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| **Report To:** | **AUDIT PANEL** |
| **Date:** | 30 May 2017 |
| **Reporting Officer:** | Ian Duncan, Assistant Executive Director (Finance) |
| **Subject:** | **ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND ESTIMATES FOR 2016/17 ACCOUNTS** |
| **Report Summary:** | As part of the preparation for the closure of the accounts, it is timely to review with the Panel:-<br>• the proposed accounting policies<br>• the critical judgements made in applying the accounting policies<br>• assumptions made about the future and other major sources of estimated uncertainty within the accounts |
| **Recommendations:** | The Panel is requested to agree the recommendations included in section 5 of the report, subject to discussion. |
| **Links to Community Strategy:** | The community strategy helps determine the priorities for Council spending, which will be reported using the policies referred to in this report. |
| **Policy Implications:** | There are no wider policy implications arising from this report. |
| **Financial Implications:**<br>**(Authorised by Section 151 Officer)** | There are no direct cost implications arising from this report. |
| **Legal Implications:**<br>**(Authorised by Borough Solicitor)** | The Council has a statutory duty to provide annual accounts – this report sets out requirements that the Council needs to comply with together with an explanation as to how certain matters are to be treated in the accounts. |
| **Risk Management:** | The accounting policies will help to reduce the risk of error or misstatement within the Council's accounts by ensuring a clear framework for financial reporting, consistent with guidance. |
| **Access to Information** | The background papers relating to this report and any further information can be obtained from the report writer, Ian Duncan, Assistant Executive Director (Finance)<br>Telephone:0161 342 3864<br>e-mail: ian.duncan@tameside.gov.uk |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Accounting Policies adopted by the Council determine the accounting treatment that is applied to transactions during the financial year and in the preparation of the Statement of Accounts at the year end. They determine the specific principles, bases, conventions, rules and practices that will be applied by the Council in preparing and presenting its financial statements. The accounting policies themselves are published within the Statement of Accounts in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards, as adopted by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting ('the Code').

1.2 The approval of the accounting policies to be applied by the Council demonstrates that due consideration is being given to which policies to adopt and apply and that those charged with corporate governance are fully informed of the policies that are being adopted, prior to the commencement of the preparation of the Statement of Accounts.

1.3 The accounts of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund are included within the Council's Statement of Accounts document each year. However, it should be noted that this report is in relation to the Council only and that the accounting policies and estimates of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund are approved elsewhere.

1.4 The critical judgements made in applying accounting policies as well as the assumptions made about the future and other major sources of estimated uncertainty also need to be reviewed by the Panel and agreed.

1.5 As per the practice adopted in previous years, the Panel are requested to endorse the use of the policies underpinning the financial statements within the Statement of Accounts.

## 2. ACCOUNTING POLICIES – UPDATE TO THE 2015/16 CODE OF PRACTICE

2.1 Officers have assessed the accounting policies that are deemed necessary to explain clearly and underpin the accounting treatment of transactions within the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2016/17. In undertaking this assessment a review of all accounting policies previously agreed has been undertaken to check their relevance, clarity, legislative compliance and that they are in accordance with the latest version of 'the Code' and International Financial Reporting Standards requirements.

2.2 The accounting policies, as based on the requirements of 'the Code' and relevant financial standards, will be used to produce the financial statements for 2016/17 and can be seen at **Appendix 1** to this report.

2.3 As the Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 is prepared it may be necessary to amend an accounting policy in order to adopt a more appropriate accounting treatment. If this occurs the change and the reason for the change will be reported back to the Audit Panel prior to the publication of the Statement of Accounts.

## 3. ADOPTION OF THE ACCOUNTING POLICIES

3.1 This report sets out the accounting policies, which it is proposed to adopt in respect of the 2016/17 Statement of Accounts for consideration by the Audit Panel. Given that the policies adopted have a significant influence upon the financial statements it is important that these are given appropriate consideration at the outset of the preparation of the Statement of Accounts. This helps ensure that they are applied consistently in the preparation of the accounts.

## 4. CRITICAL JUDGEMENTS IN APPLYING ACCOUNTING POLICIES, ASSUMPTIONS MADE ABOUT THE FUTURE AND OTHER MAJOR SOURCES OF ESTIMATED UNCERTAINTY

4.1 The following are significant management judgements in applying the accounting policies of the Council when preparing the accounts, as well as a description of the major sources of estimated uncertainty within the accounts.

**Accounting for schools – Balance Sheet recognition of schools**

4.2 The Council recognises schools in line with the provisions of 'the Code'; consequently schools are recognised on the Balance Sheet only if the future economic benefits or service potential associated with the school will flow to the Council. The Council regards that the economic benefits or service potential of a school flows to the Council where the Council has the ability to appoint the employees of the school and is able to set the admission criteria.

4.3 There are currently five types of schools within the borough:-

- Community schools
- Voluntary Controlled schools
- Voluntary Aided schools
- Foundation/Trust schools
- Academies

4.4 Employees at community schools are appointed by the Council and the Council sets the admission criteria. These schools are therefore recognised on the Council's Balance Sheet.

4.5 In order to comply with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting, the Council wrote to each of the diocese who occupy schools within the borough of Tameside in order to establish the accounting arrangements.

4.6 Diocese of Salford, The Church of England Diocese of Chester, The Church of England Diocese of Manchester and Diocese of Shrewsbury have all responded in writing to confirm that the schools occupy the school premises under the direction of the trustees and that the legal ownership resides with the religious body. The Council has also had confirmation that the religious bodies referred to above account for the school buildings within their Balance Sheets.

