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Town Hall
Trinity Road
Bootle
L20 7AE

Date: 10 December 2021
Our Ref:
Your Ref:

Contact: Ruth Appleby
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Dear Councillor

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - WEDNESDAY 15TH DECEMBER, 2021

I refer to the agenda for the above meeting and now enclose the following reports which were unavailable when the agenda was published.

Agenda No.	Item
4	Statement of Accounts 2020/2021 (Pages 3 - 298) Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services
12	Audit and Governance Committee Member Training and Development The Chief Internal Auditor to provide a verbal update on proposals for the future Training and Development of Audit and Governance Committee Members

Yours faithfully,

Ruth Appleby

Democratic Services Officer

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Report to:	Audit and Governance Committee	Date of Meeting:	Wednesday 15 December 2021
Subject:	Statement of Accounts 2020/2021		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To present the final audited 2020/2021 Statement of Accounts, including the Annual Governance Statement, for consideration and approval. In addition, the proposed "Letter of Representation" letter from Sefton to Ernst & Young LLP (EY) is attached for approval.

Recommendation(s):

The Audit and Governance Committee is asked to:

- (1) Note the Ernst & Young LLP Audit Planning Report for 2020/2021.
- (2) Approve the 2020/2021 Statement of Accounts, subject to the final completion of the audit.
- (3) Delegate authority to the Chair to approve the final Statement of Accounts following completion of the audit, should any changes be required to the current version approved by this Committee.
- (4) Note the intention to bring an update report to this Committee in March which will detail any changes that were made.
- (5) Approve the Annual Governance Statement (Section 11 of the Statement of Accounts).
- (6) Note the comments of Ernst & Young LLP.
- (7) Approve the Letter of Representation, subject to completion of the audit, and Authorise the Chair and the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services to sign it on the Council's behalf.

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- (8) Delegate authority to the Chair and the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services to sign on the Council's behalf a revised Letter of Representation should the approved version need to be updated following the completion of the audit.
- (9) Note the intention to seek approval from Council to procure external audit services through the Public Sector Audit Appointments body.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The Council, or nominated Committee charged with responsibility for Governance, must approve the Statement of Accounts, including the Annual Governance Statement. The Audit and Governance Committee has been delegated with this responsibility and is required to approve the audited Accounts for 2020/2021 prior to its publication.

The deadline for publication was 30 September 2021. However, the regulations allow for a delay in publication where the audit has not yet been completed. This report explains that there has been a delay in completing the audit for 2020/2021. The audit is now largely complete, so the Statement of Accounts is now being presented for approval.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

None

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

None

(B) Capital Costs

None

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): None
Legal Implications: This report complies with legislation, particularly the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021.
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.
Climate Emergency Implications:

The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	N
Have a neutral impact	Y
Have a negative impact	N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	N

Contribution to the Council’s Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Not applicable
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Not applicable
Commission, broker and provide core services: Not applicable
Place – leadership and influencer: Not applicable
Drivers of change and reform: Not applicable
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Not applicable
Greater income for social investment: Not applicable
Cleaner Greener: Not applicable

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services is the author of this report (FD 6644/21).

The Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD 4845/21) has been consulted and has no comments on the report.

(B) External Consultations

None

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

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Appendices:

The following appendix is attached to this report:

Appendix A – Audit Planning Report 2020/2021 – Ernst & Young LLP

Appendix B – Statement of Accounts 2020/2021

Appendix C – Audit Results Report 2020/2021 – Ernst & Young LLP

Appendix D – Letter of Representation 2020/2021

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Background

- 1.1 Since 2010/2011 the Audit and Governance Committee has only been required to approve the Statement of Accounts following the completion of the Audit. Since 2017/2018 this has taken place at the special meeting of this Committee in July (approval and publication of the audited Statement of Accounts was required by 31 July).
- 1.2 However, for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 the deadline for approving the audited Statement of Accounts has been changed to 30 September (with a deadline of 31 July for the publication of the draft accounts). This was in response to the Redmond Review into the audit of local government which highlighted the fragility of the local audit market. The Government intend to review at that point whether there is a continued need to have an extended deadline.
- 1.3 The audit of the Statement of Accounts commenced in late July. It should be noted that due to delays in completing the audit of the 2019/2020 Statement of Accounts, no interim audit was undertaken, which has been possible in previous years. By September, a significant amount of audit work for 2020/2021 had been completed following provision of all required information and currently no key issues have been notified to the Council. However, as there was work outstanding, including confirmation from outside bodies, the audit wasn't completed by the end of September.
- 1.4 Although regulations require the publication of the Statement of Accounts for 2020/2021 by 30 September 2021, the same regulations allow for this to be delayed where the audit has yet to be concluded. This delay needs to be published on our website. The publication of the final Statement of Accounts needs to take place *“as soon as reasonably practicable after the receipt of any report from the auditor which contains the auditor’s final findings from the audit which is issued before the conclusion of the audit”*.
- 1.5 Sefton and EY agreed a workplan so that the final audited accounts could be presented to the December committee for approval.
- 1.6 At the time of writing this report, Ernst & Young (EY) have now completed the majority of the audit of the 2020/2021 Statement of Accounts with only a few areas still to be completed. The report from EY on the financial statements (including formal opinion on the accounts) is discussed in Sections 4 and 5 (their report is attached as Appendix C).
- 1.7 As part of the formal process to approve the Accounts, the Committee is also required to authorise Sefton’s “Letter of Representation” to EY. This basically acknowledges the Council’s responsibilities in preparing the Accounts and confirms whether there have been any material changes to the financial circumstances contained in the Accounts that EY should be made aware of. This is considered further in Section 7 (draft letter is attached as Appendix D).

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1.8 In addition, Section 3 discusses the content of the Statement of Accounts, the approval of the Annual Governance Statement is considered in Section 4 and the intention to seek approval from Council to procure external audit services through the Public Sector Audit Appointments body is discussed in Section 8.

2 EY Audit Planning Report 2020/2021

2.1 The Council's external auditor, Ernst and Young LLP (EY), were engaged to undertake the Council's audit for 2020/2021. Attached as **Appendix A** is their Audit Planning Report which sets out how they intend to carry out their responsibilities as auditor. This includes setting out an overview of the 2020/2021 audit strategy including an assessment of key risks and the planned audit strategy in response to those risks.

2.2 EY's Audit Planning Report should have been presented to Audit and Governance Committee at either the March or June Committee meetings before the commencement of the audit. Unfortunately, due an oversight, this didn't take place. The report is now being presented to Members so they can consider it alongside the Audit Results report (see Section 5).

3 The Content of the Statement of Accounts

3.1 The 2020/2021 Statement of Accounts is an important document, which aims to provide clear information about the Authority's finances for the year and is intended to answer:

- What the Authority's services cost for the year?
- Where the money comes from to pay for these services?
- What were the Authority's assets and liabilities at the year-end?

3.2 On 27 February 2020, the Council approved a revenue budget for 2020/2021 of £225.885m which included £1.179m relating to the expenditure of Parish Councils.

3.3 At that time, it was anticipated that balances for non-school budgets would total £7.539m at 31 March 2021. As a result of an overspend of £0.555m in 2019/2020 the anticipated year-end balances position was revised to £6.984m. The 2020/2021 Budget assumed an increase in general balances of £1.5m as part of a strategy to increase balances and ensure financial resilience.

3.4 Overall, actual expenditure for 2020/2021 on General Fund services (excluding Schools' delegated expenditure) was £2.794m lower than the Base Estimates which has increased General Fund Balances further. The Authority's Non-School General Fund balances at 31 March 2021 shown in the Statement of Accounts are therefore **£11.278m**.

3.5 The Statement of Accounts (attached as **Appendix B**) are also important in:-

- Demonstrating proper stewardship of public monies;
- Providing evidence of the quality and robustness of the Authority's financial systems and processes;

- Indicating that current financial performance, monitoring and the Medium-Term Financial Plan are integrated processes which will assist the Council in improving its financial standing;
- Providing the key financial information, which will enable future plans and decisions to be made on the basis of known facts and available financial resources; and
- Providing a key line of communication to stakeholders on the Council's current financial performance. The draft Statement of Accounts was available online on Sefton's website from the beginning of August 2021.

3.6 The Statement of Accounts includes a Narrative Report, which focuses on the most significant matters reported in the document. A brief explanation of each Section is also provided (highlighting what it is intended to show) to aid the understanding of the Accounts.

3.7 For 2020/2021 there have been no significant changes to how the Statement of Accounts are produced or presented.

3.8 The statutory declaration by the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services in the Statement represents his approval of the Accounts. Following approval of the Statement of Accounts by the Audit and Governance Committee, the Chair of the Committee will be required to sign the Accounts along with the external auditor completing their statutory certification in relation to his opinion on the financial statements.

3.9 As mentioned in paragraph 1.6, there are still some areas of audit work that have yet to be completed. EY will give a verbal update at the Committee of the work still outstanding. Should there be any changes required to the Statement of Accounts as a result of the work completed after this Committee's approval of the Statement of Accounts, it is proposed to delegate authority to the Chair to approve these changes. A report will then be presented to the March Committee to detail any changes made.

4 Annual Governance Statement

4.1 The "Annual Governance Statement" is required to be presented with the Statement of Accounts. The statement is included as section 11 of the Council's Accounts and needs to be formally accepted by this Committee.

5 Significant Accounting Matters / Corrected Misstatements

5.1 The EY Report to those charged with Governance is attached at **Appendix C**. It gives details of the significant audit and accounting matters to consider and the material misstatements identified as part of their audit work which have been corrected. These items are listed below, and more details will be found in the EY Report:

5.2 Areas of Audit Focus:
EY had seven main areas of audit risk and areas of focus:

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- Misstatements due to fraud or error (Fraud Risk).
- Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition (Fraud Risk).
- Valuation of pension fund assets and liabilities in the Local Government Pension Scheme (Significant Risk).
- Valuation of land and buildings (Significant Risk).
- New Central Government Grants and other Covid-19 funding streams (Significant Risk).
- Investments and Subsidiaries (Inherent Risk).
- Going Concern (Inherent Risk).

No significant issues have been found by EY.

5.3 Adjusted Differences within Main Financial Statements:

- Following the audit of the Merseyside Pension Fund accounts, it was found that the value of assets had increased towards the end of 2020/2021 from those used by the actuaries in calculating the amounts to be disclosed in the accounts of the individual local authorities. Given the materiality of the changes, the actuary has produced updated disclosures, and these have been reflected in the final accounts. This has reduced the Pension Liability and Reserve by **£16.459m**.

The following two changes are below EY's reporting threshold so are not mentioned in their report:

- Following testing by EY it has been determined that two Investment Properties needed to have their valuations updated. This has reduced the overall value of Investment Properties by **£4.000m**.
- During the audit it was determined that an adjustment was required to the Balance Sheet reflect the true nature of an Adult Social Care payment run. This has reduced Prepayments by **£3.599m**, with corresponding reductions in Creditors (**£3.149m**) and Receipts in Advance (**£0.450m**).

It should be noted that these adjustments have no impact on the General Fund position reported in paragraph 3.3.

- 5.4 A number of presentational and disclosure amendments have also been made to comply with requirements and to improve consistency and understanding.
- 5.5 The Statement of Accounts will need to be adjusted if any further items are identified by EY. These items will be reported verbally at the Committee meeting.

6 Ernst & Young's Report to those charged with Governance

- 6.1 The report covers the audit of the Statement of Accounts and Value for Money work undertaken by EY. Staff from EY will be present at the meeting to provide a brief summary of the issues contained in the report and to answer any questions Members may have.

- 6.2 With regard to the Accounts issues, these are discussed in Section 4 above. At the time of writing the report, EY had a small number of areas to complete; however, they anticipate that an unqualified opinion will be issued.
- 6.3 EY have a responsibility to carry out sufficient and relevant work in order to conclude on whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources. EY anticipate issuing an unqualified value for money conclusion which has been based on a local programme of audit work.
- 6.4 EY's report also makes recommendations in relation to weaknesses identified in internal control systems. Officers have considered the recommendations and the report includes their response to each issue.

7 Letter of Representation

- 7.1 The Council is required to provide a letter of representation to the Auditor at the conclusion of the audit. This acknowledges the Council's responsibilities in preparing the Accounts and provides the assurance to EY that no new information or decisions have been taken that would materially affect the Statement of Accounts for the year. Sefton's letter is attached at **Appendix D**. No issues or decisions have been made / need to be disclosed. The letter has to be signed by the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee and the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services.
- 7.2 Should the approved version need to be updated following the completion of the audit, it is proposed to delegate authority to the Chair and the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services to sign on the Council's behalf a revised Letter of Representation.

8 Intention to Procure External Audit Services through the Public Sector Audit Appointments body

- 8.1 Since the abolition of the Audit Commission, Sefton has procured its external audit services by opting into the national arrangements undertaken by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA). The most recent procurement awarded Sefton's contract for 2018/2019 to 2022/2023 to Ernst & Young LLP. It should be noted that the vast majority of local authorities procure external audit services through the PSAA.
- 8.2 The Local Government Association is encouraging all local authorities to use the national arrangements for the next five-year procurement that is due to start from 2023/2024. They have circulated the following supporting information to local authorities to help inform their decision:

Information from the LGA for those charged with governance

The process for retendering for external audit in local authorities in England, for contracts due to start from 2023/24, is now underway and shortly the council will need to decide whether to procure its own external auditor or opt into the national procurement framework.

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Legislation requires a resolution of Full Council if a local authority wishes to opt into the national arrangement. The deadline for this decision is the 11th March 2022. If the council doesn't make such a decision, the legislation assumes that the council will procure its own external audit, with all the extra work and administration that comes with it.

The national framework remains the best option councils can choose. There are many reasons for favouring the national arrangements and we think those reasons have become more compelling since 2016/17 when councils were last asked to make this choice.

The way external audit has operated over the last couple of years has been extremely disappointing. A lack of capacity in the audit market has been exacerbated by increased requirements placed on external auditors by the audit regulator. There is also a limited number of firms in the market and too few qualified auditors employed by those firms. This has led to a situation where many audits have been delayed and dozens of audit opinions remain outstanding from 2019/20 and 2020/21. Auditors have also been asking for additional fees to pay for extra work.

As the client in the contract, a council has little influence over what it is procuring. The nature and scope of the audit is determined by codes of practice and guidance and the regulation of the audit market is undertaken by a third party, currently the Financial Reporting Council. Essentially, councils find themselves operating in what amounts to a suppliers' market and the client's interest is at risk of being ignored unless we act together.

Everyone, even existing suppliers, agrees that the supply side of the market needs to be expanded, which includes encouraging bids from challenger firms. Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA), the body nominated by the Government to run the national arrangements, has suggested various ways this could be done, but these initiatives are much more likely to be successful if a large number councils sign up to the national scheme.

It is therefore vital that councils coordinate their efforts to ensure that the client voice is heard loud and clear. The best way of doing this across the country is to sign up to the national arrangement.

To summarise, the same arguments apply as at the time of the last procurement:

- A council procuring its own auditor or procuring through a joint arrangement means setting up an Audit Panel with an independent chair to oversee the procurement and running of the contract.*
- The procurement process is an administrative burden on council staff already struggling for capacity. Contract management is an ongoing burden.*
- Procuring through the appointing person (PSAA) makes it easier for councils to demonstrate independence of process.*
- Procuring for yourself provides no obvious benefits:*

- *The service being procured is defined by statute and by accounting and auditing codes*
- *Possible suppliers are limited to the small pool of registered firms with accredited Key Audit Partners (KAP).*
- *Since the last procurement it is now more obvious than ever that we are in a 'suppliers' market' in which the audit firms hold most of the levers.*
- *PSAA has now built up considerable expertise and has been working hard to address the issue that have arisen with the contracts over the last couple of years:*
 - *PSAA has the experience of the first national contract. The Government's selection of PSAA as the appointing person for a second cycle reflects MHCLG's confidence in them as an organisation.*
 - *PSAA has commissioned high quality research to understand the nature of the audit market.*
 - *It has worked very closely with MHCLG to enable the government to consult on changes to the fees setting arrangements to deal better with variations at national and local level, hopefully resulting in more flexible and appropriate Regulations later this year.*

8.3 Officers have considered the views of the Local Government Association and agree that continuing with procuring external audit services through the national arrangements would be in the best interests of the Council. The intention is, therefore, to seek approval from Budget Council on 3 March 2022 to procure external audit services through the Public Sector Audit Appointments body, subject to the views of Members of this Committee.

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Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Audit planning report

Year ended 31 March 2021

Novemeber 2021

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Building a better
working world



Private and Confidential

22 November 2021

The Members of the Audit and Governance Committee
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
Magdalen House
30 Trinity Road
Bootle
L20 3NJ

Dear Audit and Governance Committee Members

Audit planning report

We are pleased to attach our Audit planning report which sets out how we intend to carry out our responsibilities as auditor. Its purpose is to provide the Audit and Governance Committee with a basis to review our proposed audit approach and scope for the 2020/21 audit in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office's 2020 Code of Audit Practice, the Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd, auditing standards and other professional requirements. It is also to ensure that our audit is aligned with the Committee's service expectations.

This plan summarises our initial assessment of the key risks driving the development of an effective audit for the Council, and outlines our planned audit strategy in response to those risks. Our planning procedures remain ongoing; we will inform the Audit and Governance Committee if there any significant changes or revisions once we have completed these procedures.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Audit and Governance Committee and management, and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this report with you on as well as understand whether there are other matters which you consider may influence our audit.

Yours faithfully

Hassan Rohimun

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

Contents



Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the "Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies". It is available from the PSAA website (<https://www.psa.co.uk/audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities/>). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The "Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated April 2018)" issued by the PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This report is made solely to the Audit and Governance Committee and management of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council in accordance with the statement of responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Audit and Governance Committee and management of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Audit and Governance Committee and management of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



01

Overview of our 2019/20 audit strategy



Overview of our 2020/21 audit strategy

The following 'dashboard' summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters outlined in this report. It seeks to provide the Audit and Governance Committee with an overview of our initial risk identification for the upcoming audit and any changes in risks identified in the current year.

Audit risks and areas of focus

Risk / area of focus	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Misstatements due to fraud or error	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	As identified in ISA 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that would otherwise appear to be operating effectively.
Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition. We consider that the risk manifests in year end revenue and expenditure subject to manipulation, specifically estimates for accruals of income and expenditure, provisions and pensions which affect the balance sheet and the income statement. Section 2, 'audit risks' sets out our consideration of where this risk manifests in more detail.
Valuation of pension liabilities	Significant risk	No change in risk or focus	The accounting entries relating to the Local Government Pension Schemes are underpinned by significant assumptions and estimates, which increases the risk of misstatement and error. We will assess the assumptions and the valuation of scheme assets used by the actuary in determining the IAS 19 accounting transactions.
Valuation of land and buildings	Significant risk	No change in risk or focus	The Council re-values assets to reflect the valuation position at year end. The valuation process is based on professional estimation techniques, which increases the risk of misstatement and error. In the prior year we reported an error which was below our materiality threshold, as a result this year we will engage our valuation experts to assess the valuation basis for the Council's asset base and review the indexation rates used. We will also consider engaging our valuation experts to review the valuation of investment properties.
New central government grants and other Covid-19 funding streams	Significant risk	New area of focus	The Authority received a series of grants from the UK government during 202/21 in support for the pandemic crisis management. We identified the accounting treatment of those grants as a significant risk due to factors discussed in Section 02.

Overview of our 2020/21 audit strategy

The following 'dashboard' summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters outlined in this report. It seeks to provide the Audit and Governance Committee with an overview of our initial risk identification for the upcoming audit and any changes in risks identified in the current year.

Audit risks and areas of focus

Risk / area of focus	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Investments and subsidiaries	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	<p>The Council have a material wholly owned subsidiary and therefore produce group accounts as well as Council entity accounts. Our audit opinion is therefore required to cover the group as well as the entity financial statements and notes.</p> <p>This year, based on planning procedures, Sefton New Directions Limited is deemed to be material to the group. The Council also have other subsidiaries and joint working arrangements that require management judgement for disclosure and consolidation.</p>
Accounting Concern	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	<p>This auditing standard has been revised in response to enforcement cases and well-publicised corporate failures where the auditor's report failed to highlight concerns about the prospects of entities which collapsed shortly after.</p>

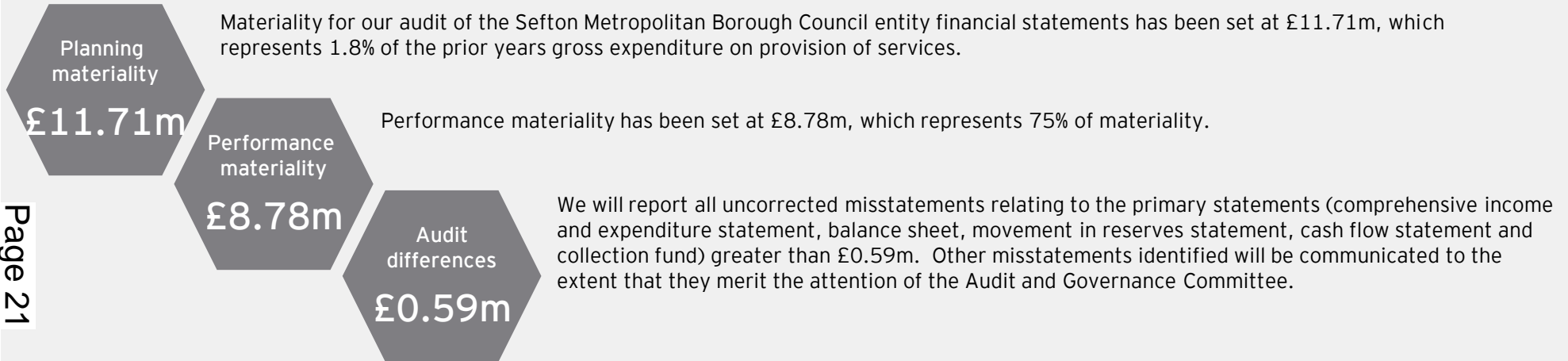
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Auditing accounting estimates

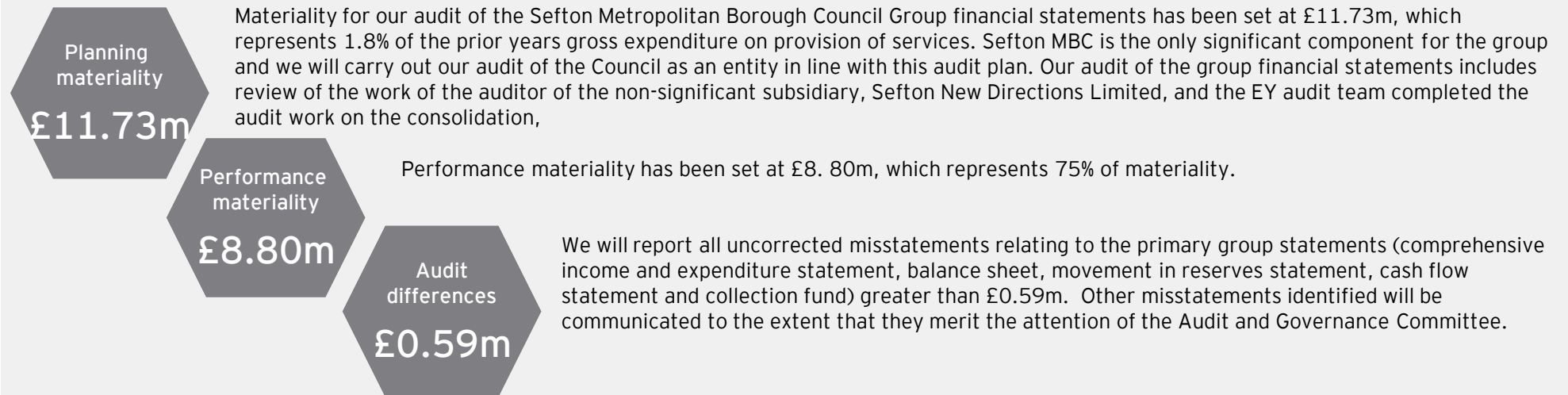
In addition to the above risks and areas of focus, a revised auditing standard has been issued in respect of the audit of accounting estimates. The revised standard requires auditors to consider inherent risks associated with the production of accounting estimates. These could relate, for example, to the complexity of the method applied, subjectivity in the choice of data or assumptions or a high degree of estimation uncertainty. As part of this, auditors now consider risk on a spectrum (from low to high inherent risk) rather than a simplified classification of whether there is a significant risk or not. At the same time, we may see the number of significant risks we report in respect of accounting estimates to increase as a result of the revised guidance in this area. The changes to the standard may affect the nature and extent of information that we may request and will likely increase the level of audit work required.

Overview of our 2020/21 audit strategy

Materiality



Group Materiality



Overview of our 2020/21 audit strategy

Audit scope

This Audit Plan covers the work that we plan to perform to provide you with:

- Our audit opinion on whether the financial statements of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 31 March 2021 and of the income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- Our conclusion on the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

We will also review and report to the National Audit Office (NAO), to the extent and in the form required by them, on the Council's Whole of Government Accounts return.

Our audit will also include the mandatory procedures that we are required to perform in accordance with applicable laws and auditing standards.

When planning the audit we take into account several key inputs:

- Strategic, operational and financial risks relevant to the financial statements;
- Developments in financial reporting and auditing standards;
- The quality of systems and processes;
- Changes in the business and regulatory environment; and,
- Management's views on all of the above.

By considering these inputs, our audit is focused on the areas that matter and our feedback is more likely to be relevant to the Council.

Taking the above into account, and as articulated in this audit plan, our professional responsibilities require us to independently assess the risks associated with providing an audit opinion and undertake appropriate procedures in response to that. Our Terms of Appointment with PSAA allow them to vary the fee dependent on "the auditors assessment of risk and the work needed to meet their professional responsibilities". PSAA are aware that the setting of scale fees has not kept pace with the changing requirements of external audit with increased focus on, for example, the valuations of land and buildings, the auditing of groups, the valuation of pension obligations, the introduction of new accounting standards such as IFRS 9 and 15 in recent years as well as the expansion of factors impacting the value for money conclusion. Therefore to the extent any of these or any other risks are relevant in the context of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council's audit, we will discuss these with management as to the impact on the scale fee.



02 Audit risks





Audit risks

Our response to significant risks

We have set out the significant risks (including fraud risks denoted by*) identified for the current year audit along with the rationale and expected audit approach. The risks identified below may change to reflect any significant findings or subsequent issues we identify during the audit.

Misstatements due to fraud or error*

What is the risk?

The financial statements as a whole are not free of material misstatements whether caused by fraud or error.

As identified in ISA (UK) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. We respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement.

We have not identified any specific fraud risks in our planning, however we will continue to update our risk assessment throughout our audit.

What will we do?

We recognise the risk of misstatements due to fraud or error as potentially occurring in income and expenditure recognition, including related estimates and judgements, or in material and significant accounting estimates relating to pensions, as identified in our significant risks.

Our audit methodology include the following general procedures which addresses the presumed risk:

- ▶ Identifying fraud risks during the planning stages.
- ▶ Inquiry of management about risks of fraud and the controls put in place to address those risks.
- ▶ Understanding the oversight given by those charged with governance of management's processes over fraud.
- ▶ Consideration of the effectiveness of management's controls designed to address the risk of fraud.
- ▶ Determining an appropriate strategy to address those identified risks of fraud.
- ▶ Testing the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements
- ▶ Assessing accounting estimates for evidence of management bias.
- ▶ Evaluating the business rationale for significant unusual transactions.

Our response to significant risks (continued)

Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition*

Financial statement impact

Misstatements that occur in relation to the risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition could affect the income and expenditure accounts and the surplus or deficit recorded at the year end.

The highest misstatement risks relating to estimates and judgements at the year end have a balance sheet and I&E impact as the debtor/income and creditor/expenditure accounts are adjusted by the same amounts.

What is the risk?

Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition.

Due to the nature and value of income which comprises of Government Grants, income from Council Tax and Business Rates, it is our view is that the risk is not significant in this area, but is relevant to other income and operating expenditure that is subject to manipulation at year end.

We consider that the risk impacts on the following account balances:

- Calculation of estimates (being pensions estimates, accruals and provisions) which impact on the completeness and valuation assertions.
- Manual income accruals which impacts on the existence and valuation assertions.
- Operating expenditure transactions around the year end which impacts on both the occurrence and completeness assertions.
- Improper capitalisation of revenue expenditure in order to reduce the impact on the general fund.

What will we do?

We will carry out substantive procedures in response to this risk. The procedures designed to address the identified risk are set out below:

- Document our understanding of the processes and controls in place to mitigate the risks.
- Identify and walk through those processes and controls, confirming our understanding.
- Review income and expenditure recognition policies and confirm consistency of application through performance of testing
- Identify significant accounting estimates for revenue and expenditure, discussing assumptions and calculation methodology with management
- Test the identified significant accounting estimates to confirm appropriateness and consistency with supporting records considering evidence of bias
- Sample test material revenue (other income) and operating expenditure streams with a focus on assets and liabilities at the year-end
- Testing of revenue cut-off at the period end date
- Conduct testing to identify unrecorded liabilities at the year-end
- Testing a sample of Property Plant and Equipment additions to confirm that the expenditure has been appropriately capitalised

Testing of revenue and expenditure will be supported through the use of data analytics tools to support sample selection. The data analysis tools enable the full population of other income and operating expenditure to be included within the sample population. The population will be filtered to enable testing to focus on higher risk areas, high value and unusual transactions.

Audit risks

Our response to significant risks (continued)

Valuation of pension liabilities

What is the risk?

The Council's pension fund deficit is a material estimated balance and the Code requires that this liability be disclosed on the Council's balance sheet. At 31 March 2021 this totalled £471 million.

The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 report issued to the Council by the actuary to the Merseyside Pension Scheme.

Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

We consider that this risk is associated to the following specific areas:

- ▶ Incorrect estimation of liabilities of the fund
- ▶ Incorrect estimation of the asset balances of the pension fund allocated to the Council
- ▶ Improper application of the pension estimate adjustments to the year end financial statements.

What will we do?

We will:

- ▶ Liaise with the auditors of the Pension Fund, to obtain assurances over the information supplied to the actuary in relation to the Council;
- ▶ Assess the work of the Pension Fund actuary, including the assumptions they have used, by relying on the work of PwC - Consulting Actuaries commissioned by the National Audit Office for all Local Government sector auditors, and considering any relevant reviews by our EY actuarial team;
- ▶ Test the variation in the pension fund assets used by the actuary in reporting to the Council against the actual year end asset valuation,
- ▶ Consider the basis for the actuary valuation of the assets in their report to the Council, and
- ▶ Review and test the accounting entries and disclosures made within the Council's financial statements in relation to IAS19.

Financial statement impact

Significant material figures are included in the financial statements in relation to the LGPS, which are subject to estimation, judgement and external expert advice.

Our response to significant risks (continued)

<p>Valuation of land and buildings</p> <p>Page 27</p>	<p>What is the risk?</p> <p>The fair value of land & building and Investment Properties (IP) represent significant balances in the Council's accounts and are subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges.</p> <p>Management is required to make material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet, including the use of work from valuation experts.</p>	<p>What will we do?</p> <p>We will carry out the following substantive procedures in response to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Consider the work performed by the Council's valuers, including the adequacy of the scope of the work performed, their professional capabilities and the results of their work; ▶ Sample test key asset information used by the valuers in performing their valuation (e.g. floor plans to support valuations based on price per square metre); ▶ Consider the annual cycle of valuations to ensure that assets have been valued within a 5 year rolling programme as required by the Code for PPE and annually for investment property; ▶ Review assets not subject to valuation in 2020/21 to confirm that the remaining asset base has been subject to impairment review; ▶ Consider changes to useful economic lives as a result of the most recent valuation; and ▶ Test that accounting entries have been correctly processed in the financial statements. <p>As part of our approach we will consider the need to engage internal EY valuation experts to appraise the approach and assumptions used by the Council's valuer, particularly in relation to investment or market rent properties, such as the Council's investment in the Strand.</p>
	<p>Financial statement impact</p> <p>Misstatements that occur in relation to the valuation of property and investment properties could affect the balance sheet by materially misstating the valuation of these assets; and the income and expenditure account via the impact on depreciation charges.</p>	

Our response to significant risks (continued)

New central government grants and other Covid-19 funding streams

What is the risk?

The Council has received a significant level of government funding in relation to Covid-19. In 2020/21, this consists of non-ringfenced and ring fenced Covid-19 response grants.

Whilst there is no change in the CIPFA Code or Accounting Standard (IFRS 15) in respect of accounting for government grant funding, the emergency nature of some of the grants received and in some cases the lack of clarity on any associated restrictions and conditions, means that the Council will need to apply a greater degree of assessment and judgement to determine the appropriate accounting treatment within the 2020/21 statements.

What will we do?

In order to address this risk we will carry out a range of procedures including:

- ▶ Reviewing managements assessment of accounting treatment for Covid-19 grants and comparing this to data collected from other Councils in a benchmarking exercise. This will provide a risk assessment and identify where testing should be focused.
- ▶ Sample testing Government Grant income to ensure that they have been correctly classified as specific or non-specific in nature;
- ▶ Sample testing Government Grant income to ensure that they have been correctly classified in the financial statements based on any restrictions imposed by the funding body; and
- ▶ Reconciliation of those primary statement balances to the detailed notes within the statement of accounts to ensure appropriate presentation of grant income and consistency.

We will encourage the finance team to provide its assessment of grant accounting before it prepares the statements so that we can provide an early view on its proposed accounting treatment.

Financial statement impact

We have identified a risk of covid-19 Government grant income misstatement that could affect the Income and Expenditure accounts.

We consider the risk applies to the classification of Government grant income and could result in a misstatement of 'Cost of Services' reported in the 'Comprehensive Income and Expenditure' statement and Balance Sheet.

Audit risks

Other areas of audit focus

We have identified other areas of the audit, that have not been classified as significant risks, but are still important when considering the risks of material misstatement to the financial statements and disclosures and therefore may be key audit matters we will include in our audit report.

What is the risk/area of focus?	What will we do?
<p><u>Investments and subsidiaries</u></p> <p>The Council have a material wholly owned subsidiary and therefore produce group accounts as well as Council entity accounts. Our audit opinion is required to cover the group as well as the entity financial statements and notes.</p> <p>The Council also have other subsidiaries and joint working arrangements that require management judgement.</p> <p>Judgements are required covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composition of the group accounts; • disclosure requirements for subsidiaries included and excluded from the group accounts; • Application of group accounting policies to the activity of subsidiaries; and • The application of consolidation and elimination adjustments. 	<p>We will take a substantive approach to the audit of the group accounts and in relation to the risks arising from the Council's involvement with subsidiaries and joint ventures.</p> <p>This year, based on planning procedures, Sefton New Directions Limited is deemed to be material to the group. In addition to our audit of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council as the significant entity in the group, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess management's judgements on components included in the group accounts, and the evidence supporting these decisions; • Issue group instructions to the auditor of Sefton New Directions Limited (Hazlewoods LLP), including our assessment of risks at the group level and application of materiality to the subsidiary; • Review the work of the subsidiary auditor where this relates to a significant risk for the group; • Test the consolidation and elimination adjustments applied to the group accounts; and • Review the application of group accounting policies across the group entities for consistency.

 **Audit risks**

Other areas of audit focus (continued)

What is the risk/area of focus?

Going Concern Compliance with ISA 570

There is a presumption that the Council will continue as a going concern for the foreseeable future. However, the Council is required to carry out a going concern assessment that is proportionate to the risks it faces. In light of the continued impact of Covid-19 on the Council's day to day finances, its annual budget, its cashflow and its medium term financial strategy, there is a need for the Council to ensure its going concern assessment is thorough and appropriately comprehensive.

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 The Council is then required to ensure that its going concern disclosure within the statement of accounts adequately reflects its going concern assessment and in particular highlights any uncertainties it has identified. In addition, the auditing standard in relation to going concern (ISA570) has been revised with effect for the 2020/21 accounts audit.

What will we do?

We will meet the requirements of the revised auditing standard on going concern (ISA 570) and consider the adequacy of the Council's going concern assessment and its disclosure in the accounts by:

- ▶ Challenging management's identification of events or conditions impacting going concern;
- ▶ Testing management's resulting assessment of going concern by evaluating supporting evidence (including consideration of the risk of management bias);
- ▶ Reviewing the Council's cashflow forecast covering the foreseeable future, to ensure that it has sufficient liquidity to continue to operate as a going concern;
- ▶ Undertaking a 'stand back' review to consider all of the evidence obtained, whether corroborative or contradictory, when we draw our conclusions on going concern;
- ▶ Challenging the disclosure made in the accounts in respect of going concern and any material uncertainties;



03 Value for Money Risks





Value for money

The Council's responsibilities for value for money

The Council is required to maintain an effective system of internal control that supports the achievement of its policies, aims and objectives while safeguarding and securing value for money from the public funds and other resources at its disposal.

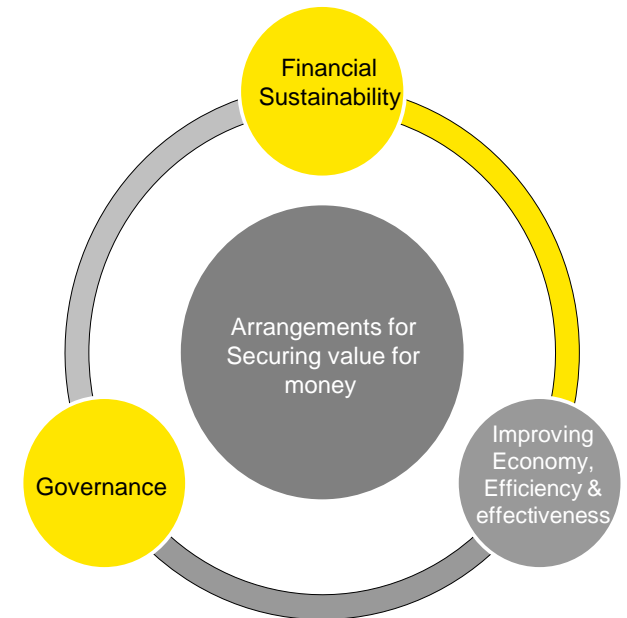
As part of the material published with its financial statements, the Council is required to bring together commentary on its governance framework and how this has operated during the period in a governance statement. In preparing its governance statement, the Council tailor's the content to reflect its own individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements of the relevant accounting and reporting framework and having regard to any guidance issued in support of that framework. This includes a requirement to provide commentary on its arrangements for securing value for money from their use of resources.

Auditor responsibilities under the new Code

Under the 2020 Code we are still required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources. However, there is no longer an overall evaluation criterion which we need to conclude on. Instead the 2020 Code requires the auditor to design their work to provide them with sufficient assurance to enable them to report to the Council a commentary against specified reporting criteria (see below) on the arrangements the Council has in place to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period.

The specified reporting criteria are:

- **Financial sustainability**
How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
- **Governance**
How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- **Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness**
How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.



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Planning and identifying VFM risks

The NAO's guidance notes require us to carry out a risk assessment which gathers sufficient evidence to enable us to document our evaluation of the Council's arrangements, in order to enable us to draft a commentary under the three reporting criteria. This includes identifying and reporting on any significant weaknesses in those arrangements and making appropriate recommendations. This is a change to 2015 Code guidance notes where the NAO required auditors as part of planning, to consider the risk of reaching an incorrect conclusion in relation to the overall criterion.

In considering the Council's arrangements, we are required to consider:

- The Council's governance statement
- Evidence that the Council's arrangements were in place during the reporting period;

Evidence obtained from our work on the accounts;

The work of inspectorates (such as OfSTED) and other bodies and

Any other evidence source that we regard as necessary to facilitate the performance of our statutory duties.

Page 33 then consider whether there is evidence to suggest that there are significant weaknesses in arrangements. The NAO's guidance is clear that the assessment of what constitutes a significant weakness and the amount of additional audit work required to adequately respond to the risk of a significant weakness in arrangements is a matter of professional judgement. However, the NAO states that a weakness may be said to be significant if it:

- Exposes - or could reasonably be expected to expose - the Council to significant financial loss or risk;
- Leads to - or could reasonably be expected to lead to - significant impact on the quality or effectiveness of service or on the Council's reputation;
- Leads to - or could reasonably be expected to lead to - unlawful actions; or
- Identifies a failure to take action to address a previously identified significant weakness, such as failure to implement or achieve planned progress on action/improvement plans.

We should also be informed by a consideration of:

- The magnitude of the issue in relation to the size of the Council;
- Financial consequences in comparison to, for example, levels of income or expenditure, levels of reserves, or impact on budgets or cashflow forecasts;
- The impact of the weakness on the Council's reported performance;
- Whether the issue has been identified by the Council's own internal arrangements and what corrective action has been taken or planned;
- Whether any legal judgements have been made including judicial review;
- Whether there has been any intervention by a regulator or Secretary of State;
- Whether the weakness could be considered significant when assessed against the nature, visibility or sensitivity of the issue;
- The impact on delivery of services to local taxpayers; and
- The length of time the Council has had to respond to the issue.



Value for money

Responding to identified risks

Where our planning work has identified a risk of significant weakness, the NAO's guidance requires us to consider what additional evidence is needed to determine whether there is a significant weakness in arrangements and undertake additional procedures as necessary, including where appropriate, challenge of management's assumptions. We are required to report our planned procedures to the Audit and Accounts Committee.

Reporting on VFM

In addition to the commentary on arrangements, where we are not satisfied that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, the 2020 Code has the same requirement as the 2015 Code in that we should refer to this by exception in the Audit Report on the financial statements.

However, a new requirement under the 2020 Code is for us to include the commentary on arrangements in a new Auditor's Annual Report. The 2020 Code states that the commentary should be clear, readily understandable and highlight any issues we wish to draw to the Council's attention or the wider public. This should include details of any recommendations arising from the audit and follow-up of recommendations issued previously, along with our view as to whether they have been implemented satisfactorily.

Status of our 2020/21 VFM planning

Our risk assessment has resulted in the identification of the significant risks noted on the following page which we view as relevant to our value for money conclusion.



Value for Money Risks

What is the significant value for money risk?

Maintaining Financial sustainability

The Council are operating in a continued environment of financial challenge and savings requirements across the sector, with pressure from Children's Social Care, Children with Disabilities, Home to School Transport and Locality Services.

such, the identification and realisation of savings in the Medium Term Financial Strategy remain critical to maintaining the level of reserves and financial sustainability.

The Council did identify underspending in other areas as well as implementing various mitigating actions during the year to ensure there would be no overspend, particularly in light of the financial pressures due to COVID19. These measures enabled the outturn position to be a net underspend of £2.794m.

What arrangements does the risk affect?

Financial Sustainability

What will we do?

Our approach will focus on the arrangements that the Council has in place to plan for, monitor and report on financial resilience in the medium term and the impact of the 2020/21 outturn position.

Our procedures will include:

- ▶ Reviewing the actions which the Council is undertaking to ensure there is a sustainable position as part of setting the Medium Term Financial Strategy
- ▶ Considering current financial standing and the availability of reserves to fund future expenditure
- ▶ Considering the 2020/21 outturn performance against budget, the proportion of recurrent and non recurrent savings achieved in the year, actions taken to support the forecast deficit and the impact on the current MTFS
- ▶ Considering the appropriateness of assumptions used by the Council in setting the budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy.



Value for Money Risks

What is the significant value for money risk?

Follow-up on DFE Improvement

An Improvement Notice was issued to Sefton Council on 14 June 2019 following an assessment that the local area had failed to make sufficient progress against five areas of weakness in its SEND service provision. This was detailed in an Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) SEND Revisit report. In our prior year (PY) VFM review, it was identified that the Council had established a plan to tackle the required areas for improvement, with quarterly monitoring and tracking of the areas of weakness.

With regards to Children’s Mental Health (MH), in September 2019, Ofsted, CQC, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services, (HMICFRS) and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) carried out a joint inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in Sefton. This inspection included a ‘deep dive’ on the response to children’s MH. In the PY, the Council produced a written Statement of Action which it submitted to OFSTED and the relevant parties, and in April 2020 this action plan was reviewed and approved by Ofsted and the others, noting it demonstrated an accurate understanding of the areas of priority action and findings of the joint inspection team.

Furthermore, during VFM planning, it was identified that two reviews had been performed by Ofsted during 2020-21, looking at both Adult & Community Learning, and Children’s Services at the Council.

What arrangements does the risk affect?

Improving Economy, Efficiency & Effectiveness

Governance

What will we do?

Our approach will focus on reviewing Ofsted reports to identify any findings, and their impact on the VFM conclusion for 2020-21.



04 **Audit materiality**



Materiality

Materiality

Materiality for 2020/21 has been set at £11.71m for our audit of the Council. This represents around 1.8% of the Council's gross expenditure on provision of services. It will be reassessed throughout the audit process. We have also set our planning materiality for the group accounts and communicated the SNDL component performance materiality to the component auditor.

Key definitions

Planning materiality - the amount over which we anticipate misstatements would influence the economic decisions of a user of the financial statements. We have set Group planning materiality at £11.73m and entity materiality at £11.471m.

Performance materiality - the amount we use to determine the extent of our audit procedures. We have set performance materiality at £8.78m which represents 75% of planning materiality.

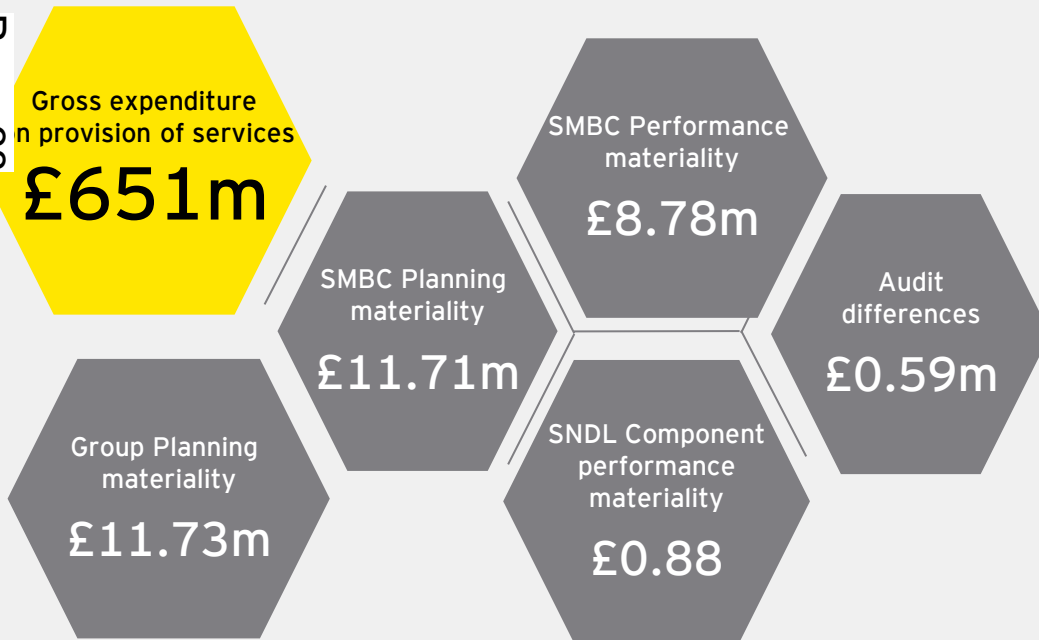
Component performance materiality range - we determine component performance materiality as a percentage of Group performance materiality based on risk and relative size to the Group.

Audit difference threshold - we propose that misstatements identified below this threshold are deemed clearly trivial. The same threshold for misstatements is used for component reporting. We will report to you all uncorrected misstatements over this amount relating to the comprehensive income and expenditure statement, balance sheet and collection fund that have an effect on income or that relate to other comprehensive income.

Other uncorrected misstatements, such as reclassifications and misstatements in the cashflow statement and movement in reserves statement or disclosures, and corrected misstatements will be communicated to the extent that they merit the attention of the Audit and Governance Committee, or are important from a qualitative perspective.

Specific materiality - We have set a materiality of £1k for remuneration disclosures, related party transactions, members' allowances, audit fees and exit packages which reflects our understanding that an amount less than our materiality would influence the economic decisions of users of the financial statements in relation to these areas.

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We request that the Audit and Governance Committee confirm its understanding of, and agreement to, these materiality and reporting levels.



05 Scope of our audit



Our Audit Process and Strategy

Objective and Scope of our Audit scoping

Under the Code of Audit Practice our principal objectives are to review and report on the Council's financial statements and arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources to the extent required by the relevant legislation and the requirements of the Code.

We issue an audit report that covers:

1. Financial statement audit

Our objective is to form an opinion on the financial statements under International Standards on Auditing (UK).

We also perform other procedures as required by auditing, ethical and independence standards, the Code and other regulations. We outline below the procedures we will undertake during the course of our audit.

Procedures required by standards

- Addressing the risk of fraud and error;
- Significant disclosures included in the financial statements;
- Entity-wide controls;
- Reading other information contained in the financial statements and reporting whether it is inconsistent with our understanding and the financial statements; and
- Auditor independence.

Procedures required by the Code

- Reviewing, and reporting on as appropriate, other information published with the financial statements, including the Annual Governance Statement; and
- Reviewing and reporting on the Whole of Government Accounts return, in line with the instructions issued by the NAO

2. Arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money)

We are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources.

Our Audit Process and Strategy (continued)

Audit Process Overview

Our audit involves:

- ▶ Identifying and understanding the key processes and internal controls; and
- ▶ Substantive tests of detail of transactions and amounts.

Page 41 For 2019/20 we plan to follow a substantive approach to the audit as we have concluded this is the most efficient way to obtain the level of audit assurance required to conclude that the financial statements are not materially misstated.

Analytics:

We will use our computer-based analytics tools to enable us to capture whole populations of your financial data, in particular journal entries. These tools:

- ▶ Help identify specific exceptions and anomalies which can then be subject to more traditional substantive audit tests; and
- ▶ Give greater likelihood of identifying errors than random sampling techniques.

We will report the findings from our process and analytics work, including any significant weaknesses or inefficiencies identified and recommendations for improvement, to management and the Audit and Governance Committee.

Internal audit:

We will regularly meet with the Head of Internal Audit, and review internal audit plans and the results of their work. We will reflect the findings from these reports, together with reports from any other work completed in the year, in our detailed audit plan, where they raise issues that could have an impact on the financial statements.

Scoping the group audit

Group scoping

Our audit strategy for performing an audit of an entity with multiple locations is risk based. We identify components as:

1. **Significant components:** A component is significant when it is likely to include risks of material misstatement of the group financial statements, either because of its relative financial size to the group (quantitative criteria), or because of its specific nature or circumstances (qualitative criteria). We generally assign significant components a full or specific scope given their importance to the financial statements. We consider Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council as an entity a significant component for the Group accounts.
2. **Not significant components:** The number of additional components and extent of procedures performed depended primarily on: evidence from significant components, the effectiveness of group wide controls and the results of analytical procedures.

For all other components we perform other procedures to confirm that there is no risk of material misstatement within those locations. These procedures are detailed below. There is no longer a concept of 'out of scope' and we therefore design 'other procedures' over these locations that address the risk of material misstatement.

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Scoping by Entity

Our preliminary audit scopes by number of locations we have adopted are set out below. We provide scope details for each component within Appendix E.

2	A	Full scope audits
0	B	Specific scope audits
0	C	Review scope audits
0	D	Specified procedures
0	E	Other procedures

Scope definitions

Full scope: locations where a full audit is performed to the materiality levels assigned by the Group audit team for purposes of the consolidated audit. Procedures performed at full scope locations support an interoffice conclusion on the reporting package. These may not be sufficient to issue a stand-alone audit opinion on the local statutory financial statements because of the materiality used and any additional procedures required to comply with local laws and regulations. The group accounts include Sefton New Directions Limited. We will engage with component auditor to perform full scope audit.

Specific scope: locations where the audit is limited to specific accounts or disclosures identified by the Group audit team based on the size and/or risk profile of those accounts.

Review scope: locations where procedures primarily consist of analytical procedures and inquiries of management. On-site or desk top reviews may be performed, according to our assessment of risk.

Specified Procedures: locations where the component team performs procedures specified by the Group audit team in order to respond to a risk identified.

Other procedures: For those locations that we do not consider material to the Group financial statements in terms of size relative to the Group and risk, we perform other procedures to confirm that there is no risk of material misstatement within those locations. These procedures include review of the subsidiary auditors group return, review of the consolidation process and analytical review. Sandway Homes Ltd is not material for the Group. We will review consolidation process and perform analytical review.

Scoping the group audit (continued)

Group audit team involvement in component audits

Auditing standards require us to be involved in the work of our component teams. We have listed our planned involvement below.

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council as a stand alone entity is considered the significant component and a full scope entity for which we complete the audit procedures as set out in the other sections of this audit plan.

This covers over 99.8% of the group accounts income and expenditure.

Auditing standards require us to be involved in the work of component teams. For 2020/21 this will relate to the audit of Sefton New Directions Limited, undertaken by Hazlewoods LLP.

We have listed our planned involvement below:

We will provide specific instruction to Hazlewoods LLP setting out our expectations regarding the detailed procedures over income recognition and going concern;

We will set up an initial meeting with the component team to discuss the content of the group instructions;

We will consider the need to perform a file review of component team's work where appropriate; and

We will review the reporting pack from the component auditor on procedures performed and findings.

