

Statement of Accounting Policies

The purpose of the Statement of Accounting Policies is to explain the basis of measurement that has been used in the preparation of the financial statements. The Statement of Accounts summarises the Council's transactions for the 2010/11 financial year and its position at the year end 31st March 2011.

The Financial Statements for 2010/11 have been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom: 2010/11 issued by The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and where appropriate the International Accounting Standards (IAS). The Accounting convention adopted is principally historical cost modified by fair value for particular categories of assets and liabilities.

There are no instances in the Statement of Accounts where the fundamental accounting concepts have not been followed.

(1) Employee Costs

The cost of salaries and wages has been included in the Accounts based on 12 months and 52 pay weeks.

In line with IAS 19 an accrual has been made for leave and flexible hours owing at year end. The accrual is based on a sample of leave owing and then averaged out to give a total for the whole authority. No adjustment has been made for other employee costs.

(2) Retirement Benefits

Employees of the council are members of two separate pension schemes:

- The Teacher's Pension Scheme, administered by Capita Teachers' Pensions on behalf of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).
- The Local Government Pensions Scheme is administered by The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

Both schemes provided defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pension), earned as employees worked for the council.

However, the arrangements for the teachers' scheme mean that liabilities for these benefits cannot be identified to the council. The scheme is therefore accounted for as if it were a defined contributions scheme – no liability for future payments of benefits is recognised in the Balance Sheet and the

education service revenue account is charged with the employer's contributions payable to teachers' pensions in the year.

The Local Government Pension Scheme

The Local Government Scheme is accounted for as a defined benefits scheme:

- The liabilities of the Berkshire pension scheme attributes 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.
- Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices using a discount rate. (The discount rate is the yield on the Merrill Lynch Non Gilt Sterling AA over 15 year Corporate Bond index, with an adjustment to reflect the liabilities relative to the duration of the index.)
- The assets of the Berkshire pension fund attributable to the council are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:
 - quoted securities – current bid price
 - unquoted securities – professional estimate
 - unitised securities – current bid price
 - Property – market value.
- The change in the net pensions liability is analysed into seven components:
 - current service cost – the increase in liabilities as result of years of service earned this year – allocated in the Income and Expenditure Account to the revenue accounts of services for which the employees worked
 - past service cost – the increase in liabilities arising from current year decisions whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years – debited to the Net cost of Services in the Income and Expenditure Account as part of Non Distributed Costs
 - Interest cost – the expected increase in the present value of liabilities during the year as they move one year closer to being paid – debited to Net Operating Expenditure in the Income and Expenditure Account.

- Expected return on assets – the annual investment return on the fund assets attributable to the council, based on an average of the expected long-term return – credited to Net Operating Expenditure in the Income and Expenditure Account.
- gains/losses on settlements and curtailments – the result of actions to relieve the council of liabilities or events that reduce the expected future service or accrual of benefits of employees – debited to the Net Cost of Services in the Income and Expenditure Account as part of Non Distributed Costs
- 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 – debited to the Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses
- Contributions paid to the Berkshire pension fund – cash paid as employer’s contributions to the pension fund.

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

Discretionary Benefits

The Council also has restricted powers to make discretionary awards of retirement benefits in the event of early retirements. Any liabilities estimated to arise as a result of an award 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 as are applied in the Local Government Pension Scheme.

(3) Accruals of Income and Expenditure

All revenue and capital income and expenditure relating to the financial year is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received. In particular:

- Fees, charges and rents due from customers are accounted for as income at the date the Council provides the relevant goods or services.
- 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 inventory on the balance sheet.
- Works are charged as expenditure when they are completed, before which they are carried as works in progress in the balance sheet
- Interest payable on borrowing and receivable on investment is accounted for 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 income and expenditure have been recognised in the accounts but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet.

An exception to this rule is the periodic costs such as gas and electricity, they are included in the accounts on a payments basis where appropriate payments have been made and are not considered material to the accounts.

(4) Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and 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.

West Berkshire's policy is to include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks and other short term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.