4.7 The legal ownership of Voluntary Controlled school buildings belong to a charity, normally a religious body, therefore the Council does not recognise these non-current assets on the Balance Sheet. However, the adjoining school playing fields remain in Council ownership and are therefore included on the Council's Balance Sheet.

4.8 Foundation Trust, Voluntary Aided and Academy school employees are appointed by the schools' governing body, which also set the admission criteria. As a consequence the Council does not receive the economic benefit or service potential of these schools and does not recognise them on the Council's Balance Sheet. However, the playing fields surrounding Voluntary Aided schools remain in Council ownership and are therefore included on the Council's Balance Sheet.

**Accounting for schools - Transfers to Academy status**

4.9 When a school that is held on the Council's Balance Sheet transfers to Academy status the Council accounts for this as a disposal for nil consideration on the date that the school converts to Academy status, rather than as an impairment on the date that approval to transfer to Academy status is announced.

4.10 Where the Council has entered into construction contracts for replacement schools on behalf of an Academy, the Council charges the cost of construction against Assets Under Construction (part of Property, Plant and Equipment), whilst the Academy is constructed.

Once the construction is complete the asset is transferred to Property, Plant and Equipment on the date of transfer to Academy status. The Council accounts for this as a disposal for nil consideration.

**Investment Properties**

4.11 Investment Properties have been estimated using the identifiable criteria under 'the Code' of being held for rental income or for capital appreciation. These Investment Properties have been assessed using these criteria, which is subject to interpretation.

**Property, Plant and Equipment**

4.12 An asset is depreciated over a useful life that is dependent on assumptions about the level of repairs and maintenance that will be incurred in relation to the individual asset. The current economic climate makes it uncertain that the Council will be able to sustain its current spending on repairs and maintenance bringing into doubt the useful life assigned to assets. If the useful life of an asset is reduced, the depreciation charge increases and the carrying amount of the asset falls.

4.13 An important estimation contained in the accounts is that of the useful economic life of non-current assets (or useful remaining economic life where assets are revalued). This is important as it determines the depreciation charge posted to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

- Property may have a remaining useful life of between 2 and 70 years and the exact amount is determined for each property by chartered surveyors, not less than once every 5 years.
- Infrastructure assets (such as roads) are depreciated over 40 years from the date of capitalisation.
- Investment properties are not depreciated, in line with guidance but are revalued each year.
- Surplus assets are not depreciated as the Council's policy is to revalue them each year.
- Other non-current assets (such as vehicles, plant and equipment) are depreciated over 10 years or less.
- Specific assets may be valued more frequently depending on the wider economic context, particularly if it is expected that there has been a material reduction in their value during the year.

4.14 Depreciation could also be calculated by adopting a fixed policy regarding economic life for each identified class of asset. However, it has been determined by the Council that a 'catch-all' policy cannot be as accurate as the case-by-case review that is employed, because of the wide variety of assets held.

**Business Rates**

4.15 Since the introduction of the Business Rates Retention Scheme effective from 1 April 2013, Local Authorities are liable for the cost of successful appeals against business rates charged to businesses in their proportionate share. Appeals are managed by the Valuation Office on a case by case basis. The Council cannot be fully aware, at all times, of all changes to businesses and to business premises, and it is the responsibility of the individual business to seek adjustments for their business rates bill where this is appropriate. Therefore, a provision is recognised in the accounts for the best estimate of the possible liability to the Council for business rates appeals, to 31 March 2017. This is calculated using the Valuation Office's latest list of appeals, which includes information on the average levels of successful and unsuccessful claims.

**Debt Impairment**

4.16 All debts due to the Council are regarded as collectible, unless firm evidence transpires that they are uncollectible and so are 'bad' debts. However, some debts, which are proving difficult to collect, may be properly termed 'doubtful'. The Council has included an impairment allowance for doubtful debts in the accounts based on a review of the Council's significant short term debtor balances. In the current economic climate it is not certain that the impairment allowance for doubtful debts would be sufficient. If collection rates were to deteriorate an increase in the impairment allowance would be required.

**Leases**

4.17 The Council has examined its leases, and classified them as either operational or finance leases. In some cases the lease transaction is not always conclusive and the Council uses judgement in determining whether the lease is a finance lease arrangement that transfers substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership. In assessing leases the Council has estimated the implied interest rate within the lease to calculate interest and principal payments.

**PFI and similar arrangements**

4.18 PFI and similar arrangements have been considered to have an implied finance lease within the agreement. In reassessing PFI leases the Council has estimated the implied interest rate within the leases to calculate interest and principal payments. In addition the future RPI increase within the contracts has been estimated as remaining constant throughout the remaining period of the contract.

**Funding**

4.19 There remains uncertainty about future levels of funding for Local Government. However, the Council has determined that this uncertainty is not yet sufficient to provide an indication that the assets of the Council might be impaired as a result of a need to close facilities and reduce levels of service provision.

**Provisions**

4.20 The Council has estimated its short term insurance provision value, based on reviewing the results of the 2015/16 actuarial review and projecting for the current year. Actuarial reviews will be commissioned every 3 years.

**Pensions Fund Liability**

4.21 The estimation of the Pension Fund liability depends on a number of complex judgements relating to the discounts used, the rate at which salaries are projected to increase, changes in retirement ages, mortality rates and expected returns on Pension Fund assets. A firm of consulting actuaries is engaged to provide the Council with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied.