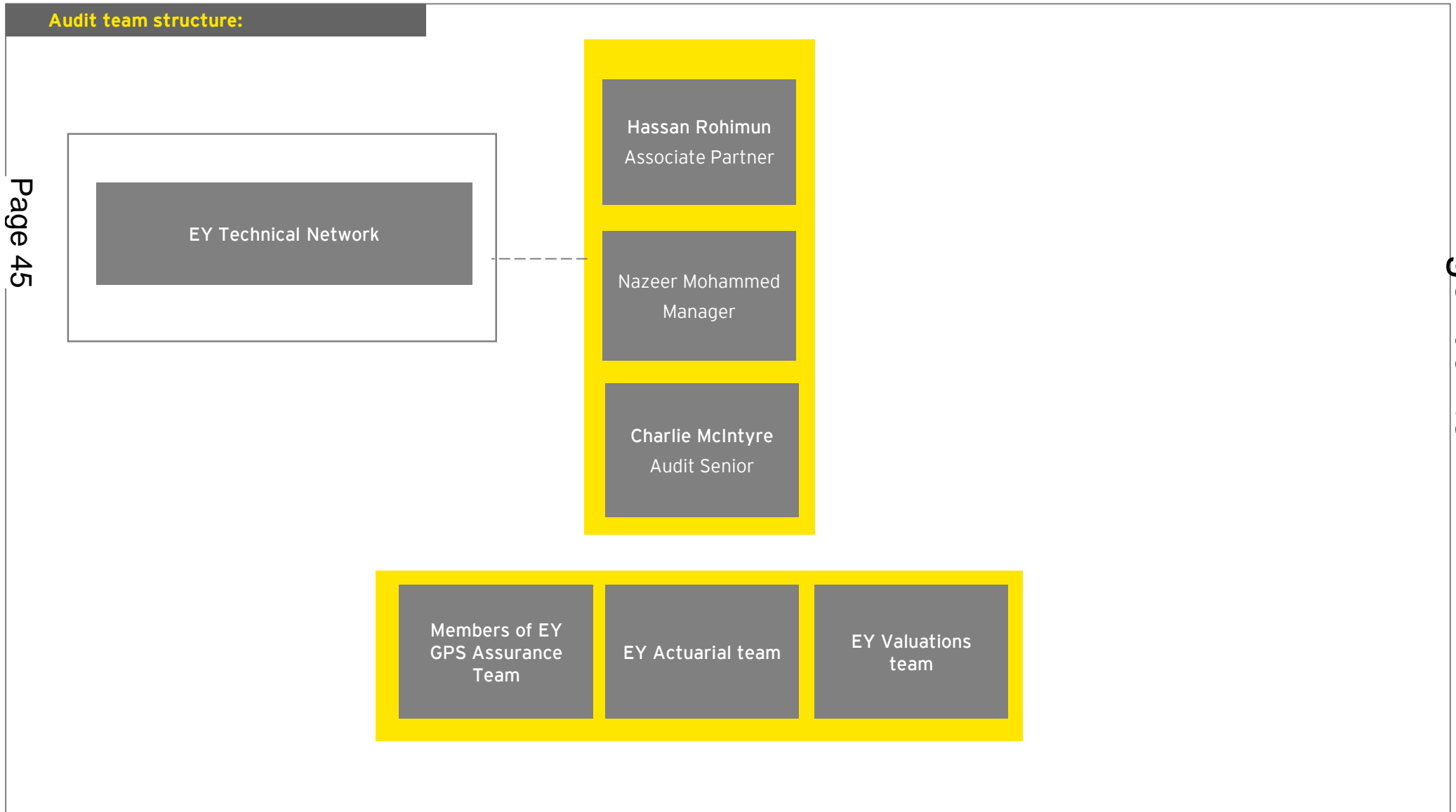
As a result of our discussions with management we do not expect any other entities to be consolidated in to the group accounts. Management have agreed to provide their assessment of other subsidiaries to confirm that they are not intended to be consolidated on grounds of immateriality to the group.



06 **Audit team**



Audit team



Use of specialists

Our approach to the involvement of specialists, and the use of their work:

When auditing key judgements, we are often required to rely on the input and advice provided by specialists who have qualifications and expertise not possessed by the core audit team. The areas where either EY or third party specialists provide input for the current year audit are:

Area	Specialists
Valuation of Land and Buildings	EY Valuations Team
Pensions disclosure	EY Actuaries

In accordance with Auditing Standards, we will evaluate each specialist's professional competence and objectivity, considering their qualifications, experience and available resources, together with the independence of the individuals performing the work.

We also consider the work performed by the specialist in light of our knowledge of the Council's business and processes and our assessment of audit risk in the particular area. For example, we would typically perform the following procedures:

- ▶ Analyse source data and make inquiries as to the procedures used by the specialist to establish whether the source data is relevant and reliable;
- ▶ Assess the reasonableness of the assumptions and methods used;
- ▶ Consider the appropriateness of the timing of when the specialist carried out the work; and
- ▶ Assess whether the substance of the specialist's findings are properly reflected in the financial statements.



07 **Audit timeline**





Audit timeline

Timetable of communication and deliverables

Timeline

Below is a timetable showing the key stages of the audit and the deliverables we have agreed to provide to you through the audit cycle in 2020/21.

From time to time matters may arise that require immediate communication with the Audit and Governance Committee and we will discuss them with the Audit and Governance Committee Chair as appropriate. We will also provide updates on corporate governance and regulatory matters as necessary.

Audit phase	Timetable	Audit and Governance Committee timetable	Deliverables
Planning: Risk assessment and setting of scopes	November		
	December	Audit and Governance Committee	
	January		
Walkthrough of key systems and processes	July		
	November	Audit and Governance Committee	Audit Planning Report
Year end audit Audit Completion procedures	July - December		
Year end audit Audit Completion procedures	December	Audit and Governance Committee	Audit Results Report Audit opinions and completion certificates
	Jan 2022	Audit and Governance Committee	Annual Audit Report



08

Independence



Introduction

The FRC Ethical Standard and ISA (UK) 260 “Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance”, requires us to communicate with you on a timely basis on all significant facts and matters that bear upon our integrity, objectivity and independence. The Ethical Standard, as revised in December 2019, requires that we communicate formally both at the planning stage and at the conclusion of the audit, as well as during the course of the audit if appropriate. The aim of these communications is to ensure full and fair disclosure by us to those charged with your governance on matters in which you have an interest.

Required communications

Planning stage	Final stage
<p>▶ The principal threats, if any, to objectivity and independence identified by Ernst & Young (EY) including consideration of all relationships between you, your affiliates and directors and us;</p> <p>▶ The safeguards adopted and the reasons why they are considered to be effective, including any Engagement Quality review;</p> <p>The overall assessment of threats and safeguards;</p> <p>Information about the general policies and process within EY to maintain objectivity and independence.</p>	<p>▶ In order for you to assess the integrity, objectivity and independence of the firm and each covered person, we are required to provide a written disclosure of relationships (including the provision of non-audit services) that may bear on our integrity, objectivity and independence. This is required to have regard to relationships with the entity, its directors and senior management, its affiliates, and its connected parties and the threats to integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence that these create. We are also required to disclose any safeguards that we have put in place and why they address such threats, together with any other information necessary to enable our objectivity and independence to be assessed;</p> <p>▶ Details of non-audit/additional services provided and the fees charged in relation thereto;</p> <p>▶ Written confirmation that the firm and each covered person is independent and, if applicable, that any non-EY firms used in the group audit or external experts used have confirmed their independence to us;</p> <p>▶ Details of any non-audit/additional services to a UK PIE audit client where there are differences of professional opinion concerning the engagement between the Ethics Partner and Engagement Partner and where the final conclusion differs from the professional opinion of the Ethics Partner</p> <p>▶ Details of any inconsistencies between FRC Ethical Standard and your policy for the supply of non-audit services by EY and any apparent breach of that policy;</p> <p>▶ Details of all breaches of the IESBA Code of Ethics, the FRC Ethical Standard and professional standards, and of any safeguards applied and actions taken by EY to address any threats to independence; and</p> <p>▶ An opportunity to discuss auditor independence issues.</p>

In addition, during the course of the audit, we are required to communicate with you whenever any significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place, for example, when accepting an engagement to provide non-audit services.

We ensure that the total amount of fees that EY and our network firms have charged to you and your affiliates for the provision of services during the reporting period, analysed in appropriate categories, are disclosed.

Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

We highlight the following significant facts and matters that may be reasonably considered to bear upon our objectivity and independence, including the principal threats, if any. We have adopted the safeguards noted below to mitigate these threats along with the reasons why they are considered to be effective. However we will only perform non-audit services if the service has been pre-approved in accordance with your policy.

Overall Assessment

Overall, we consider that the safeguards that have been adopted appropriately mitigate the principal threats identified and we therefore confirm that EY is independent and the objectivity and independence of Hassan Rohimun, your audit engagement partner, and the audit engagement team have not been compromised.

Self interest threats

A self interest threat arises when EY has financial or other interests in the Council. Examples include where we receive significant fees in respect of non-audit services; where we need to recover long outstanding fees; or where we enter into a business relationship with you. At the time of writing, there are no long outstanding fees. We believe that it is appropriate for us to undertake those permitted non-audit/additional services set out in Section 5.40 of the FRC Ethical Standard 2019 (FRC ES), and we will comply with the policies that you have approved.

When the ratio of non-audit fees to audit fees exceeds 1:1, we are required to discuss this with our Ethics Partner, as set out by the FRC ES, and if necessary agree additional safeguards or not accept the non-audit engagement. We will also discuss this with you.

A self interest threat may also arise if members of our audit engagement team have objectives or are rewarded in relation to sales of non-audit services to you. We confirm that no member of our audit engagement team, including those from other service lines, has objectives or is rewarded in relation to sales to you, in compliance with Ethical Standard part 4.

There are no other self interest threats at the date of this report

Self review threats

Self review threats arise when the results of a non-audit service performed by EY or others within the EY network are reflected in the amounts included or disclosed in the financial statements. There are no self review threats at the date of this report.

Management threats

Partners and employees of EY are prohibited from taking decisions on behalf of management of the Council. Management threats may also arise during the provision of a non-audit service in relation to which management is required to make judgements or decision based on that work.

There are no management threats at the date of this report.

Other threats

Other threats, such as advocacy, familiarity or intimidation, may arise.

There are no other threats at the date of this report.

Other communications

EY Transparency Report 2020

Ernst & Young (EY) has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained. Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the year end 30 June 2020:

https://assets.ey.com/content/dam/ey-sites/ey-com/en_uk/about-us/transparency-report-2020/ey-uk-2020-transparency-report.pdf



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Appendices



 Appendix A

Fees

The duty to prescribe fees is a statutory function delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.




This is defined as the fee required by auditors to meet statutory responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice and supporting guidance published by the National Audit Office, the financial reporting requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting published by CIPFA/LASAAC, and the professional standards applicable to auditors' work.

We will provide further details on the fee in our next update to the audit committee.

Appendix B

Required communications with the Audit and Governance Committee




We have detailed the communications that we must provide to the Audit and Governance Committee.

			 Our Reporting to you
Required communications	 What is reported?	 When and where	
Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the Audit and Governance Committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.	
Responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.	
Planning and audit approach	Communication of the planned scope and timing of the audit, any limitations and the significant risks identified.	Audit planning report - November 2021	
Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures ▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit ▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management ▶ Written representations that we are seeking ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report ▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process 	Audit results report - December 2021	

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Required communications with the Audit and Governance Committee (continued)

			 Our Reporting to you
Required communications	 What is reported?	 When and where	
Page 56 statements	<p>Going concern</p> <p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity’s ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty ▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements ▶ The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements 	Audit results report	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion, unless prohibited by law or regulation ▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods ▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected ▶ Corrected misstatements that are significant ▶ Material misstatements corrected by management 	Audit results report	
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiries of the Audit and Governance Committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity ▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist ▶ A discussion of any other matters related to fraud 	Audit results report	
Related parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity’s related parties including, when applicable: ▶ Non-disclosure by management ▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions ▶ Disagreement over disclosures ▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations ▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity 	Audit results report	

 Appendix B

Required communications with the Audit and Governance Committee (continued)





 Our Reporting to you

Required communications	 What is reported?	 When and where
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, objectivity and independence</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The principal threats ▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness ▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards ▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence 	Audit Planning Report and Audit Results Report

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Required communications with the Audit and Governance Committee (continued)

 Our Reporting to you		
Required communications	 What is reported?	  When and where
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Management’s refusal for us to request confirmations ▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures 	Audit results report
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Audit findings regarding non-compliance where the non-compliance is material and believed to be intentional. This communication is subject to compliance with legislation on tipping off ▶ Enquiry of the Audit and Governance Committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the Audit and Governance Committee may be aware of 	Audit results report
Internal controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit 	Annual Audit Report - January 2022
Group audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ An overview of the type of work to be performed on the financial information of the components ▶ An overview of the nature of the group audit team’s planned involvement in the work to be performed by the component auditors on the financial information of significant components ▶ Instances where the group audit team’s evaluation of the work of a component auditor gave rise to a concern about the quality of that auditor’s work ▶ Any limitations on the group audit, for example, where the group engagement team’s access to information may have been restricted ▶ Fraud or suspected fraud involving group management, component management, employees who have significant roles in group-wide controls or others where the fraud resulted in a material misstatement of the group financial statements 	Audit planning report Audit results report

Appendix B

Required communications with the Audit and Governance Committee (continued)

			 Our Reporting to you
Required communications	 What is reported?	 When and where	
Representations	Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance	Audit results report	
Material inconsistencies or misstatements	Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	Audit results report	
Auditors report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report 	Audit results report	
Certification work	Summary of certification work undertaken	Annual Auditors Report	

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Additional audit information

Other required procedures during the course of the audit

In addition to the key areas of audit focus outlined in section 2, we have to perform other procedures as required by auditing, ethical and independence standards and other regulations. We outline the procedures below that we will undertake during the course of our audit.

Our responsibilities required by auditing standards

- ▶ Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.
- ▶ Obtaining an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Group and Council's internal control.
- ▶ Evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- ▶ Concluding on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting.
- ▶ Evaluating the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- ▶ Obtaining sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the entities or business activities within the Group to express an opinion on the consolidated financial statements. Reading other information contained in the financial statements, the Audit and Governance Committee reporting appropriately addresses matters communicated by us to the Audit and Governance Committee and reporting whether it is materially inconsistent with our understanding and the financial statements; and
- ▶ Maintaining auditor independence.

Additional audit information (continued)

Purpose and evaluation of materiality

For the purposes of determining whether the accounts are free from material error, we define materiality as the magnitude of an omission or misstatement that, individually or in the aggregate, in light of the surrounding circumstances, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of the users of the financial statements. Our evaluation of it requires professional judgement and necessarily takes into account qualitative as well as quantitative considerations implicit in the definition. We would be happy to discuss with you your expectations regarding our detection of misstatements in the financial statements.

Materiality determines:

- The locations at which we conduct audit procedures to support the opinion given on the Group financial statements; and
- The level of work performed on individual account balances and financial statement disclosures.

The amount we consider material at the end of the audit may differ from our initial determination. At this stage, however, it is not feasible to anticipate all of the circumstances that may ultimately influence our judgement about materiality. At the end of the audit we will form our final opinion by reference to all matters that could be significant to users of the accounts, including the total effect of the audit misstatements we identify, and our evaluation of materiality at that date.

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Sefton Council



STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2020/2021

**As presented to the Audit and
Governance Committee on
15 December 2021**

Agenda Item 4

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1 NARRATIVE REPORT**Introduction**

Sefton is a Metropolitan Borough Council, providing the full range of local authority services to the residents of Sefton. These services include planning, licensing, street cleansing, highways maintenance, and refuse collection, as well as safeguarding vulnerable children and helping older people retain their independence.

Located on the west coast of England between Liverpool in the south and Lancashire in the north / northwest, the Council covers the area from Bootle in the South, through Seaforth, Waterloo, Crosby, Thornton, Altcar, Ince Blundell, Lunt, Freshfield and Formby, up to and including Birkdale, Ainsdale, Southport and Crossens in the North. It also includes the areas of Maghull, Lydiate and parts of Melling and Aintree. It is responsible for providing services to approximately 276,000 residents, local businesses and industry.

As a local authority, Sefton is accountable to Central Government and the electorate. It is responsible for continuously looking to improve its services to ensure that it meets the needs of the local community. Each service must ensure that the local taxpayers are receiving "value for money" by delivering high quality outcomes.

The Council has continued to face significant financial challenges in 2020/2021. As a result of the Government's austerity program, the Council's core grant funding was reduced every year over a ten-year period between 2010/2011 and 2019/20. By 2019/2020 core Government grant funding had reduced by more than 50%. As a result of the cuts in grant funding, local authorities are now more reliant on local sources of income such as Council Tax and Business Rates. During this period the Council has also seen a rise in demand for statutory services, most notably social care services provided to vulnerable adults and children.

For 2020/21, the Government announced an £8.0 million (8.3%) increase in the Sefton Council's core grant funding, which included a £6.7 million increase in Social Care Grant in recognition of the social care pressures faced by local authorities. This was a welcome increase in core grant funding, the first seen since 2010/11, however, core grant funding remained lower than it was in 2015/16 in cash terms and lower than it was in 2017/18 in real terms (based on movements in the CPI Index).

As a result of the previous funding cuts and the increase in demand for statutory services, the Council has needed to identify and agree savings of £233 million within its financial plans between 2010/11 and 2019/20. The impact of these savings has required a radical change to the way that the Council operates and provides services. To facilitate this change, the Council undertook a major consultation exercise in 2016 to identify the areas that local residents thought the Council should prioritise for use of its resources (Sefton 2030 Vision and Council Core Purpose). The outcome of this consultation is summarised later in this document. The Council also invited the LGA to undertake a peer group review which was undertaken in September 2018, the recommendations of this review are being implemented over a number of years.

In order to facilitate the changes required to meet the Council's future priorities, we have developed a Framework for Change program. This program covers three main strands, Economic Growth and Strategic Investment, Council of 2023 and Demand Management. An overview of Framework for Change is also provided later in this document.

The challenges faced by the Council in 2020/21 have been compounded as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, with an exponential increase in demand for services, loss of income from fees and charges and significant reductions from business rates and council tax receipts also being experienced. It has also introduced a great deal of uncertainty about the level of funding the Council will be able to raise from these sources in 2021/22 and future years.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The coronavirus pandemic has affected all our lives over the past 12 months resulting in a most complex set of circumstances. Protecting the health of our staff, members of our community, and visitors to our area, whilst continuing to provide vital services to the most vulnerable has been our priority during this crisis. We have done this in partnership with the Government, other local councils, partner agencies and businesses. We have also provided extensive communications to help our community deal with the effects of the pandemic and are planning for the recovery phase.

Agenda Item 4

Narrative

Response Structures

In the first stages of response, the Council established a Strategic Coordination Group (SCG), chaired by the Chief Executive and comprising the Executive Leadership Team, Heads of Service, key specialists, representatives from each Council service area, and partner organisations such as the police and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The SCG coordinated the Council's response in alignment with the Merseyside Local Resilience Forum (MRF), which has implemented established and well-rehearsed emergency planning governance arrangements to coordinate a multiagency response.

How the Council has responded

Since the lockdown was announced on 23 March 2020, the council has:

- Maintained core services e.g. social care, refuse collection, highways maintenance, public health, registrar services, planning, economic development and business support.
- Closed some services e.g. Libraries, Leisure Centres, Atkinson (Arts Centre and Theatre) during periods of lockdown, with our libraries and the Atkinson continuing to offer online services.
- Offered support to more than 24,000 people identified as clinically extremely vulnerable, including emergency food support, basic care needs and delivery of medicines.
- Opened a virtual contact centre - available 7 days a week, taking more than 9,000 calls regarding access to testing facilities, supermarket referrals, Test & Trace Self-Isolation payments and sent over 50,000 text messages to clinically vulnerable people to direct them to support
- Supported more than 100 care homes. Ensuring that vulnerable adults are safe. Including an immediate resource injection, daily calls to care homes, addressing concerns about future viability. Providing an integrated social work response to vulnerable residents.
- Ordered more than 2 million items of personal protective equipment.
- Supported schools and nurseries that have remained open during lockdown to educate the children of key workers. As well as sourcing over 1,100 laptops to ensure that children and young people could continue to access education and training opportunities
- Arranged temporary accommodation for 140 homeless households.
- Responded quickly to the need to deliver a Free School Meals scheme in place in October, issuing over 5,000 vouchers to eligible families.
- Transitioned staff to home working where possible.
- Redeployed over 500 staff.
- Registered over 1,000 Sefton residents as volunteers, who along with Sefton Councillors have been actively involved in making over 32,000 with those that needed continued welfare support during the lock down periods.
- Delivered in partnership the first mobile covid-19 testing centre in Cheshire and Merseyside, delivered SMART coronavirus testing for people with no symptoms, and co-ordinated a surge testing operation to understand the spread of a South African variant of Covid-19 in three wards in Southport.
- Assisted businesses to operate safely, paid around £68 million of business support grants, and reissued more than 1,500 business rate bills to ensure local businesses benefited from additional new business rate reliefs.
- Awarded more than £2.6 million of COVID-19 council tax hardship discounts to over 15,000 low income households.

Economic Impact

The economic impacts on Sefton has been immediate and severe during the first lock-down, with 27,700 jobs furloughed in the borough, and support being provided to 8,500 self-employed individuals, a substantial increase in those claiming Universal Credit (in excess of the Liverpool City Region average), with a disproportionate impact on the young. The true impact of the pandemic will not be known for several years, however, it is clear that the impact will be felt beyond the medium term and the demand for council services will increase while the council is aiming to support economic recovery.

Impact on Council finances

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on both demand for existing services as well as demand for new services. Adult social care has been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, particularly in relation to the impact on care homes. Children's Services has also experienced and is forecast to continue to experience significant demand increases. This has led to a significant increase in the cost of service provision.

The pandemic has also had a significant impact on the Council's income streams:

- Fees and charges for car parking, leisure facilities, and adult social care have experienced significant reductions as a result of the lockdown and subsequent social distancing rules.
- Business rates income has reduced as businesses fail or struggle to make payments due to the impact of lockdown or reductions in orders and sales due to reduced demand post lockdown.
- Council tax income has reduced as residents lose their jobs or struggle to make payments as a result of reductions in income. The number of working age residents claiming council tax support increased by approximately 1,300 during the first six months of 2020/21.

It is anticipated that it will now be more difficult to achieve the savings targets set out in the Council's 'Framework for Change' programme.

The Government made additional funding available to councils to assist in meeting some of the additional expenditure pressures. Sefton's share of the emergency funding totalled £23.7m during 2020/21.

The impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances in 2020/21 is summarised below:

	£'m
Cost of responding the pandemic	17.0
Loss of income from fees and charges	16.1
Reduced Council Tax receipts	5.1
Reduced Business Rates receipts	4.7
Sub Total	42.9
Government Funding Received	(23.7)
Forecast Shortfall before income compensation	19.2

Regular updates have been reported to the Government and Council Members throughout the year.

An overview of Sefton Council

Sefton Councillors in 2020/2021

The Council is composed of 66 councillors (three for each of the Borough's 22 wards), with one-third elected three years in every four. The political analysis of the councillors as at 31 March 2021 is identified below:

Labour	41
Liberal Democrat	12
Conservative	6
Independent	5
Vacant	2

Local elections were suspended in 2020 as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, as a result there was no opportunity to elect new Council members to the vacant wards before May 2021.

Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their ward. The overriding duty of councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

Councillors have to agree to follow a Code of Conduct to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties. The Audit and Governance Committee trains and advises them on the Code of Conduct which is set out in Chapter 2 of the Constitution.

Management Structure

Councillors

Along with many other authorities, a Leader and Cabinet management structure has been adopted. The Council appoints the Leader of the Council, approves those matters which are part of the Council's policy framework and provides an opportunity through questioning and debate for the Cabinet to be held to account.

The Cabinet has to make decisions which are in line with the Council's overall policies and budget. If it wishes to make a decision which is outside the budget or policy framework, this must be referred to the Council as a whole to decide.

Individual Members of the Cabinet make decisions on service issues within their area of responsibility (portfolio) under delegated powers set out in Chapter 5 of the Constitution.

There are four Overview and Scrutiny Committees which support the work of the Cabinet and the Council as a whole. They allow citizens to have a greater say in Council matters by holding public inquiries into matters of local concern:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health)
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)

These lead to reports and recommendations which advise the Cabinet and the Council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery. The Committees also monitor the decisions of the Cabinet.

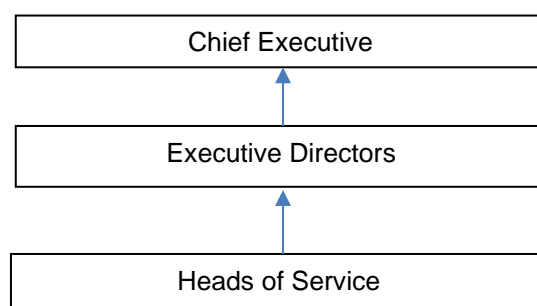
There is also the opportunity for the public to ask questions or submit petitions directly to the Council.

The Leader of the Labour Group, Councillor Ian Maher, is the Leader of the Council.

Strategic Management

The senior management structure aims to reflect the need for departments to collaboratively work together as 'One Council' and thereby maximise capacity and avoid duplication. In support of the politicians, the senior management structure is identified below.

The posts shown below formed the Strategic Leadership Board in January 2021.



Executive Directors: (1) Adult Social Care and Health, (2) Children's Social Care and Education, (3) Corporate Resources and Customer Services, (4) People.

Heads of Service: (1) Adult Social Care, (2) Children's Social Care, (3) Communities, (4) Commercial Development, (5) Economic Growth and Housing, (6) Education (7) Highways and Public Protection, (8) Locality Services, (9) Public Health & Wellbeing, and (10) Strategic Support.

The changes to the Strategic Leadership Board in recent years have reduced the number of heads of service reporting directly to the Chief Executive. The changes are intended to provide for clearer reporting lines (with appropriate span of control) and concentration on key strategic areas.

Other Employees

At the end of 2020/2021 the Council employed 2,772 people (full time equivalents, excluding school-based employees). As part of the process to reduce costs to ensure a balanced budget, roles and responsibilities have changed and the number of employees has reduced considerably over recent years. Since 2010, when the austerity measures were imposed, the Council has reduced the number of full-time equivalent staff by 24%.

Sefton 2030 Vision and Council Core Purpose

In November 2016, the Council approved the Sefton 2030 Vision and the Council Core purpose. This was developed following an extensive consultation with residents, businesses and many visitors to the borough. In their thousands, these groups told the Council they want to be involved in planning the future, what matters to them and how all stakeholders need to work together to make the vision happen. The Vision will enable the Council and partners to demonstrate the connected thinking and action. It will also enable the Council to bring about meaningful and measurable plans with targets, timescales and a performance management framework.

In supporting the delivery of the Vision, the Council approved the following refined Core Purpose to articulate its role in delivering the 2030 vision.

- **Protect the most vulnerable:** i.e. those people who have complex care needs with no capacity to care for themselves and no other networks to support them. For those who are the most vulnerable we will have a helping role to play, we will challenge others to ensure we all protect the most vulnerable and where we need to, we will intervene to help improve lives.
- **Facilitate confident and resilient communities:** The Council will be less about doing things to and for residents and communities and more about creating the capacity and motivation for people to get involved, do it for themselves and help one another. We will create an environment in which residents are less reliant on public sector support and which have well developed and effective social support.
- **Commission, broker and provide core services:** The Council will directly deliver fewer services but will act as a broker and commissioner of services which meet the defined needs of communities, are person-centred and localised where possible. We will deliver services which can't be duplicated elsewhere or where we add value.
- **Place-leadership and influencer:** Making sure what we and what others do are in the best interests of Sefton and its residents and has a contributing role to the 2030 vision of the borough. This includes strong leadership and influencing partner organisations to work towards common goals and building pride in the borough.
- **Drivers of change and reform:** The Council will play a key role in leading change and reform to improve outcomes for Sefton residents and continuously improve the borough.
- **Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:** That is, people having the level of money they need to take care of themselves and their family; creating the conditions where relatively low unemployment and high income prevail, leading to high purchasing power; and having enough money to invest in infrastructure.
- **Generate income for social reinvestment:** The Council will develop a commercial nature and look to what it can do either by itself or with others to generate income and profit that can be reinvested into delivering social purpose.
- **Cleaner and Greener:** The Council will work with others to maintain Sefton's natural beauty and ensure that its many assets provide a contribution to Sefton's economy, peoples wellbeing and the achievement of the 2030 Vision.

Governance / VFM / Risk

The Council is required to review its governance arrangements on an annual basis, along with its arrangements for achieving economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and ensuring it is identifying and managing risk effectively.

The annual review has been undertaken and the outcome of that review is reported in the annual governance statement (AGS) which is published as part of the statement of accounts. A copy of the AGS can be found in section 11 of this document.

Agenda Item 4

Narrative

LGA Peer Group Review

In September 2018, a six-strong team of expert local government officers and councillors were invited in by the council and spent four days talking to over 140 staff, councillors of all parties, and public and private partners.

The peer review team considered five core themes; understanding local context and priority setting, leadership of place, financial planning and viability, organisational leadership and governance and capacity to deliver.

Throughout the review, they commented on how impressed they were by the energy, commitment and appetite for change held by the workforce which they felt put the council in a strong position to continue its transformation journey and effectively play its role in achieving the Sefton 2030 vision.

Their independent findings also praised the council for listening to and serving its communities well through a challenging period of austerity and highlighted the council's knowledge of Sefton.

They recognised Sefton's combined strong political and managerial leadership as a key driver of success in managing a 51% reduction in grant funding through effective budget planning.

In a full feedback report, the peer review team suggested some areas of improvement for the council to consider going forward, including prioritising the refresh of the core purpose, accelerating work on a local economic growth strategy and clearer parameters around commercialisation.

The Council's Cabinet agreed that their recommendations be accepted, and authorised officers to develop an associated action plan; this plan was agreed by Cabinet in January 2019. Since then a progress report and updated action plan has been considered and approved by Cabinet in March 2020.

The LGA were to due follow up the initial review with a visit in 2020 to assess progress against their recommendations, however, this has been postponed until later in 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Framework for Change 2020 programme

In March 2021, the Council approved the continuation of the Framework for Change 2020 Programme as part of its budget setting process along with the commencement of all appropriate activity required to deliver the programme as it develops.

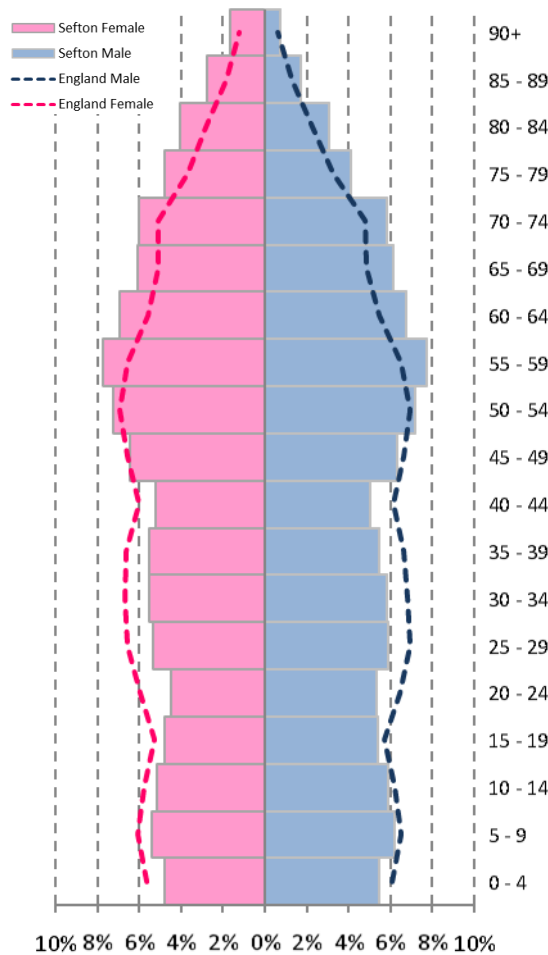
This is a comprehensive and ambitious programme that seeks to support the delivery of the Council's core purpose and vision for 2030. The programme is complex and spans a number of financial years. It aims to develop new ways of working that will improve efficiency and deliver a balanced and sustainable budget.

The Framework for Change 2020 programme is focussed on the following themes:

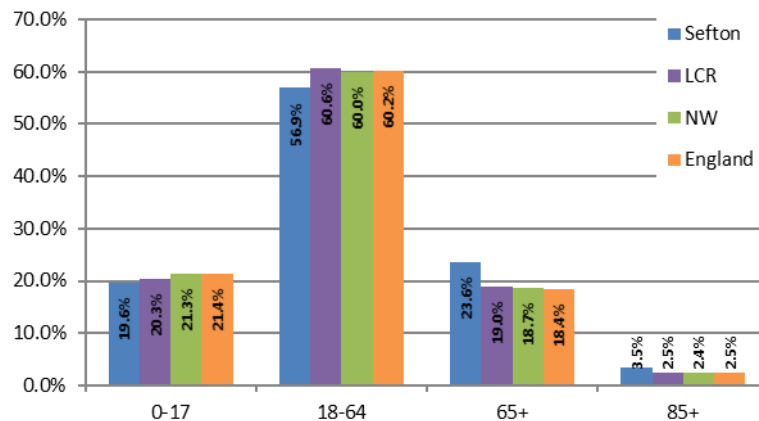
Theme	Workstreams
Council of 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Service inputs and new operating models- New Ways of Working and Taking Advantage of Technology- Workforce Development- Organisation design across the Council
Demand Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Localities - further embedding early intervention and prevention- Children's Social Care – Delivering the Children's Plan- Adults' Social Care- Streetscene- Education Excellence- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)
Economic Growth and Strategic Investment	Town Centre Regeneration, Large Employment Sites, Strategic Transport Schemes, Coast Access Gateways, Industry sector development, Housing, Employment and Skills, and Investment.

Age Profile of Sefton Residents

The age profile of residents is important to local authorities as it influences where / what services are provided. The latest Office for National Statistics Mid-Year Estimates for 2019 indicated that Sefton's total population was 276,410. The figures also showed that 24% of Sefton's residents are aged 65 and over; this is above the Liverpool City Region - LCR (19%), North West (19%) and national average (18%). Sefton is ranked 70th out of 320 local authorities for the rate of residents aged 65 or over. The high proportion of older residents has an impact on the level of resources that the Authority requires for elderly care provision. Sefton is in the highest 25% of Local Authorities for the proportions of elderly residents across the country.



Comparison of Sefton's Age Profile to LCR, NW & England (2019)



At 24%, Sefton has the 7th highest proportion of over 65's across the 39 North West local authorities and is highest of the six Liverpool City Region (LCR) authorities.

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Sefton is the 39th highest LA for the proportion of residents aged 85 and over throughout England and is the 5th highest in the North West, at over 3% of the overall population, Sefton is again higher than the LCR, North West and national proportions of 2%. The Borough is again the highest of the six LCR authorities.

The number of residents over 65 is projected to increase steadily between 2018 and 2043. For males, the increase is projected to be 36% (28,132 to 26,617) and an increase for females of 31% (35,900 to 46,938). This means an overall 65+ population increase of 36% rising from 62,600 in 2016 to 85,000 by 2037.

Greatest increases are amongst those aged 85 and above with an overall increase of 73% (9,309 to 16,134). The male over 85 population rising by 104% (3,146 to 6,418) between 2018 and 2043. For females, the increase is projected to be 58% (6,163 to 9,716).

The rate of increase in the over 65 population of 33% compared to overall population increases of just 6% means that by 2043 approximately one in three Sefton residents will be age 65 or over.

Projected reductions in working age population (16 to 65-year olds) of 3% compared to increases in the over 65 population will mean the proportion of the adult population of the borough that is of pensionable age will be 29% by 2043, compared to 23% in 2018.

Source: Mid-Year Population Estimates 2019 / Population Projections 2018

Performance information

Core Funding

Business Rates: The Government increased the standard business rate multiplier by 1.6% in 2020/21. The Council billed £33.163m of business rates charges in 2020/21 (net of reliefs), this was £38.900m lower than the net amount billed in 2019/20. The reduction in business rates income is largely due to the expansion of retail discounts announced by the Government in March 2020 in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. The council collected 96.4% of the amount billed in the year, down from 98.3% in 2019/20. A deficit of £47.136m is reported in the Collection Fund in 2020/21 of which Sefton Council's retained share is £46.665m (99.0%). A large proportion of this deficit is due to the increased amount of retail discounts which are funded by Government grants of £38.784m leaving an underlying deficit of £7.881m which is due to a reduction in rateable values as well as increase in the provisions made for non-payment and appeals. The Government have announced a Coronavirus Tax Income Guarantee Scheme Grant that is expected to cover £3.654m of the retained business rates losses, however, the grant allocations have yet to be confirmed. The remaining deficit of £4.227m will need to be recovered over the next three years (2021/22 to 2023/24).

Council Tax: The Council increased its council tax band D charge by £62.73 (3.99%) in 2020/21. This included a social care precept of 2.0%. The Council billed £166.078m of council tax charges in 2020/21 (including precepts) of which £157.733m (95.0%) was collected in the year, down from 95.8% in 2019/20. A deficit of £4.622m is reported in the Collection Fund in 2020/21 of which Sefton Council's share is £3.887m (84.1%). The deficit is largely due to the impact of Coronavirus which resulted in an increase in exemptions, single occupancy discounts, and council tax support claimants in the year, as well as an increase in the provision for non-payment. The deficit will need to be recovered over the next three years (2021/22 to 2023/24).

Government Grant Funding: The Government's Austerity programme resulted in a reduction in Sefton's core grant funding of more than 50% between 2010/2011 and 2019/2020. During 2020/2021, Sefton's core grant funding (including Settlement Funding Assessment, New Homes Bonus, Improved Better Care Fund, and Social Care Grant) increased by £8.0m (8.3%), which included a £6.7 million increase in Social Care Grant in recognition of the increased social care pressures faced by local authorities. This the first increase in core grant funding since 2010/11. However, core grant funding remains lower than it was in 2015/16 in cash terms and lower than it was in 2017/18 in real terms (based on movements in the CPI Index).

Future Funding: In November 2020, the Chancellor announced a one-year Spending Review that set out the funding envelope for Government Departments for 2021/22. Consequently, the local government finance settlement announced in February 2021 covered only one year and included a significant amount of one-off funding. This leaves Sefton's future funding levels uncertain and makes medium-term financial planning difficult. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased the financial pressures on both national and local government with the resulting economic downturn placing even more uncertainty on finances. Despite this unprecedented uncertainty, the Council has prepared and agreed a Medium-Term Financial Plan for the period 2021/22 to 2024/25 setting out its planned approach to funding service provision over the next four years. This plan will be subject to revision as additional information becomes available.

Economy

The Borough has a mixed economy ranging from industry, commerce and tourism. The east bank of the Port of Liverpool is actually in Sefton, not Liverpool. The opening of "Liverpool 2", the new deep-water container terminal is expected to provide many opportunities to improve the economy further.

Sefton is part of the Liverpool City Region and the embryonic "Northern Power House" which is expected to provide further impetus to the local economy in the future.

Latest available key data on the Sefton economy

- The unemployment rate in Sefton in February 2021 was 7.1%, putting the Borough in the top 25% of LAs nationally. Sefton is on par with the unemployment rate seen across the North West yet is higher than the national rate (6.6%). Compared to the previous year the number of unemployed people in Sefton has increased by approximately 5,500 and is at its highest level for the past 10 years.
- The economic activity rate in Sefton is 77.5%, lower than the 79.0% seen across Great Britain
- There are currently 126,400 Sefton residents in employment (75.7% employment rate).
- In 2020, the average full-time earnings for Sefton residents is £572 per week, or £29,749 per annum, 2.6% lower than the Great British average.
- The National Living Wage increased to £8.91 per hour in April 2021 for over-23s only.
- 53.4% of residents are educated to NVQ Level 3 or above.
- Sefton's Rank of Average Score in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 was 89th out of 317 local authorities (317 being the least deprived).
- There are 38 Sefton LSOA's (Lower Super Output Area – used in census collection) in the most deprived 10% of LSOA's across England. Seven of the 38 LSOA's are in the most deprived 1% of LSOA's nationally, six are in Linacre Ward; the other is in Derby Ward.
- 50 out of 189 LSOA's have a deprivation score less than in 2015 indicating that deprivation has reduced in the area. Meaning nearly three quarters of the areas have an increased deprivation score, indicating they have become more deprived.
- Sefton is ranked 89th out of 317 local authorities for deprivation affecting Children and 72nd for deprivation affecting Older people in 2019.
- 31 LSOA's across Sefton fall in to the most deprived 10% areas for children, with 31 being in the most deprived 10% for older people. Five of the 31 fall within the top 1% of deprived areas nationally for children (located in Linacre – 3, Derby -1 and Litherland -1 wards). One LSOA is in the top 1% of deprived areas in England for older people (located in Debry ward).
- 80 of Sefton LSOA's have seen the child related deprivation score (and therefore the deprivation affecting children) increase from 2015 to 2019, with 97 Sefton LSOA's seeing increases in older people related deprivation.

Source: NOMIS Claimant count by sex and age February 2021, ONS Annual Population Survey October 2019 September 2020 / January to December 2019, ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – Residents Analysis 2020, IMD 2015/19

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Social Care

Sefton's Adult Social Care dealt with some 22,000 contacts during 20/21, 31% of these related to new clients. Sefton supported some 6,000 clients in long term community or residential services during the year, along with providing support to some 400 carers.

At the 31st March 2020, there were 2,270 Children in Need, a rate of 419.9 per 10,000 population, considerably higher than that of England (323.7) and Sefton's Statistical Neighbours (370.9). At the same time 258 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan which was 47.7 per 10,000 population again higher than the national figure (42.8), but lower than the Borough's Statistical neighbour (48.4). With 566 children recorded as Looked After as at 31st March 2020, as with Children in Need and Child Protection Plans, the Children Looked after rate is considerably higher than that seen nationally (104.7 compared to 66.6 per 10,000 children) the Statistical Neighbour group was also lower (86.4).

The Extension Year of the Sefton Turnaround Programme was completed on 31st March 2021. The target of 357 families was reached with the cohort being 'turned around' meaning that the LA could draw down funding from the government of £800 per family. This generated £285 600 worth of funding to support interventions provided by Social Workers to support families. The second extension year commenced on 1st April 2021 and is due to end on 31st March 2022. The target is to turn 357 families round within the timeframe which will generate a further £285 600 of funding. The name and marketing of the Turnaround Programme has now been changed to the 'Supporting Families' Programme.

[Sources: Sefton Adult Social Care, B1 Children in Need and Episodes of Need 2020, D1 Child Protection Plans 2020, LA – Children looked after numbers and rates per 10,000 children aged under 18 years 2020, LAIT April 2021, Turnaround Families Database]

Tourism

Sefton has over 22 miles of coastline boasting a number of beautiful beaches and stunning natural beauty. Attractions range from Gormley's "Iron Men" on the beach in Crosby, to the Pinewoods (and red squirrels) in Formby, to the iconic attraction of Southport, with its elegant shopping in classic Victorian surroundings.

Southport has hotels, attractions, restaurants and pubs, with the oldest cast iron pier in the UK stretching across Southport beach. It is rumoured that Napoleon re-modelled certain parts of Paris based on his knowledge of Southport during his stay in the town back in the mid-19th century. Southport also hosts a superb events programme including the annual Air Show, Fireworks Championship and Flower Show while Sefton is also home of the Grand National.

There are many world class golf courses within Sefton, Royal Birkdale regularly hosts The Open while Hillside Golf club has recently hosted The British Masters. The area's reputation for golf is known nationwide and is known as "England's Golfing Capital" due to the number and variety of top-quality courses. This attracts visitors from the across the UK and many from the United States, Europe and Japan.

Technology / Systems

The Council is now in the third year of a five-year contract with Agilisys Ltd for the provision of IT services to the Council. This agreement has enabled the Council to reduce the annual costs of IT services, and it will also allow the Council to benefit from the innovation and best practice which Agilisys has implemented for other local authorities.

Sefton Council has completed an ambitious IT Transformation Programme, which has seen the deployment of new and upgraded end user devices to officers, the introduction of collaboration software such as Office 365, SharePoint and Microsoft Teams.

The COVID-19 pandemic has expedited the Council's ongoing move towards agile working, and the Council is using new IT initiatives to support this. A new virtual Contact Centre was implemented at short notice in 2020 so that Council staff can still take customer calls whilst working from home, and the Council's main telephony system is due to move to a cloud-hosted solution during 2021 so that calls can be made and received irrespective of location.

2021 will also see the second phase of the migration of Council systems and data to cloud hosting.

An improved broadband offer to Sefton schools has been implemented, which provides faster connectivity and better value for money.

Councillors have been issued with new mobile devices and technology which allows them to conduct their duties more efficiently by granting access to key information and electronic communication with citizens whilst on the move. This has resulted in a reduction in the use of paper and printing for Council meeting documentation. In addition, Council meetings are currently being conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams.

The Council is also looking to rationalise its use of systems to leverage use of existing investments, deploy better integration between systems and reduce the overall spend in this area. Continued leverage of the Council's Microsoft software is constantly being explored and progressed; this provides efficiency improvements to the Council and ensures we maximise our financial investment.

The Council continues to improve and develop its digital offering to customers. The Council website will be re-designed in 2021, and the deployment of a new digital Customer Experience platform is in progress, which will increase and enhance self-service on a variety of services 24 hours a day.

The Council is actively exploring the design and implementation of assistive living technology which will allow older and/or vulnerable adults to live independently at home.

Financial Overview

Revenue Budget Process / Council Tax

Unlike in previous years, the Council was unable to formulate a multi-year budget plan due to the one year Local Government Finance Settlement and the lack of clarity over future settlements. The Council identified a budget shortfall for 2020/2021 of £9.145m. Specific options to contribute to the budget shortfall in 2020/2021 were identified, including a 3.99% increase in Council Tax (including a 2% increase for the Adult Social Care Precept). Councillors were reminded that the use of one-off resources should only occur in setting a robust financial plan when there is a clear short-term requirement and that these are not used to avoid making budget savings.

The Council experienced significant budget pressures in some service areas, particularly Children's Social Care, Children with Disabilities, Home to School Transport and Locality Services. However, the Council did identify underspending in other areas as well as implementing various mitigating actions during the year to ensure there would be no overspend, particularly in light of the financial pressures due to COVID19. These measures enabled the outturn position to be a net underspend of £2.794m.

Financial risks up to 2020/2021

The budget reductions identified in the budget for 2020/2021 highlight the growing level of financial risks the Council will be facing over the coming years and the level of risk which it is possible to mitigate. The financial forecasts themselves are only estimates of future political, economic, environmental and demographic forecasts which contain many variables and degrees of uncertainty.

The budget proposals made to date contain some risks, given the extent and the impact of the £233m savings Sefton had faced to March 2020. The Council has been made aware of the consultations conducted since 2011 in determining the equality impact and risks of the reductions and reconfigurations of services. All options require close monitoring of implementation and delivery and any non-achievement reported and corrected in a timely way.

The 2020/2021 budget represented the eleventh successive year of budget reductions for Sefton Council and has required more challenging solutions to achieve a balanced budget for 2020/2021.

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Delivering savings over such a long period has had a significant impact on the delivery of Council services. In developing the approach to delivering the savings it was important to balance the delivery of savings with the protection of those services which contribute the most to the delivery of the Vision and Core Purpose.

Achieving the ambitions of Sefton 2030 also requires the Council to be financially sustainable, to ensure services align with the core purpose and that the Council works with partners to achieve better outcomes.

In order to meet this challenge, the Council has developed a 'Framework for Change' which is comprised of the following pillars which will help the Council deliver against its stated objectives including financial sustainability. These are:

- Economic Growth and Strategic Investment;
- Council of 2023;
- Demand Management.

Each of these themes will contribute towards delivering the Sefton 2030 Vision and a financially sustainable Council.

Revenue Financial Performance of the Council 2020/2021

Non-School General Fund Net Expenditure

The General Fund encompasses expenditure relating to the day-to-day running of the Council. Transactions relating to Schools' delegated budgets are included within the General Fund but because Schools are entitled to retain any year-end balances for future use, the General Fund balances are analysed according to whether or not they belong to Schools.

On 27 February 2020, the Council approved a revenue budget for 2020/2021 of £225.885m, which included £1.179m relating to the expenditure of Parish Councils. At that time, it was anticipated that balances for non-school budgets would total £7.539m at 31 March 2021. As a result of an overspend of £0.555m in 2019/2020 the anticipated year-end balances position was revised to £6.984m. The 2020/2021 Budget assumed an increase in general balances of £1.5m as part of a strategy to increase balances and ensure financial resilience.

Overall, actual expenditure for 2020/2021 on General Fund services (excluding Schools' delegated expenditure) was £2.794m lower than the Base Estimates which has increased General Fund Balances further.

The Authority's reported Non-School General Fund balances at 31 March 2021 are therefore £11.278m as shown in the following table:

Non-School General Fund Balances	£m
Actual Non-School General Fund Balances at 31 March 2020	-6.984
Plus Budgeted Contribution to Balances	-1.500
Plus underspend in comparison to the 2019/2020 Base Estimate:	-2.794
Actual Non-School General Fund Balances at 31 March 2021	-11.278

A comparison of actual expenditure to budgeted expenditure is shown below:

Net Revenue Expenditure	Budget	Net Expenditure Chargeable to General Fund Balances (per EFA)	Adjustments for Internal Recharges / Earmarked Reserves	Outturn Expenditure against Budget for Monitoring Purposes	Variance
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Services					
Strategic Management	3.136	1.042	1.890	2.932	-0.204
Adult Social Care	94.800	99.936	-8.125	91.811	-2.989
Children's Social Care	34.977	40.981	-1.227	39.754	4.777
Communities	18.359	22.508	-3.809	18.699	0.340
Corporate Resources	8.501	30.708	-23.020	7.688	-0.813
Economic Growth & Housing	5.659	5.747	-0.400	5.347	-0.312
Education Excellence	9.783	9.154	0.623	9.777	-0.006
Education Excellence - Schools	0.000	-4.977	4.977	0.000	0.000
Health and Wellbeing	18.498	16.405	1.519	17.924	-0.574
Highways & Public Protection	10.553	9.380	0.816	10.196	-0.357
Locality Services	12.240	13.491	-1.067	12.424	0.184
Other Services	3.123	2.284	0.745	3.029	0.006
Total Service Net Expenditure	219.529	246.659	-27.078	219.581	0.052
Budget Pressures Fund	1.000	-	-	-	-1.000
In Year Savings	5.411	-	-	-	-5.411
Corporate Items	8.940	20.701	-7.728	12.973	4.033
Levies	34.701	34.701	-	34.701	-
Parish Precepts	1.179	1.179	-	1.179	-
Total Net Expenditure	270.760	303.240	-34.806	268.434	-2.326
Financed by:					
Council Tax Payers	-137.856	-137.856	-	-137.856	-
Business Rates Top-Up	-21.249	-21.249	-	-21.249	-
Retained Business Rates	-66.779	-66.779	-	-66.779	-
General Government Grants	-46.376	-142.313	95.469	-46.844	-0.468
Total Financing	-272.260	-368.197	95.469	-272.728	-0.468
Amount Funded from / contributed to (-) General Balances	-1.500	-64.957	60.663	-4.294	-2.794

Note: The total of the figures shown above for Other Services and Corporate Items are categorised differently in the Expenditure & Funding Analysis (total of Corporate Unallocated Costs and Financing and Investment Income & Expenditure)

For clarity, brief definitions some services are noted below to help the reader understand what some of the functions that are provided: -

- Communities – Services include amenities and support for local neighbourhoods, youths, libraries and arts, sports and families.
- Locality Services – The delivery of key services including refuse collection / recycling, street cleansing, burials and cremation, school meals crossing patrols, parks, coast and countryside.

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The main variances relate to four key areas:

Adult Social Care – Adult Social Care underspent in 2020/21 by £2.989m. Reports to Cabinet during the year highlighted that there were a number of significant assumptions and uncertainties relating to COVID-19 that would impact on the outturn position at the year-end. Detailed work was undertaken on the level of expenditure relating to hospital discharges due to COVID-19 which will be funded by the CCGs from the allocations of funding they have received for this purpose from the Government, and how much will need to be funded by the Council. Similarly, detailed work was undertaken to evaluate the financial impact of the pandemic on the service's residential and day care services budgets. The impact of these two areas have resulted in the underspend for 2020/21. The monthly budget monitoring reports later in 2020/21 made reference to these issues and an underspend of £1.500m was included in the forecast pending finalisation of the issues.

Children's Social Care: Children's Social Care overspent in 2020/21 by £4.777m. This level of overspend was forecast consistently through the year and relates to the significant overspend on Placements and Packages. This budget is demand led, and as such, is particularly volatile, depending on the increasing numbers of children becoming looked after and where they are placed (the number of looked after children increased from 578 at the start of the year to 617 by the end of the year).

Corporate Resources - The surplus of £0.813m for Corporate Resources primarily relates to savings made against staffing budgets which is due to posts being held vacant in order to contribute to the overall budget pressures faced by the Council. In addition, the surplus includes savings of £0.337m due to elections being postponed in May 2020.

Budget Pressures Fund / In Year Savings - The Council implemented a remedial plan to ensure the Council's in-year budget didn't overspend. This included the delivery of the in-year saving proposals and the use of the Budget Pressures Fund.

Corporate Items: A variance of £4.033m is mainly due to the deficit relating to the Strand Shopping Centre as a consequence of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the transfer of £1.5m into an Earmarked Reserve to support the recruitment of additional staffing to support Children's Social Care in 2021/2022.

