credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Grants Unapplied Account via the Movement in Reserves Statement. Amounts in the Capital Grants Unapplied Account are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account once they have applied to fund capital expenditure.

(vi) Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS)

Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provisions but that does not result in the creation of a non-current asset has been charged as expenditure to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year.

Where the Authority has determined to meet the cost of this expenditure from existing capital resources or by borrowing, a transfer in the Movement in Reserves Statement from the General Fund balance to the Capital Adjustment Account then reverses out the amounts charged so that there is no impact on the level of council tax.

(vii) Leases

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

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

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

The Authority as Lessee

Finance Leases

Property, Plant and Equipment held under finance leases is recognised on the Balance Sheet at the beginning of the lease at its fair value measured at the lease's inception (or the present value of the minimum lease payments, if lower).

The asset recognised is matched by a liability for the obligation to pay the lessor. Initial direct costs of the Authority are added to the carrying amount of the asset. Premiums paid on entry into a lease are applied to writing down the lease liability. Contingent rents are charged as expenses in the periods in which they are incurred.

Lease payments are apportioned between:

- A charge for the acquisition of the interest in the Property, Plant or Equipment – applied to write down the lease liability, and
- A finance charge (debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement).

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

Operating Leases

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

The Authority as Lessor

Finance Leases

Where the Authority grants a finance lease over an item of property, plant or equipment, the relevant asset is written out of the Balance Sheet as a disposal and a long-term debtor representing the Authority's net investment in the lease is recognised.

As a disposal, the writing out of the asset and the recognition of the long-term debtor is accounted for as part of the gain or loss on disposal of non-current assets within Other Operating Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement with the debtor representing the sale proceeds.

Under statute, the gain or loss recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is reversed out of the General Fund balance and posted to the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve (proceeds) and Capital Adjustment Account (disposal) via the Movement in Reserves Statement. Deferred capital receipts are released to the Capital Receipts Reserve as the lease debtor is settled.

Lease rentals receivable are apportioned between:

- A charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property – applied to write down the lease debtor (together with any premiums received), and
- Finance income (credited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement).

Operating Leases

Where the Authority grants an operating lease over an item of property, plant or equipment, the asset is retained in the Balance Sheet and rental income is credited to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Credits are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments (e.g. there is a premium paid at the commencement of the lease).

IFRS Transitional Rules

In accordance with regulations issued upon the implementation of IFRS, amounts receivable under leases that changed from operating leases to finance leases (or vice versa) are accounted for as if the status of the lease had not changed, in that:

- Amounts receivable under operating leases that became finance leases on transition to IFRS continue to be credited to the General Fund balance as revenue income
- Amounts receivable for principal payments under finance leases that became operating leases on transition to IFRS continue to be treated as capital receipts.

In both cases, the leases are accounted for in accordance with the current provisions of the Code, with adjustments to the General Fund balance being made in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

(viii) Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) and Similar Contracts

PFI and similar contracts are agreements to receive services, where the responsibility for making available the Property, Plant and Equipment needed to provide the services passes to the PFI contractor.

As the Authority is deemed to control the services that are provided under its PFI schemes, and as ownership of the Property, Plant and Equipment will pass to the Authority at the end of the contracts for no additional charge, the Authority carries the assets used under the contracts on its Balance Sheet as part of Property, Plant and Equipment. The Authority has three PFI schemes on its Balance Sheet - Crawley Schools, Recycling and Waste Handling and Street Lighting.

The original recognition of these assets at fair value was balanced by the recognition of a liability for amounts due to the scheme operator to pay for the capital investment. Non-current assets recognised on the Balance Sheet are revalued and depreciated in the same way as Property, Plant and Equipment owned by the Authority. The amounts payable to the PFI operators each year are analysed into five elements:

- Fair value of the services received during the year – debited to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- Finance cost – an interest charge on the outstanding Balance Sheet liability, debited to Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- Contingent rent – increases in the amount to be paid for the property arising during the contract, debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

- Payments towards liability – applied to write down the Balance Sheet liability towards the PFI operator
- Lifecycle replacement costs – proportion of the amounts payable is posted to the Balance Sheet as a prepayment and then recognised as additions to Property, Plant and Equipment when the relevant works are eventually carried out.

(ix) Accruals of Income and Expenditure

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

In particular:

- Revenue from contracts with service recipients, whether for services or the provision of goods, is recognised when (or as) the goods or services are transferred to the service recipient in accordance with the performance obligations in the contract
- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed – where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet at the lower of cost and net realisable value
- Expenses in relation to services received (including services provided by employees) are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made
- Interest receivable on investments and payable on borrowings is accounted for respectively as income and expenditure on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instrument rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract.