4.22 The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions. The sensitivity analysis below is based on reasonably possible changes to the assumptions occurring at the end of the reporting period and assumes for each change that the assumption analysed changes while all the other assumptions remain constant. The assumptions in longevity, for example, assume that life expectancy increases or decreases for men and women. In practice this is unlikely to occur, and changes in some of the assumptions may be interrelated. The estimations in the sensitivity analysis have followed the accounting policies for the scheme, i.e. on an actuarial basis using the projected unit cost method. The methods and types of assumptions used in preparing the sensitivity analysis below did not change significantly from those used in 2015/16.

**Manchester Airports Group**

4.23 The Council's shareholding in Manchester Airports Group is valued using the earning based method and discounted cash flow method resulting in the asset being valued at fair value rather than historic cost, therefore requiring an annual valuation. A firm of financial experts and valuers have been engaged by the nine minority local authority shareholders to provide an independent valuation, which includes reviewing the financial performance, stability and business assumptions of Manchester Airports Group. The valuation provided is based on estimations and assumptions and therefore should the Council sell its shareholding the value held in these statements may not be realised.

**Housing Benefit Subsidy**

4.24 Assumptions contained within the accounts include the final level of housing benefit subsidy grant receivable (included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement). The amount will not be finalised until the 30 November 2017 when the auditor-certified claim is submitted and so the amount included in the accounts could differ.

**Reserves**

4.25 A number of assumptions are made regarding the required level of Council reserves. The Government has previously criticised the level of reserves held by councils as being too high. However, the professional consensus is that reserves are more necessary in times of greater risk and uncertainty.

4.26 The level of financial risk being faced by the Council continues to increase. Reserves provide a way for the Council to ensure that any unforeseen financial impacts can be absorbed without immediately impacting on frontline service delivery. Currently, potential impacts may arise from a number of sources (see Section 5 for more details), including:-

- The further significant loss of Government funding.
- Significant changes to local government responsibilities and the unknown impact of these (e.g. Care Act, Universal Credit, further responsibilities associated with full devolution of business rates).
- Other cost pressures or national policy changes e.g. the impact of an ageing population and pressures within the local health economy.
- Delays in securing further, significant, ongoing savings targets.
- Volatility of the Business Rates base.
- Potential legal judgements and the confirmation of obligations that led the Council to recognise contingent liabilities in the Statement of Accounts.

4.27 These and other factors must be borne in mind when estimating the required level of reserves and the anticipated profile of use.

4.28 Reserves can also be held for specific purposes such as the delivery of Council plans and priorities, to smooth out volatile movements in expenditure (e.g. levies, winter maintenance) and investment in the Council's fixed assets (e.g. highway network, property portfolio).

**Minimum Revenue Provision**

4.29 The Council has adopted the following policy in relation to calculating the Minimum Revenue Provision:-

- Borrowing taken up prior to 01/04/2015 will be provided for using a straight-line method of calculating Minimum Revenue Provision. It will be provided for in equal instalments over 50 years. The debt will be extinguished in full by 31 March 2065. If the Council elects to make additional voluntary Minimum Revenue Provision then the annual charge will be adjusted accordingly.
- The following will be required in relation to borrowing taken up on or after 01/04/2015. Minimum Revenue Provision is to be provided for based upon the average expected useful life of the assets funded by borrowing in the previous year. The debt will be repaid on a straight-line basis over the average useful life calculated; the debt will be fully extinguished at the end of period.
- For certain investment projects it may be deemed more prudent to use the asset life annuity method in order to calculate Minimum Revenue Provision. In this case the Council will use the annuity method, with the Minimum Revenue Provision based on the prevailing Public Works Loan Board rate for a loan with a term equal to the estimated life of the project.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The Panel is asked to:-

- approve the accounting policies detailed at **Appendix 1** to this report;
- note the critical judgements and major sources of estimated uncertainties included within the Statement of Accounts and the impact of alternative estimation bases being used.

# APPENDIX 1

## AMENDED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

## STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES FROM 1 APRIL 2016

This document outlines how the Council will account for all income, expenditure, assets and liabilities held and incurred during the 2016/17 financial year.

The Accounting Policies of the Council as far as possible have been developed to ensure that the accounts of the Council are understandable, relevant, free from material error or misstatement, reliable and comparable. A Glossary of Terms can be found at the end of this document.

### 1. Accounting Principles

#### a) Going Concern

The Council prepares its accounts on the basis that it remains a going concern; that is that there is the assumption that the functions of the Council will continue in operational existence. In the case of a pending local government reorganisation, where assets and liabilities are due to be redistributed, the Council would still account on the basis of going concern as the provision of services would continue in another Council.

#### b) Accruals Concept

The Council accounts for income and expenditure in the period to which the service has taken place, rather than when cash payments are received or made.

Where income and expenditure has been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Equally, where cash has been received or paid which is not yet recognised as income or expenditure, a creditor (income in advance) or debtor (payment in advance) is recorded in the Balance Sheet.

#### c) Cost of Services

The costs of overheads and support services are charged to those that benefit from the supply or service in accordance with the costing principles of the CIPFA Service Reporting Code of Practice (SERCOP) for Local Authorities 2016/17.