Schools

In accordance with the Fair Funding Scheme for Financing Schools, individual schools are able to carry forward any underspend on their budgets. Conversely, an overspend against budgets become the first call on future available resources. Net expenditure on schools, whether incurred directly from delegated budgets or spent against centrally retained budgets by the LEA in support of schools, is funded from the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

The DSG was underspent by £4.853m in 2020/2021. This comprised an underspend of £4.641m across Individual Schools' delegated budgets, and an increase in the level of DSG school funds held by the Local Authority during 2020/2021 in respect of the Supply Teachers scheme (£0.220m) and the Business Rates scheme (reduction of £0.008m). Movements in Schools' balances during 2020/2021 can be summarised as follows:

<u>Schools' Balances</u>	<u>£m</u>
Schools' balances as at 1 April 2020	-10.823
Overspend on Schools' Delegated Budgets	-4.853
Schools' balances at 31 March 2021	-15.676

The Council's Centrally Retained DSG reserves are separate to its Maintained Schools' balances. These are in respect of Schools' Central Support services; Early Years (non-schools) provision and High Needs (non-schools) provision. The net opening balance of these reserves, as at 1 April 2020, was a deficit of £4.385m. During 2020/2021, this deficit has grown considerably, mostly due to the significant overspending of High Needs. This has taken the reserves into a net deficit position of £6.615m (see below).

<u>Centrally Retained DSG Balances</u>	<u>1 April 2020</u>	<u>Movement 2020/2021</u>	<u>31 March 2021</u>
	<u>£m</u>	<u>£m</u>	<u>£m</u>
Schools Block	-0.544	0.023	-0.521
Early Years Block	-0.505	-0.608	-1.113
High Needs Block	5.434	2.815	8.249
	4.385	2.230	6.615

DfE permit Local Authorities to carry forward a deficit on their DSG Centrally Retained balances, without any obligations on behalf of Local Authorities to support a deficit position out of non-school Council balances. This position on the earmarking of Centrally Retained DSG Balances is a result of the statutory requirements introduced for 2020/21.

They DfE have offered to work more closely and in cooperation with Local Authorities, to support them in trying to reduce spending, particularly across High Needs, where most Authorities have been struggling to manage. The first requirement will be for the Authority to have plans to balance their in-year spending. They will still be required to provide evidence, at the DfE's request, that overspending issues have been reported regularly to Schools Forum; and that measures are in place to arrest the situation, at least, over a three-year planned period. It has been acknowledged that the full recovery of accumulated deficits however, may not be possible, even over many years, and it is not certain at this stage, whether the DfE may consider, on a case by case basis, some extra funding, to write down some, or all, of their accumulated deficits in this respect.

With the review of High Needs underway, and the actions being taken as explained above, together with the increased settlement for High Needs funding in 2021/22, work will continue to bring expenditure in line with the budget available and then start to repay the existing deficit so as to reduce the financial risk to the Council.

Capital Strategy / Programme 2020/2021

The Capital Programme Capital Allocation 2021/2022 report was approved by Council on 27 February 2020. As part of Central Government's austerity measures the capital grants previously available to local authorities have reduced year on year. As a result, the previous flexibility afforded to councils to establish a single capital pot from which capital and investment decisions could be made has been eliminated. The three remaining grant allocations received by the Council are in respect of schools, transport and social care (i.e. Better Care Fund) and due to the funding conditions of these grants are utilised within the relevant services.

Capital requirements that reflect the councils Framework for Change programme are considered by the Strategic Capital Investment Group (SCIG). SCIG consists of Cabinet members and its purpose is to review and assess capital funding plans. Recommendations are made to Cabinet and Council for a Capital Investment Plan.

Capital expenditure is principally funded from four areas:

Capital Grants and Contributions – grants from Central Government and other grant funding bodies such as European grants, lottery funding and contributions from private developers.

Capital Receipts – proceeds from the sale of the Council's capital assets.

Revenue – financing capital expenditure from the Council's revenue resources.

Prudential Borrowing – this is external borrowing undertaken by the Council that must be repaid. The Council will only borrow where plans are sustainable, affordable, prudent and offer value for money.

The Capital Programme 2020/2021 report highlighted Government grant funding for 2020/2021 of £3.879m for schools, £5.845m for transport and £4.251m for Better Care Fund, giving a total grant allocation of £13.975m. Of the £3.879m for schools, £0.347m was ring-fenced Devolved Formula Capital Grant, £0.167m, High Need Special Educational Needs and Disability Grant, £1.518m Capital Maintenance Grant and £1.847m Basic Needs Grant. Of the £5.845m for transport, £0.990m was the Local Integrated Transport Block Grant, £2.298m was the Highway Maintenance Block Grant, £0.405m

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was the Additional Key Route Network Grant, £1.085 was the Sustainable Urban Development Fund and £1.067 was the Merseyside Local Growth Fund STEP.

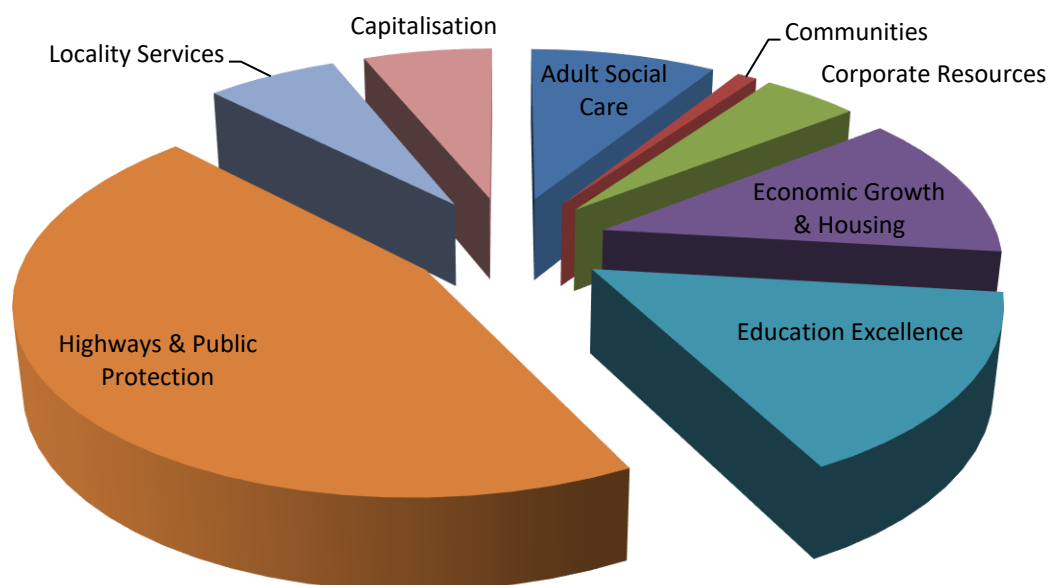
Capital Expenditure in 2020/2021

In 2020/2021 the Authority spent £26.203m on capital projects. Examples of some of the major areas of spend include expenditure on Schools programme (£4.067m), Highways Integrated schemes (£4.447m), Highways Carriageway maintenance (£3.784m), Highways Winter Service Facility (£2.632m) and Adult Social Care (£2.330m).

The analysis of capital spending (by departmental categories) and its financing is summarised below-

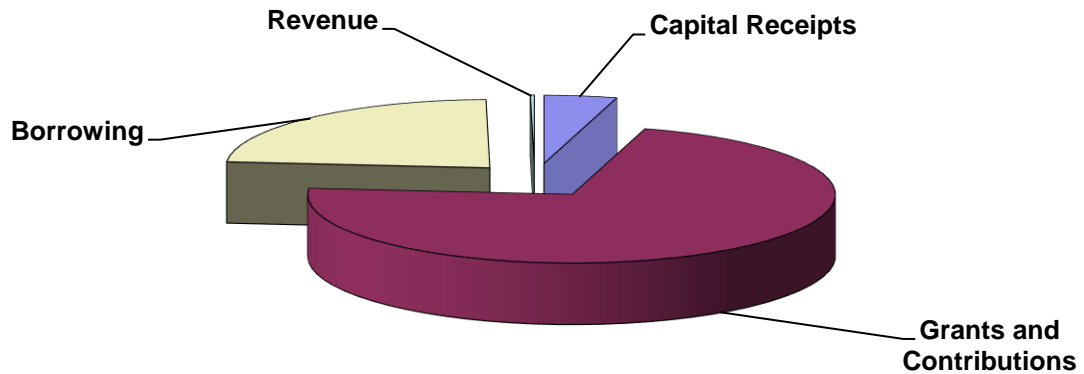
Sefton's Capital Expenditure for 2020/2021

	<u>£m</u>	<u>%</u>
Adult Social Care	2.330	9
Communities	0.252	1
Corporate Resources	1.213	5
Economic Growth & Housing	3.245	12
Education Excellence	4.067	16
Highways & Public Protection	11.839	45
Locality Services	1.641	6
Capitalisation	1.616	6
	<u>26.203</u>	<u>100</u>



Financing of Sefton's 2020/2021 Capital Expenditure

<u>Source of Finance</u>	<u>£m</u>	<u>%</u>
Capital Receipts	1.164	5
Grants and Contributions	18.860	72
Revenue	0.062	0
Prudential Borrowing	6.117	23
	<u>26.203</u>	<u>100</u>



Total capital expenditure consists of additions to fixed assets of £22.153m (Property, Plant and Equipment - £21.074m, Investment Properties - £1.079m,) and revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute of £4.050m.

An explanation of the Financial Statements

The Statement of Accounts is intended to give clear information about the Authority's finances. It is intended to answer:

- What did the Authority's services cost in the year of account?
- Where did the money come from to pay for these services?
- What were the Authority's assets and liabilities at the year-end?

Wherever possible the contents have been written in plain English and technical terms have been used sparingly. Where the use of technical terms has been unavoidable, a simple explanation has been included in the Glossary (see pages 161 to 168).

The Authority is required by law to follow proper accounting practices and this Statement of Accounts attempts to present fairly the financial position and transactions of the Authority.

The Statement was certified by the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services on 10 December 2021.

In accordance with recommended practice, the Authority's Accounts present:

(a) Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (page 27)

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Authorities raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with statutory requirements; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in both the Expenditure and Funding Analysis and the Movement in Reserves Statement.

(b) Movement in Reserves Statement (page 29)

This statement shows the movement from the start of the year to the end on the different reserves held by the authority, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and other 'unusable reserves'. The Statement shows how the movements in year of the authority's reserves are broken down between gains and losses incurred in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and the statutory adjustments required to return to the amounts chargeable to council tax (or rents) for the year. The Net Increase/Decrease line shows the statutory General Fund Balance movements in the year following those adjustments.

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(c) Balance Sheet (pages 31 - 32)

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at 31 March 2021 of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Authority. The net assets of the Authority (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Authority. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category of reserves are usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the authority may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves, and any statutory limitations on their use. The second category of reserves are those that the Authority is not able to use to provide services.

(d) Cash Flow Statement (page 33)

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Authority during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Authority generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities.

(e) Notes to the Financial Statements - Expenditure and Funding Analysis (page 35 - 36)

This analysis shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources (government grants, rents, council tax and business rates) by local authorities in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by authorities in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. It also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between the council's directorates/services/departments. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

(f) Other Notes to the Financial Statements (pages 37 - 110)

The notes to the Movement in Reserves Statement, Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Balance Sheet and Cash Flow Statement. It also includes the accounting policies employed by Sefton to comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice of Local Authority Accounting subject to any exceptions detailed in the note.

(g) Collection Fund (pages 111 - 114)

This statement that reflects the statutory obligation for billing authorities to maintain a separate Collection Fund in accordance with section 89 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1992).

The Collection Fund shows the transactions of the Billing Authority in relation to the collection of Council Tax and Non-Domestic rates and provides details of how this income has been distributed to Sefton MBC (including Parish Precepts), the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner, the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, and Central Government.

(h) Group Accounts (pages 115 – 128)

This section incorporates the accounts of both Sefton and its wholly owned subsidiaries, Sefton New Directions Limited and Sefton (ACS) Development Company Limited (Sandway Homes), to provide details of the Council's financial activities as a Group.

(i) Annual Governance Statement (pages 129 - 160)

The Annual Governance Statement is the formal statement that recognises, records and publishes an authority's governance arrangements as defined in the CIPFA / SOLACE Governance Framework. It is required to be published with the accounting statements but does not form part of the accounting statement and is therefore not covered by the Auditors' opinion.

(j) Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council (pages 161 - 164)

(k) Glossary (pages 165 - 172)

(l) Abbreviations (pages 173 – 174)

(m) Useful Addresses (page 175)

Changes to Accounting Policy during the Year

This Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/2021 (the Code).

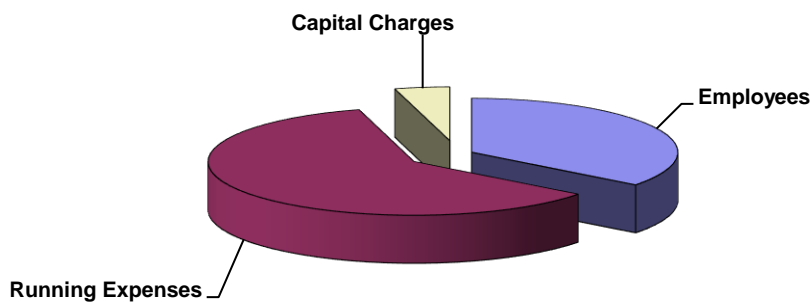
There have been no material changes to the accounting policies in 2020/21, however, the narrative provided in note 53 to the statement of accounts in respect of the 'going concern policy' has been reviewed and revised in the light of the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Analysis of the Income and Expenditure Account

The tables and charts below summarise the Authority's **gross** revenue expenditure within the General Fund for 2020/2021 and highlights the main sources of General Fund Financing for 2020/2021.

Gross Expenditure on Services (including Levies) (by Expenditure Type)

<u>Expenditure Type</u>	<u>£m</u>	<u>%</u>
Employees	242,532	36
Running Expenses	413,285	60
Capital Charges	29,514	4
	685,331	100

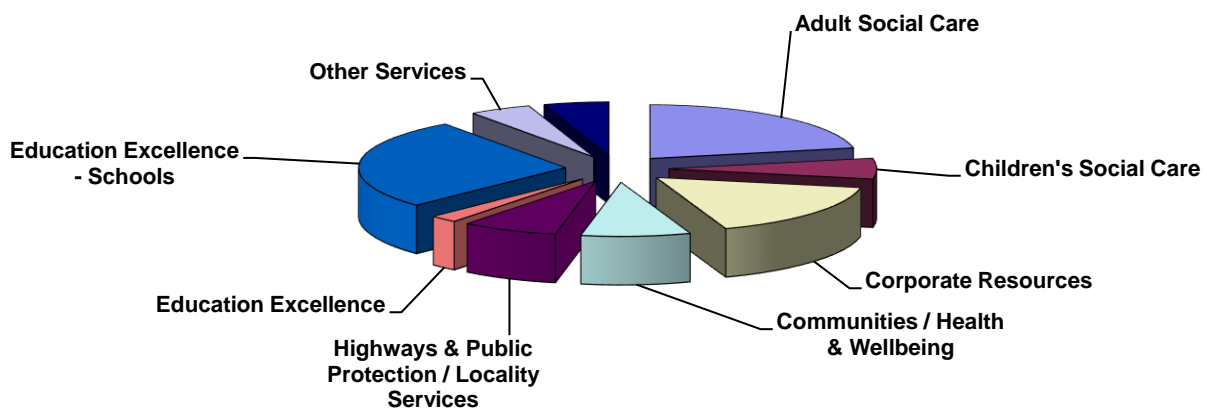


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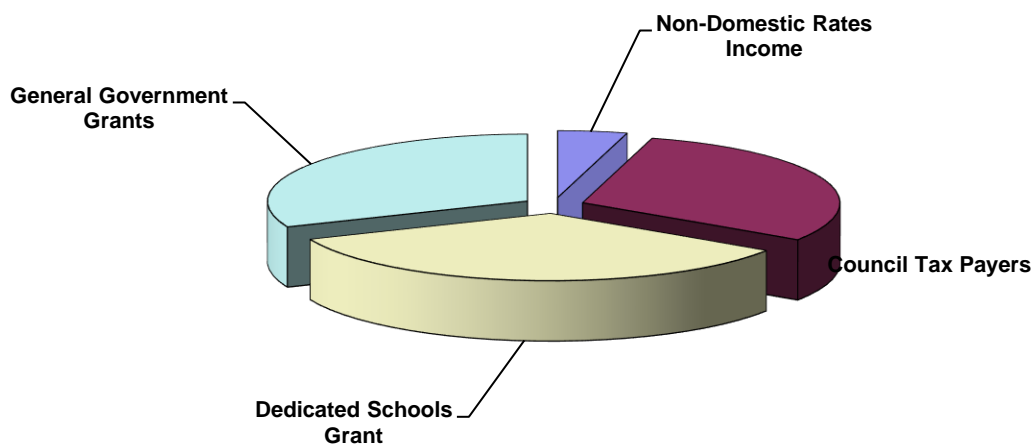
Gross General Fund Expenditure on Services (including Levies)

<u>Service</u>	<u>£m</u>	<u>%</u>
Adult Social Care	149,663	22
Children's Social Care	42,322	6
Corporate Resources	113,589	17
Communities / Health & Wellbeing	58,299	9
Highways and Public Protection / Locality Services	51,513	7
Education Excellence - Non-School	14,716	2
- Schools	187,329	27
Other Services	33,105	5
Levies	34,795	5
	<u>685,331</u>	<u>100</u>



Main Sources of General Fund Financing for 2020/2021

<u>Source of Income</u>	<u>£m</u>	<u>%</u>
General Government Grants	141.758	31
Non-Domestic Rates Income	19.504	4
Council Tax Payers	135.944	30
Dedicated Schools Grant	155,710	35
	<u>452,916</u>	<u>100</u>



The Gross expenditure is financed by the major grants shown above, other smaller revenue grants and contributions received by the Council (Note 17 on page 55) and fees and charges.

Other Financial Commitments

The Council's most significant other financial commitments are the long-term contracts it has entered into with Agilisys, Formby Pool Trust, Sefton New Directions Limited and Waterfront Leisure.

Borrowing / Investments

The Council's arrangements for long-term borrowing and investments correspond to the Council's Treasury Management Policy and Strategy documents. These were drawn up to comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities.

Under Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003, the Council must approve an overall borrowing limit before the beginning of each financial year. For 2020/2021 this limit was set at £249m; the Council stayed within this figure during the year.

As at 31 March 2021, the Council had outstanding borrowing of £186.790m (£163.760m as at 31 March 2020). This includes local authority bonds, stocks, mortgages and loans from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB). As at 31 March 2021, accrued interest of £1.336m, was due to be repaid within 12 months.

During 2020/2021, £43.560m in new long term borrowing from the PWLB was required to fund capital expenditure. Principal of £20.800m was repaid during the year of which £9.760m related to Equal Instalments of Principal (EIP) loans and £1.040m related to Annuity loans.

Interest on long term borrowing from the PWLB totalled £6.932m during the year (£5.758m in 2019/2020).

In line with its Treasury Management Policy and Strategy the Council makes daily investment decisions. As at 31 March 2021, the Council had short-term investments of £65.260m (£37.360m as at 31 March 2020). The Council had no short-term deposits with banks and building societies (£0.000m as at 31 March 2020). The Council had long term investments with the Church and Charities Local Authority (CCLA) Property Fund (£5.375m).

Pension Liability

As at 31 March 2021 the Pensions Liability figure in the Balance Sheet includes a net deficit on the Local Government Pension Scheme Fund attributable to Sefton of £448.597m (£395.498m as at 31 March 2020). The deficit is reviewed periodically (normally every three years) by the Fund's actuary and steps are taken to address the deficit via increased contributions over the remaining working life of employees. However, it should be noted that the notional figure included in the Statement of Accounts is calculated using a different set of assumptions (in line with accounting practice) than those used to calculate the deficit repayments required.

The latest valuation was completed during 2019/2020 and has set the contribution rates for 2020/2021 to 2022/2023. There has been a significant improvement in the Council's funding position resulting in the Council's overall deficit being £4m. However, it should be noted that the value of the deficit is highly dependent on market conditions at the time of the valuation and can vary significantly between valuations.

As at 31 March 2021 there was a net deficit relating to unfunded Teachers' Pensions attributable to Sefton of £6.316m (£6.854m as at 31 March 2020). The Council has budgeted to make these payments until there is no longer a liability.

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Provisions, Contingencies, Write-Offs and Material Charges or Credits

The 2020/2021 accounts include a provision for the cost of NNDR checks, challenges and appeals. The total value of the Provision as at 31 March 2021 is £23.886m (£18.891m as at 31 March 2020). Sefton's share of the Provision as at 31 March 2021 is £23.647m (£18.702 as at 31 March 2020).

The only material write-offs in 2020/2021 relate to revaluation losses on the Authority's assets. These total £6.0m (£8.2m in 2019/2020).

General Balances and Reserves

The Financial Overview on pages 12 to 15 show the General Balances of the Council split between Delegated Schools' and Non-Delegated Services. The Council's Non-Delegated Services' General Balances are £11.278m. This level of Balances is considered the least necessary given the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's financial position in 2021/2022 and future years.

The Council has £27.530m of capital resources available as at 31 March 2021 (£20.634m as at 31 March 2020). These are amounts already received that will be used to fund the Council's Capital Investment Plan in 2021/2022 and future years (see pages 15 to 17). This Plan will be vital in assisting the Borough's recovery from the pandemic.

The Council also has £91.698m of Earmarked Reserves as at 31 March 2021 (£35.888m as at 31 March 2020). These are described in Note 33. This includes previously received revenue grants and contributions that have yet to be applied and reserves that relate to schools. The significant increase in Earmarked Reserves is mainly due to S31 Business Rates grants received to compensate the Council for the loss of income due to the government introducing an expanded retail relief scheme (this grant will offset the resulting deficit in 2021/2022) as well as COVID19 funding received in 2020/2021 which will be utilised in 2021/2022. Earmarked Reserves are held by the Council to fund anticipated future expenditure of a non-recurring nature. If these resources were not available, then the expenditure would need to be funded from the Council's in-year Revenue Budget which would require additional savings to be made in order to make funding available. Given the financial challenges from COVID-19, the Council may need to utilise its Earmarked Reserves to temporarily fund costs / loss of income not covered by Government support. These reserves will need to be replenished in future years which will require savings to be achieved.

The Council also has negative £198.576m of Unusable Reserves as at 31 March 2021 (negative £101.572m as at 31 March 2020). These are accounts required under accounting regulations and are not available to support, or a call against, Council expenditure. Unusable Reserves are negative mainly due to the notional deficit on the Pension Reserve of £471m (£465m relating to the Local Government Pension Scheme). As explained in the Pension Liability section on page 21, this is a notional figure and is calculated using a different set of assumptions (in line with accounting practice) than those used to calculate the deficit repayments required. The latest valuation was completed during 2019/2020 and there has been a significant improvement in the Council's funding position resulting in the Council's overall deficit being £4m. However, it should be noted that the value of the deficit is highly dependent on market conditions at the time of the valuation and can vary significantly between valuations.

Due to the notional deficit on the Pension Reserve the Council's overall reserves are a negative £52.394m. This negative position does not give rise to the same risks to financial sustainability as it would for a company in the private sector due to the deficit on the Pension Fund being notional rather than impacting on the cash flows of the Council.

Material Events after the Reporting Date

There are no material events after the reporting date.

Conclusion

During the 2020/2021 financial year, the Council has continued to experience significant additional spending pressures but has been able to contain such costs within the overall budget. The overall outturn position is an underspend which has been added to General Balances.

Decisions taken for the agreed 2021/2022 budget will increase General Fund balances from the 31 March 2021 position by £1.5m. However, the challenges presented by the impact of Covid-19 mean that the Council will be looking to the Government to provide additional financial support beyond the amounts already announced in order to stabilise local authority finances in the short and medium term whilst the economy recovers. Maintaining financial sustainability will be a key part of the Council's recovery plan in order to continue to provide support to its residents, service users, council tax payers and the business community. Tragically a significant number of people have died in Sefton of Covid-19 and our thoughts are with their families at this difficult time.

This year's accounts have been prepared to a revised timetable as a result of the impact of Covid-19. Once again, the Accounts have been closed within the statutory deadline despite significant additional work pressures and the disruption caused by the move to home working. My thanks go to all staff that have invested considerable efforts to achieve this.

However, at the time of publication of the draft Statement of Accounts the valuations undertaken by the Council's in-house valuers have yet to be completed. It has been agreed with the Council's external auditors that the draft Statement of Accounts will exclude the impact of those valuations that have been completed, including those by external valuers. Once all internal valuations have been finalised the Statement of Accounts will be updated with the impact of all valuations.

The Statement of Accounts is a complex document and is prepared within the guidelines set by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. However, I would be interested to receive any suggestions as to how the Accounts, or the Executive Summary, could be improved. Please contact me at the address on page 171 of this document.

Stephan Van Arendsen

Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services

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Narrative

2 **STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Authority's Responsibilities

The Authority is required to:

- Make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In Sefton that officer is the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services.
- Manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets.
- Approve the Statement of Accounts.

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services Responsibilities

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services is responsible for the preparation of the Authority's Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code).

In preparing this Statement of Accounts, the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services has:

- selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent;
- complied with the local authority Code.

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services has also:

- kept proper accounting records which were up to date;
- taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services Statement

I certify that this Statement of Accounts gives a true and fair view of the financial position of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council at 31 March 2021, and its income and expenditure for the financial year ended 31 March 2021.

Stephan Van Arendsen
Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services
Date: 15 December 2021

Agenda Item 4

Responsibilities

Statement by the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee

I confirm on behalf of the Council that these accounts were approved by the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting held on 15 December 2021.

Councillor Dave Robinson
Chair, Audit and Governance Committee
Date: 15 December 2021

3 COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Authorities raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with statutory requirements; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in both the Expenditure and Funding Analysis and the Movement in Reserves Statement.

2019/2020			Note	2020/2021		
Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure / Income (-)		Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure / Income (-)
£000s	£000s	£000s				
1,256	-187	1,069	<u>Continuing Operations</u>			
3,532	-330	3,202	Strategic Management	1,235	-89	1,146
134,767	-41,202	93,565	Strategic Support	0	0	0
38,660	-1,859	36,801	Adult Social Care	149,663	-46,985	102,678
34,830	-12,374	22,456	Children's Social Care	42,322	-243	42,079
112,856	-83,334	29,522	Communities	40,161	-7,647	32,514
14,799	-8,370	6,429	Corporate Resources	113,589	-78,354	35,235
19,112	-2,132	16,980	Economic Growth and Housing	15,731	-8,259	7,472
186,677	-179,335	7,342	Education Excellence	14,716	-1,810	12,906
15,837	-20,983	-5,146	Education Excellence - Schools	187,329	-187,489	-160
29,073	-16,863	12,210	Health and Wellbeing	18,138	-23,383	-5,245
28,949	-11,396	17,553	Highways and Public Protection	24,492	-7,360	17,132
16,285	-4,301	11,984	Locality Services	27,021	-9,468	17,553
			Corporate Unallocated Costs	16,139	-6,184	9,955
636,633	-382,666	253,967	Net Cost of Services	650,536	-377,271	273,265
			<u>Other Operating Income and Expenditure</u>			
		1,072	Precepts paid to Parish Councils			1,179
		34,183	Levies			34,795
		3,907	Loss / Gain (-) on the disposal of non-current assets			-261
		-1,163	8 Other Operating Income			-950
		37,999				34,763
			<u>Financing and Investment Income & Expenditure</u>			
		6,635	9 Interest payable and similar charges			8,066
		10,958	49 Net Interest on the Net Pension Defined Benefit Liability			8,527
		-484	Interest Receivable			-431
		-2,204	20 Income and Expenditure on Investment Properties			-2,196
		-440	20 Changes in the Fair Value of Investment Properties			4,631
		150	Loss on the disposal of Investment Properties			0
		201	Changes in the Fair Value of Financial Instruments			38
		14,816				18,635
			<u>Taxation and Non-specific Grant Income</u>			
		-131,229	Income from Council Tax			-135,944
		-66,376	Non-Domestic Rates Income			-19,504
		-48,976	17 Non-Ringfenced Government Grants			-141,758
		-15,314	17 Capital Grants and Contributions			-20,725
		-261,895				-317,931
		44,887	5 Surplus (-) / Deficit on Provision of Services			8,732
		486	37 Surplus (-) / Deficit on Revaluation of non-current assets			-1,418
		-98,276	39 Re-measurement of the Net Defined Benefit Liability			31,613
		-97,790	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			30,195
		-52,903	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			38,927

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Income and Expenditure Statement

4 MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

This statement shows the movement from the start of the year to the end on the different reserves held by the authority, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and other 'unusable reserves'. The Statement shows how the movements in year of the authority's reserves are broken down between gains and losses incurred in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and the statutory adjustments required to return to the amounts chargeable to council tax (or rents) for the year. The Net Increase/Decrease line shows the statutory General Fund Balance movements in the year following those adjustments.

<u>Movements in Reserves in 2020/2021</u>	General Fund Balance	Earmarked Reserves Account	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	Total Usable Reserves	Unusable Reserves (Notes 37 to 41)	Total Authority Reserves
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance at 1 April 2020	-17,807	-35,888	-2,877	-17,757	-74,329	101,572	27,243
<u>Movements in Year</u>							
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	8,732	0	0	0	8,732	30,195	38,927
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations (Note 7)	-73,689	0	-1,911	-4,985	-80,585	80,585	0
Net Increase before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	-64,957	0	-1,911	-4,985	-71,853	110,780	38,927
Transfers to / from Earmarked Reserves (Note 33)	55,810	-55,810	0	0	0	0	0
Decrease / Increase (-) in Year	-9,147	-55,810	-1,911	-4,985	-71,853	110,780	38,927
Balance at 31 March 2021	-26,954	-91,698	-4,788	-22,742	-146,182	212,352	66,170

<u>Movements in Reserves in 2019/2020</u>	General Fund Balance	Earmarked Reserves Account	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied	Total Usable Reserves	Unusable Reserves (Notes 37 to 41)	Total Authority Reserves
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance at 1 April 2019	-21,135	-29,591	-2,134	-13,929	-66,789	146,935	80,146
<u>Movements in Year</u>							
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	44,887	0	0	0	44,887	-97,790	-52,903
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations (Note 7)	-47,856	0	-743	-3,828	-52,427	52,427	0
Net Increase before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	-2,969	0	-743	-3,828	-7,540	-45,363	-52,903
Transfers to / from Earmarked Reserves (Note 33)	6,297	-6,297	0	0	0	0	0
Decrease / Increase (-) in Year	3,328	-6,297	-743	-3,828	-7,540	-45,363	-52,903
Balance at 31 March 2020	-17,807	-35,888	-2,877	-17,757	-74,329	101,572	27,243

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Movement in Reserves

5 BALANCE SHEET

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Authority. The net assets of the Authority (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Authority. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category of reserves are usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the authority may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use (for example the Capital Receipts Reserve that may only be used to fund capital expenditure or repay debt). The second category of reserves is those that the Authority is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example the Revaluation Reserve), where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold; and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement line 'Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'.

<u>31 March</u> <u>2020</u> £000s		<u>Note</u>	<u>31 March</u> <u>2021</u> £000s
469,221	Property, Plant and Equipment	18	455,352
11,532	Heritage Assets	19	11,532
55,300	Investment Property	20	49,110
5,541	Long Term Investments	22	6,502
4,806	Long Term Debtors	23	5,207
546,400	Long-Term Assets		527,703
99	Short Term Investments	24	163
0	Assets Held for Sale	25	11,513
730	Inventories		710
49,131	Short Term Debtors	26	49,618
5,368	Prepayments	26	33,154
38,988	Cash and Cash Equivalents	27	66,410
94,316	Current Assets		161,568
-16,617	Short Term Borrowing	53	-21,567
-41,868	Short Term Creditors	28	-56,951
-25,995	Receipts in Advance	29	-18,168
-918	Deferred Liabilities	31	-942
-85,398	Current Liabilities		-97,628
-22,699	Provisions	30	-28,260
-149,153	Long Term Borrowing	53	-167,225
-8,357	Deferred Liabilities	31	-7,415
-402,352	Pensions Liability	49	-454,913
-582,561	Long Term Liabilities		-657,813
-27,243	Net Assets / Liabilities (-)		-66,170

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Balance Sheet

31 March 2020 £000s	Balance Sheet (Continued)	Note	31 March 2021 £000s
	<u>Reserves</u>		
	<u>Usable Reserves</u>		
-10,823	General Fund - Delegated Schools	33	-15,676
-6,984	General Fund - Non Delegated Services	33	-11,278
-35,888	Earmarked Reserves	34	-91,698
-2,877	Capital Receipts Reserve	35	-4,788
-17,757	Capital Grants and Contributions Unapplied	36	-22,742
-74,329			-146,182
	<u>Unusable Reserves</u>		
-69,636	Revaluation Reserve	37	-68,324
-236,118	Capital Adjustment Account	38	-229,033
370	Financial Instruments Adjustment Account		310
-414	Pooled Investment Funds Adjustment Account		-376
402,352	Pensions Reserve	39	454,913
293	Collection Fund Adjustment Account	40	49,481
4,725	Accumulated Absences Account	41	5,381
101,572			212,352
27,243	Total Reserves		66,170

The Notes on pages 35 to 114 form part of the financial statements.

6 CASH FLOW STATEMENT

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Authority during the reporting year. The statement shows how the Authority generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Authority are funded by way of taxation and grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the Authority. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Authority's future service delivery. Cash flows arising from financing activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital (i.e. borrowing) to the Authority.

<u>2019/2020</u> £000s		Note	<u>2020/2021</u> £000s
	<u>Operating Activities</u>		
44,887	Net deficit on the provision of services		8,732
-73,424	Adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	43	-36,554
13,271	Adjustments for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities	43	21,504
-15,266	Net cash flows from Operating Activities		-6,318
	<u>Investing Activities</u>		
15,108	Purchase of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets		21,524
126	Purchase of short-term and long-term investments		999
-1,053	Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets		-3,075
-12,580	Other receipts from investing activities		-19,310
1,601	Net cash flows from Investing Activities		138
	<u>Financing Activities</u>		
-20,000	Cash receipts of short- and long-term borrowing		-43,561
-19	Other receipts from financing activities		0
446	Cash payments for the reduction of the outstanding liabilities relating to finance leases and on-balance sheet PFI contracts		480
6,457	Repayments of short- and long-term borrowing		21,239
73	Other payments for financing activities		600
-13,043	Net cash flows from Financing Activities	43	-21,242
-26,708	Net decrease / (increase) in cash and cash equivalents		-27,422
-12,280	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		-38,988
-38,988	Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	26	-66,410

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Cash Flow

7 NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources (government grants, rents, council tax and business rates) by local authorities in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by authorities in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. It also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between the council's directorates/services/departments. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

<u>2020/2021</u>	Net Expenditure Chargeable to General Fund Balances	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis (Note 6)	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
Strategic Management	1,042	104	1,146
Strategic Support Unit	0	0	0
Adult Social Care	99,936	2,742	102,678
Children's Social Care	40,981	1,098	42,079
Communities	22,508	10,006	32,514
Corporate Resources	30,708	4,527	35,235
Economic Growth and Housing	5,747	1,725	7,472
Education Excellence	9,154	3,752	12,906
Education Excellence - Schools	-4,977	4,817	-160
Health and Wellbeing	16,405	-21,650	-5,245
Highways and Public Protection	9,380	7,752	17,132
Locality Services	13,491	4,062	17,553
Corporate Unallocated Costs	13,524	-3,569	9,955
Net Cost of Services	257,899	15,366	273,265
Other Operating Income and Expenditure	35,880	-1,117	34,763
Financing and Investment Income & Expenditure	9,461	9,174	18,635
Taxation and Non-specific Grant Income	-368,197	50,266	-317,931
Other Income and Expenditure	-322,856	58,323	-264,531
Deficit/(Surplus) on Provision of Services	-64,957	73,689	8,732

Opening General Fund Balance	-53,695
Plus: Surplus in the Year	-64,957
Closing General Fund Balance	-135,602
Analysis of Closing General Fund Balance:	
General Fund - Delegated Schools	-15,676
General Fund - Non-Delegated Services	-11,278
Earmarked Reserves	-91,698
Closing General Fund Balance	-118,652

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The following table shows the comparative information for 2019/2020:

2019/2020	Net Expenditure Chargeable to General Fund Balances	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis (Note 6)	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
Strategic Management	1,015	54	1,069
Strategic Support Unit	3,040	162	3,202
Adult Social Care	92,302	1,263	93,565
Children's Social Care	36,141	660	36,801
Communities	19,480	2,976	22,456
Corporate Resources	25,047	4,475	29,522
Economic Growth and Housing	4,886	1,543	6,429
Education Excellence	9,815	7,165	16,980
Education Excellence - Schools	4,819	2,523	7,342
Health and Wellbeing	15,625	-20,771	-5,146
Highways and Public Protection	5,879	6,331	12,210
Locality Services	13,823	3,730	17,553
Corporate Unallocated Costs	-7,842	19,826	11,984
Net Cost of Services	224,030	29,937	253,967
Other Operating Income and Expenditure	35,229	2,770	37,999
Financing and Investment Income & Expenditure	8,142	6,674	14,816
Taxation and Non-specific Grant Income	-270,370	8,475	-261,895
Other Income and Expenditure	-226,999	17,919	-209,080
Deficit/(Surplus) on Provision of Services	-2,969	47,856	44,887

Opening General Fund Balance	-50,726
Plus: Surplus in the Year	-2,969
Closing General Fund Balance	-53,695
Analysis of Closing General Fund Balance:	
General Fund - Delegated Schools	-10,823
General Fund - Non-Delegated Services	-6,984
Earmarked Reserves	-35,888
Closing General Fund Balance	-53,695

8 OTHER NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1 PRIOR PERIOD COMPARATORS - TRANSFERS OF FUNCTIONS BETWEEN SERVICES

At the beginning of 2020/2021 the Council transferred the Strategic Support service into Corporate Resources. The amounts are not considered material enough to warrant a Prior Period Adjustment to ensure comparability between the two years.

2 ACCOUNTING STANDARDS ISSUED BUT HAVE NOT YET BEEN ADOPTED

At the balance sheet date, the following new standards and amendments to existing standards have been published but not yet adopted by the Code of Practice of Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom:

- Definition of a Business: Amendments to IFRS 3 Business Combinations
- Interest Rate Benchmark Reform: Amendments to IFRS 9, IAS 39 and IFRS 7
- Interest Rate Benchmark Reform – Phase 2: Amendments to IFRS 9, IAS 39, IFRS 7, IFRS 4 and IFRS 16.

These changes are not expected to have a material impact on the Council's single entity statements or group statements.

3 CRITICAL JUDGEMENTS IN APPLYING ACCOUNTING POLICIES

In applying the accounting policies set out in Note 54, the Authority has had to make certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events. The critical judgements made in the Statement of Accounts are:

- There is a high degree of uncertainty about future levels of funding for local government (see Narrative Report). However, the Authority has determined that this uncertainty is not yet sufficient to provide an indication that the assets of the Authority might be impaired as a result of a need to close facilities and reduce levels of service provision.
- The Council has a material interest in Sefton New Directions Limited, an entity which conducts some of the Council's adult and social care activities. It has been deemed that Sefton New Directions Limited is a subsidiary of the Council and group accounts are required to be prepared.
- The Council has a material interest in Sandway Homes Limited, an entity which engages in housebuilding activity. It has been deemed that Sandway Homes Limited is a subsidiary of the Council and group accounts are required to be prepared.
- The Council has joint working arrangements with NHS CCGs in Sefton for the provision of intensive care packages for service users with a learning disability and the provision of an Integrated Community Equipment Service. In total £4.440m has been expended on both services in 2020/21. The Council does not consolidate both elements into its financial statements but only accounts for its own expenditure (see Note 10).
- The Council has given a number of warranties for up to 17 years (One Vision Housing Limited) and 35 years (Prudential Trustee Company Limited) in respect of statements, title, encumbrances, planning matters, statutory obligations, adverse orders, tenancies, information and statistics supplied, sales off, disputes and litigation, rights of entry to maintain and repair, absence of adverse replies, electricity sub-stations and shop leases, leasehold property, way leaves, telecommunications and works undertaken. In addition, warranties for 20 years have been given to both parties in respect of claims for asbestos and a warranty not exceeding £100,500,000 for up to 20 years in respect of environmental pollution has been given to One Vision Housing Limited. There is currently no liability. However, the Council has set aside resources in an earmarked reserve in case it is required to pay out under these warranties.

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- Investment properties have been estimated using the identifiable criteria under IFRS of being held for rental income or for capital appreciation. These properties have been assessed using these criteria, which is subject to interpretation.
- 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 reassessing the lease, the Council has estimated the implied interest rate within the lease to calculate interest and principal payments.
- The Council does not recognise Voluntary Aided, Academies or Free schools on its Balance Sheet. All other types of school are recognised on the Council's Balance Sheet.

4 **ASSUMPTIONS MADE ABOUT THE FUTURE AND OTHER MAJOR SOURCES OF ESTIMATION UNCERTAINTY**

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that amounts reported for assets and liabilities as at the balance sheet date and the amounts reported for the revenues and during the year. However, the nature of estimation means that actual outcomes could differ from those estimates.

The key judgements and estimation uncertainty that have a significant risk of causing material adjustment to the carrying of assets and liabilities within the next financial year are as follows (note that the percentages quoted are for illustrative purposes only and are not an indication of the potential impact):

Item	Uncertainties	Effect if Actual Results Differ from Assumptions
Property, Plant and Equipment	<p>Asset valuations are based on market prices and are periodically reviewed to ensure that the Council does not materially misstate its non-current assets.</p> <p>Assets are depreciated over useful lives that are dependent on assumptions about the level of repairs and maintenance that will be incurred in relation to individual assets. The current economic climate makes it uncertain that the Authority will be able to sustain its current spending on repairs and maintenance, bringing into doubt the useful lives assigned to assets.</p> <p>The total value of PP&E as at 31 March 2021 is £455.352m.</p>	<p>A reduction in the estimated valuations would result in reductions to the Revaluation Reserve and / or a loss recorded as appropriate in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.</p> <p>A 10% reduction in Net Book Value would equate to £45.5m.</p> <p>If the useful life of assets is reduced, depreciation increases and the carrying amount of the assets falls.</p> <p>It is estimated that the annual depreciation charge for assets would increase by £1.042m for every year that useful lives had to be reduced.</p>
Investment Properties	<p>The Council's valuers use valuation techniques to determine the fair value of investment property.</p> <p>The total value of Investment Properties as at 31 March 2021 is £53.110m.</p>	<p>Estimated fair values may differ from the actual prices that could be achieved in an arm's length transaction at the reporting date.</p> <p>A 10% reduction in Net Book Value would equate to £5.3m.</p>

<p>Provision for NDR Checks, Challenges & Appeals</p>	<p>A provision has been made in respect of checks, challenges and appeals against the rateable value of business properties. The provision represents the best estimate of the amount that would be repaid to businesses in respect of business rates charged up to 31 March 2021. The total provision recorded on the Collection Fund is £23.886m (Sefton's share is £23.647m).</p> <p>This estimate has been calculated using the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) list of appeals outstanding on the 2010 Rating List and a forecast of potential risk of checks, challenges, and appeals over the life of the 2017 Rating List.</p> <p>The actual number and value of successful appeals may be materially different from the experience of previous rating lists and settled appeals.</p>	<p>An increase of 1% in the reduction in Rateable Value on appeals outstanding against the 2010 Rating List would require an increase of £0.564m in the total provision (Sefton's share would be £0.558m).</p> <p>An increase of 1% in the reduction in Rateable Value on check, challenge, or appeal against the 2017 Rating List at 31 March 2021 would require an increase of £2.418m in the total provision (Sefton's share would be £2.394m).</p>
<p>Pensions Liability</p>	<p>Estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex judgements relating to the discount rate 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 Authority with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied.</p> <p>As at 31 March 2021 the value of assets was £1,520.171m and liabilities was £1,048.799m. The net liability is therefore £471.372m.</p>	<p>The effects on the net pension liability of changes in individual assumptions can be measured.</p> <p>The impact of changes in individual assumptions are shown in Note 49, as required by the Code of Practice.</p>
<p>Arrears</p>	<p>At 31 March 2021, Sefton had a net balance of sundry debtor accounts issued by the Authority but not yet paid of £22.193m. A review of significant balances suggested that an impairment of doubtful debts of approximately 13% (£2.955m) was appropriate for these accounts.</p> <p>At 31 March 2021, Sefton had a balance of Council Tax arrears (including Court Costs) of £27.421m. A review of significant balances suggested that an impairment of doubtful debts of approximately 74% (£20.390m) was appropriate for these accounts.</p> <p>At 31 March 2021, Sefton had a balance of NDR arrears (including Court Costs) of £7.687m (Sefton's share only). A review of significant balances suggested that an impairment of doubtful debts of approximately 91% (£6.978m) was appropriate for these accounts.</p> <p>At 31 March 2021, Sefton had a balance of Housing Benefit arrears of £5.631m. A review of significant balances suggested that an impairment of doubtful debts of approximately 46% (£2.576m) was appropriate for these accounts.</p> <p>However, in the current economic climate it is possible that such allowances would not be sufficient.</p>	<p>If collection rates were to deteriorate, an increase of 10% in the amount of the impairment of doubtful debts would require an additional £6.297m to be set aside as an allowance.</p>

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Notes to the Financial Statements

5 EXPENDITURE AND INCOME ANALYSED BY NATURE

2019/2020 £000s		2020/2021 £000s
	<u>Expenditure</u>	
247,201	Employee benefit expenses	242,532
352,165	Other service expenses	378,650
37,093	Depreciation, amortisation and impairment	34,145
6,638	Interest Payments	8,068
35,256	Precepts and Levies	35,974
4,057	Loss on the disposal of assets	-261
10,958	Net Interest on the Net Pension Defined Benefit Liability	8,527
693,368	Total Expenditure	707,635
	<u>Income</u>	
-69,320	Fees, charges and other service income	-53,460
-516	Interest and Investment Income	-450
-197,604	Income from council tax and non-domestic rate income	-155,448
-381,041	Government Grants and Contributions	-489,545
-648,481	Total Income	-698,903
44,887	Deficit on the Provision of Services	8,732

6 NOTE TO THE EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis in 2020/2021

Adjustments from General Fund to Arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts.	Adjustments for Capital Purposes	Net change for the Pensions Adjustment	Other Differences	Total Adjustments
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Strategic Management	0	104	0	104
Strategic Support Unit	0	0	0	0
Adult Social Care	1,452	1,293	-3	2,742
Children's Social Care	102	999	-3	1,098
Communities	8,825	1,509	-328	10,006
Corporate Resources	2,281	2,251	-5	4,527
Economic Growth and Housing	1,242	721	-238	1,725
Education Excellence	3,476	277	-1	3,752
Education Excellence - Schools	-127	4,270	674	4,817
Health and Wellbeing	0	154	-21,804	-21,650
Highways and Public Protection	7,250	598	-96	7,752
Locality Services	2,583	2,312	-833	4,062
Corporate Unallocated Costs	2	-2,067	-1,504	-3,569
Net Cost of Services	27,086	12,421	-24,141	15,366
Other Income and Expenditure	-24,129	8,527	73,925	58,323
Surplus (-) or Deficit	2,957	20,948	49,784	73,689

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Notes to the Financial Statements

Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis in 2019/2020

Adjustments from General Fund to Arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts.	Adjustments for Capital Purposes	Net change for the Pensions Adjustment	Other Differences	Total Adjustments
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Strategic Management	0	53	1	54
Strategic Support Unit	0	160	2	162
Adult Social Care	582	674	7	1,263
Children's Social Care	105	549	6	660
Communities	2,415	876	-315	2,976
Corporate Resources	3,384	1,080	11	4,475
Economic Growth and Housing	1,388	388	-233	1,543
Education Excellence	7,011	153	1	7,165
Education Excellence - Schools	-343	2,421	445	2,523
Health and Wellbeing	0	39	-20,810	-20,771
Highways and Public Protection	6,017	338	-24	6,331
Locality Services	3,124	1,311	-705	3,730
Corporate Unallocated Costs	5,915	15,406	-1,495	19,826
Net Cost of Services	29,598	23,448	-23,109	29,937
Other Income and Expenditure	-19,578	10,958	26,539	17,919
Surplus (-) or Deficit	10,020	34,406	3,430	47,856

Adjustments for Capital Purposes

Adjustments for capital purposes – this column adds in depreciation and impairment and revaluation gains and losses in the services line, and for:

- **Other operating expenditure** – adjusts for capital disposals with a transfer of income on disposal of assets and the amounts written off for those assets.
- **Financing** and investment income and expenditure – the statutory charges for capital financing i.e. Minimum Revenue Provision and other revenue contributions are deducted from other income and expenditure as these are not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices.
- **Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure** – capital grants are adjusted for income not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices. Revenue grants are adjusted from those receivable in the year to those receivable without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied throughout the year. The Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income and Expenditure line is credited with capital grants receivable in the year without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied in the year.

Change for the Pensions Adjustments

Net change for the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS 19 Employee Benefits pension related expenditure and income:

- For **services** this represents the removal of the employer pension contributions made by the authority as allowed by statute and the replacement with current service costs and past service costs.
- For **Financing and investment income and expenditure** – the net interest on the defined benefit liability is charged to the CIES.

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Other Differences

Other differences between amounts debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and amounts payable/receivable to be recognised under statute:

- For **Financing and investment income and expenditure** the other differences column recognises adjustments to the General Fund for the timing differences for premiums and discounts.
- The charge under **Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure** represents the difference between what is chargeable under statutory regulations for council tax and NDR that was projected to be received at the start of the year and the income recognised under generally accepted accounting practices in the Code. This is a timing difference as any difference will be brought forward in future Surpluses or Deficits on the Collection Fund.

In addition, this includes differences between how expenditure and income is reported to management and how it needs to be shown in the Income and Expenditure Account, e.g. Public Health Grant and Prudential Borrowing costs charged to Services.

Segmental Analysis of Revenues from External Customers

<u>2019/2020</u> £000s		<u>2020/2021</u> £000s
-156	Strategic Management	-89
-106	Strategic Support Unit	0
-20,751	Adult Social Care	-20,020
-562	Children's Social Care	-119
-8,106	Communities	-2,214
-5,472	Corporate Resources	-4,539
-3,761	Economic Growth and Housing	-3,333
-1,173	Education Excellence	-854
-4,598	Education Excellence - Schools	-2,244
-1	Health and Wellbeing	0
-8,671	Highways and Public Protection	-6,803
-10,711	Locality Services	-9,035
-4,089	Corporate Unallocated Costs	-3,260
-68,157	Net Cost of Services	-52,510
-1,163	Other Income and Expenditure	-950
-69,320	Surplus on the Provision of Services	-53,460

7 ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN ACCOUNTING BASIS AND FUNDING BASIS UNDER REGULATIONS

This note details the adjustments that are made to the total comprehensive income and expenditure recognised by the Authority in the year in accordance with proper accounting practice to the resources that are specified by statutory provisions as being available to the Authority to meet future capital and revenue expenditure.

Descriptions of the reserves that the adjustments are made against can be found in the relevant notes for each reserve.