Long-term contracts are accounted for on the basis of charging the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services with the consideration allocated to the performance obligations satisfied based on the goods or services transferred to the service recipient during the financial year.

Where income or expenditure is to be recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. The Council has applied a de minimis threshold of £10,000 for all manual accruals of income and expenditure, except for the accrual of expenditure relating to termination benefits (no de minimis has been applied to these payments).

Where debts may not be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected. An examination of debtors outstanding at 31 March has been undertaken and an allowance for doubtful debts has been made.

Under local management arrangements, school accounts have been closed shortly before the end of the reporting period. Consequently, school income, expenditure, debtors and creditors are shown on an estimated basis.

(x) Overheads and Support Services

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

(xi) Reserves

The County Council sets aside specific amounts as reserves for future policy purposes or to cover contingencies. Reserves are created by appropriating amounts out of the General Fund balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

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

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

(xii) Provisions

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

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

When payments are eventually made, they are charged to the provision carried in the Balance Sheet. Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year – where it becomes less than probable that a transfer of economic benefits will now be required (or a lower settlement than anticipated is made), the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service.

Where some or all of the payment required to settle a provision is expected to be recovered from another party (e.g. from an insurance claim), this is only recognised as income for the relevant service if it is virtually certain that reimbursement will be received if the Authority settles the obligation.

(xiii) Contingent Liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Authority a possible obligation whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Authority.

Contingent liabilities also arise in circumstances where a provision would otherwise be made but either it is not probable that an outflow of resources will be required or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

Contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but are disclosed in a note to the accounts.

(xiv) Financial Instruments

a) Financial Liabilities

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

Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest payable are based on the carrying amount of the liability, multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument.

The effective interest rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash payments over the life of the instrument to the amount at which it was originally recognised. For most of the borrowings that the Authority has, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable (plus accrued interest); and interest charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount payable for the year according to the loan agreement.

b) Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified based on a classification and measurement approach that reflects the business model for holding the financial assets and their cashflow characteristics. There are three main classes of financial assets measured at:

- amortised cost
- fair value through profit or loss (FVPL), and
- fair value through other comprehensive income (FVOCI) - the Authority has currently not designated any financial asset into this category.

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

Financial Assets Measured at Amortised Cost:

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

For most of the financial assets held by the Authority, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal receivable (plus accrued interest) and interest credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount receivable for the year in the loan agreement. Any gains and losses that arise on the derecognition of an asset are credited or debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The Code includes a number of provisions for the accounting of soft loans (loans made to voluntary organisations at below market rates), primarily relating to the recognition of foregone interest. The Authority's policy is to apply the materiality concept of the Code, and so has decided not to adopt any of these provisions for soft loans below £500,000. Any such loans are therefore accounted for as per other assets measured at amortised cost as set out in the previous paragraph.

Expected Credit Loss Model:

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

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

instrument was initially recognised, losses are assessed on a lifetime basis. Where risk has not increased significantly or remains low, losses are assessed on the basis of 12-month expected losses. No loss allowance is recognised for assets where the counterparty is central government or a local authority whereby relevant statutory provisions prevent default.

In addition to financial investments, whereby risk is mitigated through the creditworthiness policy contained within the annually approved Treasury Management Strategy, the Authority may agree loans to third parties (organisations or individuals) when considered to be of an economic or social benefit to the local area. The Authority will assess the expected credit loss by loan (or group of loans where considered to be of similar nature) on a 12-month or lifetime loss model dependent on the risk level applied to the loan(s).

Financial Assets Measured at Fair Value through Profit or Loss:

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

In November 2018 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) announced a statutory override applicable to English local authorities regarding fair value movements on pooled investments funds, initially covering a five-year period commencing 1 April 2018. This override was subsequently extended in January 2023 for a further two years, now expiring 31 March 2025. During the period of the statutory override, the Authority will transfer all fair value movements recognised in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services relating to pooled investment funds to the unusable Pooled Investment Funds Adjustment Account (or, for equity investments, to the Capital Adjustment Account).

Fair Value Measurements of Financial Assets:

The fair value of an asset is the price that would be received to sell an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. The fair value measurements of the Authority's financial assets are based on the following techniques:

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

The inputs to the measurement techniques are categorised in accordance with the following three levels:

- Level 1 inputs – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets that the Authority can access at the measurement date
- Level 2 inputs – inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset, either directly or indirectly
- Level 3 inputs – unobservable inputs for the asset.

