AVON FIRE & RESCUE

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2023-2024 Statement of Accounts and Narrative Report

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

Avon Fire Authority

Statement of Accounts 2023/2024

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2023/2024 Narrative Report

A) Introduction

Avon Fire & Rescue Service (AF&RS) provides emergency, Prevention, Protection and Response services to the communities of Bath and North-East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. We are committed to providing a safer place for people to live, work and visit across the area made up of 132,609 hectares and a residential population of more than 1.1 million people, living in over 480,000 homes. We also provide the same services for millions of visitors and those that travel through our area each year.

i) Our role:

Our primary role is to provide an effective, efficient and economic fire and rescue service which meets the public's expectations, our legislative requirements and is delivered by safe, professional and well-trained staff.

While firefighting has traditionally been at the forefront of our work, the role of a modern fire and rescue service has increased to cover the core functions of 'Preventing', 'Protecting' and 'Responding'. A lot of our work now focuses on how we can prevent accidents and emergencies from happening in the first place, as we believe this is the best way to protect our communities. We do this by providing advice and education through events, visits, campaigns and partnership working, such as with the South West Emergency Services Collaboration Forum, the Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum and the West of England One Public Estate programme. More information about our collaboration activities is available in our Collaboration Strategy 2021-2026 here:
https://avonfire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s1816/CollaborationStategydocument2022Update.pdf

ii) Our Service Plan:

Following extensive consultation with local communities, stakeholders and staff, our refreshed Service Plan 2024-2028 was approved by the Fire Authority and published online on the 20th March 2024 and sets out our mission to improve public safety through Prevention, Protection, Response and Resilience.

This Service Plan is our contract with the public and outlines how we will deliver continuous improvement to the Service; the latest Service Plan is available online here:
https://www.avonfire.gov.uk/publications/service-plan/

It clearly articulates our two Priorities of ***Making our Communities Safer*** and ***Making Our Service Stronger.***

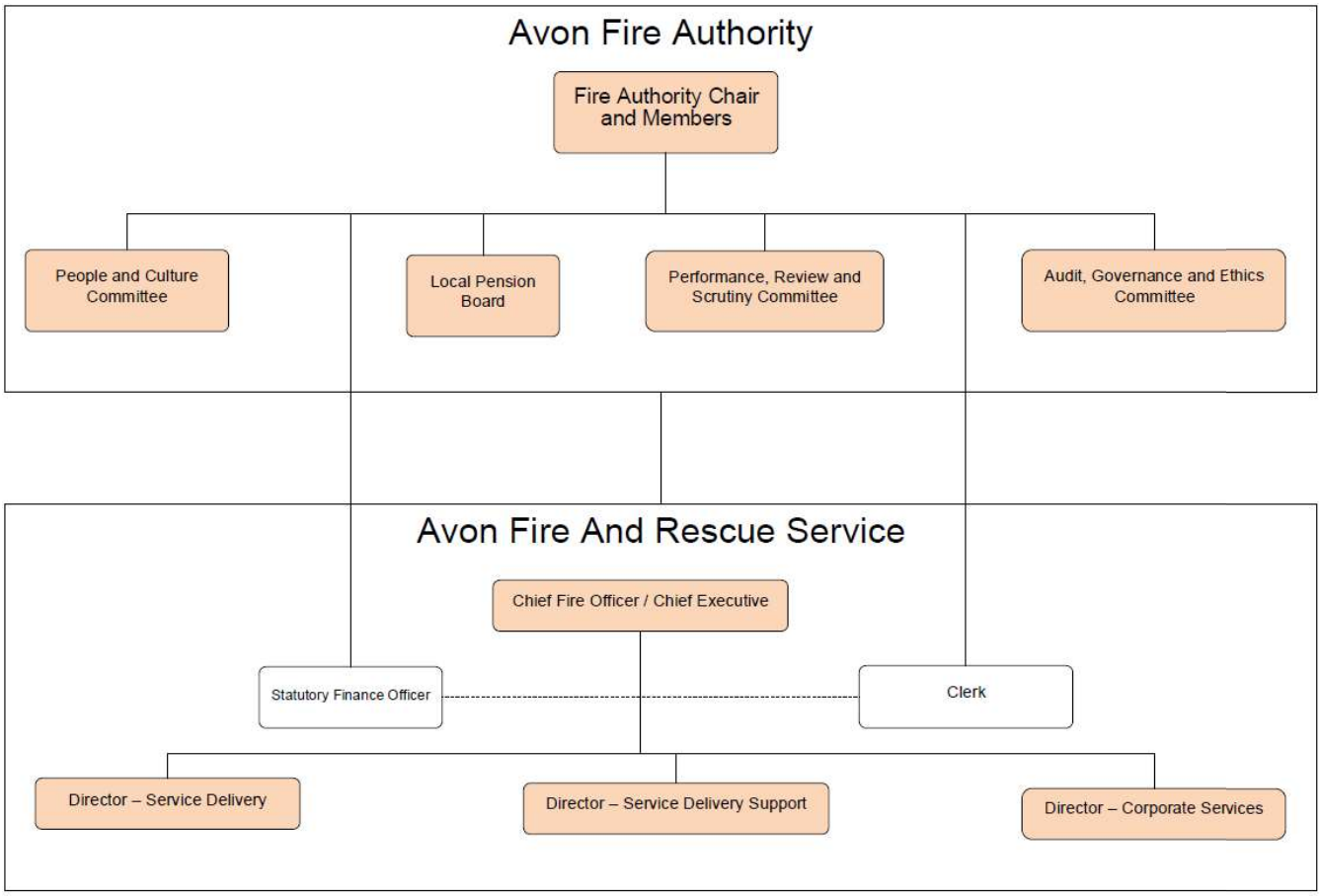
iii) The Fire Authority:

Avon Fire Authority is responsible for ensuring that it delivers its services in accordance with the prevailing legislation, regulations and Government guidance and that proper standards of stewardship, conduct, probity and professional competence are set and adhered to by all those working for and with the Authority. This will ensure the services provided to the people of Avon