Adjustments in 2020/2021	General Fund Balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied £000	Unusable Reserves £000
Adjustments primarily involving the Capital Adjustment Account:				
<u>Reversal of items debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:</u>				
Charges for depreciation of non-current assets	-19,396			19,396
Revaluation losses on non-current assets	-6,030			6,030
Movements in the market value of Investment Properties	-4,631			4,631
Amortisation of intangible assets	0			0
Capital grants and contributions applied	14,540			-14,540
Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute - Gross	-4,050			4,050
Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute – Related Capital Grants and Contributions	3,120			-3,120
Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-2,060			2,060
Amortisation of Deferred Income re. Crosby PFI Scheme	107			-107
<u>Insertion of items not debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:</u>				
Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment	6,159			-6,159
Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund	62			-62
Adjustments primarily involving the Capital Grants Unapplied Account:				
Capital grants and contributions unapplied credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	6,243		-6,243	
Reversal of capital grants and contributions unapplied previously credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-57		57	
Application of grants to capital financing transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account	0		1,201	-1,201
Adjustments primarily involving the Capital Receipts Reserve:				
Transfer of cash sale proceeds credited as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	2,322	-2,322		
Transfers to Usable Capital Receipts not relating to the disposal of assets	753	-753		
Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure		1,164		-1,164
Adjustments primarily involving the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve:				
Reduction of Capital Receipts Deferred re. Leased Out Buildings	0			0

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Adjustments in 2019/2020 Continued	General Fund Balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied £000	Unusable Reserves £000
Adjustment primarily involving the Financial Instruments Adjustment Account: Amount by which finance costs charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement are different from finance costs chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	59			-59
Adjustment primarily involving the Pooled Investment Funds Adjustment Account: Amount by which Financial Instruments held under Fair Value through Profit & Loss are subject to MHCLG statutory over-ride.	-38			38
Adjustments primarily involving the Pensions Reserve: Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-42,562			42,562
Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	21,614			-21,614
Adjustments primarily involving the Collection Fund Adjustment Account: Amount by which council tax income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from council tax income and non-domestic rates income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	-49,188			49,188
Adjustment primarily involving the Accumulated Absences Account: Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	-656			656
Total Adjustments	-73,689	-1,911	-4,985	80,585

The table below provides comparative figures for 2019/2020:

Adjustments in 2019/2020	General Fund Balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied £000	Unusable Reserves £000
Adjustments primarily involving the Capital Adjustment Account: <u>Reversal of items debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:</u>				
Charges for depreciation of non-current assets	-19,802			19,802
Revaluation losses on non-current assets	-8,195			8,195
Movements in the market value of Investment Properties	440			-440
Amortisation of intangible assets	-85			85
Capital grants and contributions applied	10,371			-10,371
Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute - Gross	-9,251			9,251
Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute – Related Capital Grants and Contributions	8,753			-8,753
Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-4,152			4,152
Amortisation of Deferred Income re. Crosby PFI Scheme	108			-108

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Notes to the Financial Statements

Adjustments in 2019/2020 Continued	General Fund Balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied £000	Unusable Reserves £000
Insertion of items not debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:				
Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment	5,971			-5,971
Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund	43			-43
Adjustments primarily involving the Capital Grants Unapplied Account:				
Capital grants and contributions unapplied credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	5,105		-5,105	
Reversal of capital grants and contributions unapplied previously credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-162		162	
Application of grants to capital financing transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account			1,115	-1,115
Adjustments primarily involving the Capital Receipts Reserve:				
Transfer of cash sale proceeds credited as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	95	-95		
Transfers to Usable Capital Receipts not relating to the disposal of assets	958	-958		
Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure		310		-310
Adjustments primarily involving the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve:				
Reduction of Capital Receipts Deferred re. Leased Out Buildings	-16			16
Adjustment primarily involving the Financial Instruments Adjustment Account:				
Amount by which finance costs charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement are different from finance costs chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	59			-59
Adjustment primarily involving the Pooled Investment Funds Adjustment Account:				
Amount by which Financial Instruments held under Fair Value through Profit & Loss are subject to MHCLG statutory over-ride.	-201			201
Adjustments primarily involving the Pensions Reserve:				
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-53,531			53,531
Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	19,125			-19,125
Adjustments primarily involving the Collection Fund Adjustment Account:				
Amount by which council tax income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from council tax income and non-domestic rates income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	-2,980			2,980
Adjustment primarily involving the Accumulated Absences Account:				
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	-509			509
Total Adjustments	-47,856	-743	-3,828	52,427

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Notes to the Financial Statements

8 OTHER OPERATING INCOME

An analysis of amounts of Other Income not included in the Net Cost of Services but credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is shown below:

<u>2019/2020</u> £000s	<u>Other Income</u>	<u>2020/2021</u> £000s
-809	Capital Receipts re. Former Council Dwellings	-744
-149	Other Capital Receipts not relating to the Disposal of Council Assets	-9
-205	Sefton's share of a VAT Shelter Agreement with One Vision Housing	-197
-1,163		-950

9 INTEREST PAYABLE AND SIMILAR CHARGES

Charges to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account during the year were as follows:

<u>2019/2020</u> £000s		<u>2020/2021</u> £000s
5,912	External Interest Charges	7,081
350	Finance Charge re. Leasing Agreements	334
373	Finance Charge re. PFI Schemes	651
-6,635	Total	8,066

10 POOLED BUDGETS

Under section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006, local authority and NHS bodies are able to enter into joint working arrangements with the NHS. Pooled funds, with resources provided by local and health authorities, offer the opportunity for the provision of seamless health and social services. Partners remain accountable for their services that are part of the pooled budget. A key feature of the pool is that the use of resources will be dictated by the needs of clients, rather than respective contributions.

Provision of intensive care packages for service users with a learning disability

Sefton Council has a joint working arrangement with CCG's in Sefton for the provision of intensive care packages for service users with a learning disability. Contributions of £1.349m from CCG's (£1.258m in 2019/2020) and £1.648m from Sefton Council (£1.670m in 2019/2020), £2.997m in total (£2.928m in 2019/2020), have been fully expended on purchasing of care packages to meet the health and social care needs of this client group. Sefton's contribution has been financed from within the Adult Social Care budget and is included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement under this heading.

Provision of an Integrated Community Equipment Service

Sefton has a joint working arrangement within South Sefton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for the provision of an Integrated Community Equipment Service, providing an appropriate range of equipment to meet assessed needs and to support intermediate care, hospital discharge, rehabilitation and independent living in the community. Contributions of £0.722m from South Sefton CCG (£0.719m in 2019/2020) and £0.721m from Sefton Council (£0.734m in 2019/2020); £1.443m in total (£1.453m in 2019/20), have been fully expended on the provision of this service. Sefton's contribution has been financed from within the Adult Social Care budget and is included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement under this heading.

Better Care Fund

The Council operates a pooled fund in partnership with South Sefton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Southport and Formby CCG. The fund is hosted by the Council.

The Better Care Fund creates a local single pooled budget to incentivise the integration of health and social care and encourage the NHS and Local Government to work more closely together around people, placing their well-being as the focus of health and care services. The five themes underpinning the agreement are:

- Integrated Community Care - building on the existing Virtual Ward and Care Closer to Home initiatives to have a comprehensive, fully integrated model of care built around the communities in localities.
- Long Term Adult Social Care –supporting packages of care and personal budgets and providing additional capacity in social work
- Intermediate Care and Reablement – seeking to reduce hospital admissions and re-admissions, reduce the need for ongoing care and support by assisting with regaining of independence and to reduce the number of long term residential and nursing care placements
- Early Years.
- Early Intervention and Prevention.

Additional funding from the Improved Better Care Fund (iBCF) has been agreed for 3 years 2017/2018 to 2019/2020, but this has now become permanent funding. The 2020/2021 allocation of £15.263m (£13.739m in 2019/2020) has been used to Protect Social Care Fees; fund a pilot Transformation Programme which will now become a permanent service and Supporting New Admissions in Community Care budget.

Financial performance in the year was as follows:

<u>2019/2020</u> £'000		<u>2020/2021</u> £'000
	<u>Contributions</u>	
-14,709	South Sefton CCG	-15,247
-9,722	Southport & Formby CCG	-10,205
-24,272	Sefton Council	-20,087
-48,703	Total Contributions	-45,539
42,371	Total Expenditure	43,045
-6,332	Variance	-2,494

The variance of £2.494m relates to capital expenditure in the pooled fund arrangement. The 2020/21 Disabled Facilities grant allocation of £4.251m together with an additional allocation of £0.572m was utilised to fund expenditure of £2.330m in 2020/2021. As a three-year programme of spend covering 2019/20 to 2021/22 has been approved the balance from 2020/21 and prior years will be carried forward to be used in the remaining year of this programme.

11 EXTERNAL AUDIT COSTS

The following fees relating to external audit and inspection were charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account.

<u>2019/2020</u> £000		<u>2020/2021</u> £000
98	Fees for external audit services carried out by the appointed auditors	98
18	Fees payable for the certification of grant returns	16
6	Fees payable in respect of any other services	0
122	Total	114

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12 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

The Council has a Cabinet style management structure with a scheme for Members' Allowances. The Council is made up of 66 Members. There were 66 Members who were paid allowances in 2020/21 (73 members in 2019/20 as some were only for part of the year) as shown below:

<u>2019/2020</u> £000s		<u>2020/2021</u> £000s
615	Basic Allowances	622
226	Special Responsibility Allowances	232
0	Expenses	0
841	Total	854

No Members were paid a salary in either year.

13 EXIT PACKAGES / TERMINATION BENEFITS

The number of exit packages with total cost per band and the total cost of the compulsory and other redundancies are set out in the tables below:

Exit Packages in 2020/2021

<u>Exit Package Cost Band</u>	<u>Number of Compulsory Redundancies</u>	<u>Number of Other Departures Agreed</u>	<u>Total Number of Exit Packages by Cost Band</u>	<u>Total Cost of Exit Packages in each Band</u>
£0 - £20,000	27	30	57	£0.261m
£20,001 - £40,000	1	6	7	£0.179m
£40,001 - £60,000	1	2	3	£0.135m
£60,001 - £80,000	1	0	1	£0.062m
£80,001 - £100,000	0	0	0	£0.000m
Total	30	38	68	£0.637m

Exit Packages in 2019/2020

<u>Exit Package Cost Band</u>	<u>Number of Compulsory Redundancies</u>	<u>Number of Other Departures Agreed</u>	<u>Total Number of Exit Packages by Cost Band</u>	<u>Total Cost of Exit Packages in each Band</u>
£0 - £20,000	40	44	84	£0.633m
£20,001 - £40,000	6	4	10	£0.261m
£40,001 - £60,000	3	2	5	£0.238m
£60,001 - £80,000	0	2	2	£0.125m
£80,001 - £100,000	1	0	1	£0.085m
Total	50	52	102	£1.342m

14 EMPLOYEES' EMOLUMENTS IN EXCESS OF £50,000

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations require the Authority to disclose the number of employees (including teaching staff) whose remuneration in the year was £50,000 or more in bands of £5,000. The definition of remuneration excludes employer pension contributions but includes:

- (i) all taxable amounts paid to, or receivable by, employees, including sums due by way of expenses allowances;
- (ii) the estimated money value of all other benefits received by employees, otherwise than in cash; and,
- (iii) redundancy payments paid to employees who have left the employment of the Authority during the year.

Readers should note that the tables below include Senior Officers' remuneration, which is also disclosed separately in Note 18.

Teaching Staff (including Voluntary Aided Schools)				
<u>2019/2020</u>		<u>Remuneration Band</u>	<u>2020/2021</u>	
<u>Employed on 31/03/20</u>	<u>Left during the year</u>		<u>Employed on 31/03/21</u>	<u>Left during the year</u>
55	7	£50,000 - £54,999	82	1
27	1	£55,000 - £59,999	28	1
28	0	£60,000 - £64,999	28	0
34	1	£65,000 - £69,999	29	0
14	1	£70,000 - £74,999	19	0
10	0	£75,000 - £79,999	12	0
3	0	£80,000 - £84,999	6	0
0	0	£85,000 - £89,999	4	0
0	1	£90,000 - £94,999	0	0
0	0	£95,000 - £99,999	1	0
1	0	£105,000 - £109,999	2	0
1	0	£110,000 - £114,999	0	0

Non-Teaching Staff (including schools)				
<u>2019/2020</u>		<u>Remuneration Band</u>	<u>2020/2021</u>	
<u>Employed on 31/03/18</u>	<u>Left during the year</u>		<u>Employed on 31/03/19</u>	<u>Left during the year</u>
23	1	£50,000 - £54,999	34	1
18	1	£55,000 - £59,999	26	0
3	0	£60,000 - £64,999	5	1
9	0	£65,000 - £69,999	8	0
5	0	£70,000 - £74,999	0	0
1	1	£75,000 - £79,999	6	0
6	0	£80,000 - £84,999	1	0
1	1	£85,000 - £89,999	7	0
2	0	£90,000 - £94,999	0	0
1	0	£95,000 - £99,999	0	0
0	0	£105,000 - £109,999	0	0
3	0	£110,000 - £114,999	0	0
1	0	£115,000 - £119,999	6	0
0	0	£120,000 - £124,999	0	0
1	0	£140,000 - £144,999	0	0

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15 SENIOR OFFICERS' REMUNERATION

The following tables provide details of the remuneration paid to senior officers as defined in the Accounts and Audit Regulations. The pension contribution shown in the tables is the employer's contribution to the local government pension scheme.

Senior Officers remuneration in 2020/2021:

Post holder Information	Notes	Salary (Including fees and allowances) £	Expense Allowances £	Compensation for loss of office £	Total Remuneration excluding pension contributions £	Pension Contributions £	Total Remuneration including pension contributions £
Chief Executive		152,481	0	0	152,481	27,629	180,110
Executive Director - People		118,112	0	0	118,112	21,371	139,483
Executive Director - Place	(a)	26,683	0	0	26,683	4,779	31,462
Executive Director – Projects (Fixed Term)	(b)	98,709	0	0	98,709	17,421	116,130
Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health		118,112	0	0	118,112	21,444	139,556
Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education		118,112	0	0	118,112	21,391	139,503
Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services		118,112	0	0	118,112	21,317	139,429
Head of Strategic Support		86,253	0	0	86,253	15,644	101,897
Head of Adult Social Care	(c)	64,690	0	0	64,690	11,719	76,409
Head of Children's Social Care		86,253	0	0	86,253	15,509	101,762
Head of Communities		86,253	0	0	86,253	15,621	101,874
Head of Economic Growth and Housing		86,342	0	0	86,342	15,567	101,909
Head of Education Excellence	(d)	12,531	0	0	12,531	1,799	14,330
Head of Health and Wellbeing (Director of Public Health)		89,888	0	0	89,888	12,942	102,830
Head of Highways and Public Protection		86,253	0	0	86,253	15,607	101,860
Head of Locality Services	(e)	62,401	0	0	62,401	11,045	73,445
Head of Commercial Development		86,253	0	0	86,253	15,600	101,853

- The previous Executive Director – Place left on 21st April 2020. The previous Executive Director – Projects was appointed to the post on 1st February 2021.
- The Executive Director – Projects left their post on 31st January 2021 to become the new Executive Director – Place. The Executive Director – Projects was a fixed term post,
- The Head of Adult Social Care post was appointed to on an interim basis on 1st July 2020. It had previously been vacant.
- The previous Head of Education Excellence left their post on 18th May 2020. The post has remained vacant but has been covered on an interim basis by an external contractor for the remainder of the year.
- The previous Head of Locality Services left their post on 17th December 2020. The post remained vacant for the remainder of the year.

Senior Officers remuneration in 2019/2020:

Post holder Information	Notes	Salary (Including fees and allowances) £	Expense Allowances £	Compensation for loss of office £	Total Remuneration excluding pension contributions £	Pension Contributions £	Total Remuneration including pension contributions £
Chief Executive	f	144,914	0	0	144,914	40,202	185,116
Executive Director - People		114,951	0	0	114,951	31,940	146,891
Executive Director - Place		114,951	0	0	114,951	31,989	146,940
Executive Director – Projects (Fixed Term)		114,951	0	0	114,951	31,820	146,771
Director of Social Care and Health	g	20,900	0	0	20,900	5,813	26,713
Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health	h	80,308	0	0	80,308	22,425	102,733
Executive Director of Children’s Social Care and Education	i	80,308	0	0	80,308	22,384	102,692
Head of Corporate Resources / Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	j	99,466	0	0	99,466	27,593	127,059
Head of Strategic Support		83,844	0	0	83,844	23,360	107,204
Head of Adult Social Care	k	13,991	0	0	13,991	3,833	17,824
Head of Children’s Social Care	l	45,703	0	0	45,703	12,609	58,312
Head of Communities		85,252	0	0	85,252	23,359	108,611
Head of Economic Growth and Housing		83,944	0	0	83,944	23,287	107,231
Head of Education Excellence		73,940	0	0	73,940	20,576	94,516
Head of Health and Wellbeing (Director of Public Health)		88,620	0	0	88,620	24,584	113,204
Head of Highways and Public Protection		83,944	0	0	83,944	23,325	107,269
Head of Locality Services		83,944	0	0	83,944	23,353	107,297
Head of Commercial Development		83,944	0	0	83,944	23,318	107,262

- f) The Chief Executive retired on 31st May 2019 with the post being filled on 1st June 2019.
- g) The Director of Social Care and Health was appointed as Chief Executive from 1st June 2019. The post was deleted and replaced by two new posts – the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health and Executive Director of Children’s Social Care and Education.
- h) The Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health post was created on 1st June 2019 and the former Head of Adult Social Care was appointed to the post.
- i) The Executive Director of Children’s Social Care and Education post was created on 1st June 2019 and the former Head of Children’s Social Care was appointed to the post.
- j) The Head of Corporate Resources post was redesignated as Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services from 1st February 2020.
- k) The Head of Adult Social Care was appointed to the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health post on 1st June 2019. The Head of Adult Social Care post remained vacant until the end of the year.
- l) The Head of Children’s Social Care was appointed to the Executive Director of Children’s Social Care and Education post on 1st June 2019. The Head of Children’s Social Care post remained vacant until 15th November 2019 when it was filled temporarily for the remainder of the year.

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16 DEDICATED SCHOOLS' GRANT

The council's expenditure on schools is funded primarily by grant monies provided by the Education Funding Agency, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). DSG is ring-fenced and can only be applied to meet expenditure properly included in the Schools Budget, as defined in the School Finance and Early Years (England) Regulations 2015. The Schools Budget includes elements for a range of educational services provided on an authority-wide basis and for the Individual Schools Budget, which is divided into a budget share for each maintained school.

Details of the deployment of DSG receivable for 2020/2021 are as follows:

	<u>Central Expenditure</u> (Note a) £000s	<u>Individual Schools Budget</u> £000s	<u>Total</u> £000s
Final DSG for 2020/2021			-215,508
Academy figure recouped for 2020/2021			59,793
Total DSG after Academy Recoupment			-155,715
Brought forward from 2019/2020			4,385
Carry forward to 2021/2022 agreed in advance			-4,385
Agreed initial budgeted distribution in 2020/2021	-52,309	-103,406	-155,715
In year adjustments	227	0	227
Final budgeted distribution in 2020/2021	-52,536	-103,406	-155,942
Actual central expenditure	54,766		54,766
Actual ISB deployed to schools		103,406	103,406
Local authority contributions in 2020/2021	0	0	0
Total Carry forward to 2020/2021 (Note a)	2,230	0	6,615

Note (a): The net overspend £2.230m recorded under Central Expenditure includes an overspend on High Needs of £2.815m, an underspend on Early Years of -£0.608m (which included additional funding related to 2019/20 of -£0.227m re-headcount changes between January 2019 and January 2020) plus other small under/overspends with a net value of £0.023m.

17 GRANT INCOME

Grants and contributions credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

The Authority credited the following grants, contributions and donations to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

<u>2019/2020</u> £000s	<u>Credited to Taxation and Non-specific Grant Income</u>	<u>2020/2021</u> £000s
	<u>Non-Ringfenced Government Grants</u>	
-19,628	Non-Domestic Rates Top-Up Grant	-21,249
-864	New Homes Bonus	-421
-11,331	Business Rates Relief - S31 Grant	-51,114
-2,107	Independent Living Fund - Transition Funding	-2,107
-2,605	Additional Social Care Funding	-9,315
-218	Business Rate Retention - Levy Account Surplus	0
-1,525	Adult Social Care Winter Pressures Grant	0
-9,975	COVID-19 Emergency Funding	-13,692
0	Other Specific COVID Funding	-43,408
-723	Other Non-Ringfenced Government Grants	-756
-48,976		-142,062

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2019/2020 £000s	Credited to Taxation and Non-specific Grant Income	2020/2021 £000s
	<u>Capital Grants and Contributions</u>	
-2,560	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority – Transport Grants	-4,156
-2,589	Better Care Fund	-3,869
0	Department of Transport Capital Grants	-3,117
-3,381	Local Transport Plan Grant	-2,872
0	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority – Growth Projects Grants	-2,721
-5,206	Department for Education Capital Grants	-1,996
-496	Environment Agency - CERMS Grant	-574
-1,244	Other Capital Grants and Contributions	-1,477
162	Reversal of capital grants and contributions unapplied previously credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	57
-15,314		-20,725

2019/2020 £000s	Grants Credited to Services	2020/2021 £000s
	<u>Revenue Grants</u>	
-147,809	Dedicated Schools Grant	-155,710
-71,982	Housing Benefit Subsidy	-68,270
-20,810	Public Health Grant	-21,803
-8,887	Pupil Premium	-9,106
-2,569	Teachers' Employer Pension Grant	-4,577
-3,359	Education Funding Agency	-3,274
-2,816	Universal Infant Free School Meals	-2,574
0	Discretionary Business Grant Funding	-2,238
-1,303	Teachers Pay Grant	-1,513
0	SMART Testing	-1,489
0	COVID Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Grant	-1,424
-1,301	PE and Sport Funding	-1,302
0	COVID Pupil Premium Catch-up	-1,251
0	COVID Winter Grant	-1,109
-880	Housing Benefit Administration	-962
-660	Discretionary Housing Payments	-925
-1,488	Troubled Families Programme	-899
-664	Arts Council	-829
-909	Skills Funding Agency	-818
0	Retrofit Grant	-757
-561	PFI Grant	-561
-353	Local Council Tax Support Administration	-417
0	Rough Sleeper Initiative	-395
0	Free School Meals Supplementary Grant	-355
-405	Youth Justice Board	-347
-376	Police and Crime Commissioner	-342
0	Next Steps Accommodation Programme	-342
-317	School Improvement Grant	-313
-177	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children	-312
-320	NNDR Administration Grant	-305
-274	Transformation Challenge Award Fund	-280
-319	Syrian Refugees (Home Office)	-70
-64	Heritage Lottery Grant	0
-8,325	Other Revenue Grants	-3,786
-276,928		-288,655
	<u>Capital Grants</u>	
-8,753	Capital Grants utilised to fund Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute	-3,120
	<u>Contributions</u>	
-20,920	Health Contributions	-25,653
-3,999	School Contributions and Donations	-3,697
-1,322	Other Local Authorities	-1,013
-4,829	Other Contributions	-4,620
-31,070		-34,983

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Notes to the Financial Statements

18 PROPERTY PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

Movement on Balances

Movements in 2020/2021:

	<u>Other Land and Buildings (OL&B)</u>	<u>Vehicles Plant and Equipment</u>	<u>Infrastructure Assets</u>	<u>Community Assets</u>	<u>Surplus Assets</u>	<u>Assets Under Construction</u>	<u>Total</u>
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
<u>Cost or Valuation</u>							
At 1 April 2020	292,005	19,987	235,875	22,862	16,728	0	587,457
Additions	7,891	2,554	10,358	271	0	0	21,074
Revaluations - recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	666	0	0	0	752	0	1,418
Revaluations – recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	-9,169	0	0	0	-273	0	-9,442
Derecognition - Disposals	-590	0	0	0	-1,470	0	-2,060
Reclassifications:							
To Assets Held for Sale	-2,264	0	0	0	-7,999	0	-10,263
From Investment Properties	1,118	0	0	0	270	0	1,388
At 31 March 2021	289,657	22,541	246,233	23,133	8,008	0	589,572
<u>Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment</u>							
At 1 April 2020	-35,480	-12,685	-70,071	0	0	0	-118,236
Depreciation Charge	-9,479	-3,193	-6,724	0	0	0	-19,396
Revaluations - recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Accumulated Depreciation written out upon impairment	3,412	0	0	0	0	0	3,412
Derecognition - Disposals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reclassifications	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
At 31 March 2021	-41,547	-15,878	-76,795	0	0	0	-134,220
<u>Net Book Value</u>							
At 1 April 2020	256,525	7,302	165,804	22,862	16,728	0	469,221
At 31 March 2021	248,110	6,663	169,438	23,133	8,008	0	455,352

Movements in 2019/2020:

	Other Land and Buildings	Vehicles Plant and Equipment	Infrastructure Assets	Community Assets	Surplus Assets	Assets Under Construction	Total
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
<u>Cost or Valuation</u>							
At 1 April 2019	302,403	22,652	226,686	22,601	10,869	0	585,211
Additions	3,496	2,982	9,189	261	0	0	15,928
Revaluations - recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	-124	0	0	0	-362	0	-486
Revaluations – recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	-9,508	0	0	0	-634	0	-10,142
Derecognition - Disposals	-4,262	-5,647	0	0	0	0	-9,909
Reclassifications: from Investment Properties	0	0	0	0	6,855	0	6,855
At 31 March 2020	292,005	19,987	235,875	22,862	16,728	0	587,457
<u>Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment</u>							
At 1 April 2019	-28,033	-14,736	-63,519	0	0	0	-106,288
Depreciation Charge	-9,653	-3,596	-6,552	0	0	0	-19,801
Revaluations - recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Accumulated Depreciation written out upon impairment	1,946	0	0	0	0	0	1,946
Derecognition - Disposals	260	5,647	0	0	0	0	5,907
Reclassifications	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
At 31 March 2020	-35,480	-12,685	-70,071	0	0	0	-118,236
<u>Net Book Value</u>							
At 1 April 2019	274,370	7,916	163,167	22,601	10,869	0	478,923
At 31 March 2020	256,525	7,302	165,804	22,862	16,728	0	469,221

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided for on the straight-line basis over an asset's estimated useful life as detailed below:

Asset Type	Basis	Estimated Life
Other Land and Buildings	Straight-line	10 to 75 Years
Vehicles, Plant and Equipment (Computers)	Straight-line	5 Years
Vehicles, Plant and Equipment (Other)	Straight-line	5 to 10 Years
Infrastructure Assets (Capitalised Highways Maintenance)	Straight-line	10 Years
Infrastructure Assets (Other)	Straight-line	40 Years
Community Assets	Not Depreciated	-
Surplus Assets	Not Depreciated	-
Assets Under Construction	Not Depreciated	-

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The usual estimated useful life of different categories of Other Land and Buildings assets are detailed below. For individual assets the valuer may determine that a lower estimated useful life is more appropriate for that asset:

Asset Type	Estimated Life
Southport Cultural Centre (The Atkinson)	75 Years
Schools and Educational Establishments	50 Years
Civic Buildings	50 Years
Social Care Establishments	40 to 50 Years
Libraries	40 Years
Leisure Facilities	30 Years
Garages / Depots	10 Years

Capital Commitments

At 31 March 2021, the Authority has entered into a number of contracts for the construction or enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment in 2021/2022 and future years which are budgeted to cost £7.170m. Similar commitments at 31 March 2020 were £5.340m. The major commitments are:

Scheme	Expenditure approved and contracted at 31 March 2021 £000s
Crosby Lakeside Redevelopment	2,801
Southport Market Redevelopment	843
Cambridge Road Centre Redevelopment	795
Vehicle Replacement Programme	713

Revaluations

Valuations are carried out as part of a rolling programme over a five-year cycle.

All freehold and leasehold land and properties which comprise the Authority's property portfolio have been valued by Mr. A. Bond (MRICS). Mr Bond is part of the Council's own qualified in-house valuers. The only exception is for the Strand Shopping Centre which was valued by Andrew Watson (MRICS) who works for an external valuation company, GVA.

Valuations of land and buildings were carried out in accordance with the methodologies and bases for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

The Council's own in-house valuers have considered valuation uncertainty and market instability insofar as those properties valued this year are concerned and reflected any changes in the valuations supplied.

The table below will show the dates and amounts of valuations for each class of Property, Plant and equipment included in the balance sheet:

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	Other Land and Buildings	Vehicles Plant and Equipment	Infrastructure Assets	Community Assets	Surplus Assets	Assets Under Construction	Total
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Cost or Valuation							
<u>Valued at Current Value in:</u>							
2020/2021	66,976	0	0	0	1,011	0	67,987
2019/2020	13,547	0	0	0	1,026	0	14,573
2018/2019	98,415	0	0	0	514	0	98,929
2017/2018	1,297	0	0	0	580	0	1,877
2016/2017	106,468	0	0	0	941	0	107,409
Assets valued at Historic Cost	0	22,541	246,233	23,133	3,936	0	295,843
Assets not subject to Revaluation	2,954	0	0	0	0	0	2,954
At 31 March 2021	289,657	22,541	246,233	23,133	8,008	0	589,572

Notes:

- Surplus Assets shown as valued at Historic Cost relates to land valued at historic cost upon purchase.
- Other Land and Buildings not subject to revaluation mainly relates to office refurbishments being depreciated.

19 HERITAGE ASSETS

A heritage asset is an asset that is held due to its historical, artistic, scientific, technological, or environmental qualities, and is maintained principally for its contribution to knowledge and culture.

Movements in Heritage Assets during the year were as follows:

2019/2020				2020/2021		
Art Collection	Other	Total		Art Collection	Other	Total
£000s	£000s	£000s		£000s	£000s	£000s
9,704	1,828	11,532	Balance at the start of the year	9,704	1,828	11,532
0	0	0	Additions (Expenditure)	0	0	0
0	0	0	Disposals	0	0	0
0	0	0	Revaluations	0	0	0
0	0	0	Depreciation	0	0	0
9,704	1,828	11,532	Balance at the end of the year	9,704	1,828	11,532

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The Art Collection consists principally of a ceramic collection, a silver collection, works of art and an Egyptology collection and is described in more detail below. Other Heritage Assets consists of several war memorials and the art installation "Another Place".

CERAMICS

The Authority owns a large collection of ceramics and china. The collection consists of 186 pieces of Crown Derby "Imari", and 757 pieces of Tuscan Ware, and is mainly held at Bootle Town Hall with further collections at the Atkinson. Due to the age of the collection no accurate records are maintained of how the collection was acquired. An inventory of the collection is made at both Bootle and Town Hall and the Atkinson.

A Collection Development Policy is in place which defines the scope of future collecting activity. When assets are bequeathed to the Authority appropriate documentation is completed to transfer the right of ownership to the Authority. It is not the Authority's policy to dispose of these assets although appropriate procedures and documentation are available for completion should an asset be disposed of. Loans of heritage assets are made to other registered museums and galleries.

Certain items are on public display within Bootle and Southport Town Halls and the Atkinson. Requests to view those items not on public display would require written request to be submitted.

The Authority has a conservation management policy and plan for heritage assets.

SILVER

The Authority owns 251 pieces of silverware, consisting of an eclectic mix of cups, salvers, and civic regalia. The collection was principally acquired by donation. An inventory of the collection is held at both Bootle and Southport Town Halls.

The policy for acquisition, disposal, management, and public access of the silver collection is the same as for the ceramic collection. However, those assets in use, such as maces, are regularly reviewed for wear and tear that requires repair.

ARTWORKS

The Authority holds approximately 3,500 artworks at the Atkinson with a further 30,000 items of social and natural history. The gallery collection consists of paintings, prints, and sculpture. The museum collection consists of paintings, photographs, postcards, furniture, costume, natural history, archaeology, and Egyptology. The majority of assets were donated to the Authority, although some items were purchased, whilst others were transferred from other museums.

Some records of assets are held on various systems, but an ongoing project is in place to document all items on the Authority's collection management database. This process is documented within the Authority's Documentation Procedural Manual, a copy of which is available from the Authority.

The policy for acquisitions and disposals are contained within the Collection Development Policy for the Atkinson, copies of which are available from the Authority.

The Authority does loan such items to other galleries and museums.

The Authority has a conservation management policy and plan for heritage assets. An Emergency Plan is in place in case of an incident of fire or flood.

The Art Collection is reported in the Balance Sheet at insurance valuation which is based on market values. The insurance valuation for the collection of oil paintings was last updated in 2005. The Authority considers that obtaining updated valuations for the collection would involve disproportionate cost. This is because of the diverse nature of the assets and the lack of comparable market values makes valuation expensive. As the valuations are for insurance purposes only, there is an inherent limitation on the precise valuation of Heritage Assets.

20 INVESTMENT PROPERTY

The following items of income and expense have been accounted for in the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

<u>2019/2020</u> £000s		<u>2020/2021</u> £000s
-2,272	Rental Income from Investment Property	-2,320
68	Direct operating expenses arising from Investment Property	124
-2,204	Net gain	-2,196

There are no restrictions on the Authority's ability to realise the value inherent in its investment property or on the Authority's right to the remittance of income and the proceeds of disposal.

At 31 March 2021, the Authority had no contractual obligations for the construction or enhancement of investment property in 2021/2022 and future years. There were also no similar commitments at 31 March 2020.

The following table summarises the movement in fair value of investment properties over the year:

<u>2019/2020</u> £000s		<u>2020/2021</u> £000s
61,836	Balance at the start of the year	55,300
29	Additions – Subsequent expenditure	1,079
-150	Disposals	0
440	Net gains / losses (-) from fair value adjustments	-4,631
	<u>Reclassifications:</u>	
0	- To Other Land and Buildings	-1,118
-6,855	- To Surplus Assets	-270
0	- To Assets Held for Sale	-1,250
55,300	Balance at the end of the year	49,110

Fair Value Hierarchy

All the Council's investment properties have been value assessed as Level 2 on the fair value hierarchy for valuation purposes (see Note 63 Statement of Accounting Policies (i) for an explanation of the fair value levels).

Valuation Techniques Used to Determine Level 2 Fair Values for Investment Property

The fair value of investment property has been measured using inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the asset, either directly or indirectly, assets being valued using applicable comparative evidence.

In estimating the fair value of the Council's properties, the highest and best use has been considered as part of the valuation process.

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21 CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND CAPITAL FINANCING

The total amount of capital expenditure incurred in the year is shown in the table below together with the resources that have been used to finance it. Where capital expenditure is to be financed in future years by charges to revenue as assets are used by the Authority, the expenditure results in an increase in the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), a measure of the capital expenditure incurred historically by the Authority that has yet to be financed. The movements in CFR is analysed in the second part of this note.

<u>2019/2020</u> £000s	Capital Financing Requirement	<u>2020/2021</u> £000s
231,762	Opening Capital Financing Requirement	230,300
	<u>Capital Expenditure</u>	
15,928	Property, Plant and Equipment	21,074
29	Investment Properties	1,079
9,251	Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute	4,050
	<u>Sources of Finance</u>	
-310	Capital Receipts	-1,164
-20,239	Grants and Contributions	-18,860
-43	Direct Revenue Contributions	-62
	<u>Provision for Repayment of Debt</u>	
-5,971	Statutory Provision for financing capital investment	-6,159
-107	Amortisation of Deferred Income re. Crosby PFI	-108
230,300	Closing Capital Financing Requirement	230,150

<u>2019/2020</u> £000s	Explanation of movements in the year	<u>2020/2021</u> £000s
	<u>Decrease (-) / Increase in underlying need to borrow:</u>	
4,616	Increase in underlying need to borrow	6,117
-6,078	Provision for Repayment of Debt	-6,267
-1,462	Increase (+) / Decrease (-) in Capital Financing Requirement	150

22 LONG TERM INVESTMENTS

<u>31 March</u> <u>2020</u> £000s		<u>31 March</u> <u>2021</u> £000s
5,414	Churches & Charities Local Authority LAMIT Property Fund	5,376
1	Sefton New Directions (see Note 54 for more details)	1
125	Sandway Homes (see Note 54 for more details)	1,125
5,540	Total	6,502

23 LONG TERM DEBTORS

31 March 2020 £000s		31 March 2021 £000s
95	<u>Transferred Services</u> Merseyside Residuary Body	87
95		87
4,635	<u>Other</u> Long Term Sundry Debtor Accounts	5,048
76	Loan to Plaza Community Cinema	72
4,711		5,120
4,806	Total	5,207

24 SHORT TERM INVESTMENTS

Sefton held no Short-Term Investments with banks at the balance sheet date. However, accrued interest receipts on the Council's Long-Term Investments are shown as Short-Term Investments in the Balance Sheet as shown below:

31 March 2020 £000s		31 March 2021 £000s
99	Accrued Interest Receipts	163
99	Total	163

25 ASSETS HELD FOR SALE

2019/2020 £000s	Movements in the year	2020/2021 £000s
0	Balance Outstanding at start of the year	0
	<u>Assets transferred from:</u>	
0	- Other Land and Buildings	2,264
0	- Surplus Assets	7,999
0	- Investment Properties	1,250
0	Balance Outstanding at the year-end	11,513

Fair Value Hierarchy

The Council's Assets Held for Sale are valued using the fair value hierarchy for valuation purposes (see Note 63 Statement of Accounting Policies (i) for an explanation of the fair value levels).

Valuation Techniques Used to Determine Level 2 Fair Values for Assets Held for Sale

The fair value of Assets Held for Sale has been measured at level 2 using inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the asset, either directly or indirectly, assets being valued using applicable comparative evidence. The asset classified as an Asset Held for Sale at 31 March 2018 has been reclassified as a surplus asset as it is no longer being actively marketed.

In estimating the fair value of the Council's properties, the highest and best use has been considered as part of the valuation process.

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26 SHORT TERM DEBTORS AND PREPAYMENTS

31 March 2020 £000s	<u>Short Term Debtors</u>	31 March 2021 £000s
	<u>Amounts Falling Due Within One Year</u>	
4,348	Central Government Bodies	8,440
2,909	HM Revenue and Customs	3,600
602	Academies	328
7,598	Other Local Authorities	7,905
12,498	NHS Bodies	7,331
22,163	Council Tax Payers	27,421
5,294	NNDR Payers	7,687
16,166	Other Entities and Individuals	19,805
6	Car Loans to Employees	0
71,584		82,517
	<u>Less Impairment</u>	
-13,903	Council Tax Payers	-20,244
-3,252	NNDR Payers	-7,124
-5,298	Other Entities and Individuals	-5,531
-22,453		-32,899
49,131	Net Debtors	49,618

31 March 2020 £000s	<u>Prepayments</u>	31 March 2021 £000s
2,196	Early Years Providers	2,007
1,643	ICT Contracts	1,005
628	Direct Payments	853
0	Payment of Pension Contributions to Merseyside Pension Fund	28,272
901	Other	1,017
5,368	Net Debtors	33,154

27 CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

The balance of Cash and Cash Equivalents is made up of the following elements:

31 March 2020 £000s		31 March 2021 £000s
52	Cash in hand of officers	59
1,572	Bank current accounts	1,085
37,364	Short-term deposits with banks and building societies	65,266
38,988	Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	66,410

28 SHORT TERM CREDITORS

31 March 2020 £000s		31 March 2021 £000s
-4,601	HM Revenue and Customs	-4,752
-4,484	Government Departments	-20,100
-3,452	Other Local Authorities	-3,049
-1,100	NHS Bodies	-1,520
-23,506	Other entities and individuals	-22,149
-4,725	Accumulated Absences	-5,381
-41,868	Total	-56,951

29 RECEIPTS IN ADVANCE

31 March 2020 £000s		31 March 2021 £000s
-4,685	Planning Section 106 Agreements	-4,417
-3,024	Rechargeable Works	-3,073
-770	Council Tax Payers	-930
-1,318	NNDR Payers	-3,099
-12,330	Business Rates – Section 31 Grants	0
-3,868	Other entities and individuals	-6,649
-25,995	Total	-18,168

30 PROVISIONS

Movements in provisions during 2020/2021 were as follows:

		1 April 2020 £000s	Additions in Year £000s	Applied In Year £000s	Released In Year £000s	31 March 2021 £000s
	Long-term					
(a)	Internal Insurance Cover	-3,997	-1,298	682	0	-4,613
(b)	Provision for NDR Appeals	-18,702	-6,693	1,748	0	-23,647
		-22,699	-7,991	2,430	0	-28,260

Movements in provisions during 2019/2020 were as follows:

		1 April 2019 £000s	Additions in Year £000s	Applied In Year £000s	Released In Year £000s	31 March 2020 £000s
	Long-term					
(a)	Internal Insurance Cover	-5,444	-914	991	1,370	-3,997
(b)	Provision for NDR Appeals	-16,156	-4,100	1,554	0	-18,702
		-21,600	-5,014	2,545	1,370	-22,699

(a) **Internal Insurance Cover** - The purpose of the insurance provision is to enable certain known uninsured losses to be met centrally, i.e., losses arising from the excesses that apply to the Authority's main insurance policies (Public Liability, Property, Employers Liability and Motor Insurance). The amount required to cover these uninsured losses is based on claims actually reported as outstanding. The timing of settlement of these claims is uncertain but is likely to be over a number of years. Based on an assessment by Sefton's insurance advisors (AON), the resources available in the Authority's Insurance Fund are in excess of known liabilities.

Included within this balance is an amount to cover potential liabilities following the announcement on the 13 November 2012 that the Municipal Mutual Insurance Limited (MMI) Scheme of Arrangement has now been triggered.

MMI was formed as a limited company by guarantee in 1903 and by 1974 some 90% of local authorities were insured by the company. Due to dramatic increases in claims, coincidental with a fall in the property market and poor investment environment, along with its inability to raise capital because of its mutual status, MMI's net assets fell below the minimum regulatory solvency requirement and the company went into run-off in September 1992.

The amount paid to the Council plus the amount outstanding under this arrangement is £3.743m, and under the Scheme or Arrangement a levy is chargeable on this amount. After the imposition of the levy, the Council is also liable to contribute to each and every subsequent claim paid by MMI on the Council's behalf, thereby creating an on-going financial obligation. The initial levy requested by the scheme administrator from the Council is a percentage of the total sum paid on behalf of the Council by MMI since 30 September 1992, less the

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assessment by a scheme actuary, a levy rate of 25% is being applied creating a liability to the Council of £0.901m (£0.541m of which was paid in January 2014 with £0.360m paid in May 2016). There is a possibility that the ultimate levy rate could eventually be higher than this and as such the Council has made a specific provision of an additional £0.478m million in the accounts to cover this potential liability, based on an assessment by Sefton's insurance advisors.

The liability upon the Council as a scheme creditor cannot be fully estimated at this stage for unknown claims incurred but not reported between 1974 and 1992. Whilst the Council has considered the financial impact in producing its Statement of Accounts, by including resources in its Insurance Provision, there is a risk that the Council's financial liability could increase from this level.

(b) **Provision for NDR Appeals** – Following the introduction of business rates retention on 1 April 2013, the Council assumed the liability for refunding ratepayers who have successfully appealed against the rateable value of their properties. The timing of these refunds is uncertain but is expected to be made over several years (which is the reason why the whole provision is treated as long-term). The provision covers the Council's locally retained share of the liability which increased from 49% in 2016/17 to 99% in 2017/18 as a result of the Council's participation in the Liverpool City Region Business Rates Pilot Scheme from 1 April 2017. The Council's share of potential repayments has been estimated at £23.647m based on the rateable value of properties still subject to appeal on the 2010 Rating List and an assessment of future threats from checks, challenges, and appeals against the rateable value of properties on the 2017 Rating List at 31 March 2021 (£18.702m on 31 March 2020).

The provision made is the Council's best estimate of the actual liability as at the 31 March 2021. There is a potential risk that the value of refunds due as a result of checks, challenges and appeals lodged with the Valuation Office Agency will exceed the provision made in the accounts.

31 DEFERRED LIABILITIES

<u>31 March</u> <u>2020</u> £000s		<u>31 March</u> <u>2021</u> £000s
	Short Term	
-438	Merseyside Residuary Body	-438
-207	Finance Lease Liability – Crosby Baths PFI	-214
-166	Finance Lease Liability – Property, Plant and Equipment	-183
-107	PFI Deferred Income	-107
-918	Total Short Term	-942
	Long Term	
-2,188	Merseyside Residuary Body	-1,750
-2,072	Finance Lease Liability – Crosby Baths PFI	-1,859
-3,345	Finance Lease Liability – Property, Plant and Equipment	-3,162
-752	PFI Deferred Income	-644
-8,357	Total Long Term	-7,415

Wirral MBC manages debt on behalf of the former Merseyside Residuary Body. Sefton MBC (along with the other Merseyside Districts, Precepting and Levying Bodies), as a successor body, inherited debt relating to services transferred to its control. The amount outstanding in respect of Sefton MBC was £2.188m at 31 March 2021 (£2.626m at 31 March 2020).

32 TRUST FUNDS

The Council acts as Sole Trustee of a number of legacies and bequests. Details of the transactions and the Committees controlling the funds are shown below. In compliance with the Code, Trust Funds have been excluded from the Council's Balance Sheet.

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Portfolio and Name of Trust	Balance at 1 April 2020 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Balance at 31 March 2021 £
<u>Children's Services</u>				
Bootle Holiday Camp - Children	23,615	84	0	23,699
Wignall Scholarship	12,663	45	0	12,708
<u>Corporate Services</u>				
Netherton Green Trust	14,046	0	0	14,046
<u>Other</u>				
Mayor of Sefton's Charity Fund	20,205	0	0	20,205
Total	70,529	129	0	70,658
<u>The balances are invested as follows:</u>				
Government Securities	300			300
Sefton Cash Balances	70,229			70,358
Total	70,529			70,658

Children's Services Trust Funds

The Educational Trust Funds aim to help in the advancement of education and training of young people within the Sefton area by providing financial assistance to those who have difficulty in paying fees and by the award of prizes as rewards to deserving students.

Netherton Green Trust

The Netherton Green Trust Fund was set up prior to 1974 as a bequest, converted into shares with the former Mersey Docks and Harbour Company. These were subsequently redeemed in 2005/2006. The original sum was applied towards the upkeep of an area within the Borough called Netherton Green.

Mayor of Sefton's Charity Fund

This fund has a year-end of 30 June. The opening balance included in the Trust Fund Statement above is therefore as at 1 July 2019. The movements in the year were not available at the time these accounts were approved in July 2021. The opening balance in this note has been adjusted to reflect the Charity Fund's final audited accounts for 2019/2020.

33 GENERAL FUND BALANCE

The General Fund is the statutory fund into which all the receipts of an authority are required to be paid and out of which all liabilities of the authority are to be met, except to the extent that statutory rules might provide otherwise. These rules can also specify the financial year in which liabilities and payments should impact on the General Fund Balance, which is not necessarily in accordance with proper accounting practice. The General Fund Balance therefore summarises the resources that the Council is statutorily empowered to spend on its services or on capital investment (or the deficit of resources that the Council is required to recover) at the end of the financial year.

General Fund Balances arise due to planned contributions or underspends in previous years. Amounts held by schools are to fund expenditure in future years and as a prudent measure against future uncertainty. General Fund Balances attributable to the Council are held as a prudent measure against future uncertainty.

2019/2020 £000s	Non-School General Fund Balances	2020/2021 £000s
-7,539	Balance at 1 April	-6,984
555	Reduction in Balances	-4,294
-6,984	Balance at 31 March	-11,278

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2019/2020 £000s	School General Fund Balances	2020/2021 £000s
-13,596	Balance at 1 April	-10,823
2,773	Reduction in Balances	-4,853
-10,823	Balance at 31 March	-15,676

34 EARMARKED RESERVES

The movements in earmarked reserves during the last two years are shown below:

	Movements in 2020/2021	1 April 2020 £000s	Transfers in £000s	Transfers Out £000s	31 March 2021 £000s
(a)	Environmental Warranty	-9,000	0	0	-9,000
(b)	Insurance Fund	-1,371	0	410	-961
(c)	Transforming Sefton	-5,466	-639	2,602	-3,503
(d)	Redundancy Reserve	-2,000	0	674	-1,326
(e)	Capital Priorities Fund	-42	0	42	0
(f)	Community Transition Fund	-659	0	178	-481
(g)	Contamination Clearance	-1,500	0	62	-1,438
(h)	Rating Appeals / Reduction in NDR Income Reserve	0	-38,784	0	-38,784
(i)	Secondary School Deficit Reserve	0	-750	0	-750
(j)	Regeneration Schemes Reserve	-193	0	193	0
(k)	Revenue Grants and Contributions Unapplied	-14,616	-18,286	2,148	-30,754
(l)	Centrally Retained DSG Balances	4,385	-608	2,838	6,615
(m)	Other Earmarked Reserves	-5,426	-6,517	627	-11,316
	Total	-35,888	-65,584	9,774	-91,698

	Movements in 2019/2020	1 April 2019 £000s	Transfers in £000s	Transfers Out £000s	31 March 2020 £000s
(a)	Environmental Warranty	-11,000	0	2,000	-9,000
(b)	Insurance Fund	0	-1,371	0	-1,371
(c)	Transforming Sefton	-8,603	0	3,137	-5,466
(d)	Redundancy Reserve	-2,162	-2,000	2,162	-2,000
(e)	Capital Priorities Fund	-76	0	34	-42
(f)	Community Transition Fund	-889	0	230	-659
(g)	Contamination Clearance	-1,500	0	0	-1,500
(h)	Rating Appeals / Reduction in NDR Income Reserve	-2,254	0	2,254	0
	MRP Adjustment Reserve	-399	0	399	0
(j)	Regeneration Schemes Reserve	-663	-30	500	-193
(k)	Revenue Grants and Contributions Unapplied	-6,677	-11,202	3,263	-14,616
(l)	Centrally Retained DSG Balances	230	-336	4,491	4,385
(m)	Other Earmarked Reserves	-5,752	-480	806	-5,426
	Total	-39,745	-15,419	19,276	-35,888
(n)	Temporary Use of Earmarked Reserves to Fund Pension Deficit Payment	10,154	-10,154	0	0
		-29,591	-25,573	19,276	-35,888

(a) **Environmental Warranty** - The Council has provided a 35-year environmental warranty for the land / property that has been transferred to One Vision Housing Limited. This warranty requires the Council to remediate any environmental contamination found on these sites during the life of the warranty. Resources are being set-aside over the coming years as a prudent measure against a potential cost.

(b) **Insurance Fund** – Any resources available in the Authority’s Insurance Fund in excess of known liabilities are included in an Earmarked Reserve.

(c) **Transforming Sefton** – The Council is currently undertaking a Transformation Programme to deliver customer focussed services through a high-performance culture whilst achieving significant ongoing savings. A reserve has been created to enable Sefton to progress the Programme over the next few years. In addition, it will be used to fund initiatives to support economic development in the Borough.

(d) **Redundancy Reserve** – The Council may be required to make significant savings in future years in order to meet the demands of reducing external resources and increased spending pressures which may result in redundancy costs associated with making these savings. In addition, the Council is required to pay contributions to Merseyside Pension Fund for the additional costs arising from employees taking early retirement. Resources have been set aside to fund these costs over the coming years.

(e) **Capital Priorities Fund** - Council on 28 February 2013 agreed to the establishment of a new one-off fund to invest in Council priorities including town centres, youth employment and the local economy. This fund has now been fully utilised.

(f) **Community Transition Fund** - Council on 28 February 2013 agreed to the establishment of a new one-off Community Transition Fund. The aim of this resource was to facilitate, where possible, the transfer of certain services to become community run and self-sustaining. Cabinet on 3 September 2015 agreed to increase the reserve by £1.000m as a result of the underspend achieved in 2015/2016. Cabinet on 6 December 2018 agreed to increase the reserve by a further £0.500m from a review of uncommitted Earmarked Reserves.

(g) **Contamination Clearance Reserve** - During 2011/2012 it was identified there was a site in the Borough that was contaminated and there could be significant costs associated with clearing the contamination. It was therefore considered prudent to set resources aside to cover these potential costs.

(h) **Rating Appeals / Reduction in NDR Income Reserve** - In response to COVID19, the Government introduced an expanded Business Rates retail relief scheme in 2020/2021. This resulted in a significant deficit on the Collection Fund which will be recovered in 2021/22. However, the Council received S31 grants to offset the reliefs granted which were received in 2020/21. These have therefore been reserved so they can be used to offset the deficit in 2021/22.

(i) **Secondary School Deficit Reserve** – Budget Council in February 2020 approved the creation of a reserve to fund the potential deficits of Secondary Schools should they transfer to academy status. A contribution of £0.750m was included in the 2020/21 budget.

(j) **Regeneration Schemes Reserve** – In April 2017 the Council purchased the Strand Shopping Centre in Bootle. During 2017/2018 the income generated by the Centre met the loan repayment costs and the Centre’s running costs with a surplus of £1.000m generated. This surplus was reserved to contribute towards supporting the Council’s revenue budget and also to help fund new regeneration projects. At Budget Council in March 2018, Council agreed to the provision of £0.500m from the Strand reserve to be used to support front line services in both 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. During 2018/2019 and 2019/2020, after all outgoings have been met, including the repayment of debt, the Strand delivered a surplus of £0.192m that was used to increase the value of the reserve. This was utilised in 2020/2021 to offset an element of the deficit incurred as a consequence of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

(k) **Revenue Grants and Contributions Unapplied** – In line with proper accounting practice, the Council credits the Income and Expenditure Account with grants and contributions as and when conditions for claiming the grant or contribution have been met. However, these amounts are required to fund expenditure on specific schemes in future years. They are therefore reserved to offset this future expenditure.

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(l) **Centrally Retained DSG Balances** – The Council holds some Centrally Retained DSG reserves, separate to its Maintained Schools balances. These are respect of Schools' Central Support services; Early Years (non-schools) provision and High Needs (non-schools) provision. The net opening balance of these reserves, as at 1 April 2020 was a deficit of £4.385m, however during 2020/2021, there were some significant under and overspending areas, which net, have resulted in an overspend of £2.230m. This has therefore taken the level of reserves into a deficit position of £6.615m at 31 March 2021. More explanation on the deficit, and its treatment as an Earmarked Reserve, is provided on page 13.

(m) **Other Earmarked Reserves** – There are a number of other earmarked reserves held by the Council. These include reserves for Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care Pressures (£3.554), Economic Recovery (£1.500m), the Formby Pool Sinking Fund (£1.315m) and the Investment Strategy Reserve (£0.692m).

(n) **Temporary Use of Earmarked Reserves to Fund Pension Deficit Payment** - The valuation of the Local Government Pension Scheme completed during 2016/2017 set the contribution rates for 2017/2018 to 2019/2020 and the deficit payments required over the three years as part of a 19-year deficit recovery period. The Council made a one-off payment in April 2017 of £30.462m to cover the deficit recovery contributions for 2017/2018 to 2019/2020 (annual payments would have been £10.8m in each of the three years so the Council received a discount by making a one-off payment). Contributions in 2019/2020 (and 2018/2019) were significantly less as no deficit recovery contribution was required in the year. The Council temporarily utilised Earmarked Reserves of £20.308m in 2017/2018 to fund part of the payment. Earmarked Reserves have been increased by £10.154m in 2019/2020 (as they were in 2018/2019) when no deficit recovery payment was required. The Earmarked Reserves temporarily utilised was therefore fully refunded by the end of 2019/2020.

35 CAPITAL RECEIPTS RESERVE

The Capital Receipts Reserve holds the proceeds from the disposal of land or other assets, which are restricted by statute from being used other than to fund new capital expenditure or to be set aside to finance historical capital expenditure. The balance on the reserve shows the resources that have yet to be applied for these purposes at the year-end.

2019/2020 £000s		2020/2021 £000s
-2,134	Balance at 1 April	-2,877
	<u>Receipts in the Year</u>	
-95	Sale proceeds credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account as part of the gain/loss on disposal of non-current assets	-2,322
-809	Capital Receipts from Former Council House Sales	-744
-149	Other Capital Receipts not relating to the Disposal of Council Assets	-9
0	Transfer from Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve upon receipt of cash	0
	<u>Applied in the Year</u>	
310	Applied to finance new capital expenditure	1,164
0	Payments to Housing Receipts Pool	0
-2,877	Balance at 31 March	-4,788

36 CAPITAL GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS UNAPPLIED

The Capital Grants and Contributions Unapplied Account (Reserve) holds the grants and contributions received towards capital projects for which the Council has met the conditions that would otherwise require repayment of the monies, but which have yet to be applied to meet expenditure. The balance is restricted by grant terms as to the capital expenditure against which it can be applied and / or the financial year in which this can take place.