All recharges of support service costs are consistent with the principles outlined in the SERCOP. The total absorption costing principle is used. This means the full cost of overheads and support services are shared between users in proportion to the benefits received, with the exception of:-

- Corporate and Democratic Core costs (as these relate to the Council's status as a multi-functional, democratic organisation).
- Non-Distributed costs (as these are the costs of discretionary benefits awarded to employees retiring early).

These two cost categories are accounted for as separate headings in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, as part of Net Cost of Services.

## d) Value Added Tax (VAT)

Income and expenditure transactions exclude any amounts relating to VAT as currently all VAT collected is payable to HM Revenue and Customs and all VAT paid is recoverable from them.

## e) Changes in Accounting Policy

Where there is a known future change in accounting policy required by the CIPFA Code, the Council will disclose the following in the notes to the accounts:-

- The nature of the change in accounting policy;
- The reasons why applying the new accounting policy provides reliable and more relevant information;
- For both the current reporting period, and the previous year comparatives reported, the extent to which the change in accounting policy would have impacted on the financial statements if it had been adopted in that year;
- The amount of adjustment relating to years previous to those reported in the set of financial statements, had the proposed policy been adopted retrospectively;
- If retrospective application is impracticable for a particular period, the circumstances that led to the existence of that condition and a description of how and from when the change in accounting policy has been applied.

The Council will also disclose information relating to an accounting standard which has been issued but not yet adopted.

## f) Previous Year Adjustments

Changes in accounting policies are only made when required by proper accounting practices or the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the Council'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 way of a prior period adjustment and an appropriate disclosure in the notes to the accounts.

A change to the accounting policy may also require that the basis of estimates is changed. This will be disclosed in accordance with the policy on changes to accounting estimates.

## g) Events after the Balance Sheet Date

Events after the Balance Sheet date are reflected up to the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue. This date and who gave that authorisation is disclosed in the notes to the accounts, including confirmation that this is the date up to which events after the Balance Sheet date have been considered.

Where a material event is identified after the Balance Sheet date, whether favourable or unfavourable, for which it can be shown that the conditions already existed at the Balance Sheet date, it is an adjusting event and the amounts in the accounts would be adjusted accordingly.

However, where a material event is identified which occurred after the Balance Sheet date but it cannot be shown that the conditions existed before the Balance Sheet date, then it is a non-adjusting event and the accounts would not be adjusted (although a disclosure would be made in the notes to the accounts).

## h) Exceptional and Extraordinary Items

When items of income and expenditure are material, their nature and amount is disclosed separately, either on the face of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement or in the notes to the accounts, depending on how significant the items are to an understanding of the Council's financial performance.

## i) Contingent Assets and Liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Council a possible obligation whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Council. Contingent liabilities also arise in circumstances where a provision would otherwise be made but either it is not probable that an outflow of resources will be required or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured reliably.

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

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

Contingent assets are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts where it is probable that there will be an inflow of economic benefits or service potential.

# 2. CAPITAL ACCOUNTING

## a) Recognition

All expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis. Expenditure on the acquisition of an asset, or expenditure which adds to, and not merely maintains, the value of an existing asset, should be capitalised, provided that it yields benefits to the Council and the services it provides for a period of more than one year.

Capital expenditure includes:-

- the acquisition, reclamation, enhancement or laying out of land;
- acquisition, construction, preparation, enhancement or replacement of roads, buildings and other structures;
- acquisition, installation or replacement of movable or immovable plant, machinery, apparatus, vehicles and vessels.

In this context, enhancement means works which are intended to:-

- Lengthen substantially the useful life of the asset, or
- Increase substantially the market value of the asset, or
- Increase substantially the extent to which the asset can or will be used for the purposes of or in conjunction with the functions of the Council.

Under this definition, improvement works and structural repairs should be capitalised, whereas expenditure to ensure that the non-current asset maintains its previously assessed standard of performance should be recognised in the revenue account as it is incurred.

A de minimis level of £1,000 has been adopted by the Council in relation to capital expenditure.

**b) Measurement**

Initially the assets are measured at cost, comprising the purchase price, plus any costs associated with bringing the asset into use. The measurement of an operational asset acquired other than through purchase is deemed to be its current value. The Code requires that non-operational property, plant and equipment classified as surplus assets are measured at fair value.

In accordance with 'the Code', Property, Plant and Equipment is further classified as:-

- Other Land and Buildings *
- Infrastructure assets
- Vehicles, Plant and Equipment
- Community Assets
- Assets under Construction
- Surplus Assets

Each of these asset classifications are valued on the base recommended by CIPFA and in accordance with the Statements of Asset Valuation Principles and Guidance Notes issued by The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), as follows:-

- Infrastructure, Community Assets and Assets Under Construction – depreciated historical cost (DRC)
- Other assets (excluding non-operational property) – current value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use (EUV)
- Surplus assets (non-operational property, plant and equipment) – fair value

Where there is no market based evidence of fair value because of the specialist nature of an asset, depreciated replacement cost (DRC) is used as an estimate of fair value. Where non-property assets (such as Vehicles, Plant and Equipment) have short useful lives or low values (or both), depreciated historical cost basis is used as a proxy for fair value.

*These asset categories are revalued on a five year rolling cycle. The programme of revaluations is continuing on this cyclical basis although values of those assets falling between scheduled valuation dates are reviewed annually to ensure that any material changes to asset valuations is adjusted in the interim period, as they occur. Assets where expenditure of £750,000 or above has been incurred, these are added to the preceding year's revaluation list

**c) Revaluation**

Revaluation of property is undertaken on at least a five year "rolling programme". A desk top valuation exercise can take place more frequently, however, if the valuer believes that market changes within the year are more significant, an interim valuation will be undertaken. Investment Properties are revalued annually to determine any material change in the carrying value.

A Revaluation Reserve for non-current assets (other than Investment Properties) is held in the Balance Sheet made up of unrealised revaluation gains relating to individual non-current assets, with movements in valuations being managed at an individual non-current asset level.

Movement in the valuation of Investment Properties are charged or credited to the Comprehensive Income Expenditure Statement. Gains arising from the revaluation of Investment Properties are not held within a revaluation reserve.

The Revaluation Reserve contains revaluation gains recognised since 1 April 2007 only, the date of the reserves formal implementation. Gains arising before that date were subsequently consolidated into the Capital Adjustment Account. Movements in the valuations of non-current assets do not impact on General Fund Balances and are not a charge or credit to council tax levies.

**d) Disposals**

Receipts from the disposal of non-current assets are accounted for on an accruals basis. When an asset is disposed of, the value of the asset in the Balance Sheet is written out to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, as is the disposal receipt. These amounts are not a charge or receipt to council tax as the cost of non-current assets is fully provided for under separate arrangements for capital financing. The asset value written out is appropriated to the Capital Adjustment Account, the capital receipt is appropriated to the Capital Receipts Unapplied Account, via the Movement in Reserve Statement. Any revaluation gains that have accumulated in the Revaluation Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Usable Capital Receipts have been used to finance capital expenditure based on the policy of the Council.

Academy Schools are written out of the Council's Balance Sheet at the time that they legally transfer to Academy status. The net book value of the school at the time of the transfer is charged to Other Operating Income and Expenditure within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as a loss on disposal/derecognition.

**e) Investment Properties**

Investment Property is held solely to earn rental income or for capital appreciation or both. Investment Property is initially recognised at cost, but is subject to valuation at fair value at the end of each accounting period. Losses or gains are recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

**f) Intangible Assets**

Intangible Assets represent non-current assets that do not have physical substance, but are identifiable and are controlled by the Council through custodial or legal rights. All purchased Intangible Assets are capitalised at historical cost in line with 'the Code'.

In line with other non-current assets, their useful economic life is determined based on the length of time that the benefit will accrue to the Council. Based on the best estimate of the useful economic life, the Intangible Asset is charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement over this period.

**g) Depreciation / Amortisation Methodology**

Depreciation is provided for on all non-current assets with a finite useful life (this can be determined at the time of acquisition or revaluation) according to the following policy:-

- In accordance with the Service Reporting Code of Practise, all buildings (but not their land) are depreciated over their remaining useful lives. A land and building split has been determined by the Council's external valuers. Estimates of the useful life are determined for each property and where material for components of those properties as part of the valuation process. These estimates of economic life may vary considerably from property to property.

- Investment Properties are not depreciated, rather an annual review is undertaken of the fair carrying value. Any changes to these values are charged to the Provision of Services within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the period that they occur.

- Infrastructure is depreciated over a 40 year period.

- Vehicles, Plant, and Equipment is depreciated over 10 years or less depending on the nature of the asset.

Depreciation is calculated on a straight-line basis. Depreciation is not charged in the year of asset acquisition. Depreciation is charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement but does not impact on council tax and is written out to the Capital Adjustment Account via the Movement in Reserves Statement. Where non-current assets have been re-valued the current value depreciation will be higher than the historic cost depreciation, this increased depreciation charge is written out against the Revaluation Reserve with an offsetting entry to the Capital Adjustment Account.

**h) Charges to revenue for non-current assets**

Service revenue accounts, support services and trading accounts are charged with the following amounts to record the real cost of holding non-current assets throughout the year:-

- Depreciation attributable to the assets used by the relevant service
- Impairment losses attributable to non-current assets used by the service in excess of the balances held in the Revaluation Reserve
- Amortisation of Intangible Assets attributable to the service

The Council does not raise council tax to cover depreciation, impairment loss or amortisations. The Council does, however, make an annual provision from revenue to reduce its borrowing requirement, (equal to approximately 2% of the Capital Financing Requirement). Depreciation, impairment losses, amortisation and gains or losses on the disposal of non-current assets are therefore written out in the Movement in Reserves Statement, by way of an adjusting transaction within the Capital Adjustment Account.

**i) Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute**

Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute represents expenditure which may be properly capitalised, but which does not result in the creation of any non-current asset to the Council. In line with the guidance contained in ‘the Code’, this expenditure is written off to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year the expenditure is incurred, because the Council does not control the economic benefits arising from this expenditure.

**j) Impairment of Non-current Assets**

Assets have been reviewed for any impairment loss in respect of the consumption of economic benefit (e.g. physical damage). Where an impairment loss occurs this would be charged to the service revenue account, with a corresponding entry made to reduce the value of the asset in the Balance Sheet.

To remove the impact of the impairment loss on the budget, a credit entry is made in the Movement in Reserves Statement as a charge to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Impairments reflecting a general fall in prices would be recognised in the Revaluation Reserve, up to the value of revaluation for the individual asset, and any further impairment would be treated as a consumption of economic benefit and charged to the service revenue account.

**k) Capital Receipts**

Capital receipts arising from the sale of non-current assets are credited to Capital Receipts

Unapplied Account.

Any capital receipts relating to the repayment of former Housing Revenue Account (HRA) mortgages (principal amounts) are subject to provisions included within the Local Government Act 2003. The Council is required to pay a specified amount from these receipts to the national pool. All other capital receipts are usable.

Usable capital receipts are shown separately in the Balance Sheet and can be used either to finance new capital investment, to repay grant received in relation to the asset disposed of, to finance the premium sum arising from the rescheduling of debt, or set aside to reduce the Council's underlying need to borrow.

**l) Redemption of Debt (Minimum Revenue Provision)**

Where capital expenditure has been financed by borrowing there is a provision for the repayment of debt to be made in accordance with the Minimum Revenue Provision requirements of the Local Authorities ('MRP' - as set out in Capital Financing and Accounting (Amendment) Regulations 2009).

Since 2015/16 the Council has adopted the following policy in relation to calculating the Minimum Revenue Provision

i) Borrowing taken up prior to 01/04/2015 will be provided for using a straight-line method of calculating 'MRP'. A total of £185,215,128 will be provided for in equal instalments over 50 years which will result in an annual charge of £3.704m. The debt will be extinguished in full by 31 March 2065. If the Council elects to make additional voluntary MRP then the annual charge will be adjusted accordingly.

ii) The following will be required in relation to borrowing taken up on or after 01/04/2015. 'MRP' is to be provided for based upon the average expected useful life of the assets funded by borrowing in the previous year. The debt will be repaid on a straight-line basis over the average useful life calculated; the debt will be fully extinguished at the end of period. If the Council elects to make additional voluntary MRP then the annual charge will be adjusted accordingly

For certain investment projects it may be deemed more prudent to use the asset life annuity method in order to calculate MRP. In this case the Council will use the annuity method, with the MRP based on the prevailing PWLB interest rate for a loan with a term equal to the estimated life of the project.

For any finance leases and any on-balance sheet private finance initiative (PFI) schemes, the MRP charge will be equal to the principal repayment during the year, calculated in accordance with proper practices.

There will be no MRP charge for any cash backed Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS) that the Council operates. As for this type of scheme, any future debt liability would be met from the capital receipt arising from the deposit maturing after a five year period. Any repossession losses for this type of scheme would be charged to an LAMS reserve.

**m) Capital Grants and Contributions**

The Council recognises capital grants and contributions as being related to capital assets and uses them to fund capital expenditure on those assets. Grants, contributions and donations are recognised as income at the date that the Council has satisfied the conditions of entitlement, and there is reasonable assurance that the monies will be received.

Any grant received before these recognition criteria were satisfied would be held as a creditor. Any grant which had met the recognition criteria but had not been received would be shown as a debtor. This is in line with the Accruals Concept Policy.

Once the recognition criteria above have been satisfied, capital grants are recognised as income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

In order to not impact on the level of Council Tax, the Council removes the credit from the General Reserves through the Movement in Reserves Statement, and makes a credit to the Capital Grants Unapplied Reserve.

Once expenditure has been incurred on the related asset, the credit is removed from the Capital Grants Unapplied Reserve and credited to the Capital Adjustment Account.

**n) Capital Reserves**

The Council holds Capital Reserves for the purpose of financing capital expenditure. Reserves will be disclosed as either usable (available to fund capital expenditure) or unusable (reserves held as a result of timing differences associated with recognition of capital expenditure and related financing).

Movements in capital reserves are accounted through the Movement in Reserves Statement.

**o) Leases**

In line with IFRIC 4, the Council recognises a lease to be any agreement which transfers the right to use an asset for an agreed period in exchange for payment, or a series of payments.

This includes; leases, hire purchase, rental, contracts of service, service level agreements and any other arrangement where the ability to use an asset is conveyed.

**p) Defining a Finance Lease**

A finance lease is where substantially all of the risks and rewards relating to ownership transfer to the lessee.

Tests to give an indication of the transfer of risk and reward are:

- If the lessee will gain ownership of the asset at the end of the lease term (e.g. hire purchase)
- If the lessee has an option to purchase the asset at a sufficiently favourable price that it is reasonably certain, at the inception of the lease, that it will be exercised
- If the lease term is for the major part of the economic life of the asset even if the title is not transferred. Measures to identify this are:
    - The economic life of the asset is deemed to be that which is consistent with the class of asset in the depreciation policy.
    - The Council recognises ‘major part’ to be 75% of the life of the asset, unless on an individual case basis this would not give a true representation of the substance of the transaction.
- At the inception of the lease, the present value of the minimum lease payments amounts to at least substantially all of the fair value of the leased asset. Measures to identify this are:
    - Fair value of the leased asset is assessed by a RICS qualified valuer.
    - The present value of the minimum lease payments is calculated by discounting at the rate inherent in the lease.
    - If this rate cannot be determined the incremental borrowing rate applicable for that year is used.

    - The Council recognises ‘substantially all’ to be 75% of the value of the asset, unless on an individual case basis this would not give a true representation of the substance of the transaction.
- The leased assets are of such a specialised nature that only the lessee can use them without major modifications.
- If the lessee cancels the lease, the losses of the lessor, associated with the cancellation are borne by the lessee.
- Gains or losses from the fluctuation in the fair value of the residual accrue to the lessee (e.g. in the form of a rent rebate equalling most of the sales proceeds at the end of the lease).
- The lessee has the ability to continue the lease for a secondary period at a rent that is substantially lower than market rent.

A suitably experienced accountant, with assistance from qualified valuers, will make a judgement based on the level of risk and reward held by the Council as to whether an asset is operating or finance.