(5) Inventories

Inventories are shown in the Balance Sheet on a cost basis, which is compliant with IAS2, this recommends valuation at the lower of cost or net realisable value.

(6) Overheads and Support Services

The costs of overheads and support services are charged to those that benefit from the service in accordance with the costing principles of the CIPFA Best Value Accounting code of Practice (BVACOP). The full cost of overheads and support services are shared between users in proportion to the benefits received.

The costs of the Corporate and Democratic Core have been separately identified and are not borne by the revenue services. This category is defined by the BVACOP and accounted for, within the Central Services heading of the net cost of services in the Income and Expenditure Account.

(7) Interest

Internal interest has been credited to certain reserves at the year-end based on the average level of balances during the year. The balance of the interest received (after the amount credited to reserves) has been credited to the general fund.

(8) Debtors and Bad Debts

Provisions for bad debts have been established in respect of general debtors in accordance with the CIPFA code of practice. The level of the provision has been set to provide adequate cover based upon an aged debt profile as at 31st March 2011.

(9) Investment

Investments are shown in the Balance Sheet at cost.

(10) Provisions

Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the council an obligation that probably requires settlement by a transfer of economic benefits, but where the timing of the transfer is uncertain. 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 to the appropriate service revenue account in the year that the authority becomes aware of the obligation, based on the best estimate of the likely settlement. When payments are eventually made, they are charged to the provision set up in the Balance Sheet. Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year – where it becomes more likely than not that a transfer of economic benefits will not now be required (or a lower settlement than anticipated is made), the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service revenue account.

Where some or all of the payment required to settle a provision is expected to be met by another party (eg from an insurance claim), this is only recognised as income in the relevant service revenue account if it is virtually certain that reimbursement will be received if the obligation is settled.

(11) Reserves

The council sets aside specific amounts as reserves for future policy purposes or to cover contingencies. Reserves are created by appropriating amounts to the General Fund. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate service revenue account in that year to score against the Net Cost of Services in the Income and Expenditure Account. The reserve is then appropriated back into the General Fund Balance so that there is no net charge against council tax for the expenditure.

Certain reserves are kept to manage the accounting processes for tangible fixed assets and retirement benefits these do not represent usable resources

for the council. Both usable and unusable reserves are explained in the relevant notes below.

(12) Non-Current Assets

Only assets with a value of £5,000 or more are counted as non-current assets.

Where a non-current asset yields economic benefit to the authority, all expenditure on, the acquisition, creation and enhancement of said asset is capitalised on an accruals basis. This excludes expenditure on routine repairs and maintenance of non-current assets, which is charged direct to service revenue accounts.

Non-current assets are initially valued at cost, comprising all expenditure that is directly attributable to that asset, on the basis 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).

CIPFA guidance allows authorities to choose whether to depreciate its assets at either the mid point through the year or at the end of the year. West Berkshire assets have been depreciated at the end of the year.

Non-current assets are classified into the groupings required by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and shown in the Balance Sheet using the following headings:

- Land and Buildings, shown at fair value
- Plant and Equipment, shown at fair value
- Infrastructure Assets, shown at depreciated historical cost
- Community Assets, shown at depreciated historical cost
- Investment Properties, shown at market value
- Assets under construction shown at historical cost
- Assets held for sale at fair value

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at fair value are revalued as a minimum every five years, except for Investment properties which are revalued annually. From 2007/08 all increases in valuations are matched by credits to the revaluation reserve to recognise unrealised gains.

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

If an impairment loss was identified on a non-current asset it would be charged to the Income and Expenditure Account. If there were accumulated revaluation gains in the Revaluation Reserve for that asset, an amount up to the value of the loss would be transferred from the Revaluation Reserve to the Capital Adjustment Account.

When an asset is sold, the value of the asset in the Balance Sheet is written off to the Income and Expenditure account as part of the gain or loss on disposal. Receipts from disposals are credited to the Income and Expenditure account as part of the gain or loss on disposal. Any revaluation gains in the Revaluation Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Amounts in excess of £10,000 are categorised as capital receipts. The balance of receipts is required to be credited to the usable capital receipts reserve and can only be used for new capital investment or set aside to reduce the Council's underlying need to borrow. Receipts are appropriated to the reserve from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Where an item of property plant or equipment is made up of components that have different asset lives, IAS 16 allows the components to be recognised as separate assets. West Berkshire Council will componentise assets where components are either 10% of the assets value or has a value of more than £250,000. These assets should be recognised either at the time of purchase or on revaluation.