2019/2020 £000s		2020/2021 £000s
-13,929	Balance at 1 April	-17,757
-5,105	Capital grants and contributions unapplied credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-6,243
162	Reversal of capital grants and contributions unapplied previously credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	58
1,115	Transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account	1,200
-17,757	Balance at 31 March	-22,742

37 REVALUATION RESERVE

The Revaluation Reserve contains the gains made by the Authority arising from increases in the value of its Property, Plant and Equipment (and Intangible Assets). The balance is reduced when assets with accumulated gains are:

- revalued downwards or impaired and the gains are lost
- used in the provision of services and the gains are consumed through depreciation, or
- disposed of and the gains are realised.

The Reserve contains only revaluation gains accumulated since 1 April 2007, the date that the Reserve was created. Accumulated gains arising before that date are consolidated into the balance on the Capital Adjustment Account.

2019/2020 £000s		2020/2021 £000s
-71,389	Balance at 1 April	-69,636
-1,973	Upward revaluation of assets	-5,083
2,459	Downward revaluation of assets and impairment losses not charged to Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	3,665
486	Surplus (-) / Deficit on revaluation of non-current assets not posted to the Surplus / Deficit on the Provision of Services	-1,418
1,267	Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation	1,187
0	Accumulated gains on assets sold or scrapped	1,543
1,267	Amount written off to the Capital Adjustment Account	2,730
-69,636	Balance at 31 March	-68,324

38 CAPITAL ADJUSTMENT ACCOUNT

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction or enhancement of those assets under statutory provisions. The Account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or enhancement as depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (with reconciling postings from the Revaluation Reserve to convert fair value figures to a historical cost basis). The Account is credited with the amounts set aside by the Authority as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction and enhancement.

The Account contains accumulated gains and losses on Investment Properties and gains recognised on donated assets that have yet to be consumed by the Authority.

The Account also contains revaluation gains accumulated on Property, Plant and Equipment before 1 April 2007, the date that the Revaluation Reserve was created to hold such gains.

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Note 7 provides details of the source of all the transactions posted to the Account, apart from those involving the Revaluation Reserve and Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve.

<u>2019/2020</u> £000s		<u>2020/2021</u> £000s
-249,225	Balance at 1 April	-236,118
	<u>Reversal of items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement</u>	
19,802	Depreciation of non-current assets	19,396
8,195	Revaluation of non-current assets	6,030
85	Amortisation of intangible assets	0
498	Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute	930
4,152	Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	2,060
-108	Amortisation of intangible assets	-107
32,624		28,309
	<u>Amounts written out to the Revaluation Reserve</u>	
-1,267	Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation	-1,187
0	Accumulated gains on assets sold or scrapped	-1,543
-1,267		-2,730
	<u>Capital financing applied in the year</u>	
-310	Capital receipts applied to finance capital expenditure	-1,164
-10,371	Capital Grants and Contributions credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement that have been applied to finance capital expenditure	-14,540
-1,115	Transfer from the Capital Grants and Contributions Unapplied Account to finance capital expenditure	-1,200
-5,971	Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment	-6,159
-43	Capital expenditure charged to the General Fund	-62
-17,810		-23,125
	<u>Other Movements</u>	
-440	Movements in the market value of Investment Properties debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	4,631
-440		4,631
-236,118	Balance at 31 March	-229,033

39 PENSIONS RESERVE

The Pensions Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Authority accounts for post-employment benefits in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed as the Authority makes employer's contributions to pension funds or eventually pays any

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pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance on the Pensions Reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Authority has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

2019/2020 £000s		2020/2021 £000s
466,222	Balance at 1 April	402,352
-98,276	Re-measurements (Liabilities and Assets)	31,613
53,531	Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	42,562
-19,125	Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	-21,614
402,352	Balance at 31 March	454,913

40 COLLECTION FUND ADJUSTMENT ACCOUNT

The Collection Fund Adjustment Account manages the differences arising from the recognition of council tax and non-domestic rates income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as it falls due from council tax payers and business rate payers compared with the statutory arrangements for paying across amounts to the General Fund from the Collection Fund.

2019/2020 £000s		2020/2021 £000s
-2,687	Balance at 1 April	293
2,980	Amount by which council tax income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from council tax and non-domestic rates income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	49,188
293	Balance at 31 March	49,481

41 ACCUMULATED ABSENCES ACCOUNT

The Accumulated Absences Account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the General Fund Balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year, e.g. annual leave entitlement carried forward at 31 March. Statutory arrangements require that the impact on the General Fund Balance is neutralised by transfers to or from the Account.

2019/2020 £000s		2020/2021 £000s
4,216	Balance at 1 April	4,725
	<u>Transactions in Year</u>	
-4,216	Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year	-4,725
4,725	Amounts accrued at the end of the current year	5,381
509	Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	656
4,725	Balance at 31 March	5,381

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42 EVENTS AFTER THE BALANCE SHEET DATE

The Statement of Accounts was authorised for issue by the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services on 10 December 2021. Events taking place after this date are not reflected in the financial statements or notes. Where events taking place before this date provided information about conditions existing at 31 March 2021, the figures in the financial statements and notes have been adjusted in all material respects to reflect the impact of this information.

43 RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

The Council is required to disclose material transactions with related parties - bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the council or to be controlled or influenced by the Council. Disclosure of these transactions allows an assessment of the extent to which the Council might have been constrained in its ability to operate independently or might have secured the ability to limit another party's ability to bargain freely with the Council.

Central Government

The Government has effective control over the general operations of the Council – it is responsible for providing the statutory framework within which the Council operates, provides the majority of its funding in the form of grants and prescribes the terms of many of the transactions that the Council has with other parties (e.g. Housing Benefits). Grants received from government departments are set out in the analysis in Note 20. In addition, Sefton paid £15.724m to HM Revenue and Customs for Employers' National Insurance Contributions. Amounts owed from and to Central Government at 31 March 2020 are shown in Notes 31 and 33.

Members' Interests

Members of the Council have direct control over the Council's financial and operating policies. During 2020/2021, works and services to the value of £0.519m were commissioned from companies in which one or more Members have declared an interest. These are shown in the table below. Contracts were entered into in full compliance with the Council's standing orders. In addition, grants and payments for goods and services totalling £0.619m were made to voluntary organisations in which one or more Members have declared an interest. The most significant of these are shown in the table below. The grants were awarded by the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services and were made with proper consideration of declarations of interest. The relevant Members did not take part in any discussion or decision relating to the grants.

<u>2020/2021</u>	Income £000s	Expenditure £000s	Debtors £000s	Creditors £000s
One Vision Housing	-186	519	31	-3
Bosco Society	-1	616	0	0

<u>2019/2020</u>	Income £000s	Expenditure £000s	Debtors £000s	Creditors £000s
One Vision Housing	-126	140	11	0
Bosco Society	-1	429	0	0

Other Public Bodies

A number of Councillors are nominated to serve as representatives on other public bodies. These include, for example, Aintree University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, British Destinations, Formby Pool Trust, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority, Merseyside Pension Fund, Merseyside Police Authority, Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority, Sandway Homes, Sefton Council for Voluntary Service and Sefton New Directions.

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Significant transactions during the year and balances at year-end with related public bodies included:

<u>2020/2021</u>	Income £000s	Expenditure £000s	Debtors £000s	Creditors £000s
Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner	-549	18,095	145	1,111
Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority	-124	7,525	6	616
Parish Councils	-48	1,177	5	16
Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority	0	18,851	48	0
Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority	-1,919	15,622	40	0
Merseyside Pensions Authority - Employers' Contributions	0	19,080	0	0
Merseycare NHS Foundation	-17	3,916	124	433
Sefton New Directions Limited	-57	10,946	21	24
North West Borough Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	-2	5,915	161	2
Sandway Homes	-2,424	1,391	3,556	0
Sefton CVS	-1	2,159	0	0

<u>2019/2020</u>	Income £000s	Expenditure £000s	Debtors £000s	Creditors £000s
Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner	-465	17,287	60	974
Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority	-27	7,393	6	163
Parish Councils	-130	1,087	28	0
Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority	0	18,970	0	0
Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority	-1,257	15,442	16	0
Merseyside Pensions Authority - Employers' Contributions	0	16,577	0	1,557
Merseycare NHS Foundation	-626	4,616	527	294
Sefton New Directions Limited	-180	10,759	2	0
North West Borough Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	-139	5,721	159	6
Sefton CVS	-11	1,617	0	0

The amounts owed by the Merseyside Police Authority and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority are the net amounts of Council Tax outstanding (after allowing for the Provision for Bad and Doubtful Debts) that relates to these bodies. There is no Provision for Bad and Doubtful Debts for amounts due from other bodies as all amounts have been assessed as being fully collectable.

Officers' Interests

The Head of Locality Services is a Council appointed representative on the Formby Pool Trust Board. There are no other senior officer relationships. Any significant financial transactions for all these organisations have been disclosed in the table above under Other Public Bodies.

There are no senior officer car loans outstanding at the end of 2020/2021.

Subsidiary and associated companies

Details of the Council's interest in companies is set out in Note 45.

Note: If organisations ceased to be related parties at the end of 2019/2020, they are not shown in 2020/2021.

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Notes to the Financial Statements

44 CASH FLOW STATEMENT

OPERATING ACTIVITIES

The surplus or deficit on the provision of services has been adjusted for the following items:

2019/2020 £000s		2020/2021 £000s
	<u>Adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements</u>	
-19,802	Depreciation charged to CIES	-19,395
-8,195	Revaluation Losses charged to CIES	-6,030
440	Movements in the Market Value of Investment Properties	-4,631
-85	Amortisation of Intangible Assets	0
-34,406	Reversal of non-cash items relating to retirement benefits debited to the CIES	-20,948
368	Movement in Long-Term Debtors	413
14	Movement in Inventories	-20
10,446	Movement in Short-term Debtors	-1,335
968	Movement in Prepayments	31,385
-10,454	Movement in Short-term Creditors	-17,809
-11,619	Movement in Receipts in Advance	7,377
-1,099	Movement in Provisions (Long-Term)	-5,561
-73,424		-36,554
	<u>Adjustments for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities</u>	
-4,057	Loss (-) on Sale of Fixed Assets	261
15,314	Capital Grants and Contributions credited to the CIES	20,726
958	Capital receipts not related to disposals	753
-16	Reduction of Capital Receipts Deferred re. Leased Out Buildings	0
1,072	Other Adjustments	-236
13,271		21,504

The cash flows for operating activities include the following items:

2019/2020 £000s	The cash flows for operating activities include the following items:	2020/2021 £000s
-447	Interest received	-367
7,871	Interest Paid	7,805

FINANCING ACTIVITIES

The following table provides a reconciliation between the movements on the Balance Sheet during the year and net cash flows from financing activities in the Cash Flow Statement:

2020/2021	31 March 2020	Financing Cash Flows	Acquisitions	Other non- financing Cash Flows	31 March 2021
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Short-term Borrowing	-16,617	-4,689	0	-261	-21,567
Long-term Borrowing	-149,153	-18,072	0	0	-167,225
Short-term Deferred Liabilities	-918	-24	0	0	-942
Long-term Deferred Liabilities	-8,357	942	0	0	-7,415
Short-Term Debtors	49,131	395	0	92	49,618
Short-Term Creditors	-41,868	206	0	-18,438	-60,100
Total	-167,782	-21,242	0	-18,607	-207,631

The movements in short-term debtors and short-term creditors shown under Financing Cash Flows relate to the net amounts owed to or from the Government and Major Preceptors in respect of their share of council tax and business rates balances which are accounted for on an agency basis. The movements recorded under Other Cash Flows relate to operating and investing activities.

<u>2019/2020</u>	<u>31 March</u> <u>2019</u>	Financing Cash Flows	Acquisitions	Other non- financing Cash Flows	<u>31 March</u> <u>2020</u>
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Short-term Borrowing	-10,332	-7,521	0	1,236	-16,617
Long-term Borrowing	-142,693	-6,460	0	0	-149,153
Short-term Deferred Liabilities	-884	-34	0	0	-918
Long-term Deferred Liabilities	-9,275	918	0	0	-8,357
Short-Term Debtors	35,866	73	0	13,192	49,131
Short-Term Creditors	-30,546	-19	0	-11,303	-41,868
Total	-157,864	-13,043	0	3,125	-167,782

45 INTEREST IN COMPANIES

Sefton New Directions Limited

Sefton New Directions Limited was incorporated on 15 January 2007 and began trading on 1 April 2007. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Council. Its principal activity is providing Social Care Services for Adults and those with Learning and / or Physical Disabilities.

The Company's accounts for 2020/2021 will be able to be obtained from The Company Secretary, Sefton New Directions Head Office, Third Floor, Burlington House, Crosby Road North, Waterloo, Liverpool, Merseyside, United Kingdom, L22 0PJ.

Sandway Homes

On 19 July 2018 Sefton (ACS) Development Company Limited, a company limited by shares and wholly owned by Sefton MBC, was incorporated. On 29 October 2018 Sandway Homes Limited, a company limited by share and wholly owned by Sefton (ACS) Developments Limited, was incorporated. The nature of business of Sandway Homes Limited is registered as development of building projects. The Filing of accounts of both companies is required by Companies House by 31 December 2021. **For 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 the accounts of the group were not consolidated into the accounts of Sefton MBC on the grounds of materiality.** However, for 2020/2021 the activities of the companies are considered material enough to be consolidated in Sefton's Group Accounts.

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46 OPERATING LEASES

Authority as a Lessee

The Council employs operating leases to obtain the use of certain vehicles and equipment. During 2020/2021 operating lease payments totalled £0.027m (£0.035m in 2019/2020).

In addition, the Council leases a number of properties from third parties under operating lease agreements. During 2020/2021 lease rentals paid for properties under these lease agreements totalled £0.118m (£0.069m in 2019/2020).

The future lease payments due under non-cancellable leases in future years are:

<u>31 March</u> <u>2020</u> £000s		<u>31 March</u> <u>2021</u> £000s
69	Not later than one year	118
204	Later than one year and not later than five years	251
2,371	Later than five years	2,321
2,644		2,690

Authority as a Lessor

The Council leases a number of properties to third parties under operating lease agreements. The assets leased include shops, offices, land and other commercial properties. These property leases are for economic development purposes to provide suitable affordable accommodation for local businesses. During 2020/2021 lease rentals received from these operating lease agreements totalled £5.222m (£5.325m in 2019/2020).

The future lease payments receivable under non-cancellable leases in future years are:

<u>31 March</u> <u>2020</u> £000s		<u>31 March</u> <u>2021</u> £000s
5,109	Not later than one year	5,030
15,884	Later than one year and not later than five years	15,690
277,642	Later than five years	277,294
298,635		298,014

47 FINANCE LEASES

Authority as Lessee

The Council has acquired a number of administrative buildings under finance leases.

The assets acquired under these leases are carried as Property, Plant and Equipment in the Balance Sheet at the following net amounts:

<u>31 March</u> <u>2020</u> £000s		<u>31 March</u> <u>2021</u> £000s
2,204	Other Land and Buildings	2,017
2,204		2,017

The Authority is committed to making minimum payments under these leases comprising settlement of the long-term liability for the interest in the property acquired by the Authority and finance costs that will be payable by the Authority in future years while the liability remains outstanding. The minimum lease payments are made up of the following amounts:

31 March 2020 £000s		31 March 2021 £000s
	Finance lease liabilities (net present value of minimum lease payments):	
166	• Current	183
3,345	• Non-current	3,162
2,147	Finance costs payable in future years	1,833
5,658	Minimum lease payments	5,178

The minimum lease payments will be payable over the following periods:

	Minimum Lease Payments		Finance Lease Liabilities	
	31 March 2020 £000s	31 March 2021 £000s	31 March 2020 £000s	31 March 2021 £000s
Not later than one year	480	480	166	183
Later than one year and not later than five years	1,920	1,920	853	942
Later than five years	3,257	2,777	2,491	2,220
	5,657	5,177	3,510	3,345

The minimum lease payments do not include rents that are contingent on events taking place after the lease was entered into, such as adjustments following rent reviews. In 2020/2021 £0.020m contingent rents were payable by the Authority (£0.020m were paid in 2019/2020).

Authority as Lessor

The Authority did not lease out any properties on finance leases in 2020/2021 (none in 2019/20).

48 PFI AGREEMENT / SERVICE CONCESSION

Crosby Leisure Centre

On 18 September 2001, the Council entered into an agreement under a Private Finance Initiative with Waterfront Leisure (Crosby) Limited for the provision and operation of a leisure centre in Crosby. Under the terms of the agreement Waterfront Leisure constructed the centre and will operate it for a period of 25 years in accordance with the Council's specification. The contractor has the obligation to maintain the building to a minimum acceptable condition and to procure and maintain the plant and equipment needed to operate the leisure centre. The building and any plant and equipment installed will be transferred to the Council at the end of the 25-year contract for nil consideration. The Council only has the right to terminate the contract if it pays within three months:

1. the senior cost;
2. any redundancy payments of the contractor that have been reasonably incurred;
3. all amounts shown in the base financial model as payable by the contractor from the termination date.

Payments

The Council will pay an annual unitary charge for the serviced facility. At the start of the contract it was estimated this would total £23.860m over the life of the concession period (25 years). The figure is subject to inflationary increases with potential reductions should the service provided fall below specified standards. The charge is also eligible for government grant. The centre was opened on 17 February 2003. Payments to the contractor in 2020/2021 were £1.607m (£1.282m in 2019/2020) with government grants of £0.561m received in the year (£0.561m in 2019/2020).

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The outstanding commitments (Unitary Payments) due to be made to Waterfront Leisure (Crosby) Limited each year until the end of the contract in 2028 are required to be brought in to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. In addition to this unitary payment, Waterfront Leisure generates income through the provision of goods and services, which has enabled a lower unitary payment charge.

The table below shows the outstanding commitment for the PFI contract and has been split between the key elements. It should be noted that the outstanding commitment has been inflated using the inflationary factors included within the original contract.

Commitments under PFI Contract	Reimbursement of Capital Expenditure £000s	Interest £000s	Service Charge £000s
Contract Payments in 2021/2022	214	649	771
Contract Payments between 2022/2023 and 2025/2026	1,075	2,374	3,365
Contract Payments between 2026/2027 and 2027/2028	783	1,001	1,796

Liabilities

Although the payments made to the contractor are described as unitary payments, they have been calculated to compensate the contractor for the fair value of the services they provide, the capital expenditure incurred and interest payable whilst the capital expenditure remains to be reimbursed. The liability outstanding to pay the liability to the contractor for capital expenditure incurred is as follows:

2019/2020 £000s		2020/2021 £000s
-2,468	Balance outstanding at start of year	-2,279
189	Payments during the year	207
-2,279	Balance outstanding at the year-end	-2,072

Property Plant and Equipment

The assets used to provide services at Crosby Leisure Centre are recognised on the Council's Balance Sheet. The following table shows the value of assets held under Crosby Leisure Centre PFI scheme at each Balance Sheet date and an analysis of the movement in those values:

2019/2020 £000s	Other Land & Buildings: PFI Assets	2020/2021 £000s
	<u>Cost or Valuation</u>	
9,647	Opening Balance at 1 April	9,680
33	Additions	0
0	Revaluations	0
9,680	Closing Balance at 31 March	9,680
	<u>Depreciation and Impairments</u>	
-537	Opening Balance at 1 April	-813
-276	Depreciation Charge	-277
0	Revaluations	0
-813	Closing Balance at 31 March	-1,090

2019/2020 £000s	Other Land & Buildings: PFI Assets	2020/2021 £000s
	<u>Balance Sheet Amount</u>	
9,110	Opening Balance at 1 April	8,867
8,867	Closing Balance at 31 March	8,590

49 **PARTICIPATION IN PENSION SCHEMES**

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers and other employees, the Authority offers retirement benefits. Although retirement benefits will not actually be payable until employees retire, the Authority has a commitment to make the payments that needs to be disclosed at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.

The Authority participates in three pension schemes:

Pension Schemes Accounted for as Defined Contribution Schemes

Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS)

Teachers employed by the Authority are members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme, administered by Capita Teachers' Pensions on behalf of the Department for Education. It provides teachers with specified benefits upon their retirement, and the Authority contributes towards the costs of making contributions based on a percentage of members' pensionable salaries.

The Scheme is a multi-employer defined benefit scheme. The scheme is unfunded, and the Department for Education uses a notional fund as the basis for calculating the employers' contribution rate paid by local authorities. Valuations of the notional fund are undertaken every four years.

The scheme has approximately 11,200 participating employers and consequently the Authority is not able to identify its share of the underlying financial position and performance of the scheme with sufficient reliability for accounting purposes. For the purpose of this Statement of Accounts, it is therefore accounted for on the same basis as a defined contribution scheme. As a proportion of the total contributions into the Teachers' Pension Scheme during the year ending 31 March 2021, the Authority's own contributions equate to approximately 0.19%.

In 2020/2021, the Council paid £14.171m to Teachers' Pensions in respect of teachers' retirement benefits, representing 23.68% of teachers' pensionable pay. The figures for 2019/2020 were £12.206m and 20.73%. The increase was due to the employer rate increasing to 23.68% from 1st September 2019. Contributions of £1.190m remained payable at the year-end. The contributions due to be paid in 2021/2022 are estimated to be £14.206m.

In cases of redundancy or early retirement in the interests of the efficiency of the service, the Authority is responsible for the cost of any additional benefits awarded that are outside the terms of the teachers' scheme. In 2020/2021 these contributions amounted to £0.902m, representing 1.51% of teachers' pensionable pay. The figures for 2019/2020 were £0.984m and 1.67%.

NHS Pension Scheme

As a result of the transfer of responsibility for Public Health to local authorities in April 2013, a number of staff also transferred who are members of the NHS Pension Scheme, administered by NHS Pensions on behalf of the Department of Health. It provides staff with specified benefits upon their retirement, and the Authority contributes towards the costs of making contributions based on a percentage of members' pensionable salaries.

The Scheme is a multi-employer defined benefit scheme. The scheme is unfunded, and the Department of Health uses a notional fund as the basis for calculating the employers' contribution rate paid by local authorities. Valuations of the notional fund are undertaken every four years.

The scheme has approximately 8,300 participating employers and consequently the Authority is not able to identify its share of the underlying financial position and performance of the scheme with sufficient reliability for accounting purposes. For the purpose of this Statement of Accounts, it is therefore accounted for on the same basis as a defined contribution scheme. As a proportion of the total contributions into the NHS Pension Scheme during 2020/2021, the Authority's own contributions equate to less than 0.001% (0.001% in 2019/2020).

In 2020/2021, the Council paid £0.026m to NHS Pensions in respect of retirement benefits, representing 16.3% of the employees' pensionable pay. The figures for 2019/2020 were £0.028m and 14.3%. Contributions of £0.002m remained payable at 31 March 2021 (£0.002m at 31 March 2020). The contributions due to be paid in 2021/2022 are estimated to be £0.026m.

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Defined Benefit Schemes

Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

All employees not eligible to join the Teachers' Pension Scheme or the NHS Pension Scheme are, subject to certain qualifying criteria, eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme. Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council acts as the administering authority of the LGPS as lead authority for the Merseyside councils' scheme, the Merseyside Pension Fund (MPF). This is a funded defined benefit final salary scheme (career average revalued earnings scheme from 1 April 2014), meaning that the Authority and employees pay contributions into the fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liabilities with investment assets.

In 2020/2021, the Council paid £18.428m to the MPF in respect of retirement benefits, representing 17.14% of employees' pensionable pay. The figures for 2019/2020 were £16.772m and 16.09%. Contributions of £0.843m remained payable at 31 March 2021 (£1.557m at 31 March 2020).

In cases of redundancy or early retirement in the interests of the efficiency of the service, the cost of any added years awarded is borne by the Council and not the Local Government Pension Scheme. In 2020/2021 these contributions amounted to £1.351m representing 1.26% of pensionable pay. The figures for 2019/2020 were £1.369m and 1.31%.

The principal risks of the scheme to the Authority are the longevity assumptions, statutory changes to the scheme, structural changes to the scheme (i.e. large-scale withdrawals from the scheme), changes to inflation, bond yields and the performance of the equity investments held by the scheme. These are mitigated to a certain extent by the statutory requirements to charge the General Fund the amounts required by statute, as described in the accounting policies note.

Transactions Relating to Post-Employment Benefits

The cost of retirement benefits is recognised in the Cost of Services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge we are required to make against Council Tax is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of retirement benefits are reversed out of the General Fund via the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The following transactions have been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the General Fund Balance via the Movement in Reserves Statement during the year:

2019/2020		<u>Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement</u>	2020/2021	
LGPS £000s	TPS Unfunded Liabilities £000s		LGPS £000s	TPS Unfunded Liabilities £000s
36,018	0	<u>Cost of Services:</u> Current Service Cost	33,333	0
557	0	Curtailment Cost	153	0
521	0	Administration Expenses	538	0
0	0	Effect of Settlements	0	0
5,477	0	Past Service Cost	11	0
10,764	194	<u>Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure:</u> Net Interest Cost	8,373	154
53,337	194	Total Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	42,408	154
-97,324	-952	Re-measurement of the Net Defined Benefit Liability	31,403	210
-43,987	-758	Total Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	73,811	364

2019/2020		Movement in Reserves Statement	2020/2021	
LGPS £000s	TPS Unfunded Liabilities £000s		LGPS £000s	TPS Unfunded Liabilities £000s
-53,337	-194	Reversal of net charges made to the Deficit for the Provision of Services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the Code	-42,408	-154
		<u>Actual amount charged against the General Fund for pensions in the year:</u>		
18,141	984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employers' contributions payable to the scheme • retirement benefits payable direct to pensioners 	20,712	902

Assets and Liabilities in Relation to Retirement Benefits

Pensions Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

The amount included in the Balance Sheet arising from the Authority's obligation in respect of its defined benefit plans is as follows:

2019/2020			2020/2021	
LGPS £000s	TPS Unfunded Liabilities £000s		LGPS £000s	TPS Unfunded Liabilities £000s
-1,302,339	-6,854	Present Value of the Defined Benefit Obligation	-1,513,855	-6,316
906,841	0	Fair Value of Plan Assets	1,065,258	0
-395,498	-6,854	Net Liability arising from defined benefit obligation	-448,597	-6,316

Reconciliation of Present Value of the Scheme Liabilities (Defined Benefit Obligation)

2019/2020			2020/2021	
LGPS £000s	TPS Unfunded Liabilities £000s		LGPS £000s	TPS Unfunded Liabilities £000s
1,402,273	8,596	Opening Balance at 1 April	1,302,339	6,854
36,018	0	Current Service Cost	33,333	0
33,280	194	Interest Cost on Pension Liabilities	30,900	154
6,594	0	Contributions from scheme participants	6,784	0
-82,818	-710	Remeasurement Gains (-) and Losses:		
		- Actuarial Gains / Losses arising from changes in demographic assumptions	0	0
-27,896	-94	- Actuarial Gains / Losses arising from changes in financial assumptions	203,173	312
-33,420	-148	- Experience Gains / Losses	-26,280	-102
-37,726	-984	Benefits paid	-36,558	-902
557	0	Curtailment Cost	153	0
0	0	Settlements	0	0
5,477	0	Past Service Cost	11	0
1,302,339	6,854	Closing Balance at 31 March	1,513,855	6,316

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Reconciliation of the Movements in the Fair Value of the Scheme (Plan) Assets

2019/2020			2020/2021	
LGPS £000s	TPS Unfunded Liabilities £000s		LGPS £000s	TPS Unfunded Liabilities £000s
944,647	0	Opening Balance at 1 April	906,841	0
22,516	0	Interest Income	22,527	0
-46,810	0	Remeasurement Gains / Losses (-): - The return on plan assets, excluding the amount included in the net operating expense	145,490	0
18,141	984	Contributions from Employer	20,712	902
6,594	0	Contributions from Employees into the Scheme	6,784	0
-37,726	-984	Benefits paid	-36,558	-902
-521	0	Administration Expenses	-538	0
906,841	0	Closing Balance at 31 March	1,065,258	0

Local Government Pension Scheme Assets Comprised:

2019/2020			2020/2021	
Quoted £000s	Unquoted £000s		Quoted £000s	Unquoted £000s
13,971	0	Cash and Cash Equivalents	24,075	0
		Equities:		
124,478	18,568	- UK	161,174	21,199
205,923	90,456	- Global	249,483	109,615
330,401	109,024		410,657	130,814
		Bonds:		
15,981	0	- UK Government	13,742	0
40,279	0	- UK Corporate	35,473	0
70,087	0	- UK Index Linked	84,368	0
0	0	- Overseas Corporate	5,752	0
0	0	- Derivative Contracts	-3,515	0
126,347	0		135,820	0
		Property:		
0	53,808	- UK Direct Property	0	50,493
2,388	15,850	- Property Managed (UK)	1,917	18,749
0	24,100	- Property Managed (Global)	0	24,394
2,388	93,758		1,917	93,636
		Alternatives:		
111	11,626	- Private Equity (UK)	0	21,305
0	59,902	- Private Equity (Global)	0	69,135
2,245	14,641	- Other Alternatives (UK)	1,704	6,392
3,709	24,694	- Other Alternatives (Global)	0	39,628
1,690	35,072	- Infrastructure (UK)	1,385	38,669
0	29,895	- Infrastructure (Global)	0	30,360
2,483	22,060	- Opportunities (UK)	320	20,879
859	21,965	- Opportunities (Global)	1,491	37,071
11,097	219,855		4,900	263,439
484,204	422,637	Total Assets (Quoted / Unquoted)	577,369	487,899
	906,841	Total Assets		1,065,258

Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent upon assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels etc. Both the Local Government Pension Scheme and Teachers' Pension Scheme Unfunded Liabilities have been estimated by Mercer Human Resource Consulting, an independent firm of actuaries, estimates being based on the latest full actuarial valuation of the scheme as at 31 March 2019.

The principal assumptions used by the actuary have been:

2019/2020		2020/2021
	<u>Mortality assumptions (years):</u>	
	Local Government Pension Scheme:	
20.9	Longevity at 65 for current pensioners: Men	21.0
24.0	Longevity at 65 for current pensioners: Women	24.1
22.5	Longevity at 65 for future pensioners: Men	22.6
25.9	Longevity at 65 for future pensioners: Women	26.0
	Teachers' Pension Scheme Unfunded Liabilities:	
20.9	Longevity at 65 for current pensioners – aged 65: Men	21.0
24.0	Longevity at 65 for current pensioners – aged 65: Women	24.1
12.5	Longevity at 65 for current pensioners – aged 75: Men	12.5
14.9	Longevity at 65 for current pensioners – aged 75: Women	15.0
	<u>Other assumptions</u>	
2.1%	Rate of Inflation - CPI	2.7%
3.6%	Rate of increase in salaries	4.2%
2.2%	Rate of increase in pensions	2.8%
2.4%	Rate for discounting scheme liabilities (LGPS)	2.1%
2.4%	Rate for discounting scheme liabilities (TPS Unfunded Liabilities)	2.1%

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. The sensitivity analyses below have been determined based on reasonably possible changes of 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 for longevity, for example, assume that life expectancy increases for men and women. In practice, this is unlikely to occur, and changes in some of the assumptions are interrelated. The estimations in the sensitivity analysis have followed the accounting policies of 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 from those used in the previous period.

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Notes to the Financial Statements

	Impact on the Defined Benefit Obligation in the Scheme	
	Increase in Assumption	Decrease in Assumption
	£000s	£000s
<u>Local Government Pension Scheme</u>		
Longevity (increase or decrease in 1 year)	46,593	-46,593
Rate of Inflation (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	24,427	-24,427
Rate of Increase in Salaries (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	2,963	-2,963
Rate of Increase in Pensions (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	24,427	-24,427
Rate for Discounting Scheme Liabilities (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	-24,039	24,039
Investment Returns (increase or decrease by 1%)	-10,970	10,970
<u>Teachers' Additional Unfunded Pensions</u>		
Longevity (increase or decrease in 1 year)	376	-376
Rate of Inflation (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	37	-37
Rate for Discounting Scheme Liabilities (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	-34	34

Impact on the Authority's Cash Flows

The objectives of the Local Government Pension Scheme are to keep employers' contributions at as constant a rate as possible. The Council has agreed a strategy with the scheme's actuary to achieve a funding level of 100% over the next 16 years. Funding levels are monitored on an annual basis. The most recent triennial valuation took place on 31 March 2019 and has set contributions levels for 2020/2021 to 2022/2023.

The total payments expected to be made to the local government pension scheme by the Council in the year to 31 March 2022 is £20.059m.

The total payments expected to be made by the Council to former teachers receiving additional unfunded pensions in the year to 31 March 2022 is £0.902m.

The weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation for Local Government Pension Scheme members is 16 years in 2020/2021 (16 years in 2019/2020). The weighted average duration for former teachers receiving additional unfunded pensions is 6 years in 2020/2021 (6 years in 2019/2020).

50 CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

Collateral warranty by the Council in favour of the Security Trustee (Prudential Trustee Company Limited)

The Council has given a number of warranties for up to 35 years in respect of environmental pollution, statements, title, encumbrances, planning matters, statutory obligations, adverse orders, tenancies, information and statistics supplied, sales off, disputes and litigation, rights of entry to maintain and repair, absence of adverse replies, electricity sub-stations and shop leases, leasehold property, wayleaves, telecommunications and works undertaken.

In addition, the following specific warranties have been given from the date of transfer (30 October 2006):

- Unlimited warranty for up to 35 years in respect of vires claims
- Warranty for up to 20 years in respect of claims in relation to asbestos, except that this shall not apply in respect of the first £10,685,780 of costs and expenses incurred in aggregate on asbestos works.

In aggregate, the value of these warranties is limited to £100,500,000 plus any costs associated with interest and loan breakage costs due under the One Vision Loan Agreement.

Collateral warranty by the Council in favour of One Vision Housing Limited

The Council has given a number of warranties for up to 17 years in respect of statements, title, encumbrances, planning matters, statutory obligations, adverse orders, tenancies, information and statistics supplied, sales off, disputes and litigation, rights of entry to maintain and repair, absence of adverse replies, electricity sub-stations and shop leases, leasehold property, wayleaves, telecommunications and works undertaken.

In addition, the following specific warranties have been given from the date of transfer (30 October 2006):

- Warranty not exceeding £100,500,000 for up to 20 years in respect of environmental pollution.
- Warranty for up to 20 years in respect of claims in relation to asbestos, except that this shall not apply in respect of the first £8,439,750 of costs and expenses incurred in aggregate on asbestos works.
- Unlimited warranty for up to 17 years in respect of vires claims.

Contamination Costs: During 2011/2012, it was identified there was a site in the Borough that was contaminated and there would be significant costs associated with clearing the contamination. Sefton has an Earmarked Reserve of £1.432m to cover potential costs associated with clearing the contamination. There is a potential further liability if the costs of clearing the contamination are greater than currently envisaged.

Merseyside Pension Fund - Contractor Admission Bodies: The Council provides guarantees for any potential unfunded liabilities on the Merseyside Pension Fund for Sefton New Directions Limited and Agilisys Limited. The most recently notified value of the guarantees was nil for Sefton New Directions Limited and £1.077m for Agilisys Limited. The values are highly dependent on market conditions at the time of the valuation and can vary significantly between valuations.

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51 CONTINGENT ASSETS

Receipts from Former Council House Sales: The Council agreed to share any proceeds of former council house sales if they were subsequently sold by One Vision Housing Limited. The arrangement lasts until 31 March 2037 and the amount received will depend on the number of sales each year.

VAT Sharing Arrangement: As part of the voluntary stock transfer an agreement was reached with One Vision Housing Limited to share their VAT that they can claim from HM Revenue and Customs. This arrangement is unique to councils and registered social landlords upon transfer. This arrangement was due to end on 30 October 2016 but has now been extended until 2027. Sefton's share of reclaimable VAT is estimated to be in the region of £1.2m until the end of the arrangement.

52 FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

A financial instrument is any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability of another. Typical financial instruments include trade creditors and borrowings (liabilities) and investments and trade debtors (assets).

Financial Instruments in so far as the Authority is concerned relate to investments, cash and cash equivalents, loans receivable, borrowings, trade creditors and debtors.

The following categories of financial instrument are carried in the Balance Sheet:

FINANCIAL ASSETS	Long Term		Current	
	31/03/2020 £000s	31/03/2021 £000s	31/03/2020 £000s	31/03/2021 £000s
Fair Value through Profit or Loss				
Investments	5,541	6,502	99	163
Amortised Cost				
Debtors	4,806	5,207	38,829	41,877
Cash and cash equivalents	0	0	38,988	66,410
Total Financial Assets	10,347	11,709	77,916	108,450
Non-financial assets - Debtors	0	0	10,302	7,741
Total	10,347	11,709	88,218	116,191

FINANCIAL LIABILITIES	Long Term		Current	
	31/03/2020 £000s	31/03/2021 £000s	31/03/2020 £000s	31/03/2021 £000s
Amortised Cost				
Borrowing	149,153	167,225	16,617	21,567
Creditors	0	0	41,868	60,100
Service Concessions and Finance Lease Liabilities	8,357	7,415	918	942
Total Financial Liabilities	157,510	174,640	59,403	82,609

Designated to fair value through profit and loss and statutory override

The Council holds a £5m pooled investment in a property fund. As a result of the change in accounting standards for 2018/2019, under IFRS 9, this investment had been reclassified as Fair Value through Profit and Loss. To avoid any impact on the General Fund balance, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have agreed a temporary override to allow English Local Authorities time to adjust their portfolio of all pooled investments. This override commences on the 1st April 2018 and lasts for five years. The Council will use the statutory override to account for any changes in the fair value on its pooled investments.

Items of income, expense, gains or losses

The gains and losses recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in relation to the above financial instruments are made up as follows:

	31 March 2021		
	Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services £000s	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure £000s	Total £000s
Net Gains/ Losses on:			
Financial assets measured at fair value through profit or loss	-38	0	-38
Total net gains/ losses (-)	-38	0	-38
Interest Revenue			
Financial assets measured at fair value through profit or loss	431	0	431
Total Interest Revenue	431	0	431
Interest Expense	-8,066	0	-8,066

Comparative figures for the previous financial year are made up as follows:

	31 March 2020		
	Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services £000s	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure £000s	Total £000s
Net Gains/ Losses on:			
Financial assets measured at fair value through profit or loss	-201	0	-201
Total net gains/ losses (-)	-201	0	-201
Interest Revenue			
Financial assets measured at fair value through profit or loss	484	0	484
Total Interest Revenue	283	0	283
Interest Expense	-6,635	0	-6,635

Fair Value of Assets and Liabilities.

The Churches and Charities Local Authority LAMIT Property Fund asset is measured in the balance sheet (Long Term Investments) at fair value on a recurring basis.

Recurring Fair Value Measurements	Input level in Fair Value Hierarchy	Valuation technique used to measure Fair Value	31 March 2020 £000s	31 March 2021 £000s
Financial Instruments - CCLA	Level 1	Unadjusted quoted prices in active markets for identical shares	5,414	5,376

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The Fair Values of Financial Assets and Liabilities that are not measured at Fair Value but require a Fair Value disclosure.

Financial liabilities and financial assets represented by loans and debtors are carried in the Balance Sheet at amortised cost. Their fair value can be assessed by calculating the present value of the cash flows that will take place over the remaining term of the instruments (Level 2 Input – inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the financial asset/ liability). We have used the following assumptions:

- The discount rate used in the net present value calculation is equal to the current rate in relation to the same instrument from a comparable lender. This rate will be the rate applicable in the market on the date of valuation (31st March 2021), for an instrument of the same duration.
- For PWLB debt the new borrowing rate has been used, as opposed to the premature repayment rate.

The fair value calculation has been based on the comparable new borrowing / deposit rate for the same financial instruments from a comparable lender. A consistent approach has been applied to assets and liabilities.

The purpose of the fair value valuation is to allow evaluation quantitatively of the Authority's financial position and performance with regard to each class of financial instrument, and also to indicate the extent of the Authority's risk exposure arising as a result of these transactions. The fair value also indicates the cost / benefits to the Council of retaining fixed interest borrowings and investments to maturity.

The fair values calculated are as follows:

FINANCIAL LIABILITIES	31 March 2020		31 March 2021	
	Carrying amount £000s	Fair value £000s	Carrying amount £000s	Fair value £000s
Financial Liabilities held at amortised cost				
Borrowing-PWLB	163,735	188,081	186,770	220,831
Borrowing-Other	2,035	2,035	2,022	2,022
Short-term Creditors	41,868	41,868	60,100	60,100
PFI and finance lease liabilities	9,275	9,275	8,357	8,357
Total	216,913	241,259	257,249	291,310

The fair value is more than the carrying amount because the Authority's portfolio of loans includes a number of fixed rate loans where the interest rate payable is higher than the rates available for similar loans at the Balance Sheet date. This commitment to pay interest above the current market rate increases the amount that the Authority would have to pay if the lender requested or agreed to early repayment of the loan.

FINANCIAL ASSETS	31 March 2020		31 March 2021	
	Carrying amount £000s	Fair value £000s	Carrying amount £000s	Fair value £000s
Investments	99	99	163	163
Cash and Cash Equivalents	38,988	38,988	66,410	66,410
Short-term Debtors	38,829	38,829	41,877	41,877
Long-term Debtors	4,806	4,806	5,207	5,207
Total	82,722	82,722	113,657	113,657

No fixed rate investments were held at the Balance Sheet date therefore, the fair value is the same as the carrying amount as all investments are at current market rates.

Short term debtors and creditors are carried at cost as this is a fair approximation of the value.

53 NATURE AND EXTENT OF RISKS ARISING FROM FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The Authority is required to disclose information, which enables the user of these statements of accounts to evaluate the nature and extent of any risk arising from Financial Instruments.

The Authority’s activities expose it to a variety of financial risks:

- i) Credit risk – the possibility that other parties may fail to pay amounts due to the Authority;
- ii) Liquidity risk – the possibility that the Authority may not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments;
- iii) Market risk – the possibility that financial loss may arise for the Authority as a result of changes in such measures as interest rates or stock market movements.

The Treasury Management Policy and Strategy documents approved by Council annually seek to limit the risk of potential adverse effects on resources available to fund services arising due to the impact of unpredictable movements in the financial markets on treasury management activity undertaken by the in-house team.

Credit Risk

The main element of credit risk the Authority is exposed to arises from deposits with banks, building societies and money market funds, as well as credit exposures to the Authority’s customers.

This risk is managed through the Authority’s Treasury Management Policy and Strategy documents approved by Council annually. These documents set out the limits in terms of value and duration over which investment can be made with the various Banks and Building Societies included on the Authority’s Counter Party lending list. This counter party list is made up of the institutions that have been rated using the Fitch scoring methodologies and any changes to the institutions rating that result in a non-compliance with the minimum criteria will see the institution taken off the counter party list.

Credit rating agencies such as Fitch rate institutions depending upon:

- Long term ability to meet all of their most senior financial obligations on a timely basis
- Short term ability to meet financial obligations within a relatively short time period
- Viability rating attempts to assess how a bank would be viewed if it was entirely independent of any external support
- Sovereign rating reflects the strength of a country’s economy, and hence the ability of a country’s Government to support its financial institutions.

The credit criteria in respect of Financial Assets held by the Authority is as detailed below:

Financial Asset Category	Criteria	Maximum Investment
Deposits with banks	Sovereign rating: AA+ Short Term: F1+ Long Term: A- Individual rating: C Support: 2 Active in sterling markets	£25m (the Authority currently operates an operational limit of £15m)
Deposits with building societies	Short Term: F1 (Fitch) / P-1 (Moody) Active in sterling markets Minimum total assets: £2,000m	£25m (the Authority currently operates an operational limit of £15m)
Deposits with money market funds	Sovereign rating: AAA	£15m

The above table demonstrates that the Authority will only invest in institutions that have the highest credit rating scores. For Banks, a risk score of F1+ (exceptionally strong credit quality), A- (High credit quality - low credit risk and very strong capacity to pay financial commitments), Building Societies that have a risk score of F1 (highest credit quality), P-1 (low risk) and Money Market Funds rating of AAA (highest credit quality).

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Notes to the Financial Statements

The following analysis summarises the Authority's potential maximum exposure to credit risk at the balance sheet date. The figures represent the actual investment made and, based on experience of default and uncollectability over the last 15 financial years, adjusted to reflect current market conditions:

Estimated maximum exposure at 31/03/20		Amount at 31/03/21	Historical experience of default	Historical experience adjusted for market conditions at 31/03/20	Estimated maximum exposure to default & uncollectability at 31/03/21
£000s		£000s A		C	£000s (A x C)
0	Deposits with Banks	0	0	0	0
0	Deposits with Money Market	65,266	0	0	0
0	Deposits Other	0	0	0	0
696	Customers	22,193	3.29%	3.29%	730
696					730

The Authority has no history of non-repayment of investments. There were no instances of counterparties failing to meet contractual obligations in relation to deposits during the financial year, and whilst no guarantee can be given against default, the Authority does not expect any losses from non-performance by any of its counterparties in relation to deposits.

The Authority also reduces its exposure of credit risk by limiting the number of investments with a maturity period of between 1 and 5 years to a maximum of 40% of our total investments. This ensures that the Authority does not tie up all its funds for a long period of time, increasing the risk of a bank running into financial problems.

As mentioned previously, the Authority has changed its investment policy with banks and when investing in banks it now only invests with extremely highly rated ones (with a Sovereign rating: AA+) that are backed by the Government in which the bank is situated. The Authority currently has no investments with banks. The Council does have an investment with the Churches & Charities Local Authority LAMIT Property Fund (CCLA) – this investment is in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Policy.

The profile of investments by country is shown below:

	Total Investments at 31 March 2020 £000s	Total Investments at 31 March 2021 £000s
United Kingdom Banks	0	0
Other: CCLA	5,414	5,376
	5,414	5,376

Although the Authority does not generally allow credit for customers, £18.088m of the £22.193m balance is past its due date for payment. The total debt amount can be analysed by age as follows:

	31 March 2020 £000s	31 March 2021 £000s
Less than three months	12,484	9,841
Three months to one year	3,605	5,748
More than one year	5,076	6,604
	21,165	22,193

A provision for bad debts relating to customers exists which totals £2.955m at 31 March 2021 (£2.681m at 31 March 2020). This provision relates to a wide variety of assets of which none are individually significant. The provision was increased by £0.319m in 2020/2021 (£0.421m in 2019/2020) and £0.045m was written-off during the year (£0.012m in 2019/2020).

Of this debt £5.048m is secured against properties at 31 March 2021 (£4.635m as at 31 March 2020). These properties are held as collateral but cannot be pledged or resold unless the owner defaults.

Liquidity Risk

The Authority has a comprehensive cash flow management system that seeks to ensure that cash is available as needed. If unexpected movements happen, the Authority has ready access to borrowings from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) and Money Markets as a result of the annual Treasury Management Policy and Strategy documents approved by Council. The authority has set an affordable borrowing limit that reflects its underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose, and this includes an allowance for exceptional cash flow movements. There is thus no significant risk that the Authority will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments.

The risk for the Authority is that it will need to replace its borrowings at a time when interest rates are unfavourable, leading to additional ongoing financing costs. The strategy for the Council is to ensure that by careful planning of the repayment date for new and replacement loans, and (when economic to do so) the restructuring of debt, the maturity profile of its fixed rate loans do not exceed or fall below the limits for the periods set out below. These limits also ensure that the Authority does not have significant amounts of variable borrowing in the long term, exposing itself to major movements in interest rates. Analyses of the Council's debt by type and maturity are shown in the following tables.

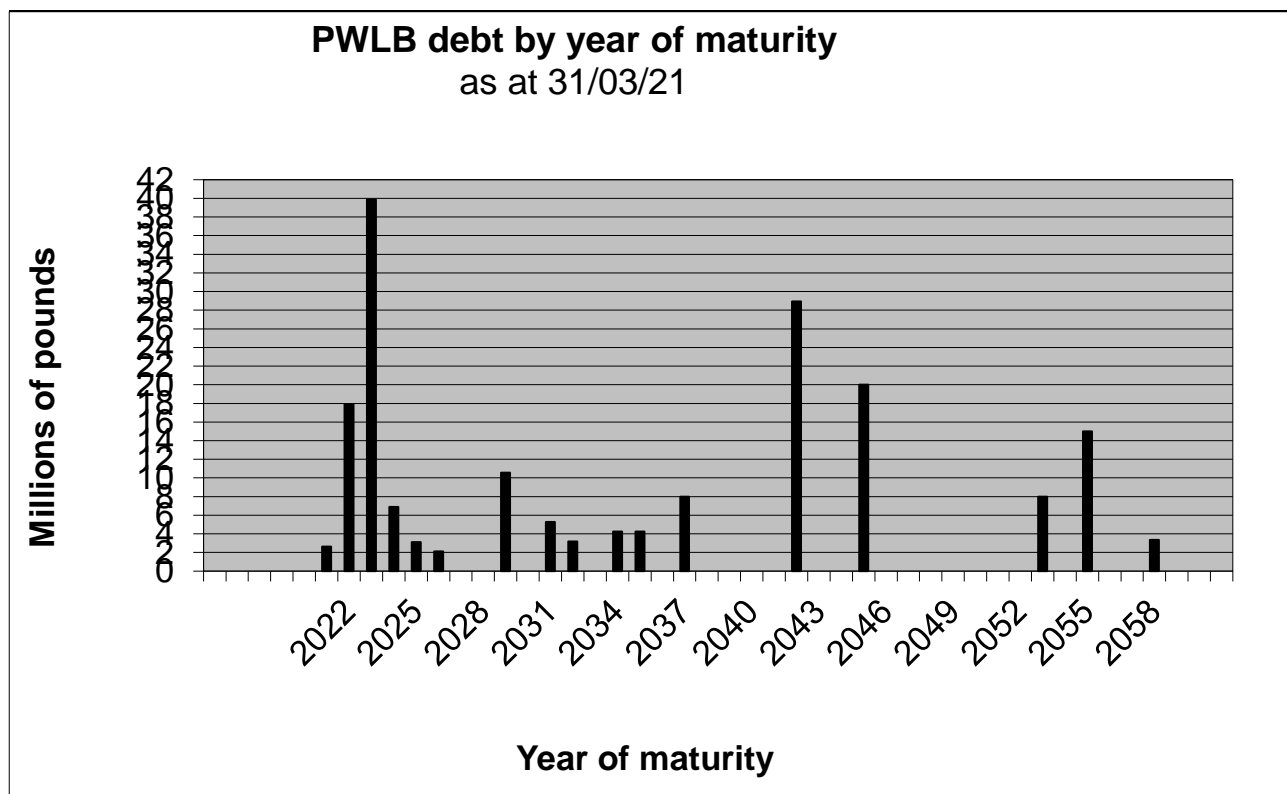
<u>Without Interest</u> <u>31 March</u> <u>2020</u> £000s	<u>With Interest Due</u> <u>31 March</u> <u>2020</u> £000s	<u>Analysis of Loans by Type:</u>	Range of Interest Rates Payable (%)	<u>Without Interest</u> <u>31 March</u> <u>2021</u> £000s	<u>With Interest Due</u> <u>31 March</u> <u>2021</u> £000s
163,736	255,685	Public Works Loan Board	0.00 – 0.00	186,770	273,518
0	0	Money Market		0	0
16	16	Individuals	0.00	16	16
0	0	Other Local Authorities		0	0
2,018	2,018	Other	0.00 - 0.00	2,006	2,006
165,770	257,719	Total		188,792	275,540

<u>Without Interest</u> <u>31 March</u> <u>2020</u> £000s	<u>With Interest Due</u> <u>31 March</u> <u>2020</u> £000s	<u>Analysis of Loans by Maturity:</u>	<u>Without Interest</u> <u>31 March</u> <u>2021</u> £000s	<u>With Interest Due</u> <u>31 March</u> <u>2021</u> £000s
16,617	22,858	Maturing within one year	21,587	28,242
3,708	9,739	Maturing in 1-2 years	33,511	39,676
31,658	46,653	Maturing in 2-5 years	24,211	37,544
24,006	43,388	Maturing in 5-10 years	21,021	39,628
19,479	34,117	Maturing in 10-15 years	23,861	37,555
18,226	28,638	Maturing in 15-20 years	15,747	25,535
25,698	34,144	Maturing in 20-25 years	22,496	30,320
0	5,608	Maturing in 25-30 years	0	5,608
8,000	13,062	Maturing in 30-35 years	23,000	27,698
18,358	19,491	Maturing in 35-40 years	3,358	3,734
0	0	Maturing in 40-45 years	0	0
20	20	Maturing in more than 45 years	0	0
165,770	257,719	Total	188,792	275,540

The Analysis of Loans by Maturity shows the total of loans that are due to be repaid within one year (shown as Short-Term Borrowing on the Balance Sheet) and those due to be repaid in more than one year (shown as Long-Term Borrowing on the Balance Sheet).

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The maturity profile of the Council's PWLB debt only is shown in the following chart.



All trade and other creditors are due to be repaid within one year.

Market Risk

a) Foreign Exchange Risk

The Authority has no financial assets or liabilities denominated in foreign currencies, and thus has no exposure to loss arising from movements in exchange rates.

b) Price Risk

Price risk arises on financial assets because of changes in commodity prices or equity prices. The Authority's holdings in the CCLA Local Authority Property Fund are held on the Balance Sheet at bid price. This is the expected return if the Authority decided to sell its holdings. The asset value will reflect fluctuations in Property Values and rents and are therefore exposed to risk arising from movements in the price of such assets due to changes in general economic conditions. The property fund is classified at fair value through profit or loss, meaning that all movements in price will impact on gains and losses recognised in the surplus or deficit on the provision of services. However, for a five-year period commencing the 1st April 2018, there is a statutory override to avoid such an impact.

c) Interest Rate Risk

The Authority is exposed to significant risk in terms of its exposure to interest rate movements on its borrowings and investments. As an example of this, a rise in interest rate has the following effects:

- i) Borrowings at variable rates – the interest expense charged to the surplus or deficit on the provision of services will rise;
- ii) Borrowings at fixed rates – the fair value of the loan will fall;
- iii) Investments at variable rates – the interest income credited to the surplus or deficit on the provision of services will rise;
- iv) Investments at fixed rates – the fair value of the investment will fall.

Borrowings are carried at amortised cost on the Balance Sheet not fair value, and so nominal gains and losses on fixed rate borrowings would not impact on the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services or Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure. However, changes in variable rates on borrowings and investments will be posted to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services and affect the General Fund Balance.

The annual Treasury Management Policy and Strategy documents approved by Council contain a number of strategies for managing interest rate risk. To guard against the impact of adverse changes in interest rates, the maximum proportion of borrowing subject to variable interest rates is limited to 33% along with a maximum proportion of investments subject to variable rates limited to 40%.

During periods of falling interest rates, and where economic circumstances make it favourable, the Authority will look to reschedule its loans in order to limit its exposure to losses and so reduce its capital financing costs.

The in-house Treasury Management team receives professional advice and has an active strategy for assessing interest rate exposure via the use of indicators. This is used to establish and monitor the budget for capital financing costs, allowing any adverse changes to be accommodated. The monitoring of interest rate exposure assists with the decision as to whether new borrowing or investment undertaken is fixed or variable.

Based on the assessment strategy for interest rate risk if interest rates had been 1% higher with all other variables held constant on 31 March, the financial effect would be (note that the percentages quoted are for illustrative purposes only and are not an indication of the likely change):

31 March 2020 £000s		31 March 2021 £000s
275	Increase in interest receivable on variable rate investments (and resultant impact on the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services)	870
-18,839	Decrease in fair value of fixed rate loans (no impact on Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure)	-20,721
0	Increase in fair value of fixed rate investments (impact on Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure)	0
0	Increase in fair value of financial liabilities (no impact on Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure)	0

The impact of a 1% fall in interest rates would be as above but with the movements being reversed. The 1% variation chosen for sensitivity analysis can be treated as a flat line change, so a 5% variation will result in amounts totalling five times the amount included in the table above.

The Authority held no loans at variable rate at the Balance Sheet date so any movement in interest rates will have no effect on the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services.

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54 STATEMENT OF SINGLE ENTITY AND GROUP ACCOUNTING POLICIES

(a) GOING CONCERN

The provisions in the Code in respect of going concern reporting requirements reflect the economic and statutory environment in which local authorities operate. These provisions confirm that, as authorities cannot be created or dissolved without statutory prescription, they must prepare their financial statements on a going concern basis of accounting.

Local authorities carry out functions essential to the local community and are themselves revenue raising bodies (with limits on their revenue raising powers, arising only at the discretion of central government). If an authority were in financial difficulty, the prospects are thus that alternative arrangements might be made by central government either for the continuation of the services it provides or for assistance with the recovery of a deficit over more than one financial year. As a result of this, it would not therefore be appropriate for local authority financial statements to be provided on anything other than a going concern basis.

The accounts are prepared on the expectation that the services and functions of the Council are expected to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Therefore, these financial statements are produced on a going concern basis.

Additionally, management have assessed cash flow modelling through to July 2022 which demonstrates the Council's ability to work within its Capital Financing Requirement and Cash management framework, with appropriate headroom (at least £6m), and identified no significant risks to liquidity within the next twelve months from the date of issue of these financial statements.

The Narrative Report sets out the significant impacts of the pandemic on the local economy and on Council finances, as well as the response structures and steps taken to manage the risks and impacts. The Council is still experiencing a reduction in income in the current year, with losses of fees and charges and Council Tax and Business Rates. The pandemic is also still resulting in the Council bearing significant extra costs, particularly in social care.

The Council has received additional grant support from Government in 2021/22 to fund a proportion of these costs, including emergency funding, and compensation for an element of losses on sales, fees and charges and council tax. It is estimated that this funding will offset a significant proportion of costs and income losses, with no residual losses currently included in the Council's budget monitoring position for the year.

Current cash and cash-equivalents of £66m at the balance sheet date have been modelled, using reasonable assumptions regarding service costs, staff costs and income, for 12 months from the final certification of these statements to July 2022, including down side scenarios for cash collection and the ongoing impact of reduction on fees and charges. The low point in liquidity is in March 2022 due to the cumulative impacts of the down-side scenarios modelled and the usual cycle of taxation collection resulting in lower cash income in February and March. The Council remains in a positive cash position for the duration of the forecast.

The Council do not plan for any borrowing to support cashflow until March 2022, and only then in the downside scenario. In line with the treasury management strategy of the Council, planned borrowing is limited to the refinancing of a loan due for repayment. The Council remains within its prudential borrowing limits with sufficient headroom should further need arise.

The Council budget and medium-term financial strategy identify savings requirements over the next three years. The Council plan to maintain the General Fund Balance above the minimum 3.5% of Council net budget as set by the Section 151 officer. There is no planned use of the Council's earmarked reserves to support the short- or medium-term budgets. However, given the pandemic is ongoing, the associated economic impact and service implications remain unclear, and there remains significant uncertainty over the final cost to the Council. Any use of these reserves to meet further unplanned or unfunded expenditure will necessitate their replenishment, and plans will be developed to do this in line with the Council's track record of achieving savings required by difficult financial decisions.

The Council recognise that Collection Fund losses from 2020/2021 can be carried forward and funded over three years in line with Government guidance.

As the cash flow modelling demonstrates that the Council will continue to have liquidity for the next 12 months, to support the continuation of service assumption, management are satisfied that there is no material uncertainty relating to going concern.

(b) GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Council's transactions for the financial year and its position at the year end. 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 are set out primarily the *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/2021*.

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

(c) ACCRUALS OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

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

- Revenue from contracts with service recipients, whether for services or the provision of goods, is recognised when (or as) the goods or services are transferred to the service recipient in accordance with the performance obligations in the contract.
- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed - where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet.
- 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.

(d) BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

A Business Improvement District (BID) scheme applies to an area in Southport Town Centre. The scheme is funded by a BID levy paid by non-domestic ratepayers. The Authority acts as principal under the scheme, and accounts for income received and expenditure incurred (including contributions to the BID project) within the relevant services within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

(e) 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 investments that mature in three months or less from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

In the Balance Sheet and 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.

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(f) **CHARGES TO REVENUE FOR NON-CURRENT ASSETS**

Services, support services and trading accounts are debited with the following amounts to record the cost of holding Property, Plant and Equipment and Intangible Assets during the year:

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

The Council is not required to raise council tax to fund depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisation. However, it is required to make an annual contribution from revenue towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement equal to an amount calculated on a prudent basis determined by the Council in accordance with statutory guidance. Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses are therefore replaced by the contribution in the General Fund Balance (Statutory Provision for the Financing of Capital Investment) by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement of Reserves Statement for the difference between the two.

(g) **COUNCIL TAX AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES**

Sefton Council as a billing authority acts as an agent, collecting council tax and non-domestic rates (NDR) on behalf of the major preceptors (Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority) and, as principal, collecting council tax and NDR for the Council. Billing authorities are required by statute to maintain a separate fund (i.e. the Collection Fund) for the collection and distribution of amounts due in respect of council tax and NDR. Under the legislative framework for the Collection Fund, billing authorities, major preceptors and central government share proportionately the risks and rewards that the amount of council tax and NDR collected could be less or more than predicted. Sefton is part of the Liverpool City Region Business Rate Retention Pilot scheme currently retains 99% of NDR rates, which includes the 50% that would otherwise be due to central government.

Accounting for Council Tax and NDR

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

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

(h) **EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

Benefits payable during employment

Short term employee benefits are those due to be settled within 12 months of the year end. They include such benefits as wages, salaries, paid annual leave and paid sick leave, bonuses and non-monetary benefits (e.g. cars) for current employees and are recognised as an expense for services in the year in which the employees render service for the Council. An accrual is made for the cost of holiday entitlements (or any form of leave e.g. time off in lieu), earned by employees but not taken before the year-end which employees can carry forward into the next financial year. The accrual is made at the wage and salary rates applicable in the following financial year, being the period in which the employee takes the benefit. The accrual is charged to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services, but then reversed out through the Movement in Reserves Statement so that holiday entitlements are charged to revenue in the financial year to which the holiday absence occurs.

Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the authority to terminate an officer's appointment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits and are charged on an accruals basis to the appropriate service or, where applicable, to the Corporate Unallocated Costs line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement at the earlier of when the Authority can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Authority 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 Authority 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.

Post-Employment Benefits

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

- The Teachers' Pension Scheme administered by Capita Teachers' Pensions on behalf of the Department for Education.
- The NHS Pension Scheme administered by NHS Pensions on behalf of the Department of Health.
- Local Government Pension Scheme (Merseyside Pension Fund) administered by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.

These Schemes are defined benefits schemes in that they provide defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions) earned as employees working for the Council.

However, the arrangements for the Teachers' Pension Scheme and NHS Pension Scheme mean that liabilities for these benefits cannot ordinarily be identified specifically to the Council. The scheme is therefore accounted for as if it were a defined contribution scheme and no liability for future payments of benefits is recognised in the Balance Sheet. The Schools and Families - Schools line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is charged with the employer's contributions payable to Teachers' Pensions. The Health and Wellbeing line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is charged with the employer's contributions payable to NHS 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 Merseyside 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 current earnings for current employees.
- Liabilities are discounted to their present value at current prices using a discount rate based on the indicative rate of return on high quality corporate bonds (based on a weighted average of 'spot yields' on AA rated corporate bonds). The discount rate used for the year is disclosed in the Participation in Pension Schemes note.
- The assets of Merseyside 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 the following components:

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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 employee worked.
- Past Service Cost - the increase in liabilities as a result of 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 Corporate Unallocated Costs,
- Net Interest on the Net Defined Benefit Liability (Asset), i.e. net interest expense of the Authority - the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability (asset) that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in 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 (asset) at the beginning of the period – taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability (asset) during the year as a result of contribution and benefit payments.

Remeasurements comprising:

- The Return on Plan Assets – excluding amounts included in net interest on the net 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 Merseyside 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 Authority to the pension fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, this means that there are transfers to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year end. The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve therefore measures the beneficial impact on the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than benefits which 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 to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

(i) EVENTS AFTER THE BALANCE SHEET DATE

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

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

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

(j) **FAIR VALUE MEASUREMENT**

The Council measures some of its assets and liabilities at fair value at the end of the reporting period. Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability at the measurement date. The fair value measurement assumes that the transaction to sell the asset or transfer the liability takes place either:

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

The Council uses external valuers to provide a valuation of its assets and liabilities in line with the highest and best use definition within the accounting standard. The highest and best use of the asset or liability being valued is considered from the perspective of a market participant.

Inputs to the valuation techniques in respect of the Council's fair value measurement of its assets and liabilities are categorised within the fair value hierarchy as follows:

Level 1 – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets or liabilities that the authority can access at the measurement date.

Level 2 – inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly or indirectly.

Level 3 – unobservable inputs for the asset or liability.

(k) **FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS**

General Comment

A financial instrument is any contract that gives rise to a financial asset in one entity, and a financial liability in another. Most straight forward financial assets (debtors, bank deposits, investments etc.) and liabilities (creditors, borrowings etc) are covered by this policy.

Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured at fair value and are subsequently carried at their amortised cost. Annual charges to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest payable are based on the carrying amount of the liability, multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the investment. The effective interest rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash payments over the life of the instrument to the amount at which it was originally recognised.

For most of the borrowings that the Council has, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable (plus accrued interest); and interest charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount payable for the year according to the loan agreement.

Gains and losses on the repurchase or early settlement of borrowing are credited and debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure in the year of repurchases/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 is spread over the life of the loan by an adjustment to the effective interest rate. This is managed by a transfer to or from the Financial Instruments Adjustment Account in Movement in Reserves Statement.

Where premiums and discounts have been charged to CIES, regulations allow the impact on the General Fund Balance to be spread over future years. The Council has a policy of spreading the gain or loss over the term that was remaining on the loan against which the premium payable or discount receivable when it was repaid.

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Financial Assets

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

- Amortised costs
- Fair value through profit and loss (FVPL), and
- Fair value through other comprehensive income (FVOCI)

The Council does not hold investments that are measured fair value through FVOCI.

Financial assets measured at amortised cost

Financial assets measured at amortised cost are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Council becomes a party to the contractual provision of a financial instrument and are initially valued at fair value. They are subsequently measured at their amortised costs. Annual credits to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) for interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. For most of the financial instrument held by the Council, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal receivable (plus accrued interest) and interest credited to CIES is the amount receivable for the year in the loan agreement.

Financial assets measured at fair value through profit and loss

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

The fair value measurement is based on the following techniques:

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

The inputs to the measurement techniques are categorised in accordance with the accounting policy set out in section (i) Fair Value Measurement.

Churches & Charities Local Authority LAMIT Property Fund:

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government introduced a mandatory statutory override requiring local authorities to reverse out all unrealised fair value movements resulting from pooled investment funds to protect the General Fund. This will be effective for 5 years from the financial year commencing 1 April 2018, and upon expiry all fair value movements will then impact on the General Fund Balance.

Credit loss model

The credit risk model allows the authority to measure the loss allowance for a financial instrument at an amount equal to the lifetime expected credit losses if the credit risk on that instrument has increased significantly since initial recognition. To make the assessment the authority compares the risk of a default occurring on the financial instrument. This is carried out with market intelligence supplied by external treasury consultants.

Warranties and Guarantees

The Council has entered into a number of 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 at some future date a provision or earmarked reserve may have to be set up. These guarantees relate to:

- Housing stock transfer warranties,
- Pension guarantees related to contractor admissions bodies, such as New Directions.

(l) FOREIGN CURRENCY TRANSLATION

Where the Council has entered into a transaction denominated in a foreign currency, the transaction is converted into sterling at the exchange rate applicable on the date the transaction was effective.

(m) 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 authority where there is reasonable assurance that:

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

Amounts recognised as due to the Council are recognised immediately in the CIES, except to the extent that the grant or contribution has a condition(s) relating to initial recognition that the Authority has not satisfied. Conditions are stipulations that specify that the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset received in the form of the grant or contribution are required to be consumed by the recipient as specified, or future economic benefits or service potential must be returned to the transferor.

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

Where capital grants are credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Where the grant has yet to be used to finance capital expenditure, it is posted to the Capital Grants Unapplied Reserve. Where it has been applied, it is posted to the Capital Adjustments Account. Amounts in the Capital Grants Unapplied Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustments Account once they have been applied to fund capital expenditure.

(n) HERITAGE ASSETS

A heritage asset is an asset that is held due to its historical, artistic, scientific, technological, or environmental qualities, and is maintained principally for its contribution to knowledge and culture. The Authority's heritage assets are held in a number of locations, such as Town Halls and the Atkinson Centre.

The collection consists principally of a ceramic collection, a silver collection, works of art, an Egyptology collection, several war memorials, and the art installation "Another Place". The collection is mainly valued on an insurance valuation basis. However, a number of war memorials are held that are valued at a nominal £1.

The assets are felt to have indeterminate lives and a high residual value; hence the Authority does not consider it appropriate to charge depreciation.

The Authority considers that obtaining valuations for the collection would involve disproportionate cost. This is because of the diverse nature of the assets and the lack of comparable market values.

Heritage Assets are recognised and measured (including the treatment of revaluation gains and losses) in accordance with the Authority's accounting policies on property, plant and equipment (note (q)). The carrying amounts of Heritage Assets would be reviewed where there was evidence of impairment, e.g. where an item has suffered physical deterioration or breakage or where doubts arise about its authenticity. Any impairment would be recognised and measured in accordance with the Authority's general policies on impairment (see Impairment section of note (v)). If any items were disposed of, the proceeds would be accounted for in accordance with the Authority's general provisions relating to the disposal of property, plant and equipment. Disposal proceeds are disclosed separately in the notes to the financial statements and are accounted for in accordance with statutory accounting requirements relating to capital expenditure and capital receipts.

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Notes to the Financial Statements

(o) **INTANGIBLE ASSETS**

Expenditure on non-monetary assets that do not have physical substance but are controlled by the Council as a result of past events (e.g. software licenses) is capitalised when it is expected that the future economic benefits or service potential will flow from the intangible asset to the Council.

Expenditure on the development of websites is not capitalised if the website is solely or primarily intended to promote or advertise the Councils goods or services.

Intangible assets are carried at amortised cost. An intangible asset is amortised over its useful life to the relevant service lines in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. An asset is tested for impairment whenever there is an indication that the asset might be impaired - any losses recognised are posted to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Any gain or loss arising on the disposal or abandonment of an intangible asset is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where expenditure on intangible assets qualifies as capital expenditure for statutory purposes, amortisation, impairment losses and disposal gains and losses are not permitted to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement of Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustments Account and (if sales proceeds exceed £10,000) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

(p) **INTERESTS IN COMPANIES AND OTHER ENTITIES**

The Council has a material interest in companies that are subsidiaries and is required to prepare group accounts. In the Council's own single entity accounts the interest in the companies is recorded as a long-term investment at cost.

In the group accounts transactions and balances between the Council and subsidiary are netted out on consolidation.

(q) **INVENTORIES AND LONG-TERM CONTRACTS**

Inventories are included in the Balance Sheet at the lower of cost or net realisable value. The cost of inventories is assigned using the First-In-First-Out costing formula.

Long term contracts are accounted for on the basis of charging the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services with the value of works and services received under the contract during the financial year.

(r) **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 the production of goods or is held for sale.

Investment Properties are measured initially at cost. This is the amount of cash or cash equivalents paid or the fair value of other consideration given to acquire an asset at the time of its acquisition. They are subsequently measured at fair value, based on the market price that would be received to sell an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. Properties are not depreciated but are revalued. An annual revaluation of all investment properties is undertaken. 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.

Rentals received in relation to investment properties are credited to the Financing and Investment Income line and result in a gain for the General Fund Balance. However, revaluation and disposal gains and losses are not permitted by statutory arrangements to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the general fund balance in the movement in reserves statement and posted to the capital adjustment account and (for any sale proceeds greater than £10,000) the capital receipts reserve.

(s) **JOINT OPERATIONS**

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

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

(t) **LEASES**

Leases have been classified as finance leases where the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to the ownership of property from the lessor to the lessee. All other leases are to be classified as operating leases.

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

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

THE COUNCIL AS A LESSEE

Finance Leases

Property, plant and equipment held under Finance leases will be recognised on the balance sheet at the commencement of the lease at its fair value measured at the leases inception (or the present value of the minimum lease payments if lower). The asset recognised will be matched by a liability for the obligation to pay the lessor. Initial direct costs of the Authority are added to the carrying amount of the asset. Premiums paid on entry into a lease are applied to writing down the lease liability. Contingent rents are charged as expenses in the periods in which they are incurred.

Lease payments will be apportioned between:

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

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

The Council is not required to raise Council Tax to cover depreciation or revaluation and impairment losses arising on leased assets. Instead a prudent annual contribution is made from revenue funds towards the deemed capital investment in accordance with statutory requirements. Depreciation and revaluation and impairment losses are therefore substituted by a revenue contribution in the General Fund Balance, by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the two.

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Notes to the Financial Statements

Operating Leases

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as an expense of the services benefiting from the use of the leased property, plant and 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 (i.e. there is a rent free period at the commencement of the lease).

THE COUNCIL AS A LESSOR

Finance Leases

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. At the commencement of the lease, the carrying amount of the asset in the balance Sheet (whether Property, Plant and Equipment or Assets Held for Sale) is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. A gain, representing the Authority's net investment in the lease is credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement also as part of a gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal) matched by a lease (long term debtor) asset in the balance sheet.

Lease rentals receivable will be apportioned between:

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

The gain credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is not permitted by Statute to increase the General Fund Balance and is required to be treated as a capital receipt. Where a premium, this is posted out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Receipts Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Where the amount due in relation to the lease asset is to be settled by the payment of rentals in future financial years, this is posted out of the General Fund Balance to the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When the future rentals are received, the element for the capital receipt for the disposal of the asset is used to write down the lease debtor. At this point, the deferred capital receipts are transferred to the Capital Receipts Reserve.

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

Operating Leases

Where the Council grants an operating lease over a property or an item of Plant or Equipment, the asset is retained in the Balance Sheet. Rental Income is credited to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Credits are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments (i.e. there is a premium paid at the commencement of the lease).

Initial direct costs incurred in negotiating and arranging the lease are added to the carrying amount of the relevant asset and charged as an expense over the term on the same basis as rental income.

(u) OVERHEADS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The costs of overhead and support services are charged to those services that benefit from them, in accordance with the Council's arrangements for accountability and financial performance.

(v) **PRIOR YEAR ADJUSTMENTS, CHANGES IN ACCOUNTING POLICY AND ESTIMATES AND ERRORS**

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

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

(w) **PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVE AND SIMILAR CONTRACTS**

PFI and similar contracts are agreements to receive services, where the responsibility for making available the property, plant and equipment needed to provide the services passes to the PFI contractor. As the Council is deemed to control the services that are provided under its PFI schemes, and as ownership of the property, plant and equipment will pass to the Council at the end of the contracts for no additional charge, the Authority carries the assets used under the contracts on its Balance Sheet as Property Plant and Equipment.

The original recognition of these assets at fair value (based on the cost to purchase the Property, Plant and Equipment) was balanced by the recognition of a liability for amounts due to the scheme operator to pay for the capital investment.

These non-current assets recognised on the Balance Sheet are revalued and depreciated in the same way as property plant and equipment owned by the Council.

The amounts payable to the PFI operator each year are analysed into five elements:

- Fair value of the services received during the year - debited to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement;
- Finance Cost – An interest charge on the outstanding Balance Sheet Liability, debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement;
- Contingent Rent – increases in the amount to be paid for the property arising during the contract, debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement;
- Payment towards liability – applied to write down the balance sheet liability towards the PFI operator (the profile of write downs is calculated on the same basis as for a finance lease);
- Lifecycle replacement costs - proportion of the amounts payable is posted to the Balance Sheet as a prepayment and then recognised as additions to Property, Plant and Equipment when the relevant works are eventually carried out.

(x) **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 (PP&E).

Recognition

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

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All expenditure, regardless of value, is capitalised if it relates to an existing asset. Expenditure on new assets under £10,000 is not capitalised but treated as Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS), with expenditure over £10,000 being capitalised.

Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

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

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

The cost of assets acquired other than by purchase is deemed to be its current value, unless the acquisition does not have commercial substance (i.e. it will not lead to a variation in the cash flows of the authority). In the latter case, where an asset is acquired via an exchange, the cost of the acquisition is the carrying value of the asset given up by the Authority.

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

- Infrastructure, community assets and assets under construction – depreciated historical cost,
- Non HRA dwellings and rented property - current value, determined using the basis of existing use,
- Surplus assets - fair value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use.
- All other assets - current value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use.

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

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 revalued 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. (Exceptionally gains might be credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement where they arise from the reversal of a loss previously charged to a service).

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 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.

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

Impairment

Assets are assessed at each year end as to whether there is any indication that an asset may be impaired. Where indications exist and any possible differences are estimated to be material, the

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Notes to the Financial Statements

recoverable amount of the asset is estimated and, where this is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognised for the shortfall.

Where impairment losses are identified, they are accounted for by:

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

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

Depreciation

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

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

For those assets that have major components the percentage of the asset that makes up each component is shown below:

<u>Asset Type</u>	<u>Building</u>	<u>Roof</u>	<u>Services</u>	<u>Externals</u>	<u>Total</u>
Primary Schools	42%	9%	26%	23%	100%
Secondary Schools	50%	11%	22%	17%	100%
Sports Centres	49%	10%	23%	18%	100%
Libraries	49%	8%	28%	15%	100%

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.

Disposals and non-current assets held for sale

When it becomes apparent that the carrying amount of an asset will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through its continuing use, it is reclassified as an Asset Held for Sale. The asset is revalued immediately before reclassification and then carried at the lower of this amount and current value less costs to sell. Where there is a subsequent decrease to current value less costs to sell, the loss is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Gains in current value are recognised only up to the amount of any losses previously recognised in the Surplus or Deficit on Provision of Services. Depreciation is not charged on Assets Held for Sale.

If assets no longer meet the criteria to be classified as Assets Held for Sale, they are reclassified back to non-current assets and valued at the lower of the carrying amount before they were classified as held for sale; adjusted for depreciation, amortisation or revaluations that would have been recognised had they not been classified as Held for sale, and their recoverable amount at the date of the decision not to sell.

Assets that are to be abandoned or scrapped are not reclassified as Assets Held for Sale.

When an asset is disposed of or decommissioned, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet (whether Property Plant and Equipment or Assets Held for Sale) is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal, Receipts from disposals (if any) are credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e.

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netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal). Any revaluation gains accumulated for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account.

When an asset has been fully depreciated it is assumed, unless otherwise known, that the asset is disposed of or decommissioned in the following year. The gross value of the asset and the matching accumulated depreciation are then written out as disposals in that year.

Amounts received for a disposal in excess of £10,000 are categorised as capital receipts.

The written off value of disposals is not a charge against council tax, as the cost of Property, Plant and Equipment is fully provided for under separate arrangements for capital financing. Amounts are appropriated to the capital adjustments account from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Schools

When a maintained school transfers to Foundation Trust or Academy status the transfer of the school is treated as a disposal. Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled schools are not recognised on the Council's Balance Sheet. The land and building are owned by the trustees of the school and the Council provides educational services under mere licence with no assignment of rights to the property. The trustees can terminate the arrangement at any time and as such the risks and rewards of the asset have not transferred to the school.

(y) PROVISIONS, CONTINGENT LIABILITIES AND CONTINGENT ASSETS

Provisions

Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the Authority 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 authority may be involved in a court case that could eventually result in the making of a settlement or the payment of compensation.

Provisions are charged as an expense to the appropriate service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year that the 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 within 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. an insurance claim), this is only recognised as income for the relevant service if it is virtually certain the reimbursement will be received if the Council settles the obligation.

Amounts needed to settle any obligation are only discounted where required when included in the accounts.

Internal Insurance Cover

The Authority has established a provision to cover the potential costs of certain known uninsured losses, i.e. losses arising from excesses that apply to the Authority's main insurance policies. This is accounted for in line with the normal policy above.

Provision for NDR Appeals

The Authority has established a provision to cover the potential costs for refunding ratepayers who have successfully appealed against the rateable value of their properties. The provision covers the Council's locally retained share (99%) of the cost. This is accounted for in line with the normal policy above.

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

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

Contingent Assets

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 authority.

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 benefit or service potential.

(z) RESERVES

The Council sets aside specific amounts as reserves for future policy purposes or to cover contingencies. Reserves are created by appropriating amounts out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When the expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate service in that year to score against the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The reserve is then appropriated back into the General Fund Balance in the Movement of Reserves Statement so that there is no net change against council tax for the expenditure.

Certain reserves are held to manage the accounting processes for non-current assets, financial instruments, retirement and employee benefits and do not represent usable resources for the authority- these reserves are explained in the relevant notes and policies.

(aa) 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 from 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.

(bb) SCHOOLS

The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom confirms that the balance of control for local authority-maintained schools (ie those categories of school identified in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended) lies with the local authority. The Code also stipulates that those schools' assets, liabilities, reserves and cash flows are recognised in the local authority financial statements (and not the Group Accounts). Therefore, schools' transactions, cash flows and balances are recognised in each of the financial statements of the authority as if they were the transactions, cash flows and balances of the authority.

(cc) 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.

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Notes to the Financial Statements

9 COLLECTION FUND

The Collection Fund is an agent's statement that reflects the statutory obligation for billing authorities to maintain a separate Collection Fund. The statement shows the transactions of the billing authority in relation to the collection from taxpayers and distribution to local authorities and the Government of council tax and non-domestic rates.

2019/2020			<u>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT</u>	Note	2020/2021		
<u>Business Rates</u> £000s	<u>Council Tax</u> £000s	<u>Total</u> £000s			<u>Business Rates</u> £000s	<u>Council Tax</u> £000s	<u>Total</u> £000s
			<u>INCOME</u>				
	-160,962	-160,962	<u>Council Tax</u> Income from Council Tax Payers			-165,572	-165,572
	-143	-143	<u>Transfers from the General Fund</u> Hardship Relief / Care leavers Discounts			-2,945	-2,945
-71,233		-71,233	<u>Business Rates</u> Income from Business Ratepayers	2	-29,890		-29,890
-109		-109	Transitional Protection Receipts		0		0
0	0	0	<u>Contributions</u> Contributions towards previous year's deficit	3	0	-2,348	-2,348
-71,342	-161,105	-232,447	TOTAL INCOME		-29,890	-170,865	-200,755
			<u>EXPENDITURE</u>				
	158,306	158,306	<u>Distribution of Resources</u> Council Tax	5		166,267	166,267
65,393		65,393	Non-domestic Rates Income	6	66,838		66,838
0		0	Transitional Protection Payments		537		537
311	26	311	<u>Transfers to the General Fund</u> Cost of Collection Allowance Council Tax Benefit		305	15	305
1,413	5,000	6,413	<u>Impairment of Debts / Appeals</u> Provision for Bad and Doubtful Debts	7	4,351	6,857	11,208
2,572		2,572	Provision for Appeals	8	4,995		4,995
1,768	1,160	2,928	<u>Contributions</u> Contributions towards previous year's surplus	3	616	0	616
71,457	164,492	235,949	TOTAL EXPENDITURE		77,642	173,139	250,781
115	3,387	3,502	MOVEMENT ON FUND BALANCE		47,752	2,274	50,026

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Collection Fund

2019/2020			INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT (continued)	Note	2020/2021			
Business Rates	Council Tax	Total			Business Rates	Council Tax	Total	
			COLLECTION FUND BALANCES					
-1,861	-983	-2,844	Balances Brought Forward		-1,746	2,404	658	
115	3,387	3,502	Movement in Year		47,752	2,274	50,026	
-1,746	2,404	658	BALANCES AT YEAR END		46,006	4,678	50,684	
			BALANCES TO BE ALLOCATED					
-1,729	2,021	292	Sefton MBC		45,546	3,934	49,480	
0	258	258	Police and Crime Commissioner		0	505	505	
-17	101	84	Fire and Rescue Authority		460	193	653	
0	24	24	Combined Authority		0	46	46	
-1,746	2,404	658			46,006	4,678	50,684	

NOTES TO THE COLLECTION FUND

1 COUNCIL TAX BASE

The Council's tax base, i.e., the number of chargeable dwellings in each valuation band for 2020/2021 (adjusted for dwellings where discounts apply) converted to a number of band D dwellings, has been calculated as follows:

Band	Number of Chargeable Dwellings After Discounts	Proportion of Band D Charge	Band D Equivalent Dwellings
A*	64.4	5/9	35.8
A	23,378.0	6/9	15,585.3
B	20,653.4	7/9	16,063.8
C	25,232.9	8/9	22,429.2
D	13,260.6	9/9	13,260.6
E	7,590.6	11/9	9,277.4
F	3,625.3	13/9	5,236.5
G	2,451.5	15/9	4,085.8
H	217.1	18/9	434.1
	96,473.8		86,408.6
Adjustment for estimated collection rate (98.25%)			-1,512.2
Adjustment for Ministry of Defence properties			8.0
Council Tax Base			84,904.4

* Properties subject to disabled relief

Band "D" Equivalent is the statutory method of expressing the cost of Council Tax for any given area if all properties are valued as a proportion of a band D property, e.g. band H, which is equivalent to twice the value of band D, would therefore be charged twice the band D equivalent.

2 BUSINESS RATES INCOME

Income from business rate payers has reduced significantly in 2020/21 largely as a result of the expansion of retail discounts announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in March 2020 in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Expanded retail discounts of £41.941m were awarded in 2020/21 (retail discounts of £2.337m were awarded in 2019/20). Sefton's share of the cost of these discounts (99%) is fully funded by Central Government via a Section 31 Grant which is paid to the Council's General Fund Income and Expenditure Account.

3 COLLECTION FUND SURPLUS / DEFICIT (-) PAYMENTS IN THE YEAR

The following amounts were paid / recouped (-) during the year in respect of the estimated collection fund surplus / deficit:

Council Tax	<u>2019/2020</u> £000	<u>2020/2021</u> £000
Sefton Council	995	-1,974
Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner	115	-252
Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service	50	-98
Liverpool City region Combined Authority	0	-24
	1,160	-2,348

Business Rates	<u>2019/2020</u> £000	<u>2020/2021</u> £000
Central Government	0	0
Sefton Council	1,750	610
Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service	18	6
	1,768	616

4 BUSINESS RATES MULTIPLIER AND RATEABLE VALUE

Under the arrangements for nationally uniform business rates, the Council collects rates for its area, which are based on local rateable values multiplied by a uniform rate. The business rate multipliers applied are shown below:

Multipliers	2019/20	2020/21
Standard Business Rate Multiplier	50.4p	51.2p
Small Business Rate Multiplier	49.1p	49.9p

The total non-domestic rateable value on Sefton's Rating List was £181,970,214 at 31 March 2021 (£184,220,787 at 31 March 2020).

5 PRECEPTS AND DEMANDS ON THE COLLECTION FUND

The following precepts and demands have been made on the fund during the year:

Council Tax	<u>2019/2020</u> £000	<u>2020/2021</u> £000
Sefton Council (Including Parish Precepts)	133,099	139,830
Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner	16,981	17,997
Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority	6,629	6,826
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	1,597	1,613
	158,306	166,267

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Collection Fund

6 SHARES OF NON-DOMESTIC RATES INCOME

Business rates income is shared on the following basis:

Business Rates	Share %	2019/2020 £000	2020/2021 £000
Sefton Council	99%	64,739	66,169
Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority	1%	654	668
	100%	65,393	66,838

7 PROVISION FOR BAD AND DOUBTFUL DEBTS

The Collection Fund provides for bad debts on Council Tax and Business Rates arrears. The following movements on the bad debt provisions were recorded in the year:

Council Tax	2019/2020 £000	2020/2021 £000
Balance at 1 April	-10,213	-15,030
Write-offs in year	183	-32
Increase / Decrease in Year	-5,000	-6,857
Balance at 31 March	-15,030	-21,919

Business Rates	2019/2020 £000	2020/2021 £000
Balance at 1 April	-2,420	-3,269
Written-off in year	564	601
Increase / Decrease in Year	-1,413	-4,351
Balance at 31 March	-3,269	-7,019

8 PROVISION FOR CHECKS, CHALLENGES AND APPEALS

The Collection Fund also makes a provision for checks, challenges, and appeals against rateable values set by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). The table below shows the movements on the provision in the year:

Business Rates	2019/2020 £000	2020/2021 £000
Balance at 1 April	-16,319	-18,891
Movement in the Year	-2,572	-4,995
Balance at 31 March	-18,891	-23,886

10 GROUP ACCOUNTS

The standard financial statements consider the Council only as a single entity. Sefton Council conducts some of its adult and social care services activities through a wholly owned company, Sefton New Directions Limited, which began trading on 1 April 2007. In addition, it wholly owns Sandway Homes Limited, a housing development company.

Thus, a full picture of the Council's economic activities, financial position, service position, accountability for resources and exposure to risk is not presented in the Council's single entity financial statements. As a result, group financial statements are used to reflect the full extent of Sefton Council's involvement with its group undertakings in order to provide a clearer picture of the Council's activities as a group.

The following pages include:

- Group Movement in Reserves Statement,
- Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement,
- Reconciliation of the Single Entity Deficit / Surplus (-) on Provision of Services to the Group Deficit / Surplus (-) on Provision of Services,
- Group Balance Sheet,
- Group Cash Flow Statement, and,
- Notes to the Group Accounts.
- A summary of the financial statements for Sefton New Directions.

The financial positions of Sefton Council, Sefton New Directions and Sandway Homes have been consolidated to produce the Group Accounts with any transactions and balances between the three organisations netted out on consolidation.

All organisations have a financial year-end of 31 March.

Sefton New Directions

The main effect of consolidation has been to reduce revenue reserves by £0.423m (£0.157m increase as at 31 March 2020), representing the Authority's 100% share of accumulated net deficit in the Company.

The Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement records a deficit for Sefton New Directions Limited of £0.506m in 2020/2021 (a £0.396m surplus in 2019/2020).

After adjusting for Movements on Reserves the deficit recorded by Sefton New Directions Limited was £0.469m in 2020/2021 (a £0.957m deficit in 2019/2020).

A dividend of £0.111m was also paid in the year (no dividend paid in 2019/2020).

Copies of the Company's accounts for 2020/2021 will be able to be obtained from The Company Secretary, Sefton New Directions Head Office, Third Floor, Burlington House, Crosby Road North, Waterloo, Liverpool, Merseyside, United Kingdom, L22 0PJ.

Sandway Homes

On 19 July 2018 Sefton (ACS) Development Company Limited, a company limited by shares and wholly owned by Sefton MBC, was incorporated. On 29 October 2018 Sandway Homes Limited, a company limited by share and wholly owned by Sefton (ACS) Developments Limited, was incorporated. The nature of business of Sandway Homes Limited is registered as development of building projects. The Filing of accounts of both companies is required by Companies House by 31 December 2021. **For 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 the accounts of the group were not consolidated into the accounts of Sefton MBC on the grounds of materiality.** However, for 2020/2021 the activities of the companies are considered material enough to be consolidated in Sefton's Group Accounts.

The main effect of consolidation has been to reduce revenue reserves by £1.839m representing the Authority's 100% share of accumulated net deficit in the Company.

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Group Accounts

The Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement records a deficit for Sandway Homes Limited of £0.505m in 2020/2021.

GROUP COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Authorities raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

2019/2020			Note	2020/2021		
Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure / Income (-)		Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure / Income (-)
1,256	-187	1,069	<u>Continuing Operations</u>	1,235	-89	1,146
3,532	-330	3,202	Strategic Management	0	0	0
134,767	-41,202	93,565	Strategic Support Unit	149,663	-46,985	102,678
38,660	-1,859	36,801	Adult Social Care	42,322	-243	42,079
34,830	-12,374	22,456	Children's Social Care	40,161	-7,647	32,514
112,856	-83,334	29,522	Communities	113,589	-78,354	35,235
14,799	-8,370	6,429	Corporate Resources	15,731	-8,259	7,472
19,112	-2,132	16,980	Economic Growth and Housing	14,716	-1,810	12,906
186,677	-179,335	7,342	Education Excellence	187,329	-187,489	-160
15,837	-20,983	-5,146	Education Excellence - Schools	18,138	-23,383	-5,245
29,073	-16,863	12,210	Health and Wellbeing	24,492	-7,360	17,132
28,949	-11,396	17,553	Highways and Public Protection	27,021	-9,468	17,553
16,285	-4,301	11,984	Locality Services	16,139	-6,184	9,955
			Corporate Unallocated Costs			
1,388	-370	1,018	Sefton New Directions - Net	707	-237	470
0	0	0	Sandway Homes - Net	312	124	436
0	0	0	Sefton New Directions – Net Out	0	111	111
			Dividend Paid			
638,021	-383,036	254,985	Net Cost of Services	651,555	-377,273	274,282
			<u>Other Operating Income and Expenditure</u>			
		1,072	Precepts paid to Parish Councils			1,179
		34,183	Levies			34,795
		3,907	Loss on the disposal of non-current assets			-261
		-1,163	Other Operating Income			-950
		37,999				34,763
			<u>Financing and Investment Income & Expenditure</u>			
		6,635	Interest payable and similar charges			8,066
		11,081	Net Interest on the Net Pension Defined Benefit Liability			8,640
		-503	Interest Receivable			-365
		-2,204	Income and Expenditure on Investment Properties			-2,196
		-440	Changes in the Fair Value of Investment Properties			4,631
		150	Loss on the disposal of Investment Properties			0
		201	Changes in the Fair Value of Financial Instruments			38
		14,920				18,814
			<u>Taxation and Non-specific Grant Income</u>			
		-131,229	Income from Council Tax			-135,944
		-66,376	Non-Domestic Rates Income			-19,504
		-48,976	Non-Ringfenced Government Grants			-141,758
		-15,314	Capital Grants and Contributions			-20,725
		-261,895				-317,931
		46,009	Deficit on Provision of Services			9,928
		-165	Taxation Income			-111
		45,844	Group Deficit			9,817

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2019/2020			Continued from previous page	2020/2021		
Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure / Income (-)		Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure / Income (-)
		486	Surplus (-) / Deficit on Revaluation of non-current assets			-1,418
		-99,818	Re-measurement of the Net Defined Benefit Liability			31,659
		189	Deferred Tax re. Actuarial losses/gains on pension fund assets and liabilities for Sefton New Directions Limited			-9
		-99,143	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			30,232
		-53,299	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			40,049

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Group Accounts

GROUP MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the authority, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and unusable reserves. The Surplus or (Deficit) on the Provision of Services line shows the true economic cost of providing the authority's services, more details of which are shown in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. These are different from the statutory amounts required to be charged to the General Fund Balance for Council Tax setting purposes. The Net Increase /Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves line shows the statutory General Fund Balance before any discretionary transfers to, or from, earmarked reserves undertaken by the Council.

Movements in Reserves in 2020/2021	Council	New Directions	Sandway Homes	Total Usable	New Directions	Council	Total Council	Total Group
	Usable Reserves £000	Surplus £000	Surplus £000s	Reserves £000	Pensions Reserve £000	Unusable Reserves £000	Reserves £000	Reserves £000
Balance at 1 April 2020	-74,329	-157	0	-74,486	46	101,572	27,243	27,132
Sandway Homes – Deficit Brought Forward	0	0	1,334	1,334	0	0	0	1,334
Movements in Year								
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	8,732	580	505	9,817	37	30,195	38,927	40,049
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations (Note 7 of single entity accounts)	-80,585	0	0	-80,585	0	80,585	0	0
Net Increase (-) / Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	-71,853	580	1,839	-69,434	37	110,780	38,927	41,383
Transfers to / from Earmarked Reserves (Note 34 of single entity accounts)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Increase in Year	-71,853	580	1,839	-69,434	37	110,780	38,927	41,383
Balance at 31 March 2021	-146,182	423	1,839	-143,920	83	212,352	66,170	68,515

Movements in Reserves in 2019/2020	Council	New Directions	Total Usable	New Directions	Council	Total Council	Total Group
	Usable Reserves £000	Surplus £000	Reserves £000	Pensions Reserve £000	Unusable Reserves £000	Reserves £000	Reserves £000
Balance at 1 April 2019	-66,789	-1,114	-67,903	1,399	146,935	80,146	80,431
Movements in Year							
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	44,887	957	45,844	-1,353	-97,790	-52,903	-53,299
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations (Note 7 of single entity accounts)	-52,427	0	-52,427	0	52,427	0	0
Net Increase (-) / Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	-7,540	957	-6,583	-1,353	-45,363	-52,903	-53,299
Transfers to / from Earmarked Reserves (Note 34 of single entity accounts)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Increase in Year	-7,540	957	-6,583	-1,353	-45,363	-52,903	-53,299
Balance at 31 March 2020	-74,329	-157	-74,486	46	101,572	27,243	27,132

GROUP BALANCE SHEET

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Authority. The net assets of the Authority (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the authority. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category of reserves are usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the Authority may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use (for example the Capital Receipts Reserve that may only be used to fund capital expenditure or repay debt). The second category of reserves is those that the Authority is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example the Revaluation Reserve), where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold; and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement line 'Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'.

<u>31 March</u> <u>2020</u> £000s		<u>Note</u>	<u>31 March</u> <u>2021</u> £000s
469,719	Property, Plant and Equipment		458,029
11,532	Heritage Assets		11,532
55,300	Investment Property		49,110
5,540	Long Term Investments		6,501
4,806	Long Term Debtors		5,207
546,897	Long-Term Assets		530,379
99	Short Term Investments		163
0	Assets Held for Sale		11,513
730	Inventories		2,112
49,487	Short Term Debtors		44,893
5,368	Prepayments		36,753
42,488	Cash and Cash Equivalents		70,841
98,172	Current Assets		166,275
-16,617	Short Term Borrowing		-21,567
-42,199	Short Term Creditors		-60,862
-25,995	Receipts in Advance		-19,243
-61	Provisions		-54
-918	Deferred Liabilities		-942
-85,790	Current Liabilities		-102,668
-22,699	Provisions		-28,260
-149,153	Long Term Borrowing		-167,225
-8,357	Deferred Liabilities		-7,415
-406,202	Pensions Liability		-459,601
-586,411	Long Term Liabilities		-662,501
-27,132	Net Assets		-68,515

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Group Accounts

31 March 2020 £000s	Balance Sheet (Continued)	Note	31 March 2021 £000s
	Reserves		
	<u>Usable Reserves</u>		
-10,823	General Fund - Delegated Schools		-15,676
-6,984	General Fund - Non-Delegated Services		-11,278
-157	New Directions - Profit and Loss Account		423
0	Sandway Homes - Profit and Loss Account		1,839
-35,888	Earmarked Reserves		-91,698
-2,877	Capital Receipts Reserve		-4,788
-17,757	Capital Grants and Contributions Unapplied		-22,742
-74,486			-143,920
	<u>Unusable Reserves</u>		
-69,636	Revaluation Reserve		-68,324
-236,118	Capital Adjustment Account		-229,033
370	Financial Instruments Adjustment Account		310
-414	Pooled Investment Funds Adjustment Account		-376
402,398	Pensions Reserve		454,996
293	Collection Fund Adjustment Account		49,481
4,725	Accumulated Absences Account		5,381
101,618			212,435
27,132	Total Group Reserves		68,515

The Notes to the single entity accounts on pages 35 to 114, and to the Group Accounts on pages 126 to 130 form part of the financial statements (note that the disclosures on pages 131 to 132 are for information only and do not form part of the financial statements).

GROUP CASH FLOW STATEMENT

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the authority during the reporting year. The statement shows how the authority generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the authority are funded by way of taxation and grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the authority. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the authority's future service delivery. Cash flows arising from financing activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital (i.e. borrowing) to the authority.

<u>2019/2020</u> £000s		<u>Note</u>	<u>2020/2021</u> £000s
	<u>Operating Activities</u>		
45,844	Net Deficit on the provision of services		9,817
-74,892	Adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements		-42,322
13,271	Adjustments for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities		21,504
-15,777	Net cash flows from Operating Activities	12	-11,001
	<u>Investing Activities</u>		
15,290	Purchase of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets		25,276
126	Purchase of short-term and long-term investments		999
-1,053	Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets		-3,075
-12,580	Other receipts from investing activities		-19,310
1,783	Net cash flows from Investing Activities		3,890
	<u>Financing Activities</u>		
-20,000	Cash receipts of short- and long-term borrowing		-43,561
-19	Other receipts from financing activities		0
446	Cash payments for the reduction of the outstanding liabilities relating to finance leases and on-balance sheet PFI contracts		480
6,457	Repayments of short- and long-term borrowing		21,239
73	Other payments for financing activities		600
-13,043	Net cash flows from Financing Activities		-21,242
-27,037	Net decrease / increase (-) in cash and cash equivalents		-28,353
-15,451	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		-42,488
-42,488	Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	9	-70,841

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NOTES TO THE GROUP ACCOUNTS

1 INTRODUCTION

The notes below include details of where the inclusion of Sefton New Directions Limited and / or Sandway Homes has altered the disclosures within Sefton's single entity accounts. All other notes to the Group Financial Statements are as shown in the Notes to the single entity accounts.

2 DISCLOSURE OF AUDIT COSTS

Sefton New Directions Limited incurred the following fees relating to external audit and inspection.

<u>2019/2020</u> £000		<u>2020/2021</u> £000
14	Fees payable to Hazlewoods LLP for external audit services	14
14	Total	14

Sandway Homes didn't incur any fees relating to external audit and inspection. Sefton's expenditure on audit costs is shown in Note 11 to the single entity accounts.

3 ASSETS ON OPERATING LEASES

Sefton New Directions Limited made operating lease payments of £0.058m in 2020/2021 relating to Land and Buildings and other assets (£0.063m in 2019/2020). Sefton New Directions has obligations to make payments for operating leases in future years as follows:

<u>31 March</u> <u>2020</u> £000s		<u>31 March</u> <u>2021</u> £000s
81	Not later than one year	60
162	Later than one year and not later than five years	162
516	Later than five years	510
759		732

Sandway Homes had no operating leases. Sefton's expenditure on operating leases is shown in Note 46 to the single entity accounts.

4 EMPLOYEES' EMOLUMENTS IN EXCESS OF £50,000

Sefton New Directions had 421 employees during 2020/2021 (442 during 2019/2020). The number of employees whose remuneration was over £50,000 is shown in the table below:

Sefton New Directions (Only)				
<u>2019/2020</u>		<u>Remuneration Band</u>	<u>2020/2021</u>	
<u>Employed on 31/03/20</u>	<u>Left during the year</u>		<u>Employed on 31/03/21</u>	<u>Left during the year</u>
1	0	£90,000 - £94,999	1	0

Sandway Homes had no employees during the year. Details of Sefton Employees' Emoluments are shown in Notes 14 and 15 to the single entity accounts.

5 PARTICIPATION IN PENSION SCHEMES

Sefton New Directions Limited employees are eligible to join the same Local Government Pension Scheme as those employees in Sefton. Sandway Homes had no employees during 2020/2021.

The following transactions have been made in the Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement during the year:

<u>2019/2020</u>		<u>Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement</u>	<u>2020/2021</u>	
<u>Sefton Council</u>	<u>Sefton New Directions Limited</u>		<u>Sefton Council</u>	<u>Sefton New Directions Limited</u>
£000s	£000s		£000s	£000s
36,018	987	<u>Cost of Services:</u>		
557	38	Current Service Cost	33,333	872
521	14	Curtailment Cost	153	4
5,477	266	Administration Expenses	538	14
		Past Service Cost	11	0
		<u>Financing and Investment Income & Expenditure:</u>		
10,928	123	Net Interest Cost	8,527	113
53,501	1,428	Total Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	42,562	1,003
-98,276	-1,542	Actuarial Losses / Gains (-) on Pension Assets and Liabilities	31,613	46
0	189	Deferred Tax re. Actuarial losses on pension fund assets and liabilities for Sefton New Directions Limited	0	-8
-44,775	75	Total Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	74,175	1,041

Pensions Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

The amount included in the Balance Sheet arising from the Authority's obligation in respect of its defined benefit plans is as follows:

<u>2019/2020</u>			<u>2020/2021</u>	
<u>Sefton Council</u>	<u>Sefton New Directions Limited</u>		<u>Sefton Council</u>	<u>Sefton New Directions Limited</u>
£000s	£000s		£000s	£000s
-1,309,193	-44,500	Present Value of the Defined Benefit Obligation	-1,520,171	-50,759
906,841	39,747	Fair Value of Plan Assets	1,065,258	44,972
0	903	Related Deferred Tax Assets	0	1,100
-402,352	-3,850	Net Liability arising from defined benefit obligation	-454,913	-4,687

Assets and Liabilities in Relation to Retirement Benefits Reconciliation of present value of scheme liabilities

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Group Accounts

2019/2020			2020/2021	
Sefton Council £000s	Sefton New Directions Limited £000s		Sefton Council £000s	Sefton New Directions Limited £000s
1,410,869	46,713	1 April	1,309,193	44,500
36,018	987	Current Service Cost	33,333	872
33,474	1,111	Interest Cost on Pension Liabilities	31,054	1,054
6,594	168	Contributions by scheme participants	6,784	164
-145,086	-3,613	Remeasurement Gains (-) and Losses	177,103	5,435
-38,710	-1,170	Benefits paid	-37,460	-1,270
557	38	Curtailment Cost	153	0
5,477	266	Past Service Cost	11	4
1,309,193	44,500	31 March	1,520,171	50,759

Reconciliation of fair value of scheme assets:

2019/2020			2020/2021	
Sefton Council £000s	Sefton New Directions Limited Restated £000s		Sefton Council £000s	Sefton New Directions Limited £000s
944,647	41,490	1 April	906,841	39,747
22,516	988	Interest Income	22,517	941
-46,810	-2,071	Remeasurement Gains / Losses (-)	145,490	5,389
19,125	356	Employer contributions	21,614	15
6,594	168	Contributions by scheme participants	6,784	164
-38,710	-1,170	Benefits paid	-37,460	-1,270
-521	-14	Administration Expenses	-538	-14
906,841	39,747	31 March	1,065,258	44,972

The liabilities show the underlying commitments that the Authority and Sefton New Directions Limited have in the long-run to pay additional retirement benefits. The total liability of £460m has a substantial impact on the net worth of the Group as recorded in the Balance Sheet, resulting in an overall balance of -£81m.

The deficit for Sefton New Directions Limited on the Local Government Pension Scheme will be made good by increased contributions over the remaining working life of employees, as assessed by the scheme Actuary.

Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

The principal assumptions used by the actuary for Sefton New Directions have been:

2019/2020		2020/2021
	<u>Mortality assumptions (years):</u>	
	Local Government Pension Scheme:	
21.0	Longevity at 65 for current pensioners: Men	21.0
24.0	Longevity at 65 for current pensioners: Women	24.0
23.0	Longevity at 65 for future pensioners: Men	24.0
26.0	Longevity at 65 for future pensioners: Women	26.0

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Group Accounts

	<u>Other assumptions</u>	
2.2%	Rate of Inflation - CPI	2.8%
3.6%	Rate of increase in salaries	4.2%
2.1%	Rate of increase in pensions	2.7%
2.4%	Rate for discounting scheme liabilities	2.1%

The assumptions used by the actuary for Sefton Council are shown in Note 49 to the single entity accounts.