**q) Defining an Operating Lease**

The Council recognises an operating lease to be a lease which is not a finance lease.

**r) Lessee Accounting for a Finance Lease**

Where the Council is tenant in a property, or is, by definition of IFRIC 4, leasing an asset which is deemed under IAS 17 to be a finance lease the Council will recognise that asset within the asset register, and account for that asset as though it were an owned asset.

The initial recognition of the asset is at the fair value of the property, or if lower, the present value of the minimum lease payments. A liability is also recognised at this value, which is reduced as lease payments are made.

**s) Lessor Accounting for a Finance Lease**

Where the Council is the lessor for a finance lease, the asset is not recognised in the asset register; however a long term debtor at the present value of minimum lease payments is recognised. Income received is split between capital – credited against the debtor, and finance income – credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as interest receivable.

**t) Lessor Accounting for an Operating Lease**

Where the Council is the lessor for an operating lease, normally the asset is classified as an Investment Property. Any rental income is credited to the relevant service income.

**u) Service Concession Agreements (Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and other 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. PFI and similar contracts are assessed against criteria within IFRIC 12 Service Concession Arrangements to determine whether the risks and rewards incidental to ownership lie with the Council or the contractor.

Those which lie with the contractor – payments made during the life of the contract are chargeable to revenue as incurred.

Those which lie with the Council – are recognised as an asset in the Balance Sheet for the construction costs of the asset. Once recognised this asset is treated in line with all capital assets. A corresponding long term liability is also recognised at the construction value. Payments made during the life of the contract are split into finance costs, capital costs and service costs. Determining the split of payments is calculated at the inception of the contract and is based on the inherent interest rate within the original agreement. Finance costs are chargeable to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as interest payable. Capital costs reduce the level of liability in the Balance Sheet. Service costs are chargeable to the relevant revenue service expenditure. Pre-payments reduce the level of liability at the start of the contract.

PFI credits are treated as general revenue government grants.

## 3. REVENUE ACCOUNTING

### a) Recognition of Revenue Expenditure

The Council recognises revenue expenditure as expenditure which is not capital.

### b) Employee Costs

In accordance with IAS 19, the Council accounts for the total benefit earned by employees during the financial year.

Employee Costs are split into 3 categories; short term benefits, termination benefits and pensions costs.

<u>Short Term Employee Benefits</u>

- Salaries and Wages – The total salary and wages earned by employees during the financial year are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Where the amount accrued exceeds the amount paid at the 31 March, a creditor will be reflected in the accounts.

- Leave Owed, Accumulating Absences – The Council allows employees to earn time off in one period with the resulting cost to the Council in a later period when that time is either taken off or paid to the employee. Examples of this accumulating leave are annual leave, flexi-time and time off in lieu.

If an employee were to leave the Council, cash payment would be made for entitlements such as annual leave; this leave is termed vesting. Where no cash payment would be due, the leave is termed non-vesting.

In order to correctly reflect the cost of time owed to staff, a charge has been made to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and a creditor accrual has been reflected in the Balance Sheet. This charge is reflective of the estimated time cost value of all accumulating leave owed to employees. Vesting leave will be charged in full; however non-vesting leave has been adjusted to reflect the turnover of staff.

- Non-accumulating Absences – are periods of leave that cannot be carried forward for use in future periods. Examples include Maternity Leave, Special Leave, Sick Leave and Jury Service. The Council does not recognise non-accumulating compensated absences until the time that the absence occurs.

- Non-monetary Benefits – Where employees have non-monetary benefits (e.g. retirement benefits or life insurance), the associated cost of providing that benefit has been charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Termination benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Council to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy and are charged on an accruals basis to the relevant service lines 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.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the General Fund Balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Council to the Pension Fund or pensioner in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, appropriations are required to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for pension enhancement termination benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

Pensions Costs

Employees of the Council are members of three separate pension schemes:-

- **Teachers Pension Scheme** is a defined benefit scheme administered by Capita Teachers' Pensions on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE).

  The assets and liabilities of the Teachers Pension Scheme are not attributable to the Council, therefore the Council accounts for the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. This means that the Children and Education Services line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement will only include the Council's contributions payable to the scheme.

- **NHS Pension Scheme** is a defined benefit scheme administered by EA Finance NHS Pensions.

  The assets and liabilities of the NHS Pension Scheme are not attributable to the Council, therefore the Council accounts for the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. This means that the Public Health Services line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement will only include the Council's contributions payable to the scheme.

- **The Greater Manchester Local Government Pension Scheme**, administered by the Council, is accounted for as a defined benefit scheme. The liabilities of the scheme attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method - i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, and projections of future earnings for current employees.

  Pension liabilities are measured using the projected unit method, discounted using the rate on high quality corporate bonds of equivalent term to the liabilities. The discount rate is the weighted average of "spot yields" on AA rated corporate bonds.

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

  Service cost comprising:

1. 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.

2. 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 will be debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non Distributed Costs.

3. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability i.e. net interest expense for the Council - the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. This is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability at the beginning of the period, taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments.

   Re-measurement comprising:

4. 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.

5. 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.

   In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund Balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Council to the Pension Fund in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. Adjustments are therefore made in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Early Retirement, Discretionary Payments

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

**c) Lessee Accounting for an Operating Lease**

Costs associated with operating leased assets where the Council is the lessee are charged immediately to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement within the Net Cost of Services on an accruals basis.