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

(xv) Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and Cash Equivalents represents cash in hand and cash equivalents, defined as 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 equivalents are not held for the purposes of an investment gain, but rather are retained so that the Authority has monies available to settle its liabilities. The Authority therefore recognises

as cash equivalents only those deposits held for the purposes of cash management and repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours.

Deposits made for the purposes of securing an investment gain are classified as Short Term Investments.

Bank overdrafts form an integral part of the Authority's cash management and are therefore consolidated within net Cash and Cash Equivalents as presented in the Authority's core financial statements.

(xvi) Schools

The Code confirms that the balance of control for local authority maintained schools (as identified in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended) lies with the local authority. The Code also stipulates that those schools' assets, liabilities, reserves and cash flows are recognised in the local authority single entity financial statements (and not the group accounts). Therefore schools' transactions, cash flows and balances are recognised in each of the financial statements of the Authority as if they were the transactions, cash flows and balances of the Authority.

(xvii) Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates

Billing authorities act as agents, collecting council tax and Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) on behalf of the major preceptors (including government for NDR) and, as principals, collecting council tax and NDR for themselves. Billing authorities are required by statute to maintain a separate fund (i.e. the Collection Fund) for the collection and distribution of amounts due in respect of council tax and NDR. Under the legislative framework for the Collection Fund, billing authorities, major preceptors and central government share proportionately the risks and rewards that the amount of council tax and NDR collected could be less or more than predicted.

Accounting for Council Tax and NDR

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

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

(xviii) Value Added Tax

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

(xix) Employee Benefits

Benefits Payable During Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled within 12 months of the year-end. They include such benefits as wages and salaries, paid annual leave and paid sick leave, bonuses and non-monetary benefits for current employees and are recognised as an expense for services in the year in which employees render service to the Authority.

An accrual is made for the cost of holiday entitlements (or any form of leave, e.g. time off in lieu) earned by employees but not taken before the year-end, which employees can carry forward into the next financial year.

The accrual is made at the wage and salary rates applicable in the following accounting year, being the period in which the employee takes the benefit. The accrual is charged to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services, but then reversed out through the Movement in Reserves Statement to the Accumulated Absences Account so that holiday benefits are charged to revenue in the financial year in which the holiday absence occurs.

Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Authority to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy, and are charged on an accruals basis to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when the Authority can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Authority recognises costs for a restructuring.

(xx) Post-employment Benefits

Employees of the council may be members of four separate pension schemes:

- the Local Government Pension Scheme, administered by West Sussex County Council;
- the Firefighters' Pension Scheme, administered by West Sussex County Council;
- the Teachers' Pension Scheme, administered by Capita Teachers' Pensions on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE);
- the National Health Service (NHS) Pension Scheme, administered by the NHS.

These schemes provide defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), earned as employees work for the Council.

However, the arrangements for the Teachers' and NHS Pension Schemes mean that liabilities for these benefits cannot ordinarily be identified specifically to the Authority. The schemes are therefore accounted for as if they were defined contribution schemes, and therefore no liability for future payments of benefits is recognised in the Balance Sheet. The employer contributions payable to the respective scheme administrators is recognised as an in-year expense against the appropriate service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The Local Government Pension Scheme and The Firefighters' Pension Scheme

The Local Government and Firefighters' Pension Schemes are accounted for as defined benefit schemes:

- The liabilities of the respective schemes attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method (i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc, and projected earnings for current employees).
- Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using an appropriate discount rate.

The assets of the Local Government Pension Scheme attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:

- Quoted securities – current bid price
- Unquoted securities – professional estimate
- Unitised securities – current bid price
- Property – market value

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

Service cost, comprising:

- Current service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year – allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the services for which the employees worked
- Past service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of a scheme amendment or curtailment whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years – debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non Distributed Costs
- Net interest on the net defined benefit liability, i.e. net interest expense for the Authority – the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Remeasurements, comprising:

- The return on plan assets – excluding amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit liability – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure
- Actuarial gains and losses – changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.

Contributions paid to the pension fund – cash paid as employer’s contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund to be charged with the amount payable by the Authority to the pension fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards.

In the Movement in Reserves Statement, this means that there are appropriations to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows, rather than as benefits earned by employees.

(xxi) Early Retirement Costs

The County Council’s policy is to charge the full costs of early retirement to the relevant service at the earliest date. The Local Government Pension Scheme allows authorities to spread these costs over three years, but in keeping with the policy aim, these are recognised in full in the year they are incurred. This discretion does not exist for the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme, where regulation requires that the costs are spread over three years to smooth the volatility of variable numbers of ill-health retirements.