6 PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

The Property, Plant and Equipment (PP&E) figure in the Group Balance Sheet includes £0.359m for Vehicles, Plant and Equipment of Sefton New Directions Limited at 31 March 2021 (£0.391m at 31 March 2020) and £0.086m for Land and Buildings (£0.108m at 31 March 2020). It also includes £2.232m for Land of Sandway Homes. Details of Sefton's PP&E are shown in Note 18 to the single entity accounts.

7 CURRENT ASSETS

The Current Assets figure in the Group Balance Sheet includes £0.489m for Debtors of Sefton New Directions Limited at 31 March 2021 (£0.445m at 31 March 2020) and £1.402m for Inventories (Work in Progress) of Sandway Homes. Details of Sefton's Debtors are shown in Note 26 to the single entity accounts.

8 CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

The balance of Cash and Cash Equivalents held by Sefton MBC, Sefton New Directions Limited and Sandway Homes are shown below:

31 March 2020 £000s		31 March 2021 £000s
38,988	Sefton MBC - Cash and Cash Equivalents	66,410
3,500	Sefton New Directions Limited - Bank Deposits	4,011
		420
42,488	Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	28,353

9 CURRENT LIABILITIES

The Current Liabilities figure in the Group Balance Sheet includes £0.708m for Creditors of Sefton New Directions Limited at 31 March 2021 (£0.420m at 31 March 2020) and £0.817m for Creditors and £0.625m for Receipts in Advance relating to Sandway Homes. Details of Sefton's Creditors are shown in Note 28 to the single entity accounts.

10 PROVISIONS

The Current Liabilities figure in the Group Balance Sheet includes £0.054m for Short Term Provisions of Sefton New Directions Limited at 31 March 2021 (£0.061m at 31 March 2020). Details of Sefton's provisions are shown in Note 30 to the single entity accounts. Movements in New Directions' provisions during the year were as follows:

	2020/2021	1 April 2019 £000s	Additions in Year £000s	Applied In Year £000s	Released In Year £000s	31 March 2020 £000s
(b)	Short-term Deferred Tax	-61	0	7	0	-54
		-61	0	7	0	-54

Agenda Item 4

Group Accounts

Comparable figures for the previous year are shown below:

	2019/2020	1 April 2019 £000s	Additions in Year £000s	Applied In Year £000s	Released In Year £000s	31 March 2020 £000s
(a)	Short-term Restructuring Costs / Pay Protection	-103	0	103	0	0
(b)	Deferred Tax	-21	-40	0	0	-61
		-124	-40	103	0	-61

(a) Restructuring Costs / Pay Protection Provision

During 2019/2020, the company utilised both of its restructuring and pay protection provisions. No additional provisions were deemed necessary at the year-end.

(b) **Deferred Tax** – This relates to the difference between accumulated depreciation and amortisation and capital allowances.

11 CASH FLOW STATEMENT – OPERATING ACTIVITIES

The cash flows for operating activities include the following items:

2019/2020 £000s		2020/2021 £000s
-466	Interest received	-365
7,874	Interest paid	8,066

12 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The Accounting Policies for the Group are described in Note 54 to the single entity accounts.

OTHER INFORMATION:

The following disclosures are for information only and do not form part of the financial statements.

SEFTON NEW DIRECTIONS SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Profit and Loss Account

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
10,978	Turnover	10,623
-10,422	Cost of Sales	-9,203
556	Gross Profit	1,420
-1,476	Administrative Expenses	-1,672
-920	Gross Profit / Loss (-)	-252
-98	Costs of reorganisation and restructuring / COVID19 Related Costs	-218
-104	Other interest receivable and similar income	-110
-1,122	Profit / Loss (-) before Tax	-580
165	Taxation	111
-957	Profit / Loss (-) for the financial year	-469

Statement of Comprehensive Income

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
-957	Profit / Loss (-) for the financial year	-469
1,542	Actuarial gain / loss (-) recognised on defined benefit pension scheme	-46
-189	Deferred tax actuarial gain / loss (-) recognised on defined benefit pension scheme	9
1,353		-37
396	Comprehensive Income for the financial year	-506

Balance Sheet

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
	Fixed Assets	
498	Tangible Assets	445
	Current Assets	
445	Debtors	488
3,500	Cash at bank and in hand	4,011
3,945		4,499
-420	Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	-708
3,525	Net Current Assets	3,791
4,023	Total assets less current liabilities	4,236
	Long-Term Liabilities	
-61	Provision for liabilities	-54
-3,850	Net pension liability	-4,687
-3,911		-4,741
	Capital and reserves	
-1	Called up share capital	-1
-111	Retained earnings	506
-112		505
-4,023	Total capital, reserves and long-term liabilities	4,236

Agenda Item 4

Group Accounts

SANDWAY HOMES SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Profit and Loss Account

<u>2019/2020</u> £000		<u>2020/2021</u> £000
0	Turnover	0
0	Cost of Sales	-208
0	Gross Profit	-208
0	Administrative Expenses	-228
0	Gross Profit / Loss (-)	-436
0	Interest payable and similar charges	-69
0	Profit / Loss (-) for the financial year	-505

Balance Sheet

<u>2019/2020</u> £000		<u>2020/2021</u> £000
	Fixed Assets	
0	Tangible Assets	2,232
	Current Assets	
0	Work in Progress	1,401
0	Cash at bank and in hand	420
0		1,821
	Current Liabilities	
0	Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	-817
0	Deferred Income	-625
		-1,442
0	Net Current Assets	379
0	Total assets less current liabilities	2,611
	Long-Term Liabilities	
0	Creditors: Amounts falling due after one year	-4,450
	Capital and reserves	
0	Retained earnings	1,839
0	Total capital, reserves and long-term liabilities	2,611

11 **FOREWORD TO THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Maher and the Chief Executive, Dwayne Johnson both recognise the importance of having good systems of governance, risk and assurance in place to be able to manage and deliver services to its residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders. The Council has adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'.

Each year, to provide an assurance on this, the Council is required to conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of its governance, risk and assurance systems to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which provides an assurance on how these systems have been working. This annual review is in respect of 2020/21 and this statement provides an assurance that good governance arrangements are in place and the Council is managing the risks to achieving its objectives. It also sets out planned actions for next year 2021/22. The AGS is also published in the Council's Annual Accounts.

Since the impact of COVID-19 this has meant that governance, assurance but particularly risk need to be prioritised. This therefore has exposed the Council to significant risks but we are assured that every action was taken to mitigate these risks and we will ensure that any lessons nationally, regionally and locally are applied to our organisation's future approach to managing such extreme circumstances.

We have conducted our annual review of the effectiveness of the systems of governance, risk and assurance in place at Sefton MBC and it is our opinion that these are fit for purpose and in accordance with the governance framework. We propose over the coming year to take actions to address highlighted issues in the AGS and further improve our corporate governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these actions will address the need for improvements that were identified in our annual review of effectiveness in 2020/21 and we will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our annual review in 2021/22.

Councillor Ian Maher

Leader of the Council

Dwayne Johnson

Chief Executive

Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

Year Ended 31 March 2021

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1. Introduction and Scope of Responsibility

Sefton Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. Sefton Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

It also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which requires the Council to publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) in accordance with proper practice in relation to internal control.

The Council has reviewed its existing governance arrangements and has subsequently approved and adopted in September 2019 a local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the seven principles of Corporate Governance as set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE publication 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016'.

In discharging this overall responsibility, Sefton Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.



2. The Purpose of the Annual Governance Statement

The AGS is a public document that reports on the extent to which the Council complies with its own Code of Corporate Governance, demonstrating the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of governance arrangements. The AGS is a valuable means of communication and reflects the Council's features, challenges and any planned changes in the coming period.

The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the authority is directed and controlled; and through which it engages with and leads its communities. This framework enables the authority to develop and achieve its strategic objectives and core purpose in delivering the 2030 vision. The Council's governance arrangements are designed to manage risk to a reasonable level within this context. These arrangements cannot eliminate risk but can provide reasonable assurance for the AGS.

- i. The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot remove all risk of failing to achieve the Council's aims and objectives but can provide a reasonable assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks that could prevent the Council from achieving its aims and objectives;
- ii. assess how likely it is that identified risks will happen and what the potential impact would be if they did, and
- iii. manage the risks effectively.

For the purposes of this statement, the governance framework has been in place at Sefton Council from 1 April 2020 and up to the date of the approval of the annual statement of accounts.

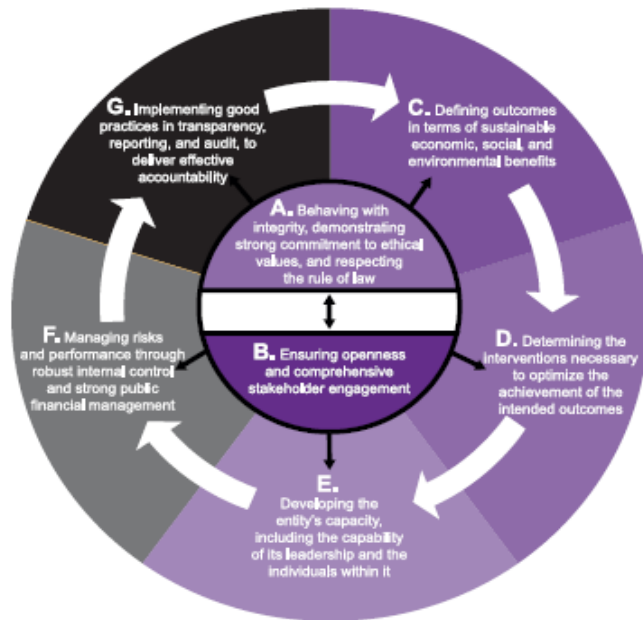


3. The Governance Framework

The seven principles of Corporate Governance laid out in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016 Edition) are as follows:

- A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law;
- B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement;
- C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits;
- D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of intended outcomes;
- E. Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it;
- F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management; and
- G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit, to deliver effective accountability.

Achieving the Intended Outcomes While Acting in the Public Interest at all Times



(International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014) (the “International Framework”)



Sefton Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control.

The review of effectiveness is informed by:

- Senior managers who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment within their service areas;
- The Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Audit Opinion Statement, which includes a report on the effectiveness of Internal Audit, and
- Feedback, recommendations and comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The outcome from this review is provided in sections 4 and 5 of this report.



4. Review of Effectiveness

Decision Making and Scrutiny

The Council approved the overall policy and budgetary framework for the financial year 2020/21. Cabinet subsequently made decisions at various points throughout the year that were in line with this policy and budget framework. The decisions of the Cabinet have been the subject of scrutiny through the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees which met regularly during the year.

Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee had a work programme for the year and reviewed a range of current activities and potential issues as part of that programme.

All decisions made by Committees, Council, Cabinet, Cabinet Member (under their delegated powers) and Chief Officer executive decisions are recorded and published on line for transparency. Delegation arrangements for Cabinet Members are reviewed annually by the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer as part of the Constitution review process. The Council publishes a calendar of meetings and deadlines for the submission of agenda items. Agendas and reports are produced promptly and provided to the relevant Members.

Audit and Governance Committee

The Audit and Governance Committee provides independent assurance on the adequacy of the Council's risk, governance and assurance environment. All political parties are represented on the Audit and Governance Committee. The Committee monitors the Corporate Risk Register which includes the mitigating actions that has been taken for the Council to manages the risks to achieving its objectives. Full details of this is available on the Council's website on the Your Council/ Calendar of Meetings/Audit and Governance Committee links. <https://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=141>

The Committee met three times during 2020/21 on 16 September 2020, 16 December 2020 and 17 March 2021. Three meetings that were planned for 24 June 2020, 22 July 2020 and 18 November 2020 were cancelled. There has also been one further meeting on 23 June 2021 and the meeting planned for 21 July 2021 has been cancelled. Meetings have considering reports, from the Monitoring



Officer, the Section 151 (S151) Officer, the Chief Internal Auditor and the External Auditor. The cancelled meetings were as a result initially of the pandemic but after this, as a result of the Council's External Auditor having not completed their annual audit work therefore these special arranged meetings could not take place.

Executive Leadership Team

The Council's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) is led by the Chief Executive and includes Executive Directors which includes the S151 Officer. ELT meet fortnightly to consider and provide leadership on all business matters of the Council.

As part of the corporate governance review for 2020/21 members of the ELT, including the Chief Executive, have provided formal assurance in respect of their role and responsibilities, by each of them completing a Governance Assurance Statement (GAS). The GAS is based upon the seven principles of Corporate Governance laid out in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016 Edition) referred to in Section 3 above.

Strategic Leadership Board

The Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) consists of the Chief Executive, Executive Directors, Heads of Service and the Council's Monitoring Officer. It provides senior management and leadership in the development, delivery and communication of Council and borough-wide policy and performance. It has a key responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment.

Each Head of Service is responsible for the governance framework and good governance in their individual Service area and are in turn supported by their managers. As part of the corporate governance review for 2020/21 Heads of Service have provided formal assurance in respect of their service area, by completing GASs based on the above Framework. The Council's Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer has also completed a GAS.



External Audit

Ernst & Young LLB is the Council's appointed External Auditor for 2020/21. The work of the Council's External Auditor includes an examination of the Council's Annual Accounts and an assessment of the degree to which the Council delivers value for money in the use of its resources. The External Auditor will also reach an opinion on the consistency of other information published with the Council's Annual Accounts and the AGS is published in the Council's Annual Accounts.

Internal Audit

The Council takes assurance about the effectiveness of the governance environment from the work of Internal Audit which provides independent and objective assurance across the whole range of Council activities. It is the duty of the Chief Internal Auditor to give an opinion, at least annually, on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control within the Council.

Based upon the work of Internal Audit during 2020/21, the Chief Internal Auditor provided the Council with an overall opinion of adequate, with the potential for improvement being adequate on the arrangements for gaining assurance through the governance framework and on the controls reviewed as part of the Internal Audit programme. It should be noted that this latter assessment has been driven by the pandemic and the fact that the Council has not been able to progress some key areas of activity during the year as it was responding to the pandemic.

Internal Audit carried out follow up audit reviews for all high-risk recommendations and a sample of medium and low risk recommendations to ensure that recommendations made had been implemented as agreed by management.

The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards were introduced from April 2013 and updated in April 2017. The service was the subject to a review during 2017/18 which was assessed as being generally compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards 2017.

Other External Inspections

During the year a number of external inspections took place within the Council. Appropriate action plans have been developed and processes are in place to track delivery. Notable inspections include:



- Youth Inspection;
- Joint local area SEND revisit in Sefton (Care Quality Commission and Ofsted);
- Schools' Ofsted Inspections;
- Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services;
- Food Standards Agency Audit Report - Food Law Enforcement Service: Onsite Audit, and
- JTAI for Children's Mental Health.

From the evaluation work undertaken the following sections look at how the Council is held to account for the seven principles of Corporate Governance.

A - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.

Sub – Principle	How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle
Behaving with integrity. Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values. Respecting the rule of law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ The Council has an agreed Constitution which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people; ◇ All reports to Council, Cabinet and committees are checked by Legal and Financial Services to ensure the decisions to be made are lawful and comply with financial requirements; ◇ The Council has put processes in place to minimise the risk that its councillors and employees act in an improper way (influenced by prejudice, bias or conflict of interest) when dealing with stakeholders; ◇ The Council has Codes of Conducts and a suite of policies and procedures for councillors and employees which define the standards of behaviour expected. Deviation from these policies may result in the use of the embedded disciplinary processes in place, and ◇ The Council's Vision (Sefton 2030) and Framework for Change programme are clear and demonstrates its commitment to its stakeholders. The 2030 Vision also takes into account ethical behaviour in its promise.



B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

Sub – Principle	How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle
<p>Openness.</p> <p>Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders.</p> <p>Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ The Council publishes all relevant information (as required by the Local Government Transparency Code 2015) on its website; ◇ The Council's website contains comprehensive information pertaining to the services provided by Sefton; ◇ The Council's decision making information, including committee agendas and minutes (not restricted) is available via the Council's website and intranet; ◇ The Council undertakes consultation exercises regularly including on all budget proposals, and ◇ All reports to Council, Cabinet and committees are checked by Legal and Financial Services to ensure the decisions to be made are lawful and comply with financial requirements.

C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.

Sub – Principle	How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle
<p>Defining Outcomes.</p> <p>Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ The Council is committed to community engagement and involvement; ◇ The Council has a clear vision for the future as set out in Sefton 2030 and Framework for Change Programme which takes into account all relevant economic, social and environmental factors; ◇ The Framework for Change has been developed to achieve financial sustainability, to ensure services align with the core purpose and that the Council works with partners to achieve better outcomes, and ◇ The Council has structured budget and treasury management processes in place.

D - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

Sub – Principle	How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle
<p>Determining interventions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ The Council operates a Scrutiny and Review Committee system and the decision making process allows for challenge where necessary;



<p>Planning interventions.</p> <p>Optimising achievement of intended outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ The Council has a robust financial strategy with financial planning protocols in place (Framework for Change, Medium Term Financial Plan, Annual Budget Monitoring and Forward Plans); ◇ Cabinet receives regular reports on the Revenue and Capital Budgets and the Audit and Governance Committee receives regular reports on Treasury Management; ◇ The Council engages and undertakes consultation exercises with its stakeholders in relation to service provision changes and new initiative, and. ◇ Social value is considered for all Council tender/ARFQ exercises, with the requirement for social value being clearly documented in the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules.
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E - Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

Sub – Principle	How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle
<p>Developing the entity’s capacity.</p> <p>Developing the capability of the entity’s leadership and other individuals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ The Council has an agreed Constitution which details roles and responsibilities of councillors and key officers of the Council; ◇ The Council requires all new employees and councillors to undertake an induction process; ◇ The Council has a number of human resource policies in place; ◇ The Council has a personal development review process in place for councillors and employees; ◇ There is a training programme for councillors and employees. Employee training needs are identified through the annual appraisal process; ◇ Workforce Development as part of the Framework for Change 2020-2030 ‘Council of 2023 Programme’; ◇ The Council contributes to the Apprentice Levy; ◇ Financial Regulations which are regularly updated are contained within the Council’s Constitution and all employees are required to operate within them; ◇ Each service has an approved Financial Scheme of Delegation; ◇ A number of new projects are being progressed as part of the Framework for Change. These are within the Demand Management, Council of 2023 and Growth Pillars;



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ The Council works with a number of partners in order to deliver services throughout the borough, and ◇ Areas of the Council have been or are under review to ensure that they are operating efficiently and effectively within resources available.
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F - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.

Sub – Principle	How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle
<p>Managing risk.</p> <p>Managing performance.</p> <p>Robust internal control.</p> <p>Managing data.</p> <p>Strong public financial management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ The Council has a Risk Management Framework in place; ◇ The Council’s Performance Management of new projects is linked to the Framework for Change; ◇ A system of scrutiny and review is in place as part of the Council’s decision making process; ◇ The Council has an Audit and Governance Committee who meet quarterly and provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the Council’s Risk Management Framework and the associated control environment; ◇ The Council has a Risk Management Handbook and the Audit and Governance Committee review the Corporate Risk Register at each meeting; ◇ An Internal Audit function is maintained and reports quarterly to the Audit and Governance Committee; ◇ A data management framework and procedures are in place and are readily available to all members of staff. The Council has appointed a Data Protection Officer, Senior Information Risk Owner and Deputy; ◇ There is a mandatory e learning module available for all Council employees on Information Compliance, Sharing and Guarding and all Council employees are required to complete an ongoing mandatory annual refresher module. Compliance with the requirement is monitored; ◇ The Council has a robust financial strategy with Financial Planning protocols in place (Framework for Change, Annual Budget Monitoring, Medium Term Financial Plan), and ◇ The Council’s Financial Statements are available to the Public on the Council’s website.



G - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver accountability.

Sub – Principle	How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle
Implementing good practice in transparency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ The Council adheres to the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, with relevant information accessible via the Council’s website;
Implementing good practices in reporting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ The Council’s website is designed for ease of navigation and includes a “Browse Aloud” function;
Assurance and effective accountability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ The Council has an accessible Communications Policy in place; ◇ The Council’s Financial Statements and External Auditor’s Letter is available on the Council’s website; ◇ The Council produces Financial Statements in accordance with CIPFA’s Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK following International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The Financial Statements are scrutinised by the External Auditor with a separate report produced, and ◇ An Annual Governance Statement is produced and incorporated into the Council’s approved Financial Statements.



5. Significant Governance Issues

In addition to identifying those areas where the Council meets the principles of Corporate Governance, it is also appropriate to identify areas of improvement that can be undertaken during the next financial year, or where it is considered that there is a significant new or ongoing issue that will require stringent focus due to the potential impact. These are termed as ‘Significant Governance Issues’ (SGIs) and can be defined as an issue that:

- Seriously prejudices or prevents achievement of a key target;
- Has resulted in a need to seek additional funding to allow it to be resolved, or has resulted in significant diversion of resources from another aspect of the business;
- The External Auditor regards as having a material impact on the accounts/value for money conclusion;
- Audit and Governance Committee advises that it should be considered significant;
- The Chief Internal Auditor identifies and reports on it as significant;
- It has been reported as significant by external bodies - for example Care Quality Commission, Ombudsman, Information Commissioner, Independent Consultants;
- The issue, or its impact, has attracted significant public interest, or has seriously damaged the reputation of the body;
- May make it harder to prevent fraud or other misuse of resources, and
- May put financial stability, security or data integrity at risk.

The 2020/21 annual governance review has identified the following issues:

	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
1	COVID-19 has resulted in changing priorities and demands on the Council's services and rapid responses that have	GAS Review	a) Ensure that the Government's guidance and legislation is complied with, as well as continue to assess the	31 March 2022	Dwayne Johnson, Chief Executive, Margaret Jones,



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
	<p>included support and financial assistance for residents and local businesses and the need to respond to emerging and changing local, regional and national guidance from National Government. There have been changes to business continuity, business planning, business models and increased risk assessments as a result of the pandemic with changes in decision making arrangements, and virtual meetings. Home working has also increased.</p>		<p>potential for local outbreaks, third wave, or variants of concern. National restrictions in place were relaxed from 19 July 2021. During July 2021 there have been high rates of infection in Sefton, exacerbated by the spread of the Delta variant;</p> <p>b) On an ongoing basis review the existing business continuity planning framework and ensure that the Council's governance processes support the response to COVID-19 and market engagement in respect of social care providers to mitigate market failure and ensure sufficiency of services to children and adults directly impacted through COVID-19. The financial implications from COVID-19 will continue to be monitored and managed accordingly. There has a been a refresh of the existing COVID-19 specific Service Business Continuity Plans during the</p>		<p>Director of Public Health and the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing</p>



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
			<p>past twelve months. Due to the Council's role in the pandemic, there has been a need to carry out the instructions of National Government with regard to role and distribution of income and support to residents and businesses immediately. Where this has been the case this has been done and where appropriate has been reported retrospectively to Cabinet Members or Cabinet. Where there has been discretion in any support this has been determined by either the Leader of the Council, Cabinet members or Cabinet where this has been appropriate and possible and in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules;.</p> <p>With regard to financial management, at the start of the pandemic a decision was made to provide Cabinet with comprehensive monthly financial reports</p>		



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
			<p>from April 2020. This has covered three elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitoring of the Council approved budget for 2020/21; 2. Financial impact of COVID-19, and 3. Future year implications that would impact 2021/22 and beyond (as required). <p>This ensures members are aware of both the current and long-term impact of the pandemic and where grant funding has been received this has been reported also;</p> <p>c) COVID-19 Outbreak Management (Health Protection) Board and the Stakeholder Board aim to be responsive to changes during the pandemic and make quick recommendations and/or decisions on prevention and protection measures and</p>		



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
			<p>feed information and recommendations to the Cabinet and the Council. The Outbreak Management (Health Protection) Board continues to meet and put in place measures to identify and contain outbreaks and protect the public's health in Sefton. The Outbreak Management Plan was updated in March 2021 and reviewed in June 2021. An Outbreak Identification and Rapid Response (OIRR) Programme has been established, and</p> <p>d) Sefton has seen significant rises in infection rates. The Council is directly reporting through the Merseyside Resilience Forum (MRF) to the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) and feeding into National COVID-19 monitoring systems. Sefton is working with Liverpool City Region partners and National agencies to implement a range of public health measures including</p>		



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
			<p>locally supported contact tracing and community testing. Further relaxations to step 3 national restrictions in place were implemented from 19 July 2021.</p> <p>There has a been a refresh of the existing COVID-19 specific Service Business Continuity Plans during the past twelve months. Following the initial period of the lockdown the Council's formal governance meetings including Council, Cabinet, Planning, Audit and Governance and Overview and Scrutiny recommenced and have followed National Government guidance. During this period the Council did not suspend either Financial Procedure Rules, Contract Procedure Rules nor the Constitution other than procedures necessary for the holding of remote meetings.</p>		



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
			Access to testing has been made widely available via pharmacy collection, Asymptomatic Testing Sites (ATS), sites and collection, and swab squads to reach hard to reach groups and support outbreaks. Symptomatic testing available via local testing static sites and mobile testing sites. Local asymptomatic and symptomatic testing provision is in addition to national testing programmes.		
2	To support financial sustainability, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) issued a Financial Management (FM) Code which aims to ensure a high standard of financial management in local authorities. The FM Code was launched in November 2019 and authorities were advised that they should introduce this in the 'shadow year' in 2020/21 prior to full implementation in 2021/22.	GAS Review	As part of this budget setting process, the Council's Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services and S151 Officer has completed a self assessment of compliance with the Code that has included input from the SLB to reflect that financial management and good practice needs to be embedded across the Council and at all levels of the organisation. The assessment concluded that there are many areas of good practice in financial management	31 March 2022	SLB



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
	<p>A key goal of the FM Code is to improve the financial resilience of organisations by embedding enhanced standards of financial management. Inevitably, the impact of COVID-19 has tested that financial resilience in 2020/21 and will continue to do so in coming years. There are clear links between the FM Code and the Governance Framework, particularly with its focus on achieving sustainable outcomes.</p> <p>For these reasons, the AGS for 2020/21 should include the overall conclusion of an assessment of the organisation's compliance with the principles of the FM Code. The Code is based on establishing Principles of Good Financial Management with these being translated into financial management standards. Each local authority has to then detail how it meets these standards through self assessment and what improvements are required in order to ensure compliance.</p>		<p>evident across the Council. The assessment also incorporated an Action Plan for further improvements.</p> <p>On 17 March 2021 the Council's Audit and Governance Committee considered a report from the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services and S151 Officer on the outcome of the self assessment on compliance with the FM Code. The Committee has noted the introduction of the CIPFA FM Code and the self assessment of compliance with the Code and noted the Action Plan to further improve both compliance with the Code and financial management across the Council.</p>		



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
3	<p>Sefton Council declared a 'Climate Emergency' on 18 July 2019 and work has progressed within the Council on the agreed actions that were contained and approved by Members. The Climate Emergency Strategy and associated Action Plan was approved by Cabinet on 28 May 2020 and by Council on 17 September 2020.</p> <p>The Strategy and delivery are via an Action Plan for the period to 2030 and will establish and refine a baseline position on the Council's carbon emissions (carbon footprint) with the development of three year implementation plans to make the Council's activities net-zero carbon by 2030.</p>	GAS Review	<p>The progress on the delivery of the Strategy was initially delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, however, opportunities have arisen as part of the recovery phase which Sefton has acted upon and a significant amount of work has been undertaken in the past twelve months. A Cabinet Report in June 2021 (Climate Emergency Annual Report) has highlighted progress on key projects including Assets Street Lighting, Energy Efficiency at Bootle and Southport Town Halls, Agile Working, Procurement, Domestic Housing Retrofit and Tree Planting. An e Learning climate emergency module has been developed and is available to all staff and from May 2021 all Cabinet and Council decision papers will include a climate change impact assessment.</p> <p>In addition to the roll out of projects and processes noted above, in 2021/22</p>	31 March 2022	Dwayne Johnson, Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
			<p>there are a number of key projects scheduled to commence, in line with the Action Plan including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a Climate Change Risk Assessment; • focus on customer engagement and delivery of communications plan, linking to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) due to be held in Glasgow in November 2021; • an investigation of the potential to switch to a 100% renewable/green electricity tariff, and • the exploration of options for local offset via climate adaptation programmes and local landscape enhancement. 		
4	On 11 February 2021, the Government published a White Paper 'Integration and Innovation: Working Together to Improve Health and Social Care' - Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), 2021,	GAS Review	The Council are already working with the local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), the voluntary sector and other key local partners to ensure that a local ICP is in place. 'Shadow' arrangements	April 2022	Dwayne Johnson, Chief Executive



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
	<p>setting out a raft of proposed reforms to health and care. This was accompanied by an NHS England (NHSE), 2021 publication - 'Legislating for Integrated Care Systems'. The DHSC recognise that there is a critical role for local Councils to work with health partners in this integration. Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) build on existing services and enable greater provision of proactive, personalised, coordinated and more integrated health and social care for people close to home. This should achieve a change from reactively providing care to proactively caring for people and communities.</p>		<p>are to be introduced in 2021/22 and be delivered in full by April 2022.</p> <p>The proposed ICP governance arrangements have already been considered by the decision making forums within the Council and the CCGs as has the strategic approach to the ICP. Regular reports are to be developed and provided to Cabinet, and the Health and Wellbeing Board with a clear programme and timetable.</p>		
5	<p>There were three SGIs in the Council's 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement relating to inspections as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) for Children's Mental Health in Sefton took place in September 2019; 	GAS Review	<p>Reports were presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2020 and in March 2021. The majority of actions are either RAG rated Green, complete or Amber in progress within</p>	31 March 2022	<p>Dwayne Johnson, Chief Executive and Lisa Lyons, Interim Executive Director</p>



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
			<p>the timescale. The potential cross over between the JTAI areas for improvement and those in the focused visit of March 2021, mean that there could be some areas in which progress against the JTAI areas has not had the desired impact of improving quality in children's social care. As a result, the areas for improvement from the JTAI action plan will be repeated in the wider Children's Improvement Board and the triangulation of evidence and progress will continue to be reviewed and tested. Some actions will be impacted by COVID-19 and particularly the pressure on health services and where this is identified remedial action will be taken to mitigate any risk. The Committee will continue to monitor and receive reports on the Action Plan.</p>		of Children's Social Care and Education



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) revisit in April 2019 relating to weaknesses in the Written Statement of Action (WSOA), and 		<p>Good progress is being made in relation to the WSOA and significant improvements continue to be made.</p> <p>A follow up visit was undertaken by DfE and CQC in December 2020 and formal feedback from the Chair of the meeting from DfE on the basis of the evidence provided acknowledged we were able to demonstrate that the Council has made clear and sustained progress against the improvement areas in the APP.</p> <p>Officials have also informed the Council that they are reassured by the local partnership's ongoing commitment to making sustainable improvements to SEND services and to the lives of children and young people in our area. Evidence of strong local partnerships was provided by statements from those present at the meeting including Headteachers, Parents, Health</p>	31 March 2022	Dwayne Johnson, Chief Executive and Lisa Lyons, Interim Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sefton was overdue an Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services. Following a pause in the inspection framework due to COVID-19, Ofsted undertook a 'restart' focused visit of Children's Social Care in March 2021. This was not a full inspection and therefore was not graded. A letter to the Council was published on the Ofsted website on 10 May 2021 with the visit's findings and identification of priority action. <p>Areas for priority action in the letter included:</p>		<p>Providers and this was noted as showing an improved awareness of the improvements across all areas.</p> <p>On 14 July 2021 DfE removed the improvement notice.</p> <p>Following the visit, a draft Action Plan was submitted to Ofsted after the letter was received. This was submitted on 26 May 2021. Ofsted have accepted the plan and have been given assurance regarding further feedback from the Improvement Board and wider plan. The Department of Education have issued a notice to improve against these areas.</p> <p>A report on the focused visit has been submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 6 June 2021 for noting and the same report was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>	70 days after receipt of the letter	Dwayne Johnson, Chief Executive and Lisa Lyons, Interim Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timely application of the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline where risks for children are not reducing through child protection planning, and The effectiveness of case supervision and the monitoring of children who are subject to child protection planning, including those children in the pre-proceedings process, to prevent drift and delay. <p>What needs to improve in this area of social work practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality assurance arrangements and senior management oversight of social work practice; The strategic and operational focus on achieving change and reducing risk for vulnerable children, including disabled children and care leavers, and 		<p>(Children’s Services and Safeguarding) on 6 July 2021 for noting.</p> <p>An Independent Improvement Board has been constituted and is chaired by an Independent Chair. The DfE advisor monitors the progress and change to address areas for improvement.</p> <p>External triangulation of evidence and progress is being commissioned to support the departmental evidence of progress.</p>		



	Significant Governance Issue	Source	Action to Address the issue	Timescale	Lead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The capacity in social work teams and the number of children on social workers' caseloads. 				



Conclusion and Declaration

The review provides good overall assurance that Council’s arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the Governance Framework.

During the next twelve months there will be improvements to address the above matters and further enhance governance arrangements. The effectiveness of measures implemented in 2021/22 will be monitored and reported as part of the next annual review.

Signed on behalf of Sefton Council:

.....

Dwayne Johnson
Chief Executive

.....

Date

.....

Councillor Ian Maher
Leader of the Council

.....

Date



12 **INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

The Independent Auditor's Report will be included in the final version of the Statement of Accounts following the conclusion of the audit of the accounts.

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Auditors' Report

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Auditors' Report

13 GLOSSARY**ACCOUNTABLE BODY**

Projects financed from Government / European resources in some instances require grant claims from recognised legal entities, especially when a partnership or voluntary organisation is involved. This accountable body (usually the local authority) is held responsible for the proper completion of grant claims, ensuring that appropriate financial systems are in place and to receive and distribute the grant.

ACCRUALS

The concept that income and expenditure are recognised in the accounts as they are earned or incurred not as money is received or paid.

ACTUARIAL GAINS AND LOSSES

For a defined benefit pension scheme, the changes in actuarial deficits or surpluses that arise because:

- (i) Events have not coincided with the actuarial assumptions made for the last valuation (Asset and Liability Gains and Losses); or
- (ii) The actuarial assumptions have changed.

AMORTISATION

The accounting technique of recognising a cost or item of income in the Income and Expenditure Account over a period of years rather than when the initial payment is made. Its purpose is to charge/credit the cost/income over the accounting periods that gain benefit for the respective item. The technique is supported by relevant accounting policies and practices.

AUTHORITY

Another term used to refer to the Council.

BALANCES

These represent accumulated monies of the Authority. Non-School General Fund balances may be utilised to reduce the amount to be met from Revenue Support Grant, NNDR and local taxpayers. School balances can be used by schools to finance future years' expenditure.

BEST VALUE

The Local Government Act 1999 introduced the principle of Best Value and places a statutory duty on authorities to provide economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of its services.

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Business Improvement Districts are business led partnerships which are created through a ballot process to deliver additional services to local businesses.

Business Improvement Districts cover a defined area in which a levy is charged on all business rate payers in addition to the business rates bill. This levy is used to develop projects which will benefit businesses in the local area.

CAPITAL CHARGES

A charge to service revenue accounts to reflect the cost of fixed assets used in the provision of services.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

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Capital expenditure is the acquisition of a fixed asset or expenditure which adds to the value of the existing fixed asset (e.g. building of a school). It can be spent either directly by the local authority or indirectly in the form of grants to other persons or bodies.

CAPITAL RECEIPTS

The proceeds from the sale of capital assets which, subject to various limitations, can be used to finance Capital Expenditure or to repay leasing charges or outstanding debt on assets originally financed through loan. A proportion of capital receipts may need to be set aside to meet future liabilities.

CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC FINANCE AND ACCOUNTANCY (CIPFA)

CIPFA is the leading professional accountancy body for public services, which has responsibility for setting accounting standards in Local Government.

CODE OF PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY ACCOUNTING IN GREAT BRITAIN (THE CODE)

The Statement of Accounts is produced in accordance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in Great Britain, which is updated annually. The Code specifies the principles and practices of accounting required to prepare a Statement of Accounts which "presents fairly" the financial position and transactions of a local authority.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

These are assets that the Authority intends to hold indefinitely, have no determinable useful life and may have restrictions on their disposal. Examples include parks and historic buildings.

CONTINGENT ASSET

A contingent asset is a possible asset arising from past events whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the local authority's control.

CONTINGENT LIABILITY

A condition that exists at the balance sheet date, where the outcome will be confirmed only on the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events. Where a material loss can be estimated with reasonable accuracy a contingent liability is accrued in the financial statements. If, however, a loss cannot be accurately estimated or the event is not considered sufficiently certain, it will be disclosed in a note to the balance sheet.

COVID-19

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus.

COUNCIL TAX

A property based tax levied on all domestic properties in the Borough. The banding (and resultant sums due) is based on independent assessed property values. The Council sets levels of Council Tax on an annual basis under relevant statutory provisions.

CURRENT SERVICE COSTS (PENSIONS)

The increase in the present value of a defined benefit scheme's liabilities expected to arise from employee service in the current year.

CURTAILMENT

For a defined benefit scheme, an event that reduces the expected years of future service of present employees or reduces for a number of employees the accrual of defined benefits for some or all of their future service. Curtailments include:

- (i) Termination of employees services earlier than expected, for example as a result of closing or discontinuing a segment of a business; and
- (ii) Termination of, or amendment to the terms of, a defined benefit scheme so that some or all of future service by current employees will no longer qualify for benefits or will qualify only for reduced benefits.

DEFERRED CAPITAL RECEIPTS

Deferred Capital Receipts are derived from the sale of Assets receivable over an agreed period of time, principally mortgages relating to the sale of Council houses.

DEFERRED CREDITS

These represent capital income to be received in the future, when disposals have taken place, and deferred payments have been agreed e.g. the principal outstanding from the sale of Council houses.

DEFINED BENEFIT SCHEME

A pension or other retirement benefit scheme other than a defined contribution scheme. Usually, the scheme rules define the benefits independently of the contributions payable, and the benefits are not directly related to the investments of the scheme. The scheme may be funded or unfunded (including notionally funded).

DEFINED CONTRIBUTION SCHEME

A pension or other retirement benefit scheme into which an employer pays regular contributions fixed as an amount or as a percentage of pay and will have no legal or constructive obligation to pay further contributions if the scheme does not have sufficient assets to pay all employee benefits relating to employee service in the current or prior periods.

DEPRECIATED REPLACEMENT COST (DRC)

A method of valuation that provides a recognised proxy for the market value of specialised properties.

DEPRECIATION

The measure of the wearing out, consumption, or other reduction in the useful life of a fixed asset, whether arising from use, effluxion of time or obsolescence through technological or other changes.

DISCRETIONARY BENEFITS

Retirement benefits that the employer has no legal, contractual or constructive obligation to award and which are awarded under the Authority's discretionary powers.

EARMARKED RESERVES

Earmarked reserves are created by setting resources aside for future events or to equalise expenditure between years. Earmarked reserves do not affect service expenditure in the year of creation.

EMOLUMENTS

Amounts paid to or receivable by an employee including expenses allowances chargeable to tax, and the estimated money value of any other benefits received by an employee other than in cash.

EVENTS AFTER THE BALANCE SHEET DATE

Events after the Balance Sheet date are those events, favourable or unfavourable, that occur between the Balance Sheet date and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue.

EXISTING USE VALUE

The estimated amount for which a property should exchange on the date of valuation between a willing buyer and a willing seller in an arms-length transaction after proper marketing wherein the parties had each acted knowledgeably, prudently and without compulsion assuming that the buyer is granted vacant possession of all parts of the property and disregarding potential alternative uses and any other characteristics that would cause its market value to differ from that needed to replace the remaining service potential at least cost.

EXPECTED RATE OF RETURN (ON PENSIONS ASSETS)

For a funded defined benefit scheme, the average rate of return, including both income and changes in fair value but net of scheme expenses, expected over the remaining life of the related obligation on the actual assets held by the scheme.

FAIR VALUE

The fair value of an asset is the price at which it could be exchanged in an arm's length transaction, less, where applicable, any grants receivable towards the purchase or use of the asset.

FAIR FUNDING

Under Section 48 of the School Standards Framework Act 1998, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) are required to have schemes dealing with the financing of schools. These govern the financial relationship between maintained schools and LEAs from the inception of the new funding framework on 1 April 1999

FINANCE LEASE

A lease that transfers substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership of a fixed asset to the lessee.

FIXED ASSETS

Assets that yield benefits to the Local Authority and the services it provides for a period of more than one year.

GENERAL FUND

This is the account where costs are charged for the year of the major functions for which the Authority is responsible (excluding the Collection Fund). Income to the Fund includes charges made by the Authority, specific Government and other grants and receipts from the Collection Fund.

HERITAGE ASSETS

Heritage assets are assets that are held by the Authority principally for their contribution to knowledge or culture.

IMPAIRMENT

A reduction in the value of a fixed asset below its carrying amount on the balance sheet.

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS

These include facilities to enable other developments to take place, including roads, street lighting and coastal defence works.

INTANGIBLE FIXED ASSET

"Non-financial" fixed assets that do not have physical substance but are identifiable and are controlled by the Authority through custody or legal rights. Purchased intangibles (e.g. software licences) are capitalised at cost, whilst internally developed intangibles are only capitalised where there is a readily ascertainable market value for them.

INTEREST COST (PENSIONS)

For a defined benefit scheme, the expected increase during the period in the present value of the scheme liabilities because the benefits are one period closer to settlement.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING STANDARDS (IFRS)

Defined Accounting Standards that must be applied by all reporting entities to all financial statements in order to provide a true and fair view of the entity's financial position, and a standardised method of comparison with financial statements of the other entities.

INVENTORIES

Amounts of unused or unconsumed stocks held in expectation of future use. Inventories are comprised of the following categories:

- Goods or other assets purchased for resale
- Consumable stores
- Raw materials and components
- Products and services in intermediate stages of completion
- Finished goods

LIQUID RESOURCES

Current asset investments that are readily disposable by the authority without disrupting its business and are either readily convertible to known amounts of cash at or close to the carrying amount or traded in an active market.

LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS (FAIR FUNDING)

The Authority is required to delegate responsibility for the management of a large proportion of its Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Special School budgets to schools. Individual schools are allocated a share of the budget through a formula mechanism, which distributes funds primarily on the basis of age weighted pupil numbers.

LONG-TERM CONTRACTS

A contract entered into for the design, manufacture or construction of a single substantial asset or the provision of a service (or a combination of assets or services which together constitute a single project), where the time taken substantially to complete the contract is such that the contract activity falls into different accounting periods. Some contracts with a shorter duration than one year should be accounted for as long-term contracts if they are sufficiently material to the activity of the period.

MARKET VALUE

The estimated amount for which a property should exchange on the date of valuation between a willing buyer and a willing seller in an arms-length transaction after proper marketing wherein the parties had each acted knowledgeably, prudently and without compulsion.

NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES (NNDR)

These are often referred to as Business Rates, and are a levy on business properties based on a national rate in the pound applied to the 'rateable value' of the property. The Government determines that national rate poundage. Local Authorities collect the sums due, but the proceeds are split, with 1% paid to the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority and 99% retained by the Council.

NET BOOK VALUE

The amount at which fixed assets are included in the balance sheet, i.e. their historical cost or current value less the cumulative amount provided for depreciation.

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NET CURRENT REPLACEMENT COST

The cost of replacing or recreating the particular asset in its existing condition and in its existing use, i.e. the cost of its replacement or of the nearest equivalent asset, adjusted to reflect the current condition of the existing asset.

NET REALISEABLE VALUE

The open market value of the asset in its existing use (or open market value in the case of non-operational assets), less the expenses to be incurred in realising the asset.

NON-OPERATIONAL ASSETS

These are assets, which are held by the authority but not directly occupied, used or consumed in the delivery of services. Examples include assets that are surplus to requirements, pending sale or redevelopment.

OPERATING LEASES

In an operating lease, the ownership of the asset remains with the leasing company and the annual rent is charged to the annual service account. Expenditure financed by operating leases does not count against capital allocations.

OPERATIONAL ASSETS

These are assets that are held and occupied, used or consumed in the direct delivery of services for which the Authority is responsible.

PAST SERVICE COST / GAIN

For a defined benefit scheme, the increase or reduction in the present value of the scheme liabilities related to employees service in prior periods arising in the current period as a result of the revision of scheme benefits.

PAYABLES

Amounts owed by the Authority for goods and services provided for which payment has not been made by the end of the financial year.

POOLED BUDGET

Arrangement permissible under the Health Act 1999 and National Health Service Act 2006 that provides an opportunity for partners to bring money together, in a discrete fund, to pay for the services that are an agreed part of the pooled fund arrangement for the client group who are to benefit from one or all of the services. Instead of users being inconvenienced by disputes about Health and Local Authority responsibilities, organisations will agree at the outset the range of Health and Local Government services to be purchased and provided from a pooled fund.

PRECEPT

This is a charge issued by the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (and Parish Councils where appropriate), which is collected by the Council on their behalf by adding the precept to its own Council Tax.

PRIOR YEAR ADJUSTMENTS

Those material adjustments applicable to prior years arising from changes in accounting policies and from the correction of fundamental errors. They do not include normal recurring corrections and adjustments of accounting estimates made in prior years.

PROVISIONS

Provisions represent sums set aside for liabilities or losses, which are certain to arise but, owing to their inherent nature, cannot be quantified with any certainty.

PUBLIC WORKS LOANS BOARD (PWLB)

An arm of Central Government which is the major provider of loans to finance long term funding requirements for Local Authorities.

RECEIVABLES

Sums of money due to the Authority but not received by the end of the financial year.

RELATED PARTY TRANSACTION

A related party transaction is the transfer of assets or liabilities or the performance of services by, to or for a related party irrespective of whether a charge is made. Related party transactions include the provision of services to a related party.

The materiality of related party transactions should be judged not only in terms of their significance to the authority, but also in relation to its related party.

REMUNERATION

All sums paid to or receivable by an employee and sums due by way of expenses allowances (as far as those sums are chargeable to UK income tax) and the money value of any other benefits received other than in cash. Pension contributions payable by the employer are excluded.

RESERVES

A reserve is an amount, which has been set aside for a specific purpose in one financial year and carried forward to meet expenditure in future years. Reserves include earmarked reserves set aside for specific policy purposes and balances that represent resources set aside for purposes such as general contingencies and cash flow management.

RETIREMENT BENEFITS

All forms of consideration given by an employer in exchange for services rendered by employees that are payable after the completion of employment. Retirement benefits do not include termination benefits payable as a result of either: -

- i. An employer's decision to terminate an employee's employment before the normal retirement date, or
- ii. An employee's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits, because these are not given in exchange for services rendered by employees.

REVENUE SUPPORT GRANT

This is a Government grant in aid of Local Authority services generally. It is based on the Government's assessment of how much an authority needs to spend in order to provide a standard level of service.

REVENUE EXPENDITURE

This is money spent on the day-to-day running costs of providing services (e.g. salary costs). It is usually of a constantly recurring nature and produces no permanent asset.

SCHEME LIABILITIES

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The liabilities of a defined benefit scheme for outgoings due after the valuation date. Scheme liabilities measured using the projected unit method reflect the benefits that the employer is committed to provide for service up to the valuation date.

SECTION 52 / 106 AGREEMENTS

The Council is able to restrict or regulate the development or use of land by requiring that a developer deposit funds with the Authority when granting planning permission. The funds are either used directly by the Authority to undertake work, such as providing access from the existing highway to a new development, or held as a deposit which is refundable to the developer when the conditions attached to the planning permission, such as landscaping work, are complied with. The statutory basis for such agreements is currently contained within Section 106 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act and previously, within Section 52 of the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act.

SET ASIDE CAPITAL RECEIPTS

These are receipts that have to be reserved under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and can only be used to repay external debt or in substitution for new external borrowing.

SETTLEMENT

An irrevocable action that relieves the employer of the primary responsibility for a pension obligation and eliminates significant risks relating to the obligation and the assets used to effect the settlement. Settlement includes the transfer of scheme assets and liabilities relating to a group of employees leaving the Authority's scheme.

SPECIFIC GOVERNMENT GRANTS

These are designed to aid particular services or reimburse the costs of payments made to claimants. Examples of specific grants include Dedicated Schools Grant, Standards Fund and Housing and Council Tax Benefit Subsidy. Assistance may also be given in aid of specific capital expenditure, e.g. Housing Market Renewal Grant and Stronger Safer Communities Fund.

STATUTORY PROVISION FOR THE FINANCING OF CAPITAL INVESTMENT

This is the amount required to be set aside from revenue for the repayment of external loans. It is calculated in accordance with the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 [SI 2008/414], in conjunction with the MHCLG guidance on the minimum revenue provision (published in February 2018).

TREASURY MANAGEMENT

This is the process by which the Authority controls its cash flow and its borrowing and lending activities.

TRUST FUNDS

These are funds administered by the Council on behalf of charitable organisations and/or specific organisations.

USABLE CAPITAL RECEIPTS

These are receipts which, after allowing for the proportion to be set aside, may be used to finance capital expenditure.

USEFUL LIFE

The period over which the Local Authority will derive benefits from the use of a fixed asset.

14 ABBREVIATIONS

AGS	Annual Governance Statement
ASHE	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
BID	Business Improvement District
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CCLA	Church and Charities Local Authority
CERMS	Continuous Emission Rate Monitoring System
CFR	Capital Financing Requirement
CIES	Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CVS	Council for Voluntary Service
DfE	Department for Education
DRC	Depreciated Replacement Cost
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant
EFA	Expenditure and Funding Analysis
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
IAS	International Accounting Standards
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IBCF	Improved Better Care Fund
IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standard
LGA	Local Government Association
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
LCHT	Liverpool Community Health Trust
LCR	Liverpool City Region
LEA	Local Education Authority
LGPS	Local Government Pension Scheme
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
MBC	Metropolitan Borough Council
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
MMI	Municipal Mutual Insurance Limited
MPF	Merseyside Pension Fund

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Abbreviations

MRF	Merseyside Local Resilience Forum
MRICS	Member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
NHS	National Health Service
NNDR	National Non-Domestic Rates
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PP&E	Property, Plant and Equipment
PWLB	Public Works and Loans Board
REFCUS	Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute
SCG	Strategic Coordination Group
SCIG	Strategic Capital Investment Group
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
TPS	Teachers' Pension Scheme
UK	United Kingdom
VAT	Value Added Tax
VOA	Valuation Office Agency

15 **USEFUL ADDRESSES**

Additional financial information on Sefton MBC and related organisations is usually available at libraries throughout the Borough and on our website (www.sefton.gov.uk). Further copies are also available upon request to the following addresses.

Sefton Council

Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services,
Magdalen House
30 Trinity Road
Bootle
L20 3NJ

Sefton New Directions

Sefton New Directions Limited Annual Financial Statements can be obtained from:

Sefton New Directions Limited Head Office,
Third Floor,
Burlington House,
Crosby Road North,
Waterloo,
Liverpool
Merseyside,
United Kingdom
L22 0PJ

Pension Fund Information

The Merseyside Pension Fund's Annual Report can be obtained from:

The Pension Manager
Merseyside Pension Fund,
PO Box 120,
7th Floor,
Castle Chambers,
43 Castle Street,
Liverpool
L69 2NW

CONTACT US

If you have any questions or comments on the Statement of Accounts, please write to the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services at the above address. We would particularly like to hear from you if you have any suggestions on how the accounts could be improved.

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Useful Addresses

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Agenda Item 4

9 December 2021



Dear Audit and Governance Committee Members

We are pleased to attach our Audit Results Report for the forthcoming meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee. This report summarises our current audit status and our preliminary audit conclusion in relation to the audit of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council (the Authority) for 2020/21.

Subject to concluding the outstanding matters listed in our report, we expect to issue an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements in the form at Section 03 of this report. However, until all our audit procedures are complete, we cannot confirm the final form of our audit opinion as new issues may emerge. At the Audit and Governance Committee meeting, we will provide an update on the current status of our audit, outstanding matters and agree with management and this committee the governance procedures required to consider our final audit results report, proposed audit opinion, schedule of adjustments and unadjusted items, management representations and the authorisation of the 2020/21 audited financial statements for publication.

This report is intended solely for the use of the Audit and Governance Committee, other members of the Council, and senior management. It should not be used for any other purpose or given to any other party without obtaining our written consent.

We would like to thank your staff for their help during the engagement.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the contents of this report with you at the Audit and Governance Committee meeting on 15 December 2021.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'H Rohimun'.

Yours faithfully

Hassan Rohimun

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

Encl

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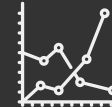
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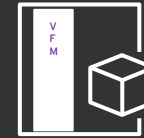
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Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) have issued a 'Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies'. It is available from the Chief Executive of each audited body and via the PSAA website (www.psaa.co.uk).

This Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The 'Terms of Appointment (updated April 2018)' issued by PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and statute, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This Audit Results Report is prepared in the context of the Statement of responsibilities / Terms and Conditions of Engagement. It is addressed to the Members of the audited body, and is prepared for their sole use. We, as appointed auditor, take no responsibility to any third party.



01 Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Status update - Overview of progress as at 9th December 2021

We have substantially completed our audit of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021 and have performed the procedures outlined in our Audit Planning Report. Subject to satisfactory completion of the following outstanding items we expect to issue an unqualified opinion on the Council's financial statements in the form which appears at Section 4. However until work is complete, further amendments may arise:

We would like to thank the finance team at the Council for the cooperation and assistance we have received during the course of the audit. However, we will not be in a position of completing our external audit by the time of the Audit and Governance Committee meeting on the 15th December 2021. This report summarises why this is the case, which impacts specifically with our work on property valuations.