**d) Revenue Grants and Contributions**

Grants, contributions and donations (referred to as grants for the purposes of this policy) are recognised as income at the date that the Council has satisfied the conditions of entitlement, and there is reasonable assurance that the monies will be received. Any grant received before these recognition criteria were satisfied would be held as a creditor (income in advance). Any grant which had met the recognition criteria but had not been received would be shown as a debtor.

Revenue grants will either be received to be used only for a specific purpose, or can be used for general purpose. Those for a specific purpose are recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement within the Net Cost of Services. Those which are for general purpose are shown within Other Operating (Income) and Expenditure in the Comprehensive Expenditure and Income Statement.

**e) Provisions**

Provision has been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for liabilities that have been incurred by the Council, but where the amounts or dates on which they will arise are uncertain.

Provisions are required to be recognised when the Council has a present obligation, as a result of a past event, where it is probable that an outflow of resources embodying economic benefit or service potential will be required to settle the obligation and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation, (IAS 37 – Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets).

When expenditure is incurred to which the provision relates, it is charged directly against the provision in the Balance Sheet and not against the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The Council has made a provision for the costs of settling claims for back pay arising from discriminatory payments incurred before the Council implemented its equal pay strategy. However, statutory arrangements allow settlements to be financed from General Fund Balances in the year that payments actually take place, not when the provision is established. The provision is therefore balanced by an entry within the Capital Adjustment Account (CAA) created from amounts credited to the General Fund Balance in the year the provision was made or modified. The balance within the CAA will be debited back to the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement in future financial years as payments are made.

**f) Revenue Reserves**

The Council holds usable revenue reserves for the purpose of funding future expenditure. The General Fund Balance represents the balance of reserves to meet short term, unforeseeable expenditure and to enable significant changes in resources or expenditure to be properly managed over the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Earmarked Reserves represent balances where approval has been received to use the reserve for a specific purpose.

Unusable revenue reserves represent timing differences such as those associated with the recognition of retirement benefits, Council tax income and financial instruments.

Movement in reserves are accounted through the Movement in Reserves Statement.

**g) Council Tax and Business Rates Recognition**

Council Tax and Business Rates income included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement includes the Council's share of accrued income recognised by billing authorities in the production of the Collection Fund Statements.

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 Reserve is taken to the Collection Fund Adjustment Account and reported in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

**h) Inventories and Work in Progress**

Work in progress is valued at the lower of cost (including all related overheads) or net realisable value.

No amounts are included for such items as small stores at Community Services residential homes, or stocks at special schools and outdoor education centres as these are not regarded as having material value due to their size. It is considered that this difference in treatment (together with the exclusion of certain types of stock) does not have a material effect on the values stated.

### i) Provisions for bad and doubtful debts

The Council maintains a bad debt provision for any potential non-payment of debtors at each Balance Sheet date. Assessment is made based on the risk of debtors' ability to pay future cash flows due under the contractual terms. This risk is estimated where possible based on historical loss experience, credit rating for a debtor and other impacting factors.

Provisions for bad debts are offset against the debtor amount shown as an asset, the movement in the provision is charged against the relevant service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

## 4. TREASURY MANAGEMENT

### a) Financial Instruments

A Financial Instrument is defined as "any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another". Although this covers a wide range of items, the main implications are in terms of investments and borrowings.

As reflected in 'the Code', accounting standards on Financial Instruments IAS 32, 39 and IFRS 7 cover the concepts of recognition, measurement, presentation and disclosure. A financial asset or liability should be recognised in the Balance Sheet when, and only when, the holder becomes a party to the contractual provision of the instrument.

Financial liabilities and assets are initially measured at fair value less transaction costs and carried at their amortised cost. Fair value is the amount for which an asset could be exchanged or a liability settled between knowledgeable and willing parties in an arms length transaction. Annual charges to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest payable and receivable are based on the carrying amount of the liability, multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. For the borrowings and investments of the Council, this means that the amount included in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable plus accrued interest to the end of the financial year. Interest charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the effective amount payable for the year in the loan agreement (which is not necessarily the cash amount payable).

When long term borrowing is reviewed for rescheduling opportunities, the early repayment results in gains and losses (discounts and premiums) which are credited or debited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. If the Council decides to write off these gains or losses on early repurchase/settlement then this can be done over ten years or over the life of the new loan or over a shorter more prudent time scale. The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is charged with one year related costs with the rest being taken to the Financial Instruments Adjustment Account in the Balance Sheet via the Movement in Reserves Statement. The accounting policy is to charge gains and losses to Net Operating Expenditure in the year of repurchase/settlement.

### b) Cash and cash equivalents

Cash equivalents are short term investments that are of a highly liquid nature. The Council has deemed that deposits held within money market funds are categorised as cash equivalents.

## c) Interests in Companies and Other Entities

Where the Council has material interests in companies and other entities that have the nature of subsidiaries, associates and joint arrangements, it is required to prepare group accounts. In the Council's own single-entity accounts, the interests in companies and other entities are recorded as investments, i.e. at cost, less any provision for losses.

Chapter 9 Group Accounts of 'the Code' contains revised provisions following the issue of new IFRS standards and the amendment of related existing standards. The new provisions have effect in three main areas:

- a new definition of subsidiaries based on a remodelled control test (IFRS 10 Consolidated Financial Statements);
- new classifications for joint operations and joint ventures (IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements);
- extended and revised disclosure requirements for group accounts (IFRS 12 Disclosure of Interests in Other Entities).