(13) Investment Property

Only properties that the authority holds solely to earn rental income or capital appreciation are classed as investment properties. These properties are not used by the council in its daily business. Initially investment properties are valued at cost and are then revalued annually.

(14) Depreciation

In accordance with International Accounting Standard 16 depreciation is provided for on all fixed assets with a finite useful life.

All assets with the exception of freehold land, community assets, investment properties and assets under construction are depreciated,

Depreciation is calculated on the following basis:

- Dwellings and other buildings – straight line allocation over the life of the property as estimated by the valuer.
- Vehicles, plant and equipment - straight line allocation over the life of the asset, mainly 10 years.
- IT assets are depreciated over 5 years.
- Infrastructure – straight line allocation, between 10 and 40 years.

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

Where assets have been componentised, components can be depreciated over different asset lives, but they will always be in the same asset class.

(15) Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute

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

(16) Charges to Revenue for non current assets

Service revenue accounts, support services and trading accounts are debited with the following amounts to record the real cost of holding fixed assets during the year.

- Depreciation attributable to the assets used by the relevant service.
- Impairment losses attributable to the clear consumption of economic benefits on tangible fixed assets used by the service and other losses where there are no accumulated gains in the revaluation reserve against which they can be written off.
- Amortisation of intangible fixed assets attributable to the service.

The Council is not required to raise council tax to cover depreciation, impairment losses or amortisations. However, it is required to make an annual provision from revenue to contribute towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement (equal to an amount calculated on a prudent basis determined by the authority in accordance with statutory guidance).

Depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations are therefore replaced by revenue provision in the General Fund Balance, by way of an adjusting transaction with the capital adjustment account for the difference between the two.

(17) Capital Financing

The Prudential Code Framework places the emphasis for capital expenditure on affordability. Local authorities themselves decide how much they can afford to borrow, the costs of this borrowing being met from the revenue budget.

Where ever possible the Council aims to fund any necessary capital investment from external sources of funding i.e. grants, developers' contributions and capital receipts. The level of investment required over and above the level of external funding available must then be weighed up against

the revenue cost of repaying loans to fund capital expenditure from external sources

In establishing its Prudential Framework the Council has determined that it can support an annual Capital programme of approximately £15 million. Every year a borrowing limits and annual investment strategy is produced, this is approved by Full Council.

(18) Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are initially measured at fair value and carried at their amortised cost. Annual charges to the Income and Expenditure Account for interest payable are based on the carrying amount of the liability, multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. For most of the borrowings this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable and the interest charged to the Income and Expenditure Account is the amount payable for the year in the loan agreement.

However the stock issued by the council in 2010/11 is carried at a lower amortised cost than the outstanding principal and interest is charged at a marginally higher effective rate of interest than the rate payable to stockholders as a material amount of costs incurred in its issue is being financed over the life of the stock.

Gains and losses on the repurchase or early settlement of borrowing are credited and debited to Net Operating Expenditure in the Income and Expenditure Account in the year of repurchase/settlement. However, where repurchase has taken place as part of a restructuring of the loan portfolio that involves the modification or exchange of existing instruments, the premium or discount is respectively deducted from or added to the amortised cost of the new or modified loan and the write-down to the Income and Expenditure Account is spread over the life of the loan by an adjustment to the effective interest rate.

Where premiums and discounts have been charged to the Income and Expenditure Account, regulations allow the impact on the General Fund Balance to be spread over future years. The council has a policy of spreading the gain/loss over the term that was remaining on the loan against which the premium was payable or discount receivable when it was repaid. The reconciliation of amounts charged to the Income and Expenditure Account to the net charge required against the General Fund Balance is managed by a transfer to or from the General Fund Balance.