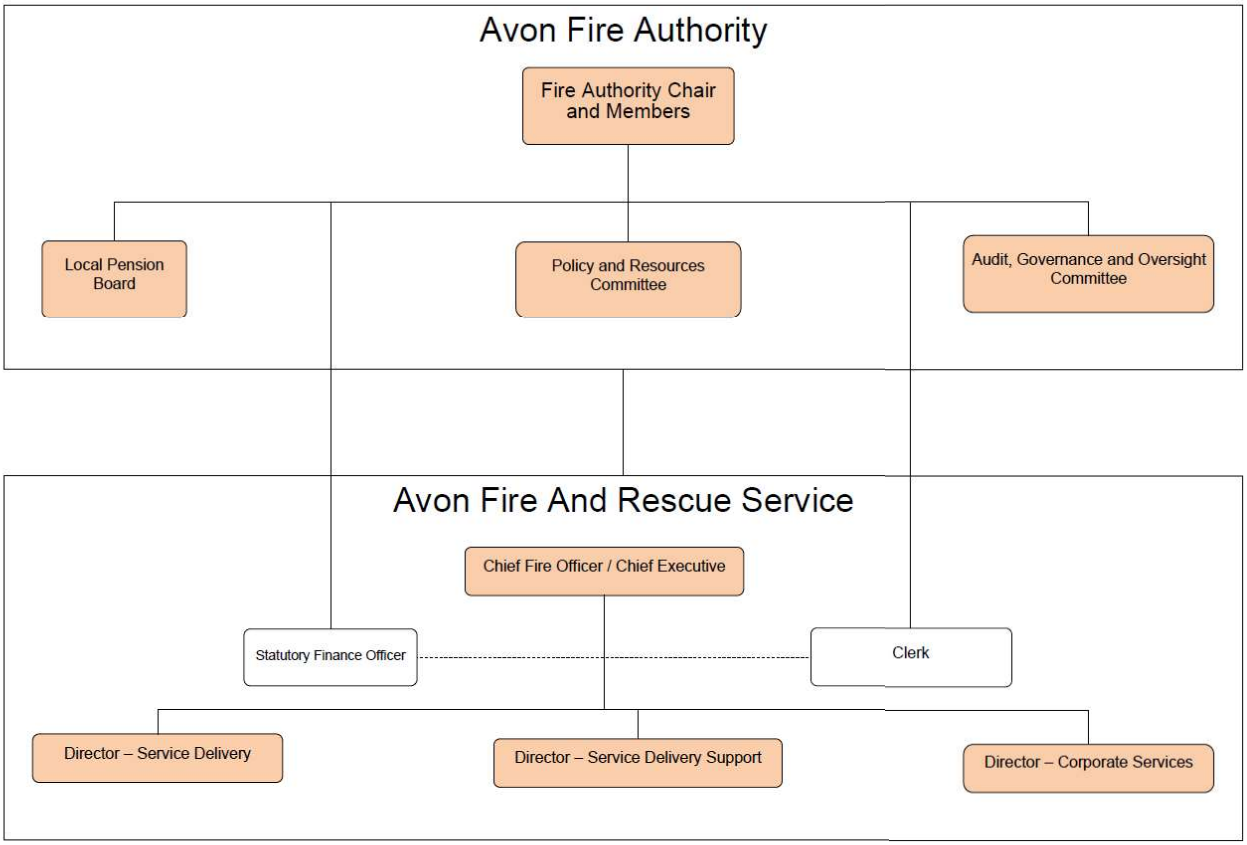
are delivered efficiently, effectively and fairly and that public money is used wisely, is properly accounted for and achieves optimum Value for Money.

The Fire Authority is committed to continuously improving its services to meet the needs of the public, reviewing and developing what it does and consulting with the public about its activities on a regular basis. In discharging these responsibilities, the Authority is required to ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place for the control and management of its business affairs, Service performance, finances and for the management of the key risks the organisation faces.

The Authority has recently undergone a Governance restructure. Prior to restructuring, the Governance was as follows;



The adoption of the new Governance structure was approved at the Extraordinary meeting of the Fire Authority on 25th April 2023. The new Governance structure is shown below;



iv) The Fire and Rescue Service:

The Service is led by the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive with the support of the Service Leadership Board (SLB), which consists of the most senior executive officers of the Service (the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive and the Directors of Service Delivery, Service Delivery Support, Corporate Services and the Statutory Finance Officer), supported by the the Clerk. The SLB has overall responsibility for the organisation's strategic direction, leadership, strategic financial planning and decision making. The Board considers strategic, legal, operational and financial issues and risk. It has overall responsibility for management of the organisation, the establishment of strategy, direction-setting and both capital and revenue requirements. The SLB monitors and oversees Service operations, ensuring competent and prudent management, good governance, sound planning and suitable procedures for the maintenance of adequate systems of internal control and for compliance with statutory and regulatory obligations.

The Service Leadership Team (SLT) provides day to day leadership and management for the Service, overseeing a working environment which supports the effective achievement of goals and priorities (both operational and non-operational), maintains all necessary standards of compliance and good practice, and ensures that the Service is a great place to work. The SLT has delegated responsibility for developing and delivering against the Service Plan, as well as other supporting Service strategies, action plans and budgets.

B) Governance & Assurance

The Governance and Assurance Framework 2024-2028 explains how the Fire Authority delivers good governance and how it reviews the effectiveness of its governance arrangements. It can be viewed here:
https://avonfire.moderngov.co.uk/ecCatDisplayClassic.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13201&path=13198

The following key documents and processes exist to support the Governance & Assurance of the organisation:

i) Annual Governance Statement

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Fire Authority is required to produce an Annual Governance Statement. This document sets out a framework by which the Fire Authority's internal systems and processes are directed and controlled. It enables the Fire Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of cost-effective services. The final 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement is signed and published alongside the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts.

ii) Statement of Assurance

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, published in May 2018, sets out the requirement for all Fire and Rescue Authorities in England to publish an annual statement of assurance to cover financial, governance and operational matters. The 2023/24 Statement of Assurance was signed off by the Audit Governance and Oversight Committee on 12 December 2024 and can be viewed here:
https://avonfire.moderngov.co.uk/ecCatDisplayClassic.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13200&path=13198

iii) Fire and Rescue Service Inspections

Avon Fire & Rescue Service is regularly inspected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and its Round 3 inspection was undertaken in summer 2023 to assess the Service against the three principal areas of effectiveness, efficiency and how we look after our people.

On 16 August 2023, HMICFRS published two accelerated causes of concern (ACoC) – one relating to the management of site-specific risk information and the other to technical issues with our mobilising system. We submitted action plans to address these two ACoC on 19 September 2023.

The Inspectorate's full Round 3 report was subsequently published on 22 November 2023; across the eleven diagnostics, HMICFRS graded Avon Fire & Rescue Service as 'adequate' in two, 'requires improvement' in five and 'inadequate' in four. It issued a total of 31 areas for improvement (AFIs) and four Causes of Concern (including the two ACoC published in August 2023 – with 20 associated recommendations overall). We submitted further action plans to address the two Causes of Concern in January 2024.

HMICFRS revisited the Service to assess progress against our ACoC action plans in early December 2023. A second revisit took place in March 2024 focussing on the mobilising IT system accelerated cause of concern. HMICFRS recognised the progress made to date in their revisit outcome letters.

The Service has strengthened its governance arrangements and introduced a Service Improvement Board to monitor progress and provide strategic assurance, and more recently introduced an Internal Improvement Board which reviews evidence of actions completed. It also provides support 'critical friend' to action owners. The Service also reports into the central Fire Performance Oversight Group (FPOG) as a result of entering enhanced monitoring known as 'engage' – addressing concerns by strengthening strategic scrutiny and oversight.

A further revisit took place in the first two weeks of September 2024 where progress against all four causes of concern were reviewed. Following this revisit, HMICFRS closed eight of the 20 recommendations in the original report and discharged the Accelerated Cause of Concern relating to the Service's mobilising IT system.