(xxii) Senior Officer Remuneration

The Code contains requirements for the disclosure of the remuneration of higher paid officers. However, these requirements are derived from (and supplemented by) the overarching requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations:

- For England – regulation 7 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (as specified in Schedule 1 SI 2015/234)

There are two related disclosures required by the regulations:

- Figures for the number of officers whose remuneration was £50,000 or more, grouped in £5,000 bands (starting at £50,000)
- The individual remuneration of senior employees.

Disclosure of senior officers' remuneration is made on an accruals (rather than cash) basis in line with the definition of remuneration provided by the regulations, which states that remuneration is to include "all amounts paid to or receivable by a person..."

The regulations dictate that the disclosure of remuneration by category must be made by reference to individuals, with the following proviso:

- Where the senior employee or relevant police officer's salary is £150,000 or more per year, they must be identified by name and job title
- Where the senior employee's salary is less than £150,000, only their job title must be disclosed.

(xxiii) Prior Period Adjustments, Changes in Accounting Policies and Estimates and Errors

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

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

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

(xxiv) Fair Value Measurement of Non-Financial Assets

The Authority measures some of its non-financial assets (such as Surplus Assets and Investment Property) and some of its financial instruments (such as equity shareholdings) at fair value at each reporting date. Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. The fair value measurement assumes that the transaction to sell the asset takes place either:

- a) in the principal market for the asset, or
- b) in the absence of a principal market, in the most advantageous market for the asset.

The Authority measures the fair value of an asset using the assumptions that market participants would use when pricing the asset, assuming that market participants act in their economic best interest.

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

The Authority uses valuation techniques that are appropriate in the circumstances and for which sufficient data is available, maximising the use of relevant observable inputs and minimising the use of unobservable inputs.

Inputs to the valuation techniques in respect of assets for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the Authority's financial statements are categorised within the fair value hierarchy, as follows:

- Level 1 – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets that the Authority can access at the measurement date
- Level 2 – inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset, either directly or indirectly
- Level 3 – unobservable inputs for the asset.

(xxv) Joint Operations and Other Pooled Budgets

Joint operations are arrangements where the parties that have joint control of the arrangement have rights to the assets and obligations for the liabilities relating to the arrangement. The activities undertaken by the Authority in conjunction with other joint operators involve the use of the assets and resources of those joint operators. In relation to its interest in a joint operation, the Authority as a joint operator recognises:

- its assets, including its share of any assets held jointly
- its liabilities, including its share of any liabilities incurred jointly
- its revenue from the sale of its share of the output arising from the joint operation
- its share of the revenue from the sale of the output by the joint operation
- its expenses, including its share of any expenses incurred jointly

In April 2015 the West Sussex Better Care Fund was established. This is a joint operation between the Authority and the NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board to provide integrated health and social care support within the area. West Sussex County Council acts as host in the arrangement, but shares control with its partner and as such accounts only for its share of the Fund's income, expenditure, assets and liabilities in its accounts.

The Authority is also part of three other pooled budget arrangements with NHS bodies to provide services in the local area. In two of these partnerships, established for the provision of services relating to Learning Disabilities and Telecare, the Authority acts as lead commissioner, and has control of the decisions of how the pooled funds are applied. As such, the Authority accounts for all of the expenditure of these funds in its financial statements. Funding contributed by partners is recognised as revenue in the Authority's accounts. The third agreement, for the provision of Mental Health services, is hosted by the NHS, and as such the Authority accounts only for its contribution to the pooled budget.

(xxvi) Events After the Reporting Period

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

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

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

(xxvii) Going Concern

These financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. Assets and liabilities are therefore reported on the assumption of continuing operations for the foreseeable future.

This approach is prescribed by the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting. The Code confirms that, as authorities cannot be created or dissolved without statutory prescription, they must prepare their financial statements on the going concern basis of accounting.

The potential for abolition of an authority (or the transfer of its functions) by statute is not taken as negating the presumption of going concern. Even though assets may be taken from the authority, perhaps without compensation, the continued use of those assets for public benefit means that an individual authority does not need to consider the restriction on its own ability to make use of those assets from a going concern perspective.

An authority experiencing significant resource pressures does not therefore negate the presumption of going concern, because if an authority were in financial difficulty the prospects are that alternative arrangements might be made by central government for the continuation of services. However, references to such issues affecting financial resilience and sustainability will be made in other sections of the financial statements as appropriate, for example in Note 38 Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies.

Considering the above, and the critical judgements made in applying the Council's policy on going concern as set out in Note 38, the Council is satisfied that the financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis.