

Statement of Accounts 2023/24

Accounting Policies

Accounting policies included in the statement of accounts for 2023/24 are as listed below.

Contingent liabilities

A contingent liability arises when an event has taken place that gives the council a possible obligation whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence of uncertain future events not wholly within control of the council. Contingent liabilities are not recognised in the financial statements but disclosed as a note to the accounts. If it becomes probable that an outflow of future economic benefits or service potential will be required then a provision is recognised in the year in which the probability occurs.

Events after the reporting period

Events after the reporting period are those that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the statement of accounts is authorised for issue.

There are two types of event;

- Those that provide evidence of conditions at the end of the reporting period, which are adjusted in the accounts; and
- Those that relate to conditions after the reporting period, which are not adjusted in the accounts, and disclosed in the notes to the statements

Revenue recognition

Income and expenditure is accounted for in the financial year in which the activity it relates to takes place, which may not be the same year in which cash payments are made or received. Where income and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the balance sheet, subject to a de-minimis threshold of £5,000 for revenue and £10,000 for capital.

Revenue from the sale of goods is recognised when the council transfers the significant risks and rewards of ownership to the purchaser and it is probable that economic benefits or service potential associated with the transaction will flow to the authority. Revenue from contracts with service recipients, whether for services or the provision of goods, is recognised at the point that the service is provided or is charged for. Value Added Tax (VAT) payable is included as an expense only to the extent that it is not recoverable from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs. VAT receivable is excluded from income.

Taxation and non-specific grant income

The council tax and non-domestic rates income is accounted for on an accruals basis and included in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement within taxation and non-specific grant income. As a billing authority, the difference between the non-domestic rates and council tax included in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement and the amount required by regulation credited to the general fund is taken to the collection fund adjustment account and reported in the movement in reserves statement.

Revenue relating to council tax and non-domestic rates is measured at the full amount receivable (net of any impairment losses) as they are non-contractual, non-exchange transactions and there can be no difference between the delivery and payment dates.

Grant income

Grants and contributions are recognised in the accounts when there is reasonable assurance that the council will comply with any conditions attached to them and the grants or contributions will be received.

Revenue grants are recognised in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement when any relevant conditions have been satisfied. Grant monies unspent at the end of the year are transferred to an earmarked reserve. When the grant is applied, an amount equal to the expenditure is transferred back from the earmarked reserve to the general fund. Where conditions attached to the grants or contributions have not been met, monies received to date are carried in the balance sheet as receipts in advance and credited to the comprehensive income and expenditure statement when the conditions are satisfied.

Capital grants are credited to the comprehensive income and expenditure statement when any relevant conditions have been satisfied. Where the grant has yet to be used to finance capital expenditure, it is transferred to the capital grants unapplied reserve; where grant conditions have not been satisfied then the monies received are carried in the balance sheet as receipts in advance.

Pooled budgets

Pooled budgets exist where neither partner has sole control of the pooled fund. These arrangements meet the definition of a joint operation, where the partners have joint control over the arrangement, the rights to the arrangements assets and obligations for the arrangements liabilities.

Where services are primarily managed by the council, the income and expenditure are reflected within the net cost of services in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement. This also includes the council's proportion of jointly controlled pooled budgets. Where services are primarily managed by the Integrated Commissioning Board (ICB), the income and expenditure is not reflected in the council's accounts.

Termination benefits

Termination benefits are recognised in the surplus or deficit on the provision of services at the earlier of when the council can no longer withdraw an offer of benefits, or when the council recognises the costs of restructuring. Termination benefits are payable as a result of either:

- An employer's decision to terminate an employee's employment; or
- An employee's decision to accept voluntary redundancy

Property, plant and equipment

Physical assets that support the delivery of our services and have a life of more than one financial year are classified as Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE).

Expenditure on PPE is capitalised on an accrual basis in the accounts, unless it is maintenance only in which case it is charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when it is incurred. Purchased assets are initially measured at cost. Non-purchased assets are measured at fair value, or at the carrying amount where there is no commercial substance (e.g. via exchange). The detailed bases for measuring assets are given below:

- Community assets and assets under construction – historical cost
- Land and buildings – current value based on existing use for operational assets where there is an active market or depreciated replacement cost for assets of a more specialist nature
- Vehicles, plant and equipment – current value based on existing use for operational assets where there is an active market or depreciated replacement cost for assets of a more specialist nature
- Infrastructure assets - 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 England], which was deemed at that time to be historical cost

Capital expenditure that does not result in the creation of a long-term asset (Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute, known as REFCUS) is charged as expenditure to the relevant service in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement. Where the cost of this expenditure is met 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 so that there is no impact on the level of council tax

Depreciation is provided for on PPE assets over their useful lives, with major components depreciated separately. Assets without a determinable finite useful life (e.g. freehold land and certain Community Assets) or that are not yet available for use (e.g. assets under construction) are not depreciated. The calculation is on a straight-line basis over the remaining useful life of the assets as estimated by the valuer (for buildings this is between 24 and 56 years). For those assets classed as vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment, useful economic lives are estimated to be 5 years, unless the individual asset life is known (e.g. the waste asset is 30 years). New assets are not subject to a depreciation charge in the year of acquisition.

Revaluations

Asset categories are revalued at least every five years on a rolling basis in accordance with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Valuation - Global Standards 2021 and UK National Supplement. Further revaluations are carried out where there have been material changes.

Where increases in value are identified, the carrying amount of the asset is increased with a corresponding entry for the gain in the revaluation reserve.

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

- the carrying amount of the asset writing down the balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the revaluation reserve; or
- the carrying amount of the asset is written down against the relevant service line(s) in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement where there is no, or insufficient, balance in the revaluation reserve

Upon revaluation (upwards or downwards) previously accumulated depreciation is eliminated and the asset shown at the newly revalued figure.

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 by:

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

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

Infrastructure assets

In accordance with the temporary relief offered by the update to the CIPFA code on infrastructure assets, the PPE note does not include disclosure of gross cost and accumulated depreciation for infrastructure assets because historical reporting practices and resultant information deficits mean that this would not faithfully represent the asset position to the users of the financial statements. The council has chosen not to disclose this information as the previously reported practices and resultant information deficits mean that gross cost and accumulated depreciation are not measured accurately and would not provide the basis for the users of the financial statements to take economic or other decisions relating to infrastructure assets.

The council has determined in accordance with Regulation 30M of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 that the carrying amounts to be derecognised for infrastructure assets when there is replacement expenditure is nil.

School assets

Where a school is under the council's control (i.e. under the responsibility of the council's Section 151 Officer) its income, expenditure, current assets, liabilities and reserves are consolidated into the council's accounts and included within the figures disclosed in the statement of accounts. Any reserves attributable to the school are earmarked and disclosed separately. If a school transfers to academy status it is no longer under the control of the council and therefore its income, expenditure, assets, liabilities and reserves are no longer consolidated into the council's accounts.

In respect of any property, plant and equipment associated with schools, the council has determined that community schools, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools are included in the balance sheet. Voluntary aided schools' long term assets are owned by the school trustees however under these assets have been recognised due to the probability that the future economic benefits associated with the asset will flow to the council and the cost of the asset can be measured reliably in accordance with IAS16. The fair value of schools is included using a depreciated replacement cost valuation method which comprises the market value of the land in its existing use plus the current replacement cost of the buildings less an allowance for physical deterioration.

Investment property

Investment properties are those that are used solely to earn rentals and/or for capital appreciation. Rentals earned are recognised as income in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement on an accruals basis. The definition is not met if the property is used in any way to facilitate the delivery of services or is held for sale. Management aim for a minimum return of 4% on investment assets.

Investment property value is measured at fair value in compliance with IFRS 13. A definition of fair value is the price that would be received

to sell an asset, or paid to transfer a liability, between market participants in an orderly transaction at the measurement date under current market conditions. Gains and losses on revaluation are included in the financing and investment income and expenditure line in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement. Gains or losses on disposal of an investment property are treated in the same way. Gains or losses recognised in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement are not proper charges to the general fund and are reversed out through the movement in reserves statement. For all investment properties where a fair value review is conducted, fair values are based on multiplying an estimated net income by an appropriate investment yield or having regard to the capital value of similar assets. The net income figure is based on market rent.

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) is a charge to the general fund with a matching entry in the capital adjustment account. It represents an annual contribution from revenue towards the provision for the reduction in our overall borrowing requirement. MRP is charged over a period that is broadly commensurate with the period over which the council receives benefit from the asset.

The minimum revenue provision (MRP) is calculated as follows:-

- MRP on supported borrowing is written down on an annuity basis with an annuity rate of 4%
- MRP on unsupported borrowing is written down on an annuity basis with an annuity rate of 4%
- MRP on assets acquired through finance leases and Private Finance Initiative (PFI) will be equal to the cash payments that reduce the outstanding liability each year

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and demand deposits. 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. Cash equivalents are deemed to be 'on-call' investments, where investments can be recalled immediately.

Private finance initiatives (PFI)

Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts are agreements to receive services where the responsibility for making available the property, plant and equipment needed to provide the services passes to the PFI contractor. As the council is deemed to control the services that are provided under its PFI schemes and as ownership of the property, plant and equipment will pass to the council at the end of the contracts for no additional charge, the council carries the property, plant and equipment used under the contracts on its balance sheet. The original recognition of these property, plant and equipment at their fair value is balanced by the recognition of a liability for amounts due to the PFI provider. Property, plant and equipment recognised on the balance sheet are revalued and depreciated in the same way as property, plant and equipment owned by the council.

The amounts payable to the PFI contractors 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 – a percentage interest charge on the outstanding balance sheet liability, debited to interest payable and similar charges in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement under financing, investment income and expenditure
- Contingent rent – differences in the amount to be paid for the property arising during the contract, debited or credited to interest payable and similar charges in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement
- Payment towards liability – applied to write down the balance sheet liability, current and long term, towards the PFI operator
- Lifecycle replacement costs – the annual payment implicit in the contract is funded and treated as a prepayment on the balance sheet and recognised as property, plant and equipment when the contractor incurs the expenditure

Leases

Leases are classified as either finance leases or operating leases based on the extent to which risks and rewards of ownership of a leased asset lie with the lessor or the lessee. The council does not hold any finance leases.

Where the council is lessee – an operating lease is recognised as an expense on a straight line basis over the lease term.

Where the council is lessor – the asset is recognised under the relevant category of assets. Costs, including depreciation, are recognised as an expense and income is recognised in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

Pension schemes

Defined benefit schemes

The Local Government Pension Scheme is accounted for as a defined benefit scheme. The liabilities are included in the balance sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, that is, an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees. Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices (based on market yields and other factors). Assets are included in the balance sheet at their fair value determined through market or bid prices or using professional valuations. The change in the net pension's liability is analysed into six components;

- Current service cost: The increase in liabilities as a result of service earned in the year is allocated to the revenue account of the services for which the employee worked, within the comprehensive income and expenditure statement
- Past service cost: The increase in liabilities arising from a scheme amendment or curtailment whose effect relates to service earned in earlier years is debited to the net cost of services in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement
- Net Interest on the defined benefit liability: The change during the period that arises from the passage of time is charged to the financing and investment income and expenditure line of the comprehensive income and expenditure statement
- Return on plan assets: Charged to the pensions reserve as other comprehensive income and expenditure but excludes amounts included in net interest on defined benefit liability

- Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability: Changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions previously made by the actuaries is included in other comprehensive income and expenditure
- Contributions paid to the pension fund: Cash paid as employer's contributions to the pension fund

Under IAS 19 the cost of retirement benefits is included in the cost of services when it is earned by employees, rather than when it is paid as pensions. However, the charge required to be made against council tax is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of the retirement benefits is reversed out to the pensions reserve via the movement in reserves statement.

Defined contribution schemes

Teachers employed by the council are members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme, which is a defined benefit scheme administered by the Teachers Pensions Agency. Although the scheme is unfunded, a notional fund is used as a basis for calculating the employers' contribution rate. It is not possible for the council to identify its share of the underlying liabilities in the scheme attributable to its own employees, and therefore for the purposes of the statement of accounts it is accounted for on the same basis as a defined contribution scheme, that is, actual costs are included in the revenue accounts, with no assets and liabilities in the balance sheet.

Financial instruments

Financial instruments are contracts that give rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability (or equity instrument, such as share capital) of another entity. They are valued in line with the requirements of IFRS 13 (fair value), the recognition and measurement of financial instruments is reported in accordance with IFRS 9.

Financial assets

The council's business model is to hold investments to collect contractual cash flows i.e. payments of interest and principal. All of the council's financial assets are therefore classified as amortised cost. Financial assets measured at amortised cost are recognised on the balance sheet when the council becomes 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 council, this means that the amount presented in the balance sheet is the outstanding principal receivable (plus accrued interest) and interest credited is the amount receivable for the year in the loan agreement.

The council recognises expected credit losses on all of its financial assets held at amortised cost either on a 12-month or lifetime basis. Only lifetime losses are recognised for trade receivables (debtors) held by the council. Impairment losses are calculated to reflect the expectation that the future cash flows might not take place because the borrower could default on their obligations.

Financial liabilities

A financial liability is an obligation to deliver cash (or another financial asset) to another entity. Financial liabilities are recognised on the balance sheet when the council becomes 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 for interest payable are based on the carrying amount of the liability multiplied by the effective interest rate for the instrument and are charged to the financing and investment income and expenditure line in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement. The effective interest rate is the rate that 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 council has, the amount presented in the balance sheet is the outstanding principal repayable (plus accrued interest) and interest charged is the amount payable for the year in the loan agreement.

Fair value of assets and liabilities

Financial liabilities and financial assets are carried in the balance sheet at amortised cost, but fair value disclosures are required by the Code. Fair value is the price that would be received/paid in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. The fair value has been assessed by calculating the present value of the anticipated cash flows that will take place over the remaining term of the instruments, using the following assumptions:

- Where an instrument will mature in the next 12 months, the carrying amount is assumed to approximate to fair value
- The fair value of Long term debtor loans have been calculated based on discounted contractual cash flows at the market rate for a similar instrument of the same remaining term with a counterparty of similar credit standing
- For PWLB and other loans, PWLB premature repayment rates and prevailing market rates have been applied to provide the fair value under PWLB debt redemption procedures
- The fair value of liabilities under PFI schemes have been calculated based on discounted contractual cash flows of the same remaining term

There are three tier levels in measuring fair value, these are:-

- Level 1 inputs – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets or liabilities 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 or liability, either directly or indirectly
- Level 3 inputs – unobservable inputs for the asset or liability.

Group accounting policies

In preparing group accounts, the council is required to align the accounting policies of the subsidiary with those of the council, and make consolidation adjustments if necessary. The accounting policies adopted by Hoople Ltd are considered to be consistent with the accounting policies adopted by the council, with the exception of those listed below:

Taxation

Corporation tax expense comprises current and deferred tax. Current tax and deferred tax are recognised in the statement of comprehensive income, profit and loss, except to the extent that it relates to a business combination, or items recognised directly in equity or in other comprehensive income. Current tax is the expected tax payable or receivable on the taxable income or loss for the period, using tax rates enacted or substantively enacted at the reporting date and any adjustment to tax for the prior period. Deferred tax is recognised in respect of temporary differences between the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities for financial reporting purposes and the amounts used for taxation purposes. Deferred tax is not recognised for temporary differences on the initial recognition of assets or liabilities in a transaction that is not a business combination and that affects either accounting nor taxable profit or loss. Deferred tax is measured at the tax rates that are expected to be applied to temporary differences when they reverse, based on the laws that have been enacted or substantively enacted by the reporting date.

A deferred tax asset is recognised for unused tax losses, tax credits and deductible temporary differences, to the extent that it is probable that future taxable profits will be available against which they can be utilised. Deferred tax assets are reviewed at each reporting date and are reduced to the extent that it is no longer probable that the related tax benefit will be realised. Deferred tax assets and liabilities are offset if there is a legally enforceable right to offset current tax liabilities and assets, and they relate to income taxes levied by the same tax authority on the same taxable entity, or on different tax entities, but they intend to settle current tax liabilities and assets on a net basis or their tax assets and liabilities will be realised simultaneously.