The Service continues to work hard on delivering the improvements necessary to resolve the remaining issues highlighted by HMICFRS at the original inspection. A further revisit(s) may take place in 2025 covering the remaining recommendations. The Round 4 inspection programme commences in the summer of 2025. Avon's Round 4 inspection will likely take place in late 2025 or early 2026.

Full details of the HMICFRS Round 3 inspection can be found on the Inspectorate's website at https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/fire-and-rescue-services/avon/

The first revisit letter (published January 2024) can be found here;
https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publications/avon-frs-causes-of-concern-revisit-letter-january-2024/

The second revisit letter (published May 2024) can be found here;
https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publications/avon-frs-cause-of-concern-revisit-letter-may-2024/

The third revisit letter (published October 2024) can be found here;
https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publications/avon-frs-causes-of-concern-revisit-letter-october-2024/

C) Performance

Organisational Performance

AF&RS continues to make excellent progress in lowering risk in our community by meeting targets for the number and impact of incidents attended. We have met our target for reducing Accidental dwelling fires and deliberate small fires and are just above target for reducing deliberate fires in buildings and vehicles.

Each incident that is prevented represents a reduction of risk in our community. Overall, we received 22,859 calls for emergency assistance and attended 11,288 incidents. We exceeded our targets for response standards across each of the three key response criteria (emergency critical target 8 minutes and actual 7 minutes 33 seconds, emergency non-critical target 12 minute and actual 7 minute 41 seconds, and non-emergency target 60 minutes and actual 7 minutes 57 seconds).

We are committed to doing all that we can to make our community safer and our Service stronger. We continue to analyse our data to show us what additional interventions and initiatives we can take.

Our Performance Report will be published later this year on our website https://www.avonfire.gov.uk/publications/performance-reports/ and will give full information about our progress against our targets.

A summary of the service provided to our communities can be seen in the diagram below:

IN 2023/24 AVON FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

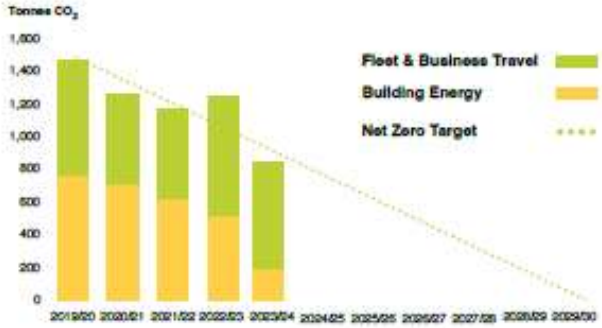
Environmental performance

Avon Fire & Rescue Service 2024

54%

reduction in carbon emissions

We've reduced our carbon emissions by 54% since the baseline 2019/20 - towards our Net Zero by 2030 goal.



£21,000

grant from the Bristol Clean Air Zone support scheme towards electric vehicles

Change to fluorine-free foam on all fire appliances

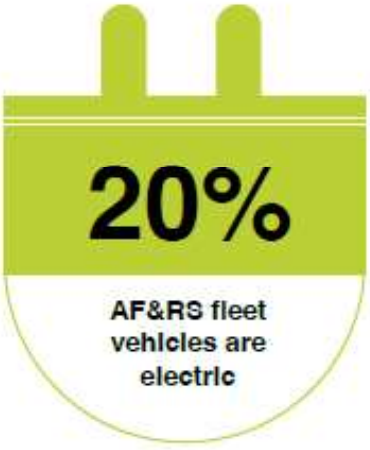
Transition away from fluorinated foams which containing 'persistent' chemicals

13% of our energy is generated from solar panels on AF&RS buildings

Energy efficient new-build Avonmouth – uses 57% less energy than the old station

Environmental Management System in place

Aligned to internationally recognised standard ISO14001



20%

AF&RS fleet vehicles are electric

Litter picks at Weston beach & around Portishead to celebrate Earth Day April 2023

£13,000

for Fire Fighters Charity

Textile banks – £13,000 for the Fire Fighters Charity & 58 tonnes of unwanted clothes and textiles collected from the textile banks at AFRS fire stations

New wellbeing spaces at Chew Fire Station & Nova Way

Our Annual Environmental Report 2023/2024 Report gives more detail:
https://www.avonfire.gov.uk/publications/environmental-reports/

D) Transformation Programme

Transformation is a multi-year programme of interlinked projects designed to review, develop and improve the Service's policies, processes and systems, often using technology more effectively to maximise efficiency. Due to labour market issues, there were difficulties in recruiting to the digital arm of the programme, together with some vacancies within the team. The programme end date has therefore been extended until March 2025 to ensure its objectives are met without incurring further cost. No further extensions are planned. Despite these delays, significant progress has been made with key IT projects which have realised efficiencies and benefits for the Service through improved use of technology to reduce time spent on administrative tasks, manual processing and intervention.

The Service had for many years remained on an old version of Firewatch (this is a core integrated system covering Human Resources, staff availability and people development which supports the maintenance of skills and training). It was therefore not possible to introduce many new features which would enable multiple processes to be streamlined, moving on-call colleagues off Rappel (a legacy on-call resourcing system) and a host of other benefits. The first phase of the Firewatch upgrade went live in February 2023; this enabled further process and digital improvements in the programme to be delivered. Phase two, the move to a Cloud based solution was implemented in September 2023. Phase 3, the upgrade to version 7.8 was implemented in June 2024. The final phase of the Firewatch upgrade is currently underway.

The development of digital forms has continued in 2023/24 bringing further efficiencies. A Continuous Improvement Framework and Register has been implemented, bringing together in one place actions from all the Service's key programmes and action plans, and providing dashboard views for more effective governance and oversight. Policy related activities were completed in Transformation by the end of 2023/24, with administration for future policy reviews being passed to the BAU team from 01/04/24.

The majority of the remaining work is expected to be completed by the end of the 2024/25 financial year. Two of the digital projects will be completed after this date due to complexity and other related IT projects requiring completion first. Resourcing beyond March 2025 for these projects is already in place.

E) Financial Performance

i) Financial Overview:

The key financial matters arising from the 2023/2024 Statement of Accounts are:

- The 2023/2024 final revenue results showed a break-even position (2022/2023 break-even).

- The capital programme for 2023/2024 was £6.3m (2022/2023 £7.7m) and there has been capital expenditure of £4.3m (2022/2023 £5.0m). The majority of the remaining allocation has now been carried forward into the 2024/2025 Capital Programme, as approved by the Fire Authority on 20 March 2024.

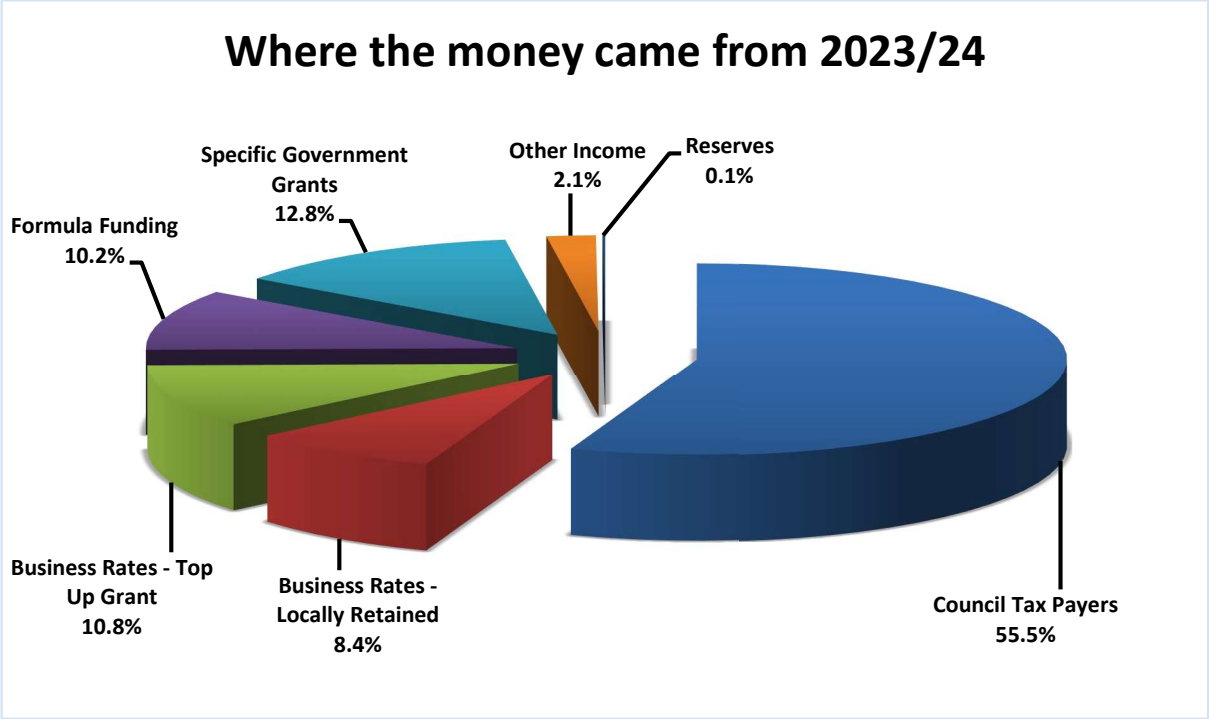
- A full review of reserves has been undertaken by the Statutory Finance Officer and the Service Leadership Board (SLB) and transfers between reserves were made during the year and are described in the reserves section of this report.

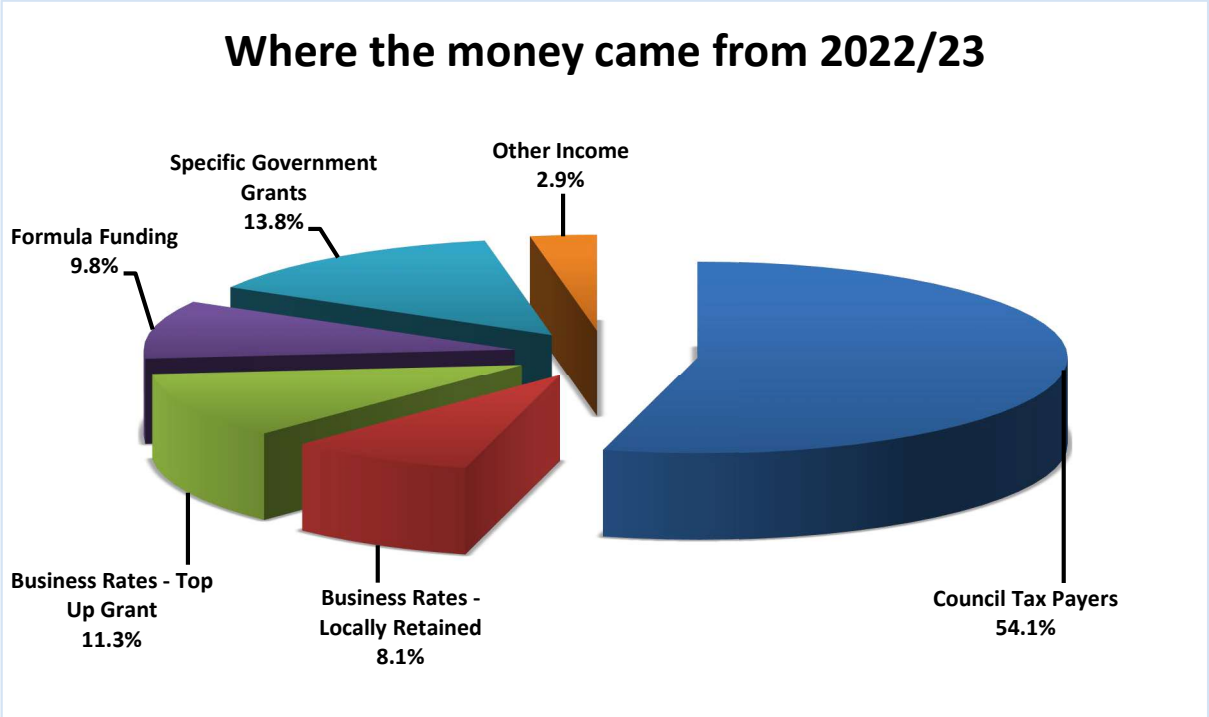
- The General Fund Reserve (working balance) remained at £1.5m for 2023/2024 (2022/2023 £1.5m). This sum is intended to meet unforeseen expenditure and, if called upon, would then need to be replaced.

ii) 2023/2024 Revenue Budget:

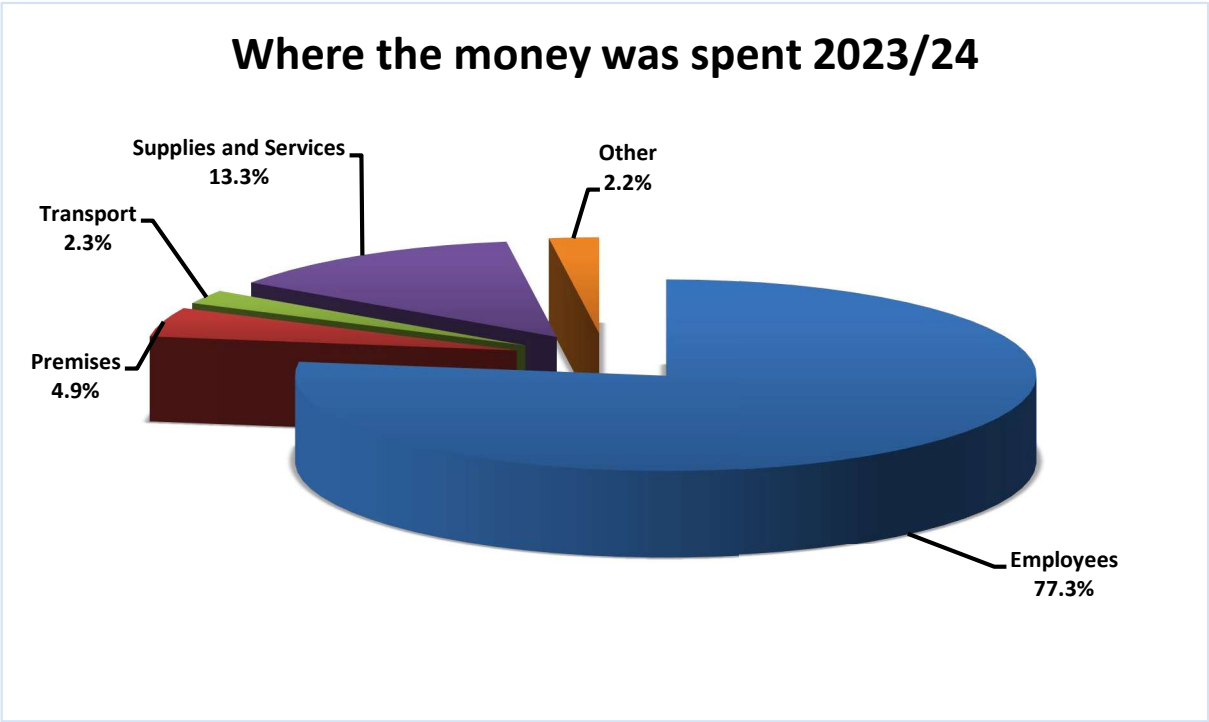
The original Annual Budget approved by the Fire Authority for 2023/2024 totalled £55.62m (2022/2023 £52.42m) and this budget remained unchanged at the year-end (2022/2023 increased to £54.20m). The key movements to the Income annual budgets approved by the Fire Authority in February 2023 related to the Business Rate Relief Grant from central government decreasing to £2.55m (2022/2023 £2.64m).

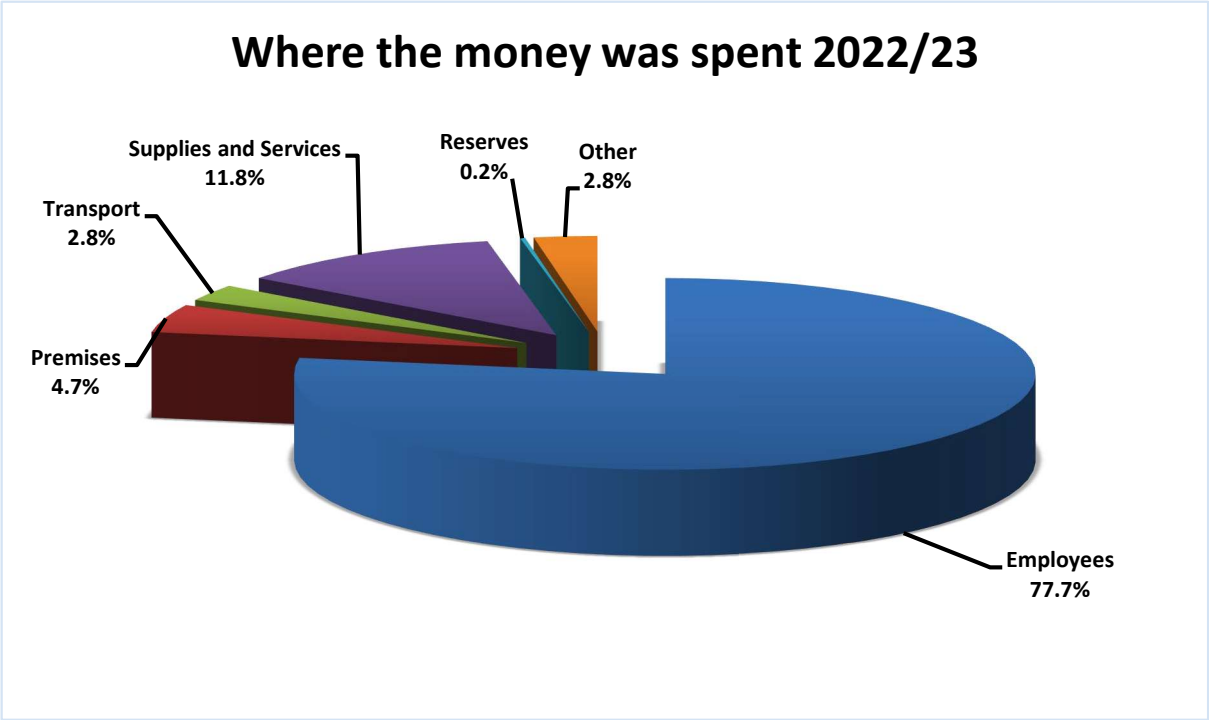
55.5% (2022/2023 54.1%) of the Fire Authority's funding came from the local council taxpayer, with 10.8% (2022/2023 11.3%) from business rates top up grant from central government and 8.4% (2022/2023 8.1%) from locally retained business rates. Most of the remainder of the funding comes from Central Government, for items such as formula funding and specific government grants, for example pension contribution grant and USAR (Urban Search and Rescue) support grant.





Expenditure for the year was incurred in the following main areas:





Most of the expenditure continues to relate to employee staff costs which decreased to 77.3% in 2023/2024 from 77.7% in 2022/2023. Supplies & Services expenditure relates to areas including Communications and IT, Equipment and key contracts for services including the Financial Services and Occupational Health contracts. Premises expenditure covers key areas which include Property Repairs, Rent, Rates and Utilities. Central Government continues to subsidise the increase in Firefighter pension contributions by issuing a grant of £2.407m (2022/2023 £2.407m), against a total employer pension cost of £5.853m (2022/2023 £5.549m).

Set out below is a comparison between the actual revenue expenditure in 2023/2024 and the revised budget for the year.

	Original Budget 2023/2024 £'000	Revised Budget 2023/2024 £'000	Actual Expenditure 2023/2024 £'000
Expenditure on services			
Employees (net)	42,221	42,680	44,218
Premises	2,819	2,819	2,815
Transport	1,481	1,481	1,338
Supplies and Services	7,867	7,867	7,579
Other Costs	1,834	1,375	1,241
Income	(6,739)	(6,739)	(8,227)
Net Expenditure	**49,483**	**49,483**	**48,964**
Transfers to / from revenue reserves			
Transfers from Reserves	(600)	(600)	(67)
Transfers to Reserves	-	-	
Net Expenditure after transfers to / from reserv	**48,883**	**48,883**	**48,897**
Local Taxpayers			
Council Tax	(31,602)	(31,602)	(31,602)
Locally Retained Business Rates	(4,802)	(4,802)	(4,802)
Collection Fund Surpluses	(145)	(145)	(145)
Central Government			
Formula Funding	(12,036)	(12,036)	(12,036)
Non-Domestic Rates Redistribution	-	-	-
West of England City Region Deal	(298)	(298)	(312)
Working Balance	-	-	-

These budget and actual amounts comprise the net expenditure chargeable to the General Fund, which relates to council tax, business rates and formula funding from Central Government. This is before statutory accounting adjustments relating to pensions, capital and other differences, to get to the net expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

iii) Reserves:

Reserves are an essential tool to ensure long-term budget stability and Fire Authorities are expected to provide for reserves to manage their financial position and to manage risks. There is no statutory maximum level of reserves and traditionally AF&RS has held £1.5m (3% of the total 2023/24 income base) in the general reserve to manage the impact of uneven cash flows and unexpected events or emergencies as well as earmarked reserves (sums set aside to meet known or predicted specific requirements).

A full review of reserves is carried out at a minimum annually to ensure continuing relevance and adequacy of the Avon Fire Authority reserves. The 2024/2028 Reserve Strategy was presented and approved by the Fire Authority on 12 June 2024. The previous review in June 2023 can be viewed here:

https://avonfire.moderngov.co.uk/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=1606&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI1113

iv) 2023/2024 Capital Budget and Spending:

The Fire Authority determines its capital investment plans and consequent level of borrowing in accordance with guidelines laid out in the Prudential Code issued by CIPFA. The Prudential Code requires the Fire Authority to ensure that its capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

For 2023/2024, the Fire Authority set a revised capital programme of £6.3m as part of the rolling 3-year capital programme (the 3-year capital programme for 2022/2023 was £7.7m). Capital expenditure (excluding the PFI scheme) for the year is shown in the table below:

Area	Revised Budget 2023/2024 £'000	Outturn £'000	Overspend/ (Underspend) £'000
Fleet	1,834	1,035	(799)
Premises	3,176	2,655	(521)
Operational Equipment	100	113	13
IT	300	120	(180)
Transformation	471	172	(299)
Control	450	189	(261)
Total Programme	6,331	4,284	(2,047)

Funding for the programme was met from the following sources:

Funding Source	2023/2024 Funding £'000
Capital Receipts / Capital Reserves	4,258
Capital Grant and Contributions	26
Total Funding	4,284

The Fire Authority invested in the following material assets during the year:

Premises - £2.66m (2022/23 £1.48m)

- The majority of expenditure in the year relates to major refurbishments at Bedminster station (£2.27m).
- Other premises projects included follow-up work after completion of Avonmouth and renovation to extend the life of Bath station.

Fleet - £1.04m (2022/23 £3.39m)

- £863k has been spent on the appliance replacement programme and £171k on ancillary vehicles.

Capital Budget underspend:

The budgets for a number of capital items were not spent in the year, with the main reasons for this described below:

Fleet:

- The underspend of £0.80m arises as a result of timing differences, with £826k of milestone payments on type B appliances having been accrued into the earlier 2022/23 year end. A detailed review of fleet requirements by the incoming fleet manager will inform elements of the future fleet capital programme.

Premises:

- The underspend of £0.52m arises as a result of some slippage of the programme of works for the major refurbishment at the Bedminster Station. This is planned to be completed by early 2024/25.

Operational Equipment:

- This is mostly on-budget with a small variance due to timing and changing priorities.

IT:

- Lower than expected IT spend has resulted from delays to the IT hardware infrastructure project. The appointment of a new Head of ICT during 2024/25 will ensure the IT strategy and investment requirements are reviewed and updated, as required.

Transformation Programme:

- In 2023/24 the transformation programme invested in new rear mounted MDTs to assist in the provision of risk information on the appliance.

Control:

- Control spend of £189k relates to the radio replacements approved by the Service Leadership Team in September 2023 against the 2023/24 Control capital allocation. The underspend on Control is as a result of rephasing of the Control projects which is accounted for in the revised Capital Programme approved by the Fire Authority in March 2024.

F) Strategic Financial Planning

i) Medium-Term Financial Planning

The Fire Authority prepares a 4-year revenue Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to ensure that it has adequate resources to deliver its services into the future. This Financial Strategy document supports the approved Service Plan to ensure the key priorities are delivered within the funding available. Whilst continued pressures on Government funding and additional pension costs are a key driver for change, it remains important that the Fire Authority's future strategies continue to be service-led and aligned to risk. These strategies would include the Service's Transformation Programme and the IT infrastructure update.

The revised four-year Medium-Term Financial Plan covering the period 2024/2025 to 2027/2028 was approved by the Fire Authority on 20 March 2024 and is published here (Option 2(3)): https://avonfire.moderngov.co.uk/ecCatDisplayClassic.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13296&path=13193,13206

It is summarised below:

Funding, Income and Expenditure	2024/2025 Annual Budget £'000	2025/2026 Annual Budget £'000	2026/2027 Annual Budget £'000	2027/2028 Annual Budget £'000
Home Office & Local Authority Funding	(52,924)	(53,408)	(54,521)	(55,659)
Grants and Income Contributions	(8,899)	(8,899)	(8,899)	(8,899)
Total Funding and Income	**(61,823)**	**(62,307)**	**(63,420)**	**(64,558)**
Employees	48,638	49,611	50,603	51,615
Premises	2,849	2,934	3,022	3,113
Transport	1,549	1,596	1,644	1,693
Supplies and Services	8,477	8,731	8,993	9,263
Capital Financing Costs	672	869	1,811	3,033
Other Expenditure/(Savings)	(130)	(1,434)	(2,653)	(4,159)
HMICFRS costs	440	-	-	-
Transfer to/(from) reserves	(672)	-	-	-
Total Expenditure	**61,823**	**62,307**	**63,420**	**64,558**

The objectives of the MTFP are:

- To ensure the Authority's strategic priorities can be delivered within the funding envelope available;
- To ensure expenditure commitments do not exceed forecast resources over the four-year period;
- To ensure the revenue implications of proposed Capital Programmes are affordable;
- To look for more efficient ways of delivering services, ensuring Value for Money is delivered within the Service.
- To manage the resources available effectively and to ensure the budget is aligned with corporate objectives;
- To ensure that Precept increases are contained within the Government's referendum limit; and,
- To ensure the Authority maintains a realistic level of general reserves to meet unforeseen events and to mitigate risk for the Service.

The MTFP for 2024/2025 to 2027/2028 was approved by the Fire Authority in March 2024 and considers all current risks and cost pressures such as increasing inflation, increases to pay awards interest rate fluctuations and increases to capital financing costs as a result of prudential borrowing. All these ongoing factors are also reported throughout the financial year for consideration by the Service Leadership Team, Service Leadership Board and the Fire Authority as part of our in-year financial monitoring.

ii) Capital Strategy:

The revised 3-year Capital Programme covering the period 2024/2025 to 2026/2027 was approved by the Fire Authority on 20 March 2024 and is published here (Option 2(3)): https://avonfire.moderngov.co.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=2037&Opt=3

It is summarised below:

Capital Programme 2024/2025 to 2026/2027 Funding and Expenditure	2024/2025 £'000	2025/2026 £'000	2026/2027 £'000
Capital Receipt from fleet disposals	25	25	25
Capital Reserve	5,093	-	-
Prudential borrowing	366	9,915	18,855
Total Funding	**5,484**	**9,940**	**18,880**
Premises	2,805	5,700	17,400
Fleet	1,499	1,800	1,000
Control	730	2,000	-
ICT	300	330	360
Transformation	50	-	-
Operational Equipment	100	110	120
Total Expenditure	**5,484**	**9,940**	**18,880**

To help support the oversight of the Capital Programme, additional capital planning reviews and controls have been adopted by the Service. These include:

- A Capital Steering and Prioritisation Group which considers all proposed capital projects and ensures these are prioritised according to Service need and objectives whilst remaining affordable.
- Regular capital reporting to both SLB and SLT, aligned with revenue reporting, to ensure capital spend is similarly monitored and scrutinised.

