

1. Accounting Policies

1.1 General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Council's transactions for the 2016-17 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31 March 2017. The Council is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016-17 supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

The accounting convention adopted in the Statement of Accounts is principally historical cost, modified by the revaluation of certain categories of non-current assets and financial instruments.

In accordance with the Accounting Code of Practice, these accounts are prepared on a going concern basis.

1.2 Accruals of Income and Expenditure

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

- Revenue from 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 Council.
- Revenue from the provision of services is recognised when the Council can measure reliably the percentage of completion of the transaction and it is probable that economic benefits or service potential associated with the transaction will flow to the Council.
- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed – where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet.
- Expenses in relation to services received (including services provided by employees) are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made.
- Interest receivable on investments and payable on borrowings is accounted for respectively as income and expenditure on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instrument rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract.

- Where revenue and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where debts may not be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.

1.3 Materiality

Where possible, the Council prepares disclosure notes for items in the principal statements that are either above £1,000,000, or are judged to be of particular interest or importance to users of the Financial Statements.

1.4 Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are short-term, highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value and held by the Council for the purpose of meeting its short-term cash requirements.

In the Cash Flow Statement, cash and cash equivalents are shown net of bank overdrafts that are repayable on demand and form an integral part of the Council's cash management strategy.

1.5 Prior Period Adjustments, Changes in Accounting Policies and Estimates and Errors

Prior period adjustments may arise as a result of a change in accounting policies or to correct a material error. Material errors discovered in prior period figures are corrected retrospectively by amending opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period.

Changes in accounting estimates are accounted for prospectively, i.e. in the current and future years affected by the change and do not give rise to a prior period adjustment.

1.6 Accounting for Taxation

Under the Code, taxation tax income included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account for the year is the accrued income for the year. The difference between the taxation income included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the amount required by regulation to be credited to the General Fund is taken to a Collection Fund Adjustment Account and included as a reconciling item in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Since the collection of taxation is in substance an agency arrangement, the Council as the billing authority recognises a creditor in its Balance Sheet for cash collected from taxpayers on behalf of major preceptors but not yet paid to them, or a debtor for cash paid to major preceptors in advance of it receiving the cash from tax payers.

1.7 Employee Benefits

i. Benefits Payable During Employment

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

ii. Termination Benefits

When the Council is demonstrably committed to the termination of the employment of an officer or group of officers or making an offer to encourage voluntary redundancy, these costs are charged on an accruals basis to the respective Service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

iii. Post-employment Benefits

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

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

Employees of the Council are members of the Local Government Pensions Scheme, administered by West Sussex County Council. As the scheme provides defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), earned as employees worked for the Council, it is accounted for as a defined benefits scheme.

Scheme Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate of 2.6%. The discount rate used to value scheme liabilities is either:

- For Government bonds, yield curves provided by the Bank of England;
- For Corporate bonds, a “Hymans Robertson” corporate yield curve constructed based on the constituents of the iBoxx AA corporate bond index.

Separate discount rates are set for individual employers, dependent upon their own weighted average duration (or term) of their benefit obligation.

The assets of West Sussex pension fund attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:

- quoted securities – current bid price
- un-quoted securities – professional estimate
- unitised securities – current bid price
- property – market value.

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

- Service Cost Comprising:
 - **current service cost** - the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the services for which the employees worked.
 - **past service cost** – the increase in liabilities as a result of a scheme amendment or curtailment whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years – debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the **Provision** of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non Distributed Costs within Finance and Governance.
 - **Net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset), i.e. net interest expense for the Council** - the change during the period in the net defined liability (asset) that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement – this is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period – taking into account any changes in the net defined liability (asset) during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments.
- Re-measurements comprising:
 - **the return on plan assets** – excluding amounts included in net interest on the defined benefit liability (asset) – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
 - **actuarial gains and losses** – changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
- Contributions paid to the West Sussex County Council pension fund – cash paid as employer’s contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund Balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Council to the pension fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, this means that there are transfers to and from the Pension Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year end. The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

1.8 Financial Instruments and Investments

Financial Instruments. A financial instrument is a contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Non-exchange transactions, such as those

relating to taxes and government grants, do not give rise to financial instruments.

The Council held no material derivative financial instruments at 31 March 2017.

Financial Liabilities A financial liability is an obligation to transfer economic benefits controlled by the Council and can be represented by a contractual obligation to deliver cash or financial assets or an obligation to exchange financial assets and liabilities with another entity that is potentially unfavourable to the Council. Loans and receivables are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Council becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument. They are measured at amortised cost.

Financial Assets A financial asset is a right to future economic benefits controlled by the Council that is represented by cash or other instruments or a contractual right to receive cash or another financial asset.

Where assets are identified as impaired because of a likelihood arising from a past event that payments due under the contract will not be made, the asset is written down and a charge made to the relevant service (for receivables specific to that service) or the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Offsetting Financial Assets and Liabilities The Council has not offset any material financial instruments and had no other material financial assets or liabilities subject to an enforceable master netting arrangement or similar agreement.