Page 245 : key areas (not already referred to elsewhere in this report) of the audit that are not yet complete are:

- ▶ Valuation of land and buildings;
- ▶ completion of our internal consultation process on our audit assessment and review of the Council's proposed going concern disclosures;
- ▶ final quality review procedures by the engagement partner and quality reviewer;
- ▶ review of the final version of the financial statements;
- ▶ completion of subsequent events review;
- ▶ receipt of the signed management representation letter and accounts.

Scope update

In our Audit Planning Report, we provided you with an overview of our audit scope and approach for the audit of the financial statements. We carried out our audit in accordance with this Plan, subject to the modifications noted below.

Changes in materiality:

In our Audit Planning Report, we communicated that our audit procedures would be performed using a materiality of £11.7m, with performance materiality, at 75% of overall materiality, of £8.8m, and a threshold for reporting misstatements of £0.59m. We updated our planning materiality assessment using the draft accounts and have also reconsidered our risk assessment. Based on our materiality measure of gross expenditure on provision of services, we have noted no change in overall materiality assessment. The basis of our assessment is 1.8% of gross expenditure on provision of services. The threshold for reporting misstatements that have an effect on the primary statements (comprehensive income and expenditure statement, balance sheet, movement in reserves statement, cash flow statement and collection fund) is £0.59m.



Executive Summary

Audit differences

Subject to the conclusion of outstanding procedures there are no factual unadjusted audit differences arising from our audit.

We identified a small number of adjusted audit differences and other minor disclosure amendments which management agreed to amend. We have reported an adjusted audit differences above £8.8m in section 4.

Areas of audit focus

Our Audit Planning Report identified key areas of focus for our audit of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council's financial statements This report sets out our observations and conclusions, including our views on areas which might be conservative, and where there is potential risk and exposure. We summarise our consideration of these matters, and any others identified, in the "Key Audit Issues" section of this report.

ask you to review these and any other matters in this report to ensure:

There are no other considerations or matters that could have an impact on these issues

You agree with the resolution of the issue

There are no other significant issues to be considered.

There are no matters, apart from those reported by management or disclosed in this report, which we believe should be brought to the attention of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Control observations

We have adopted a fully substantive approach, so have not tested the operation of controls.

Value for money

We have considered your arrangements related to financial sustainability, governance, and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In our Audit Planning Report we identified two significant risks related to Maintaining Financial sustainability and Follow-up on DFE Improvement. We have no matters to report in our opinion about your arrangements to secure economy efficiency and effectiveness in your use of resources. We include the details of that consideration in Section 5.

A new requirement under the 2020 Code is for us to include the commentary on arrangements in a new Auditor's Annual Report. The 2020 Code states that the commentary should be clear, readily understandable and highlight any issues we wish to draw to the Council's attention or the wider public. This should include details of any recommendations arising from the audit and follow-up of recommendations issued previously, along with our view as to whether they have been implemented satisfactorily. The report will be issued after the audit has been concluded and we anticipate that we will issue that report after the opinion.



Executive Summary

Other reporting issues

We have reviewed the information presented in the Annual Governance Statement for consistency with our knowledge of the Council. We have no other matters to report as a result of this work.

We have not yet performed the procedures required by the National Audit Office (NAO) on the Whole of Government Accounts submission, as at the date of this report the NAO have not issued their guidance to auditors.

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Independence

Please refer to Section 9 for our update on Independence.

Agenda Item 4



02

Areas of Audit Focus

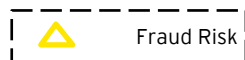


Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

Misstatements due to fraud or error

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What is the risk?

The financial statements as a whole are not free of material misstatements whether caused by fraud or error.

As identified in ISA (UK and Ireland) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. We identify and respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement.

What judgements are we focused on?

We focussed on testing key areas that are susceptible to management bias.

What did we do?

- ▶ Inquired of management about risks of fraud and the controls put in place to address those risks.
- ▶ Understood the oversight given by those charged with governance of management's processes over fraud.
- ▶ Considered of the effectiveness of management's controls designed to address the risk of fraud.

Performed mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks, including:

- ▶ Tested the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements
- ▶ Assessed accounting estimates for evidence of management bias, and
- ▶ Evaluated the business rationale for significant unusual transactions.

In addition to our overall response, we considered where these risks may present themselves and identified a separate fraud risk related to the capitalisation of revenue expenditure as set out on the next slide.

What are our conclusions?

We have not identified any material weaknesses in controls or evidence of material management override.

We have not identified any instances of inappropriate judgements being applied.

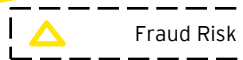
Our mandatory procedures did not identify any instances of management override.

We identified the capitalisation of revenue expenditure as the key area at risk of manipulation. The results of our work on this specific risk area is set out on the following page.

Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

Misstatements due to fraud or error - Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition



What is the risk?

Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition.

Due to the nature and value of income which comprises of Government Grants, income from Council Tax and Business Rates, it is our view is that the risk is not significant in this area, but is relevant to other income and operating expenditure that is subject to manipulation at year end.

What judgements are we focused on?

We consider that the risk impacts on the following account balances:

Calculation of estimates (being pensions estimates, accruals and provisions) which impact on the completeness and valuation assertions.

Manual income accruals which impacts on the existence and valuation assertions.

- Operating expenditure transactions around the year end which impacts on both the occurrence and completeness assertions.
- Improper capitalisation of revenue expenditure in order to reduce the impact on the general fund.

What did we do?

We carried out the following substantive procedures in response to this risk:

- Documented our understanding of the processes and controls in place to mitigate the risks;
- Identified and walked through relevant processes and controls, confirming our understanding;
- Reviewed income and expenditure recognition policies and confirmed consistency of application through performance of testing;
- Identified significant accounting estimates for revenue and expenditure, and obtained the basis and methodology on which management made these estimates;
- Tested the significant accounting estimates to confirm appropriateness and consistency with supporting records, and found no evidence of bias;
- Sample tested material revenue and expenditure streams with a focus on assets and liabilities at the year-end;
- Tested of revenue cut-off at the period end date;
- Conducted testing to identify unrecorded liabilities at the year-end; and
- Tested a sample of Property Plant and Equipment additions to confirm that the expenditure had been appropriately capitalised.

Our substantive transaction testing of income and expenditure was supported by our use of data analytics tools to support sample selection and enable our consideration of the full population.



Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

What are our conclusions?

Our testing, subject to the completion of final internal review outlined as to be completed in section one, has not identified any material misstatements from revenue and expenditure recognition.

Our testing of capital additions did not identify any inappropriate capitalisation of expenditure.

Our testing of accruals and provisions found no inappropriate judgements applied in the recognition and valuation of the liabilities.

Our testing of income recognition found no errors and found no errors in expenditure recognition.

Overall, based on the audit work completed to the date of this report, our audit work did not identify any material issues or unusual transactions to indicate any reporting of the Council's financial position.



Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

Valuation of pension liabilities

What is the risk?

The Council's pension fund deficit is a material estimated balance and the Code requires that this liability be disclosed on the Council's balance sheet. At 31 March 2021 this totalled £471m.

The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 report issued to the Council by the actuary to the Merseyside Pension Scheme.

Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

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What judgements are we focused on?

We consider that this risk is associated to the following specific areas:

- ▶ Incorrect estimation of liabilities of the fund
- ▶ Incorrect estimation of the asset balances of the pension fund allocated to the Council
- ▶ Improper application of the pension estimate adjustments to the year end financial statements.

What did we do?

- ▶ Liaised with the auditors of the Pension Fund, to obtain assurances over the information supplied to the actuary in relation to the Council;
- ▶ Assessed the work of the Pension Fund actuary, including the assumptions they have used, by relying on the work of PWC - Consulting Actuaries commissioned by the National Audit Office for all Local Government sector auditors, and considering any relevant reviews by our EY actuarial team;
- ▶ Tested the variation in the pension fund assets used by the actuary in reporting to the Council against the actual year end asset valuation;
- ▶ Considered the basis for the actuary valuation of the assets in their report to the Council, and
- ▶ Reviewed and tested the accounting entries and disclosures made within the Council's financial statements in relation to IAS19.

What are our conclusions?

ISA540 (revised) requires us to evidence that the pension model works correctly, and their data has been entered correctly. To address the requirements of revised ISA 540, we have performed additional procedures by engaging EY Pensions to review the reasonableness of the year-end liabilities recognised on the Authority's balance sheet as at 31 March 2021.

The pension fund auditor disclosed to us an overstatement of level 3 assets. Subsequent to pension fund audit, the Council obtained revised IAS19 report from the actuary in October 2021. This resulted in increase in overall liability by £16.459m and adjusted in statement of accounts.

We identified no further issues from the work we carried out. Therefore we have concluded that the pension liabilities are not materially misstated in the Council financial statements.



Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

Valuation of land and buildings

What is the risk?

The fair value of land & building and Investment Properties (IP) represent significant balances in the Council's accounts and are subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges.

Management is required to make material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet, including the use of work from valuation experts.

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What judgements are we focused on?

Our work on valuations focussed on assessing the reasonableness of the methodologies adopted by the Council's valuers in undertaking their valuations in 2020/21 and of the key assumptions input into these valuations. We have also considered those assets that were not valued in 2020/21 and the potential for material misstatement in the valuation of those assets.

What did we do?

We took a substantive approach to respond to this risk. We disaggregated the Council's property portfolio to determine those asset classes where more judgement was required in the valuation of assets, and:

- ▶ Tested that assets have been classified and valued on an appropriate basis;
- ▶ Considered the work performed by the Council's valuers, including the adequacy of the scope of the work performed, their professional capabilities and the results of their work;
- ▶ Sample tested and challenged the key asset information and assumptions used by the valuers in performing their valuation; for example floor plans based on price per square metre.
- ▶ Considered the annual cycle of valuations to ensure that assets have been valued within an appropriate timescale.
- ▶ Considered any specific changes to assets that have occurred and that these have been communicated to the valuer;
- ▶ Reviewed assets not subject to valuation in 2020/21 to confirm that the remaining asset base is not materially misstated;
- ▶ Considered changes to useful economic lives as a result of the most recent valuation; and
- ▶ Tested accounting entries have been correctly processed in the financial statements

What are our conclusions?

Strand shopping centre - We have engaged our valuation specialist to assist us with the review. We have concluded £14.2m is considered to be supportable and is within our valuer's expected range. For the £9m land classified as an investment property, we have also concluded that the value is within our valuer's expected range.

Other land and building - This work is complete with no issues identified, subject to final review. We are reviewing the disclosures to conclude.

Investment properties - At the time of writing this report, our work on investment property valuation is in progress. We have noted that the investment properties are not revalued on annual basis. We have challenged management and requested further evidence to conclude that there is no material movement.

Our work on valuation is in progress at the time of writing this report. We will provide further update in our final results report.



Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

New central government grants and other Covid-19 funding streams

What is the risk?

The Council has received a significant level of government funding in relation to Covid-19. In 2020/21, this consists of non-ringfenced and ring fenced Covid-19 response grants.

Whilst there is no change in the CIPFA Code or Accounting Standard (IFRS 15) in respect of accounting for government grant funding, the emergency nature of some of the grants received and in some cases the lack of clarity on any associated restrictions and conditions, means that the Council will need to apply a greater degree of assessment and judgement to determine the appropriate accounting treatment within the 2020/21 statements.

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What judgements are we focused on?

We consider the risk applies to the classification of Government grant income and could result in a misstatement of 'Cost of Services' reported in the 'Comprehensive Income and Expenditure' statement and Balance Sheet.

What did we do?

We have obtained and assessed the appropriateness of the Council's accounting judgement on material grants received in relation to whether it is acting as:

- ▶ An Agent, where it has determined that it is acting as an intermediary; or
- ▶ A Principal, where the Council has determined that it is acting on its own behalf.

What are our conclusions?

We have concluded accounting for covid-19 grants are appropriate. We have no further matters to report.



Areas of Audit Focus



Other areas of audit focus

We identified other areas of the audit, that have not been classified as significant risks, but are still important when considering the risks of material misstatement to the financial statements and disclosures and therefore may be key audit matters we will include in our audit report.



Investments and subsidiaries

Council have a material wholly owned subsidiary and therefore produce group accounts as well as Council entity accounts. Our audit opinion is required to cover the up as well as the entity financial statements and notes.

Council also have other subsidiaries and joint working arrangements that require management judgement. Judgements are required covering:

- Composition of the group accounts;
- disclosure requirements for subsidiaries included and excluded from the group accounts;
- Application of group accounting policies to the activity of subsidiaries; and
- The application of consolidation and elimination adjustments.

Findings and conclusions

We have identified Sefton New Directions Limited (subsidiary) as material to the group based on the risk profile. The audit of the subsidiary was carried out by the firm engaged to audit the subsidiary (Hazlewoods LLP). We issued group instructions, received confirmation, discuss and reviewed the audit deliverables and work over the significant risks.

We completed our procedures on the consolidation process and the group eliminations, as well as the presentation of the group accounts.

We found no significant items to bring to your attention in regard to the group accounts.

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Areas of Audit Focus



Going concern disclosure

We have received management's assessment and we will consider the adequacy and its disclosure in the accounts by:

- ▶ Challenging management's identification of events or conditions impacting going concern.
- ▶ Testing management's resulting assessment of going concern by evaluating supporting evidence (including consideration of the risk of management bias).
- ▶ Reviewing the Council's cashflow forecast covering the foreseeable future, to ensure that it has sufficient liquidity to continue to operate as a going concern.
- ▶ Undertaking a 'stand back' review to consider all of the evidence obtained, whether corroborative or contradictory, when we draw our conclusions on going concern.
- ▶ Challenging the disclosure made in the accounts in respect of going concern and any material uncertainties.
- ▶ Ensuring assessment is covered for at least 12 months from the date of audit report.

Findings and conclusions

At the time of writing this report, our work on going concern is still in progress.

We will scrutinise the Council's assessment of the impact of Covid-19 on its planned income and expenditure budgets, its financial plans and cashflow forecasts for next 12 months from the date of expected audit report. We will review known outcomes, sensitivities, mitigating actions and key assumptions. We will also discuss with management the need to make specific disclosures in the statements on going concern.



03 Audit Report



Draft audit report

Our opinion on the financial statements

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SEFTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2021 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The financial statements comprise the:

- Authority and Group Movement in Reserves Statement,
- Authority and Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement,
- Authority and Group Balance Sheet,
- Authority and Group Cash Flow Statement
- the related notes 1 to [x].
- Collection Fund and the related notes 1 to [x]

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council and Group as at 31 March 2021 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report below. We are independent of the Authority and Group in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and the Comptroller and Auditor General's (C&AG) AGN01, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Head of Corporate Resources use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the authority's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of [x] months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Head of Corporate Resources with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report. However, because not all future events or conditions can be predicted, this statement is not a guarantee as to the authority's ability to continue as a going concern.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Statement of Accounts, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Head of Corporate Resources is responsible for the other information contained within the Statement of Accounts.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in this report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of the other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we report by exception

We report to you if:

- in our opinion the annual governance statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit or our knowledge of the Council;
- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- we are not satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2021.

We have nothing to report in these respects



Audit Report

Our opinion on the financial statements

Responsibility of the Head of Corporate Resources

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Statement of the Head of Corporate Resources Responsibilities set out on pages [...], the Head of Corporate Resources is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21, and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Head of Corporate Resources is responsible for assessing the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Authority either intends to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Explanation as to what extent the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect irregularities, including fraud. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement due to fraud is higher than the risk of not detecting one resulting from error, as fraud may involve deliberate concealment by, for example, forgery or intentional misrepresentations, or through collusion. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below. However, the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with both those charged with governance of the entity and management.

- We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks that are applicable to the council and determined that the most significant are:
 - o Local Government Act 1972,
 - o School Standards and Framework Act 1998
 - o Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1992),

- o Education Act 2002 and school Standards and Framework Act 1998 (England)
- o Local Government Act 2003,
- o The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended in 2018 and 2020,
- o National Health Service Act 2008,
- o Planning Act 2008 and the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (SI 2010/948),
- o Business Rate Supplements Act 2009,
- o The Local Government Finance Act 2012,
- o Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013,
- o The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, and
- o The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

In addition, the council has to comply with laws and regulations in the areas of anti-bribery and corruption, data protection, employment Legislation, tax Legislation, general power of competence, procurement and health & safety.

- We understood how Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council is complying with those frameworks by understanding the incentive, opportunities and motives for non-compliance, including inquiring of management, head of internal audit, those charged with governance and the monitoring officer and obtaining and reading documentation relating to the procedures in place to identify, evaluate and comply with laws and regulations, and whether they are aware of instances of non-compliance. We corroborated this through our reading of the council's committee minutes, through enquiry of employees to confirm council policies, and through the inspection of employee handbooks and other information. Based on this understanding we designed our audit procedures to identify non-compliance with such laws and regulations. Our procedures had a focus on compliance with the accounting framework through obtaining sufficient audit evidence in line with the level of risk identified and with relevant legislation.
- We assessed the susceptibility of the council's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur by understanding the potential incentives and pressures for management to manipulate the financial statements, and performed procedures to understand the areas in which this would most likely arise. Based on our risk assessment procedures, we identified, inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure and management override of controls to be our fraud risks.
- To address our fraud risk around the manipulation of reported financial performance through improper recognition of revenue, we obtained the council's manual year end income accruals, challenging assumptions and corroborating the income to appropriate evidence.
- To address our fraud risk of inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure we tested the council's capitalised expenditure to ensure the capitalisation criteria were properly met and the expenditure was genuine.
- To address our fraud risk of management override of controls, we tested specific journal entries identified by applying risk criteria to the entire population of journals. For each journal selected, we tested specific transactions back to source documentation to confirm that the journals were authorised and accounted for appropriately.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at



Audit Report

Our opinion on the financial statements

<https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at <https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Scope of the review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance on the specified reporting criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in April 2021, as to whether the Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council had proper arrangements for financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined these criteria as those necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether the Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2021.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether, in all significant respects, the Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Delay in certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate until we have completed the work necessary to issue our assurance statement in respect of the Authority's Whole of Government Accounts consolidation pack. We are satisfied that this work does not have a material effect on the financial statements or our work on value for money arrangements.

We will report the outcome of our work on the Authority's arrangements in our commentary on those arrangements within the Auditor's Annual Report. Our audit completion certificate will set out any matters which we are required to report by exception.

Until we have completed these procedures, we are unable to certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Hassan Rohimun (Key Audit Partner)
Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)
 Manchester
 XX December 2021



04 Audit Differences





Audit Differences

In the normal course of any audit, we identify misstatements between amounts we believe should be recorded in the financial statements and the disclosures and amounts actually recorded. These differences are classified as “known” or “judgemental”. Known differences represent items that can be accurately quantified and relate to a definite set of facts or circumstances. Judgemental differences generally involve estimation and relate to facts or circumstances that are uncertain or open to interpretation.

Summary of audit differences

We highlight the following misstatements greater than £8.8m which have been corrected by management that were identified during the course of our audit:

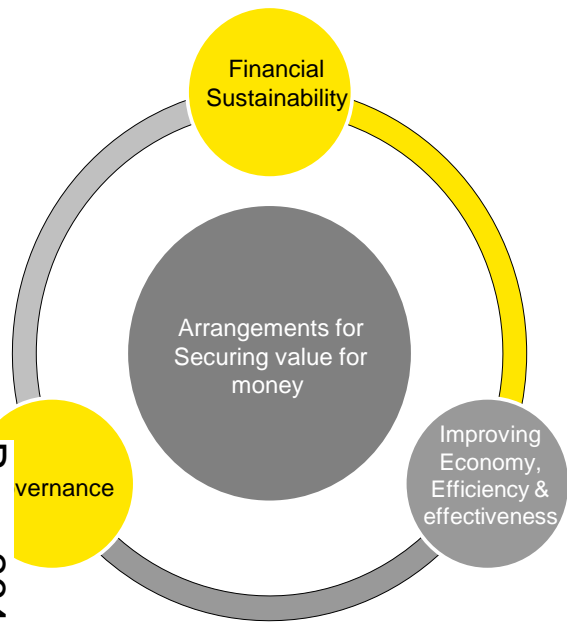
1. The Merseyside Pension Fund auditors have reported a difference between the asset values used in the IAS19 report and asset values confirmed in the Pension Fund audit. The authority obtained revised IAS 19 report from the actuary which resulted in difference of £16.2m.

There are no un-corrected misstatements at the time of writing this report. However, our work on valuations is still in progress which includes significant judgements.



05

Value for Money



Auditor responsibilities under the new Code

Under the 2020 Code we are still required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources. However, there is no longer an overall evaluation criterion upon which we need to conclude. Instead the 2020 Code requires the auditor to design their work to provide them with sufficient assurance to enable them to report to the Council a commentary against specified reporting criteria (see below) on the arrangements the Council has in place to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period.

The specified reporting criteria are:

- Financial sustainability
How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
- Governance
How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness
How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

The Council's responsibilities for value for money

The Council is required to maintain an effective system of internal control that supports the achievement of its policies, aims and objectives while safeguarding and securing value for money from the public funds and other resources at its disposal.

As part of the material published with its financial statements, the Council is required to bring together commentary on its governance framework and how this has operated during the period in a governance statement. In preparing its governance statement, the Council tailors the content to reflect its own individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements of the relevant accounting and reporting framework and having regard to any guidance issued in support of that framework. This includes a requirement to provide commentary on its arrangements for securing value for money from their use of resources.

Overall conclusion

We have considered your arrangements related to financial sustainability, governance, and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In our Audit Planning Report we identified two significant risks related to Maintaining Financial sustainability and Follow-up on DFE Improvement.

We don't have any matters to report within our audit report. We anticipate reporting our commentary on the arrangements in place after the audit opinion.



Value for Money Risks

We are only required to determine whether there are any risks that we consider significant within the Code of Audit Practice, where risk is defined as:

“A matter is significant if, in the auditor’s professional view, it is reasonable to conclude that the matter would be of interest to the audited body or the wider public”

Our risk assessment supports the planning of enough work to deliver a safe conclusion on your arrangements to secure value for money, and enables us to determine the nature and extent of any further work needed. If we do not identify a significant risk we do not need to carry out further work.

The table below presents the findings of our work in response to the risks areas in our Audit Planning Report as well as any additional risks identified since then.

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What is the significant value for money risk?

Maintaining Financial sustainability

The Council are operating in a continued environment of financial challenge and savings requirements across the sector, with pressure from Children’s Social Care, Children with Disabilities, Home to School Transport and Locality Services.

As such, the identification and realisation of savings in the Medium Term Financial Plan remain critical to maintaining the level of reserves and financial sustainability. The Council did identify underspending in other areas as well as implementing various mitigating actions during the year to ensure there would be no overspend, particularly in light of the financial pressures due to COVID19. These measures enabled the outturn position to be a net underspend of £2.794m.

What arrangements did the risk affect?

Financial Sustainability

What are our findings?

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is produced and reported to Cabinet by the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services. The 2021 to 2023 plan was presented to Cabinet on 7/11/2019 this included the key assumptions underpinning budgetary developments. The Council approved the 2020/21 budget in February 2020. In response to challenges arising as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic a budget update for the period 2020/21 was proposed and approved in July 2020 this reflected the position regarding key income streams for the Council.

The MTFP highlighted an estimated funding shortfall between 2020/21 and 2022/23 of £23.31m, before any Council Tax decisions had been made and service delivery options were considered. With a budget gap remaining and further pressure from the need to manage the impact of Covid-19 on the Council’s financial sustainability, the Council is working on a strategy to bridge the funding gaps.

The Council continue to appropriately plan, monitor and report the financial position and plans and demonstrate appropriate arrangements for the identification and monitoring of savings requirements.



Value for Money Risks

What is the significant value for money risk?

Follow-up on DFE Improvement

An Improvement Notice was issued to Sefton Council on 14 June 2019 following an assessment that the local area had failed to make sufficient progress against five areas of weakness in its SEND service provision. This was detailed in an Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) SEND Revisit report. In our prior year (PY) VFM review, it was identified that the Council had established a plan to tackle the required areas for improvement, with quarterly monitoring and tracking of the areas of weakness.

In regards to Children’s Mental Health (MH), in September 2019, Ofsted, C, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services, MCFRS) and Probation (HMIP) carried out a joint inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in Sefton. This inspection included a ‘deep dive’ on the response to children’s MH. In the PY, the Council produced a written Statement of Action which it submitted to OFSTED and the relevant parties, and in April 2020 this action plan was reviewed and approved by Ofsted and the others, noting it demonstrated an accurate understanding of the areas of priority action and findings of the joint inspection team.

Furthermore, during VFM planning, it was identified that two reviews had been performed by Ofsted during 2020-21, looking at both Adult & Community Learning, and Children’s Services at the Council.

What arrangements did the risk affect?

Improving Economy, Efficiency & Effectiveness

Governance

What are our findings?

Our review identifies that the Council has focused on improving Children’s Services throughout the year. The two main areas of development have been in respect of SEND and the Joint Target Inspection Plan which focused on Mental Health. We identified evidence of scrutiny and review being in place with reporting of key issues to relevant committees during the year. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee has also assessed both areas of concern during the year providing appropriate challenge and oversight.

The Council has established strategies (e.g. The Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2020 - 2025 & Children and Young Peoples Commission Strategy) to provide effective structure and guidance for improving Children’s Services.

The most recent Ofsted review highlighted that the Council was performing well in several areas and that partnerships had improved during the pandemic, which has helped with supporting vulnerable children during this period. However Ofsted also highlighted:

- that staff shortage is an underlying issue of concern; and
- Improvements were required to the quality assurance framework.



06 Other reporting issues

Other reporting issues

Consistency of other information published with the financial statements, including the Annual Governance Statement

We must give an opinion on the consistency of the financial and non-financial information in the Statement of Accounts 2020/21 with the audited financial statements. The other information comprises the information included in the Statement of Accounts, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services is responsible for the other information contained within the Statement of Accounts. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in this report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

We must also review the Annual Governance Statement for completeness of disclosures, consistency with other information from our work, and whether it complies with relevant guidance.

Financial information in the Statement of Accounts 2020/21 and published with the financial statements was consistent with the audited financial statements.

We have reviewed the Annual Governance Statement and can confirm it is consistent with other information from our audit of the financial statements and we have no other matters to report.

Whole of Government Accounts

Alongside our work on the financial statements, we also review and report to the National Audit Office on your Whole of Government Accounts return. The extent of our review, and the nature of our report, is specified by the National Audit Office.

We have not yet performed the procedures required by the National Audit Office (NAO) on the Whole of Government Accounts submission, as at the date of this report we have not yet received the Group Audit instructions from the NAO. We will complete this work in line with the instructions issued by the NAO when it is appropriate to do so.

Other powers and duties

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to consider whether to report on any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit, either for the Authority to consider it or to bring it to the attention of the public (i.e. "a report in the public interest"). We did not identify any issues which required us to issue a report in the public interest.

We also have a duty to make written recommendations to the Authority, copied to the Secretary of State, and take action in accordance with our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. We did not identify any issues.

Other reporting issues

Other matters

As required by ISA (UK&I) 260 and other ISAs specifying communication requirements, we must tell you significant findings from the audit and other matters if they are significant to your oversight of the Authority's financial reporting process. They include the following:

- Significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures;
- Any significant difficulties encountered during the audit;
- Any significant matters arising from the audit that were discussed with management;
- Written representations we have requested;
- Expected modifications to the audit report;
- Any other matters significant to overseeing the financial reporting process;
- Findings and issues around the opening balance on initial audits (if applicable);
- Related parties;
- External confirmations;
- Going concern;
- Consideration of laws and regulations; and
- Group audit

Aside from the matters raised elsewhere in this report, we have no other matters to report.



07

Assessment of Control Environment



Assessment of Control Environment

Financial controls

It is the responsibility of the Council to develop and implement systems of internal financial control and to put in place proper arrangements to monitor their adequacy and effectiveness in practice. Our responsibility as your auditor is to consider whether the Council has put adequate arrangements in place to satisfy itself that the systems of internal financial control are both adequate and effective in practice.

As part of our audit of the financial statements, we obtained an understanding of internal control sufficient to plan our audit and determine the nature, timing and extent of testing performed. As we have adopted a fully substantive approach, we have therefore not tested the operation of controls. Although our audit was not designed to express an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control we are required to communicate to you significant deficiencies in internal control.

We have not identified any significant deficiencies in the design or operation of an internal control that might result in a material misstatement in your financial statements of which you are not aware.

We have however identified the following control and process related matters. These matters are limited to those deficiencies identified during the audit and important enough for us to report to you.

Issue	Recommendation	Response / Responsibility / Target date
Investment properties are not re-valued on annual basis. High level review is performed without sufficient evidence to support the judgement. This is non-compliance with the accounting standards and accounting policies.	Although no significant issues noted during the year, we recommend that full investment property valuation to be performed on annual basis to comply the standards and accounting policies.	The Council will undertake a full annual valuation of investment properties to comply with the standards and policies. Paul Reilly/ Thomas Walmsley / May 2022



08 Data Analytics



Analytics Driven Audit

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We used our data analysers to enable us to capture entire populations of your financial data. These analysers:

- ▶ Help identify specific exceptions and anomalies which can then be the focus of our substantive audit tests; and
- ▶ Give greater likelihood of identifying errors than traditional, random sampling techniques.

In 2020/21, our use of these analysers in the authority's audit included testing journal entries and employee expenses, to identify and focus our testing on those entries we deem to have the highest inherent risk to the audit.

We capture the data through our formal data requests and the data transfer takes place on a secured EY website. These are in line with our EY data protection policies which are designed to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of business and personal information.

Journal Entry Analysis

We obtain downloads of all financial ledger transactions posted in the year. We perform completeness analysis over the data, reconciling the sum of transactions to the movement in the trial balances and financial statements to ensure we have captured all data. Our analysers then review and sort transactions, allowing us to more effectively identify and test journals that we consider to be higher risk, as identified in our audit planning report.



09

Independence

Independence

Confirmation of independence and analysis of audit fees

We confirm there are no changes in our assessment of independence since our confirmation in our audit planning board report dated May 2021.

We complied with the APB Ethical Standards. In our professional judgement the firm is independent and the objectivity of the audit engagement partner and audit staff has not been compromised within the meaning of regulatory and professional requirements.

We consider that our independence in this context is a matter that should be reviewed by both you and ourselves. It is therefore important that you and your Audit and Governance Committee consider the facts of which you are aware and come to a view. If you wish to discuss any matters concerning our independence, we will be pleased to do so.

We confirm we have not undertaken any non-audit work outside of the Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies as issued by the Public Sector Audit Comptrollers Ltd.

Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

The FRC Ethical Standard requires that we provide details of all relationships between Ernst & Young (EY) and your Authority, senior management and its affiliates, including all services provided by us and our network to your Authority, senior management and its affiliates, and other services provided to other known connected parties that we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on the our integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence and the related safeguards that are in place and why they address the threats.

There are no relationships from 1 April 2020 to the date of this report, which we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence and objectivity

Services provided by Ernst & Young

As part of our reporting on our independence, we set out on the next slide a summary of the fees you have paid us in the year ended 31 March 2021.

We confirm we have undertaken non-audit work outside the NAO Code requirements in relation to our work on the certification of the Housing Benefit and Teachers Pensions returns. We have adopted the necessary safeguards in our completion of this work..

Fees

As part of our reporting on our independence, we set out below a summary of the fees paid for the year ended 31 March 2021. The duty to prescribe fees is a statutory function delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

This is defined as the fee required by auditors to meet statutory responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice and supporting guidance published by the National Audit Office, the financial reporting requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting published by CIPFA/LASAAC, and the professional standards applicable to auditors' work.

We confirm that we have undertaken non-audit work outside the NAO Code requirements. We have adopted the necessary safeguards in completing this work and complied with Auditor Guidance Note 1 issued by the NAO.

	Planned fee 2020/21 (£)	Final fee 2019/20 (£) (2)
Scale Fee (1)	97,711	97,711
Additional fee to address risks (3)	29,400	33,200
Total audit	127,111	130,911
Non-audit work - Grant claims - Teachers Pension	7,000	6,500
Non-audit work - Grant claims - Housing Benefit (4)	14,500	11,500
Total other non-audit services	21,500	18,000
Total fees	148,611	148,911

All fees exclude VAT

Notes:

(1) We are currently in discussion with PSAA nationally about an increase to the scale fee. For Sefton Council we proposed a revised scale fee of £171,765. This is yet to be determined by PSAA.

(2) 2019/20 additional fees as set out in our Annual Audit Letter and Audit Results Report remains subject to approval by PSAA.

(3) There have been changes to our audit scope because of new VFM arrangements requirements, revised estimates standard and additional work in response to issues arising during the audit related to valuations. We will discuss the impact of these with management before agreeing our final fee which will be subject to PSAA approval. The total cost of these changes in risk and requirements is estimated at £29,400 at the time of completing this report.

(4) Our actual fees may exceed this estimate based on the volume of CAKE testing required in response to the previous year's report, and the amount of extended testing required from the findings of the initial testing.

Other communications

EY Transparency Report 2020

Ernst & Young (EY) has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained. Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the year end 30 June 2021: [EY UK 2021 Transparency Report | EY UK](#)



10 Appendices

Audit approach update

We summarise below our approach to the audit of the balance sheet and any changes to this approach from the prior year audit.

Our audit procedures are designed to be responsive to our assessed risk of material misstatement at the relevant assertion level. Assertions relevant to the balance sheet include:

- ▶ Existence: An asset, liability and equity interest exists at a given date
- ▶ Rights and Obligations: An asset, liability and equity interest pertains to the entity at a given date
- ▶ Completeness: There are no unrecorded assets, liabilities, and equity interests, transactions or events, or undisclosed items
- ▶ Valuation: An asset, liability and equity interest is recorded at an appropriate amount and any resulting valuation or allocation adjustments are appropriately recorded
- ▶ Presentation and Disclosure: Assets, liabilities and equity interests are appropriately aggregated or disaggregated, and classified, described and disclosed in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework. Disclosures are relevant and understandable in the context of the applicable financial reporting framework



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Agenda Item 4

Balance sheet category	Audit Approach in current year	Audit Approach in prior year
Trade receivables	Fully substantive approach	Fully substantive approach
Property, plant and equipment	Fully substantive approach	Fully substantive approach
Trade payables	Fully substantive approach	Fully substantive approach
Investments	Fully substantive approach	Fully substantive approach
Borrowing	Fully substantive approach	Fully substantive approach
Cash and cash equivalents	Fully substantive approach	Fully substantive approach
Provisions	Fully substantive approach	Fully substantive approach
Other long term liabilities	Fully substantive approach	Fully substantive approach
Grants received in advance	Fully substantive approach	Fully substantive approach
Reserves	Fully substantive approach	Fully substantive approach

 Appendix B

Summary of communications





Date 	Nature 	Summary 
Throughout the year	Meetings, calls and e-mails	The Associate Partner and Senior Manager have been in regular contact with the Director of Corporate Resources and Senior Finance team members in respect of the Council's accounts closedown, audit approach and audit findings up to the date of issue of this report
Audit and Governance Committee	Audit and Governance Committee	The Associate Partner have attended all meetings of the Audit and Governance Committee held during the year and through to the date of issue of this report

In addition to the above specific meetings and reports the audit team met with the finance team multiple times throughout the audit to discuss audit findings.

Appendix C

Required communications with the Audit and Governance Committee

There are certain communications that we must provide to the Audit and Governance Committees of UK clients. We have detailed these here together with a reference of when and where they were covered:

			 Our Reporting to you
Page 281	Required communications	 What is reported?	  When and where
		Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the Audit and Governance Committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.
	Our responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter.	Audit Plan
	Planning and audit approach	Communication of the planned scope and timing of the audit, any limitations and the significant risks identified.	Audit Plan
	Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures ▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit ▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management ▶ Written representations that we are seeking ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report ▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process 	Audit results report, December 2021

Appendix C

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Going concern	<p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity’s ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty ▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements ▶ The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements 	Audit results report, December 2021
Misstatements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion ▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods ▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected ▶ Material misstatements corrected by management 	Audit results report, December 2021
Subsequent events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiry of the Audit and Governance Committee where appropriate regarding whether any subsequent events have occurred that might affect the financial statements. 	Audit results report, December 2021
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiries of the Audit and Governance Committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the Authority ▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist ▶ Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the Authority, any identified or suspected fraud involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Management; b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or c. Others where the fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements. ▶ The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected ▶ Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to Audit and Governance Committee responsibility. 	Audit results report, December 2021

Appendix C

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Related parties	<p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the Authority's related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Non-disclosure by management ▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions ▶ Disagreement over disclosures ▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations ▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the Authority 	Audit results report, December 2021
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, objectivity and independence.</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The principal threats ▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness ▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards ▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence <p>Communications whenever significant judgments are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place.</p>	<p>Audit planning report</p> <p>Audit results report, December 2021</p>

Appendix C

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations ▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures. 	Audit results report, December 2021
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Subject to compliance with applicable regulations, matters involving identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, other than those which are clearly inconsequential and the implications thereof. Instances of suspected non-compliance may also include those that are brought to our attention that are expected to occur imminently or for which there is reason to believe that they may occur ▶ Enquiry of the Audit and Governance Committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the Audit and Governance Committee may be aware of 	Audit results report, December 2021
Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit. 	Audit results report, December 2021

Appendix C

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance 	Audit results report, December 2021
Material inconsistencies or statements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise 	Audit results report, December 2021
Auditors report	Audit results report	Audit results report, December 2021
Value for money commentary	A commentary on the arrangements in place during 2020/21 to achieve value for money, and any recommendations we may make to improve those arrangements.	Auditor's Annual Report, January 2022
Fee Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breakdown of fee information when the audit planning report is agreed Breakdown of fee information at the completion of the audit Any non-audit work 	Audit results report, December 2021

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Agenda Item 4



Management representation letter

Management Rep Letter

[To be prepared on the entity's letterhead]

[Date]

Ernst & Young

[Address]

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the consolidated and council financial statements of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council ("the Group and Council") for the year ended 31 March 2021. We recognise that obtaining representations from us concerning the information contained in this letter is a significant procedure in enabling you to form an opinion as to whether the consolidated and council financial statements give a true and fair view of the Group and Council financial position of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council as of 31 March 2021 and of its financial performance (or operations) and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

We understand that the purpose of your audit of our consolidated and council financial statements is to express an opinion thereon and that your audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing, which involves an examination of the accounting system, internal control and related data to the extent you considered necessary in the circumstances, and is not designed to identify - nor necessarily be expected to disclose - all fraud, shortages, errors and other irregularities, should any exist.

Accordingly, we make the following representations, which are true to the best of our knowledge and belief, having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

A. Financial Statements and Financial Records

1. We have fulfilled our responsibilities, under the relevant statutory authorities, for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.
2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the Group and Council, our responsibility for the fair presentation of the consolidated and council financial statements. We believe the consolidated and council financial statements referred to above give a true and fair view of the financial position, financial performance (or results of operations) and cash flows of the Group in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 and are free of material misstatements, including omissions. We have approved the consolidated and council financial statements.

3. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the Group and Council financial statements are appropriately described in the Group and Council financial statements.
4. As members of management of the Group and Council, we believe that the Group and Council have a system of internal controls adequate to enable the preparation of accurate financial statements in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. We have disclosed to you any significant changes in our processes, controls, policies and procedures that we have made to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our system of internal controls.

5. We believe that the effects of any unadjusted audit differences, summarised in the accompanying schedule, accumulated by you during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented are immaterial, both individually and in the aggregate, to the consolidated and council financial statements taken as a whole. We have not corrected these differences identified and brought to our attention by the auditor because [specify reasons for not correcting misstatement].

B. Non-compliance with law and regulations, including fraud

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible for determining that the Group and Council's activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible for identifying and addressing any non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.
2. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud.
3. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the consolidated and Council financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
4. We have no knowledge of any identified or suspected non-compliance with laws or regulations, including fraud that may have affected the Group or Council (regardless of the source or form and including without limitation, any allegations by "whistleblowers"), including non-compliance matters:
 - involving financial statements;
 - related to laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the consolidated or Council's financial statements;
 - related to laws and regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the Group or Council's activities, its ability to continue to operate, or to avoid material penalties;
 - involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal controls, or others; or

Management representation letter

Management Rep Letter

- in relation to any allegations of fraud, suspected fraud or other non-compliance with laws and regulations communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

C. Information Provided and Completeness of Information and Transactions

1. We have provided you with:
 - Access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
 - Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
 - Unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.
2. All material transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and all material transactions, events and conditions are reflected in the consolidated and council financial statements, including those related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of the Group, and committees [add the full title of the relevant committees] (or summaries of actions of recent meetings for which minutes have not yet been prepared) held through the year to the most recent meeting on the following date: [list date] and of the [Council], and committees [add the full title of the relevant committees] (or summaries of actions of recent meetings for which minutes have not yet been prepared) held through the year to the most recent meeting on the following date: [list date].
4. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Group and Council's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware, including sales, purchases, loans, transfers of assets, liabilities and services, leasing arrangements, guarantees, non-monetary transactions and transactions for no consideration for the year ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at the year end. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the consolidated and council financial statements.
5. We believe that the methods, significant assumptions and the data we used in making accounting estimates and related disclosures are appropriate and consistently applied to achieve recognition, measurement and disclosure that is in accordance with applicable financial reporting framework]
6. We have disclosed to you, and the Group and Council has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the consolidated and council financial statements in the event of non-compliance, including all covenants, conditions or other requirements of all outstanding debt.

7. From the date of our last management representation letter through the date of this letter we have disclosed to you any unauthorized access to our information technology systems that either occurred or to the best of our knowledge is reasonably likely to have occurred based on our investigation, including of reports submitted to us by third parties (including regulatory agencies, law enforcement agencies and security consultants), to the extent that such unauthorized access to our information technology systems is reasonably likely to have a material impact to the financial statements, in each case or in the aggregate

D. Liabilities and Contingencies

1. All liabilities and contingencies, including those associated with guarantees, whether written or oral, have been disclosed to you and are appropriately reflected in the consolidated and [council] financial statements.
2. We have informed you of all outstanding and possible litigation and claims, whether or not they have been discussed with legal counsel.
3. We have recorded and/or disclosed, as appropriate, all liabilities related to litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and have disclosed in Note [X] to the consolidated and council financial statements all guarantees that we have given to third parties.

E. Going Concern

1. Note [X] to the consolidated and parent entity financial statements discloses all the matters of which we are aware that are relevant to the Group and Council's ability to continue as a going concern, including significant conditions and events, our plans for future action, and the feasibility of those plans.

F. Subsequent Events

1. Other than described in Note [X] to the consolidated and council financial statements, there have been no events, including events related to the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequent to year end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the consolidated and council financial statements or notes thereto.

G. Group audits

1. There are no significant restrictions on our ability to distribute the retained profits of the Group because of statutory, contractual, exchange control or other restrictions other than those indicated in the Group financial statements.
2. Necessary adjustments have been made to eliminate all material intra-group unrealised profits on transactions amongst [council], subsidiary undertakings and associated undertakings.

H. Other information

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises the narrative statement.
2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.



Management representation letter

Management Rep Letter

I. Ownership of Assets

1. Except for assets recognised in accordance with IAS 17 Leases, the Group and Council has satisfactory title to all assets appearing in the balance sheet(s), and there are no liens or encumbrances on the Group and Council's assets, nor has any asset been pledged as collateral, other than those that are disclosed in Note [X] to the financial statements. All assets to which the Group and Council has satisfactory title appear in the balance sheet(s).
2. All agreements and options to buy back assets previously sold have been properly recorded and adequately disclosed in the consolidated and council financial statements.
3. We have no plans to abandon lines of product or other plans or intentions that will result in any excess or obsolete inventory, and no inventory is stated at an amount in excess of net realisable value.
4. There are no formal or informal compensating balance arrangements with any of our cash and investment accounts. Except as disclosed in Note [X] to the consolidated and council financial statements, we have no other line of credit arrangements.

J. Reserves

1. We have properly recorded or disclosed in the consolidated and council financial statements the useable and unusable reserves.

K. Contingent Liabilities

1. We are unaware of any violations or possible violations of laws or regulations the effects of which should be considered for disclosure in the consolidated and council financial statements or as the basis of recording a contingent loss (other than those disclosed or accrued in the consolidated and council financial statements).
2. We are unaware of any known or probable instances of non-compliance with the requirements of regulatory or governmental authorities, including their financial reporting requirements, and there have been no communications from regulatory agencies or government representatives concerning investigations or allegations of non-compliance.

L. Use of the Work of a Specialist

1. We agree with the findings of the specialists that we engaged to evaluate the Property, Plant and Equipment valuations, Investment Property valuations, and Pensions IAS19 liability and have adequately considered the qualifications of the specialists in determining the amounts and disclosures included in the consolidated and council financial statements and the underlying accounting records. We did not give or cause any instructions to be given to the specialists with respect to the values or amounts derived in an attempt to bias their work, and we are not otherwise aware of any matters that have had an effect on the independence or objectivity of the specialists.

M. Estimates (Property, Plant and Equipment, Investment Property, Provisions, NDR appeals and Pension Liabilities)

1. We confirm that the significant judgments made in making the accounting estimates have taken into account all relevant information and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic of which we are aware.
2. We believe that the selection or application of the methods, assumptions and data used by us have been consistently and appropriately applied or used in making the accounting estimate.
3. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the accounting estimate appropriately reflect our intent and ability to carry out the specific courses of action on behalf of the entity.
4. We confirm that the disclosures made in the consolidated and parent entity financial statements with respect to the accounting estimate(s), including those describing estimation uncertainty and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, are complete and are reasonable in the context of the applicable financial reporting framework.
5. We confirm that appropriate specialized skills or expertise has been applied in making the accounting estimate.
6. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimate(s) and disclosures in the consolidated and parent entity financial statements, including due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

N. Retirement benefits

1. On the basis of the process established by us and having made appropriate enquiries, we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the scheme liabilities are consistent with our knowledge of the business. All significant retirement benefits and all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for.

Yours faithfully,

(Chief Financial Officer)

(Chair of the Audit Committee)

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None

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Executive Director of
Corporate Resources and
Customer Services
Magdalen House
Trinity Road
Bootle
L20 3NJ

Date: 15th December 2021



0151 934 4081

stephan.vanarendsen@sefton.gov.uk

Dear Sirs

Representation letter – audit of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council’s (the Council) Entity and Group Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the consolidated and council financial statements of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council (“the Group and Council”) for the year ended 31 March 2021. We recognise that obtaining representations from us concerning the information contained in this letter is a significant procedure in enabling you to form an opinion as to whether the consolidated and council financial statements give a true and fair view of the Group and Council financial position of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council as of 31 March 2021 and of its financial performance (or operations) and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

We understand that the purpose of your audit of our consolidated and council financial statements is to express an opinion thereon and that your audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing, which involves an examination of the accounting system, internal control and related data to the extent you considered necessary in the circumstances, and is not designed to identify - nor necessarily be expected to disclose - all fraud, shortages, errors and other irregularities, should any exist.

Accordingly, we make the following representations, which are true to the best of our knowledge and belief, having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

A. Financial Statements and Financial Records

1. We have fulfilled our responsibilities, under the relevant statutory authorities, for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

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2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the Group and Council, our responsibility for the fair presentation of the consolidated and council financial statements. We believe the consolidated and council financial statements referred to above give a true and fair view of the financial position, financial performance (or results of operations) and cash flows of the Group in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 and are free of material misstatements, including omissions. We have approved the consolidated and council financial statements.
3. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the Group and Council financial statements are appropriately described in the Group and Council financial statements.
4. As members of management of the Group and Council, we believe that the Group and Council have a system of internal controls adequate to enable the preparation of accurate financial statements in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. We have disclosed to you any significant changes in our processes, controls, policies and procedures that we have made to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our system of internal controls.

B. Non-compliance with law and regulations, including fraud

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible for determining that the Group and Council's activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible for identifying and addressing any non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.
2. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud.
3. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the consolidated and Council financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
4. We have no knowledge of any identified or suspected non-compliance with laws or regulations, including fraud that may have affected the Group or Council (regardless of the source or form and including without limitation, any allegations by "whistleblowers"), including non-compliance matters:
 - involving financial statements;
 - related to laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the Council's financial statements;
 - related to laws and regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the Group or Council's activities, its ability to continue to operate, or to avoid material penalties.

- involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal controls, or others; or
- in relation to any allegations of fraud, suspected fraud or other non-compliance with laws and regulations communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

C. Information Provided and Completeness of Information and Transactions

1. We have provided you with:

- Access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
- Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
- Unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

2. All material transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and all material transactions, events and conditions are reflected in the consolidated and council financial statements, including those related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of the Group and Council, and relevant committees (or summaries of actions of recent meetings for which minutes have not yet been prepared) held through the year to the most recent meeting on the following date: 2 December 2021.

4. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Group and Council's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware, including sales, purchases, loans, transfers of assets, liabilities and services, leasing arrangements, guarantees, non-monetary transactions and transactions for no consideration for the year ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at the year end. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the consolidated and council financial statements.

5. We believe that the methods, significant assumptions and the data we used in making accounting estimates and related disclosures are appropriate and consistently applied to achieve recognition, measurement and disclosure that is in accordance with applicable financial reporting framework.

6. We have disclosed to you, and the Group and Council has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the consolidated and council financial statements in the event of non-compliance, including all covenants, conditions or other requirements of all outstanding debt.

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7. From the date of our last management representation letter through the date of this letter we have disclosed to you any unauthorised access to our information technology systems that either occurred or to the best of our knowledge is reasonably likely to have occurred based on our investigation, including of reports submitted to us by third parties (including regulatory agencies, law enforcement agencies and security consultants) , to the extent that such unauthorized access to our information technology systems is reasonably likely to have a material impact to the financial statements, in each case or in the aggregate.

D. Liabilities and Contingencies

1. All liabilities and contingencies, including those associated with guarantees, whether written or oral, have been disclosed to you and are appropriately reflected in the consolidated and council financial statements.
2. We have informed you of all outstanding and possible litigation and claims, whether or not they have been discussed with legal counsel.
3. We have recorded and/or disclosed, as appropriate, all liabilities related litigation and claims, both actual and contingent, and have disclosed in the consolidated and council financial statements all guarantees that we have given to third parties.

E. Going Concern

1. The introduction to Note 54 to the financial statements (pages 94 and 95) discloses all the matters of which we are aware that are relevant to the Council's ability to continue as a going concern, including significant conditions and events, our plans for future action, and the feasibility of those plans.

F. Subsequent Events

1. There have been no events, including events related to the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequent to period end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the consolidated and council financial statements or notes thereto.

G. Group Audits

1. There are no significant restrictions on our ability to distribute the retained profits of the Group because of statutory, contractual, exchange control or other restrictions other than those indicated in the Group financial statements.
2. Necessary adjustments have been made to eliminate all material intra-group unrealised profits on transactions amongst council, subsidiary undertakings and associated undertakings.

H. Other information

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises the narrative report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services, the Annual Governance Statement and the Summary Financial statements of Sefton New Directions Limited and Sandway Homes Limited.
2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.

I. Ownership of Assets

1. Except for assets recognised in accordance with IAS 17 Leases, the Group and Council has satisfactory title to all assets appearing in the balance sheet(s), and there are no liens or encumbrances on the Group and Council's assets, nor has any asset been pledged as collateral. All assets to which the Group and Council has satisfactory title appear in the balance sheet(s).
2. All agreements and options to buy back assets previously sold have been properly recorded and adequately disclosed in the consolidated and council financial statements.
3. We have no plans to abandon lines of product or other plans or intentions that will result in any excess or obsolete inventory, and no inventory is stated at an amount in excess of net realisable value.
4. There are no formal or informal compensating balance arrangements with any of our cash and investment accounts. We have no other line of credit arrangements.

J. Reserves

1. We have properly recorded or disclosed in the consolidated and council financial statements the useable and unusable reserves.

K. Contingent Liabilities

1. We are unaware of any violations or possible violations of laws or regulations the effects of which should be considered for disclosure in the consolidated and council financial statements or as the basis of recording a contingent loss (other than those disclosed or accrued in the consolidated and council financial statements).
2. We are unaware of any known or probable instances of non-compliance with the requirements of regulatory or governmental authorities, including their financial reporting requirements, and there have been no communications from regulatory agencies or government representatives concerning investigations or allegations of

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non-compliance.

L. Use of the Work of a Specialist

1. We agree with the findings of the specialists that we engaged to evaluate the Property, Plant and Equipment valuations, Investment Property valuations, and Pensions IAS19 liability and have adequately considered the qualifications of the specialists in determining the amounts and disclosures included in the consolidated and council financial statements and the underlying accounting records. We did not give or cause any instructions to be given to the specialists with respect to the values or amounts derived in an attempt to bias their work, and we are not otherwise aware of any matters that have had an effect on the independence or objectivity of the specialists.

M. Estimates (Property, Plant and Equipment, Investment Property, Provisions, NDR appeals and Pension Liabilities)

1. We confirm that the significant judgments made in making the accounting estimates have taken into account all relevant information and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic of which we are aware.
2. We believe that the selection or application of the methods, assumptions and data used by us have been consistently and appropriately applied or used in making the accounting estimate.
3. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the accounting estimate appropriately reflect our intent and ability to carry out the specific courses of action on behalf of the entity.
4. We confirm that the disclosures made in the consolidated and parent entity financial statements with respect to the accounting estimate(s), including those describing estimation uncertainty and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, are complete and are reasonable in the context of the applicable financial reporting framework.
5. We confirm that appropriate specialized skills or expertise has been applied in making the accounting estimate.
6. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimate(s) and disclosures in the consolidated and parent entity financial statements, including due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

N Retirement benefits

1. On the basis of the process established by us and having made appropriate enquiries, we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the scheme liabilities are consistent with our knowledge of the business. All significant retirement benefits and all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for.

Yours faithfully

Stephan Van Arendsen

(Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services)

Councillor Dave Robinson

(Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee)

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