(19) Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified into two types:

- Loans and receivables – assets that have fixed or determinable payments but are not quoted in an active market.
- Available-for-sale assets – assets that have a quoted market price and/or do not have fixed or determinable payments

Loans and Receivables

Loans and receivables are initially measured at fair value and carried at their amortised cost. Annual credits to the Income and Expenditure Account for interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. For the loans that the council has made, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal receivable and interest credited to the Income and Expenditure Account is the amount receivable for the year in the loan agreement.

Where assets are identified as impaired because of 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 Income and Expenditure Account.

Any gains and losses that arise on the derecognition of the asset are credited/debited to the Income and Expenditure Account.

Available-for-sale Assets

Available-for-sale assets are initially measured and carried at fair value. Where the asset has fixed or determinable payments, annual credits to the Income and Expenditure Account 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 (eg, dividends) is credited to the Income and Expenditure Account when it becomes receivable by the Council.

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

- Instruments with quoted market prices – the market price
- Other instruments with fixed and determinable payments – discounted cash flow analysis
- Equity shares with no quoted market prices – independent appraisal of company valuations.

Changes in fair value are balanced by an entry in the Capital Adjustment Account and the gain/loss is recognised in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services. The exception is where impairments losses have been incurred – these are debited to the Income and Expenditure Account, along with any net gain/loss for the asset accumulated in the Reserve.

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 Income and Expenditure Account.

Any gains and losses that arise on the derecognition of the asset are credited/debited to the Income and Expenditure Account

Where fair value cannot be measured reliably, the instrument is carried at cost (less any impairment losses).

Instruments Entered into Before 1 April 2006

The council entered into a number of financial guarantees that are not required to be accounted for as financial instruments. These guarantees are reflected in the Statement of Accounts to the extent that provisions might be required or a contingent liability note is needed.

(20) Deferred Capital Receipts

Deferred Capital Receipts are amounts derived from the sales of assets, which will be received in instalments over agreed periods of time. They arise principally from mortgages and sales of council houses.

(21) Capital Receipts

Capital receipts from the disposal of assets are held in the Capital Receipts Unapplied Account until such time as they are used to finance other capital expenditure or to repay debt.

Under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 a Specific proportion of each capital receipt must be set aside or "reserved"; normally only the usable element is available to the Council.

(22) Borrowing

The loan debt held by Berkshire County Council (BCC) when it was abolished due to local government reorganisation as at the 31st March 1998 amounted to approximately £220m. The portfolio of debt consisted entirely of Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) loans, of which some £40m was deemed to be West Berkshire's liability as part of the disaggregation process. At that time it was agreed by all the Berkshire authorities that the total debt would be administered by Reading Borough Council as part of their role as Designated Authority overseeing the closure of the BCC accounts

The Prudential Code presented the opportunity for this Council and other Berkshire authorities to take back the direct management of the remaining part of the ex BCC loan debt. The transfer took place with effect from 1st December 2005 and at that time £28.92m of Public Works Loan Board debt was transferred to West Berkshire Council.

The level of Investment required to fund the capital programme currently over and above the level of external funding available is borrowed from the Public Works Loans Board.

(23) Trusts

The Authority has direct involvement with the Corn Exchange Theatre. The council acts as a major funding source and has a non controlling interest on the Board of Trustees.

The Corn Exchange is not a regulated Company as defined under the Local Authority's (Companies) Order 1995.

(24) Government Grants and Contributions

Whether paid on account, by instalments or in arrears, government grants, both capital and revenue, and third party contributions and donations are recognised as income at the date that the authority satisfies the conditions of entitlement to the grant/contribution. There must also be reasonable assurance that the monies will be received and the expenditure for which the grant is given has been incurred. Monies advanced as grants and contributions for which conditions have not been satisfied are carried in the balance sheet as creditors. When conditions are satisfied the grant or contribution is moved to the relevant service revenue account.

Where capital grants have been credited to the comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement they are reversed out of the General Fund through the Movement in Reserves statement.

(25) VAT

Income and expenditure in the Council's accounts excludes any amounts related to VAT. VAT is reconciled and accounted for to HM Revenues and Customs on a monthly basis.