Available-for-Sale Assets

Available-for-sale assets are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Council becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured and carried at fair value.

Where the asset has fixed or determinable payments, 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 amortised cost of the asset multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. Where there are no fixed or determinable payments, income (e.g. dividends) is credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when it becomes receivable by the Council.

Available for sale assets are maintained in the Balance Sheet at fair value level 1, derived from quoted prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities

- For the Council's investment in the Local Authority property fund, fund values published by CCLA have been used as these represent the prices in the principal market within which the Council would normally enter into a transaction to sell the asset.
- For Corporate Bonds, the Fair Value is taken from the Market (Bid) Price
- For the Stable Net Asset Value money market funds, shares are issued with an unchanging face value of £1. This value has been used as the Fair value as for every £1 of principal invested, the fund will return £1 of principal on withdrawal by the Council, plus interest.

Changes in fair value are balanced by an entry in the Available-for-Sale Reserve and the gain/loss is recognised in the Surplus or Deficit on Revaluation of Available-for-Sale Financial Assets. The exception is where impairment losses have been incurred – these are debited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, along with any net gain or loss for the asset accumulated in the Available-for-Sale Reserve.

Fair values are shown in note 14, split by their level in the fair value hierarchy:

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

1.9 Government Grants and Contributions

Whether paid on account, by instalments or in arrears, government grants and third party contributions and donations are recognised as due to the Council when there is reasonable assurance that:

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

Amounts recognised as due to the Council are not credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement until conditions attached to the grant or contribution have been satisfied.

1.10 Heritage Assets

Tangible and Intangible Heritage Assets

The Heritage assets held by the Council are a collection of assets or artefacts either exhibited or stored at a number of sites in the district including the Novium Museum, Pallant House Gallery and Fishbourne Roman Palace, or other local venues. The Museum Collections consist of geological, archaeological, social history and local history artefacts, images and associated information. The principal collections include:

- The Hussey Bequest collection including furniture, paintings and other domestic wares, which is based at the Pallant House Gallery
- Archaeological collections which are held both at the Novium Museum and Fishbourne Roman Palace.

Heritage assets are recognised and measured (including the treatment of valuation gains and losses) in accordance with the Council's accounting policies on property, plant and equipment.

1.11 Investment Property

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

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

1.12 Leases

Leases are classified as finance leases where the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the property, plant or equipment from the lessor to the lessee. All other leases are classified as operating leases. Where a lease covers both land and buildings, the land and buildings elements are considered separately for classification.

Property plant and equipment held under finance leases is recognised on the Balance Sheet at the commencement of the lease at its fair value measured at the inception of the lease (or the present value of future lease rentals of the minimum lease rentals, if lower).

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

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

Where the Council grants a finance lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the relevant asset is written out of the Balance Sheet as a disposal and replaced by a long-term debtor in the Balance Sheet valued on the future income due under the finance lease.

Finance lease rental payments or receipts are apportioned between:

- A charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property, plant or equipment – applied to write-down the lease liability or debtor, and
- A finance charge (interest payable or receivable) recognised within Financing and Investment Income & Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where the Council grants an operating lease over an asset, this is retained on the Balance Sheet. Rental income is recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure statement on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments (e.g. if there is a premium paid at the commencement of the lease).

1.13 Property, Plant and Equipment

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

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

When new assets are first acquired and recognised on the balance sheet as a non-current asset, the total value of the asset must be over the £10,000 de minimis.

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

- the purchase price
- any costs attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management
- the initial estimate of the costs of dismantling and removing the item and restoring the site on which it is located.

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

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

- infrastructure, community assets and assets under construction – depreciated historical cost
- all other assets – fair (or current) value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use (existing use value – EUV).

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

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

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at current value are re-valued sufficiently regularly to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their current value at the year-end, but as a minimum every five years. Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains.

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

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

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.

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

Depreciation is calculated on the following bases:

- dwellings and other buildings – straight-line allocation over the useful life of the property as estimated by the valuer
- infrastructure, vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment – straight-line allocation over the useful life of the asset, as advised by a suitably qualified officer

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

Only assets with a gross book value of £500,000 and over are considered for componentisation.

When it becomes probable that the carrying amount of an asset will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through its continuing use, it is reclassified as an Asset Held for Sale. The asset is re-valued immediately before reclassification and then carried at the lower of this amount and fair value less costs to sell. Depreciation is not charged on Assets Held for Sale.

1.14 Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute (REFCUS)

Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provisions but that does not result in the creation of a non-current asset has been charged as expenditure to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year. Where the Council has determined to meet the cost of this expenditure from existing capital resources or by borrowing, a transfer in the Movement in Reserves Statement from the General Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account then reverses out the amounts charged so that there is no impact on the level of Council tax.

1.15 Section 106 Developer Contributions

Section 106 advances received are initially recognised as a creditor in the Council's accounts whilst the monies remain unspent to reflect the liability the Council has to the developer if the agreement is not

fulfilled. Once the conditions of the agreement are met the advances are recognised as revenue income or capital contributions.

1.16 VAT

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

1.17 Provisions

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

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

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

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