These additional reviews and controls support the current reporting of the Capital Programme to the Fire Authority and the Policy and Resources Committee

iii) Financial Risks

The following issues are considered to represent the key financial risks facing the Fire Authority:

- Uncertainty over future funding levels as a result of the 1-year settlement for 2024/25.
- A potential reduction in future Central Government and Local Government funding as a result of future austerity.
- Increased collection fund deficits above those assumed in the MTFP.
- Pay awards being confirmed at rates above those included in the MTFP.
- Non-pay inflation rates over and above the level assumed, particularly on certain materials such as fuel and vehicle parts.
- Increase in pension costs not funded centrally as a result of actuarial review or immediate detriment processing.
- Uncertainty as a result of the current conflict within Europe and its impact on supply chain and costs.
- Requirement to seek Prudential Borrowing to fund the Capital Programme and increased cost of capital funding, over and above the level assumed in the MTFP.
- Higher than anticipated costs associated with delivery against the HMICFRS action plan.

We actively monitor risks and mitigate these risks through a variety of measures including:

- Financial Modelling, including sensitivity analysis, has been undertaken in key areas to assess risk levels within the MTFP.
- The MTFP has been based on robust 2024/2025 Annual Budgets, which were approved by the Fire Authority in March 2024.
- The Devolved Budgetary Framework has now been implemented and embedded across the Service ensuring appropriate oversight and management of budgets in all areas.
- Finance Business partnering has been embedded, which helps to strengthen the management of financial resources within the organisation. Going forwards we will continue to improve our management of financial resources.

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 this Authority, that officer is the Statutory Finance Officer.

to manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and to safeguard its assets; and

to approve the statement of accounts.

The Statutory Finance Officer's Responsibilities

The Statutory Finance Officer 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.

In preparing this statement of accounts, the Statutory Finance Officer has:

- selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent; and
- complied with the code of practice.

The Statutory Finance Officer has also:

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

Certificate of the Statutory Finance Officer

I certify that the statement of accounts on pages 18 - 85 provide a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority at the accounting date and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Signed

Verity Lee
Statutory Finance Officer of the Avon Fire Authority
14th February 2025

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for the year ending 31 March 2024

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), 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.

Restated 2022/2023				2023/2024		
Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure		Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure
£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000
61,156	(9,567)	51,589	Fire fighting and rescue operations	55,077	(8,621)	46,456
61,156	**(9,567)**	**51,589**	**Cost of Services**	**55,077**	**(8,621)**	**46,456**
		510	Loss / (gain) on disposal of Property, Plant & Equipment			(106)
		(11,448)	Firefighter Pension Top up Grant			(13,430)
		18,682	Financing and investment income and expenditure (note 27)			23,454
		(45,764)	Taxation and non-specific grant income (note 26)			(48,964)
		13,569	**Deficit on Provision of Services**			**7,410**
			Items that will not be reclassified to the (Surplus) or Deficit on the Provision on Services			
		(5,394)	Surplus on revaluation of non-current assets			(395)
		(197,218)	Remeasurements of the net defined benefit liability (note 25)			(5,899)
		(202,612)	**Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure**			**(6,294)**
		(189,043)	**Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure**			**1,116**

A restatement has taken place for the 2022/23 comparative figures included within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account. This restatement has reduced the Firefighter Top Up Grant from £13,456k to £11,448k, to accurately reflect the amount the Service received during 2022/23. An equal and opposite adjustment, of £2,008k has also been made within the Gross Expenditure line, reducing Gross Expenditure from £63,164k to £61,156k. This has therefore had a nil effect on the Deficit on Provision of Services Line, which remains at £13,569k. This adjustment has been made to ensure IAS19 figures are accurately represented, and Firefighter pension accounting is in line with the treatment prescribed in the CIPFA Code.
This restatement also effects note 3 - Expenditure and Funding Analysis, note 4 - Note to the Expenditure and Funding Analysis and note 25 - Retirement Benefits.

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 other reserves. The 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 Authority.

	General Fund Balance £'000	Earmarked Fund Reserves £'000	Unapplied Capital Receipts Reserve £'000	**Total Usable reserves £'000**	Unusable Reserves £'000	**Total Authority Reserves £'000**
Balance at 1 April 2022	**1,500**	**14,332**	**3,890**	**19,722**	**(639,198)**	**(619,476)**
Movement in reserves during 2022/2023						
Deficit on the provision of services	(13,569)	-	-	(13,569)	-	(13,569)
Other Comprehensive Expenditure	-	-	-	-	202,612	202,612
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	**(13,569)**	**-**	**-**	**(13,569)**	**202,612**	**189,043**
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations (note 12)	13,522	-	-	13,522	(13,522)	-
Net Increase before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	**(47)**	**-**	**-**	**(47)**	**189,090**	**189,043**
Transfers to/from earmarked Reserves (note 23)	47	(974)	(3,890)	(4,817)	4,817	-
Increase/(Decrease) in 2022/2023	**-**	**(974)**	**(3,890)**	**(4,864)**	**193,907**	**189,043**
Balance at 31 March 2023 carried forward	**1,500**	**13,358**	**-**	**14,858**	**(445,291)**	**(430,433)**
Movement in reserves during 2023/2024						
Deficit on the provision of services	(7,410)	-	-	(7,410)	-	(7,410)
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	-	-	-	-	6,294	6,294
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	**(7,410)**	**-**	**-**	**(7,410)**	**6,294**	**(1,116)**
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations (note 12)	7,090	-	-	7,090	(7,090)	-
Net Increase before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	**(320)**	**-**	**-**	**(320)**	**(796)**	**(1,116)**
Transfers to/from earmarked Reserves (note 23)	320	(3,947)	-	(3,627)	3,627	-
Increase/(Decrease) in 2023/2024	**-**	**(3,947)**	**-**	**(3,947)**	**2,831**	**(1,116)**
Balance at 31 March 2024 carried forward	**1,500**	**9,411**	**-**	**10,911**	**(442,460)**	**(431,549)**

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2024

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'.

31-Mar-23 £'000		Notes	31-Mar-24 £'000
74,424	Property, Plant & Equipment	13	74,364
68	Intangible assets	13	33
74,492	**Long-term Assets**		**74,397**
9,524	Short-term Debtors	17	11,222
27	Inventories		372
8,604	Cash and Cash Equivalents	18	1,770
18,155	**Current Assets**		**13,364**
(856)	Short-term Provisions	22	(502)
(5,999)	Short-term Creditors	19	(4,999)
(6,855)	**Current Liabilities**		**(5,501)**
(7,000)	Long-term borrowing	20	(7,000)
	Other Long-term Liabilities		
(507,914)	Net Pensions Liability	25	(505,791)
(1,312)	Deferred Liability	7	(1,018)
(516,226)	**Long-term Liabilities**		**(513,809)**
(430,434)	**Net Liabilities**		**(431,549)**
14,857	Usable Reserves	23	10,911
(445,291)	Unusable Reserves	24	(442,460)
(430,434)	**Total Reserves**		**(431,549)**

These financial statements are updated for re-signing and replace the unaudited financial statements approved at the meeting of the Audit, Governance and Oversight Committee on 19th June 2024.