(26) Leases

The Council has acquired a number of assets, mainly vehicles and equipment by means of operating leases. In accordance with current accounting procedures the leased assets are not stated in the Balance Sheet. Rentals are charged to revenue in accordance with the terms of the lease. The Council did not enter into any finance lease agreements during the year.

(27) Post Balance Sheet Events

Post Balance Sheet Events are included in the notes to the core Financial Statements as they occur and represent significant transactions / events which are known to have taken place since the balance sheet date.

(28) Contingent Liabilities

Contingent Liabilities are disclosed in the notes to the core Financial Statements and cover known liabilities where the actual cost of the liability is not known.

(29) Group Accounts

The SORP 2004 requires Councils to consider all their interests and to prepare a full set of group accounts where they have material interests in subsidiaries, associates or joint ventures. West Berkshire Council currently has no interests, which necessitates the production of Group Accounts.

(30) Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

PFI contracts are agreements to receive services, where the responsibility for making available the fixed assets needed to provide the services passes to the PFI contractor. Payments made by the council under a contract are generally charged to revenue to reflect the value of services received in each financial year.

Prepayments

A prepayment for services receivable under the contract arises when assets are transferred to the control of the PFI contractor, usually at the start of the scheme. The difference between the value of the asset at the date of transfer and any residual value that might accrue to the authority at the end of the contract is treated as a contribution made to the contractor and is accounted for as a prepayment. The prepayment is written down (charged) to the respective revenue account over the life of the contract to show the full value of services received in each year. However, as the charge is a notional one, it is reversed out in the General Fund to remove any impact on council tax or rents.

Dowry payments, made at the start of the contract, which result in lower unitary payments over the life of the contract these are accounted for by setting up the contribution (dowry) as a prepayment for services receivable and writing the balance down to revenue over the life of the contract as services are received to reflect their real cost.

Reversionary Interests

The council has passed control of certain land and buildings over to the PFI contractor, but this property will return to the council at the end of the scheme (reversionary interests). An assessment has been made of the net present value that these assets will have at the end of the scheme (unenhanced) and a reversionary interest asset has been created in the council's Balance Sheet.

As the asset is stated initially at net present value, over the life of the scheme, the discount will need to be unwound by earmarking (decreasing) part of the unitary payment to ensure the reversionary interest is recorded at current prices when the interests revert to the council.

Residual Interests

Where assets created or enhanced under the PFI scheme are to pass to the council at the end of the scheme at a cost less than fair value (including nil) (residual interests), an amount equal to the difference between the fair value and the payment to be made at the end of the contract is built up as a long-term debtor over the contract life by reducing the amount of the unitary payment charged to the revenue.

PFI Credits

Government grants received for PFI schemes, in excess of current levels of expenditure, are carried forward as an earmarked reserve to fund future contract expenditure.

(31) Landfill allowance

The Waste and Emissions Trading Act 2003 places a duty on waste disposal authorities to reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) disposed to landfill. From 1 April 2005 central government introduced a trading scheme, which allocates tradable landfill allowances.

These allowances are recognised as current assets in the Council's Balance Sheet at market value. As waste is sent to landfill a liability is incurred to hold allowances equal to the landfill usage that is recognised as a current liability in the Council's Balance Sheet. Unused allowances at the end of the year are shown on the Balance Sheet, as an earmarked reserve, at a weighted average value.

(32) Redundancy Policy

It is West Berkshire council's policy to minimise the impact of organisational change on its employees and to redeploy employees whenever possible.

Therefore redundancies and redundancy payments only occur when absolutely necessary and in consultation with Trade unions.

When redundancy payments are applicable it will be as a result of a decision by the Authority to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date in circumstances where the statutory definition of redundancy applies (ERA1996, s139). These payments are charged on an accruals basis to the Non Distributed Costs line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when the Authority is demonstrably committed to the termination of the employment on the grounds of redundancy of an officer or group of officers.

West Berkshire's policy is not to offer enhanced pension payments on Termination of employment on the grounds of redundancy or efficiency.