Signed

Paul Goggin
Interim Chair of the Avon Fire Authority Authority
14th February 2025

Verity Lee
Statutory Finance Officer of the Avon Fire

14th February 2025

Cash Flow Statement

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. 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.

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
(13,569)	Net deficit on the provision of services	(7,410)
11,927	Adjustments to net deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements (note 28)	4,972
(1,642)	Net cash flows from Operating Activities	(2,438)
(4,005)	Net cash flows from Investing Activities (note 29)	(4,127)
(234)	Net cash flows from Financing Activities (note 30)	(269)
(5,881)	Net increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	(6,834)
14,485	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	8,604
8,604	**Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period (note 18) in-hand**	**1,770**

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

1. Statement of Accounting Policies

i General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Authority's transactions for the 2023/2024 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31 March 2024. The Authority is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations and be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/2024 supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

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

ii 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.

- Revenue from the sale of goods is recognised when the Authority transfers the significant control of ownership to the purchaser and it is probable that economic benefits or service potential associated with the transaction will flow to the Authority.
- Revenue from the provision of services is recognised when the Authority can measure reliably the percentage of completion of the transaction and it is probable that economic benefits or service potential associated with the transaction will flow to the Authority.
- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed.
- 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.

iii Cash and Cash Equivalents and Bank Overdrafts

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are short-term investments that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

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

When the gross deficit of cash overdrawn on bank accounts has no offsetting arrangements the balance sheet shows the balance as Bank Overdrafts.

iv Exceptional Items

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

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

Prior period adjustments may arise as a result of a change in accounting policies or to correct a material error. Changes in accounting estimates are accounted for prospectively, i.e. in the current and future years affected by the change and do not give rise to a prior period adjustment.

Changes in accounting policies are only made when required by proper accounting practices or where the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events and conditions on the Authority's financial position or financial performance. Where a change is made, it is applied retrospectively (unless stated otherwise) by adjusting opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period as if the new policy had always been applied.

Material errors discovered in prior period figures are corrected retrospectively by amending opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period. There have been no prior period corrections in these accounts.

vi Charges to Revenue for Non-Current Assets

Services and support services are charged with the following amounts to record the cost of holding fixed 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 fixed assets attributable to the service.

The Authority 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 calculated on a prudent basis determined by the Authority in accordance with statutory guidance. Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses and amortisation are therefore replaced by the contribution in the General Fund Balance, described as the Minimum Revenue Provision "MRP", by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the two.

vii Employee Benefits

<u>Benefits Payable During Employment</u>

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

Termination Benefits

Termination benefits, whether they are a decision by the Authority to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy, are charged on an accruals basis to the relevant service line (or in discontinued operations) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the Authority's 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 Authority are divided between the 1992, 2006 and 2015 Firefighters Pension Schemes for its uniformed Firefighters and the Local Government Scheme for support staff and abated Firefighters:

- The Firefighters Pension Schemes are administered in accordance with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) regulations. As of 29 February 2024 administration of the Firefighters Pension Schemes passed from Bath & North East Somerset Council, to West Yorkshire Pension Fund.
- The Local Government Pensions Scheme (called the Avon Pension Fund) is administered by Bath & North East Somerset Council.

All schemes provide defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), earned as employees work for the Authority.

The Firefighters Pension Schemes

These are unfunded schemes. For such schemes, as there are no investment assets, IAS 19 requires recognition of the liability and pension reserve in the Balance Sheet and transactions in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure statement.

The Local Government Pension Scheme

The Avon Pension Fund is accounted for as a defined benefits scheme:

- The liabilities of the Avon Pension Fund attributable to the Authority 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 earnings for current employees.
- Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using an appropriate discount rate based on the return for high quality corporate bonds.
- The assets of Avon Pension Fund attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:
    - Quoted securities – current bid price;
    - Unquoted securities – professional estimate;
    - Unitised securities – current bid price; and
    - Property – market value.

- The movement on the net pensions liability is analysed into the following constituents:
    - Service cost comprising:
        - Current Service cost - the increase in the present value of a defined benefit obligation (liabilities) resulting from employee service in the current period.
        - Past service cost – (where applicable) the change in the present value of the defined benefit obligation for employee service in prior periods, resulting from a plan amendment (the introduction or withdrawal of, or changes to, a defined benefit plan) or a curtailment (a significant reduction by the Authority in the number of employees covered by a plan).
        - Any gain or loss on settlement – (where applicable) arising when an authority enters into a transaction that eliminates all further legal or constructive obligations for part or all of the benefits provided under a defined benefit plan.
    - Net Interest on the defined benefit liability/(asset) – the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability/(asset) that arises from the passage of time.
    - Expected return on assets – the annual investment return on the fund assets attributable to the Authority, based on an average of the expected long-term return – credited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.
    - Gains or losses on settlements and curtailments – the result of actions to relieve the Authority of liabilities or events that reduce the expected future service or accrual of benefits of employees – debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non-Distributed Costs.
    - Remeasurements of the net defined benefit liability/(asset) comprising:
        - Actuarial gains and losses – changes in the present value of the defined benefit obligation resulting from: a) experience adjustments (the effects of differences between the previous actuarial assumptions and what has actually occurred) and b) the effects of changes in actuarial assumptions.
        - the Return on plan assets – excluding amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit liability/(asset).
    - Contributions by scheme participants – the increase in scheme liabilities and assets due to payments made into the scheme by employees (where increased contribution increases pensions due to the employee in the future).
    - Contributions by the Employer – the increase in scheme assets due to payments made into the scheme by the employer.
    - Benefits paid – payments to discharge liabilities directly to pensioners.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the Authority's 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 appropriations to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end. The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

Discretionary Benefits

The Authority 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 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.

Long-term Disability Benefit

In accordance with IPSAS 25 and the code, the Authority has rebutted the presumption to account for long-term disability benefit in the same way as other long-term benefits under IAS 19. The Authority considers that these could be both significant and volatile given the nature of the service provision and therefore accounts for them, under IAS 19, as defined post-employment benefits.

viii 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.

No events have taken place after the date of authorisation for issue that are not reflected in the Statement of Accounts.

ix Financial Instruments and Fair Value Measurement

The Authority's financial assets and financial liabilities are classified as held at amortised cost.

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 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 instrument. 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 the borrowings that the Authority 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.

Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified into two types:

- Loans and receivables – assets that have fixed or determinable payments but are not quoted in an active market.
    - Receivables are measured at fair value and carried at their amortised cost.
    - There are no material loans which require separate classification and accounting treatment.
- Available-for-sale assets – assets that have a quoted market price and/or do not have fixed or determinable payments.
    - There are no available for sale assets which require separate classification and accounting treatment.

Fair value measurement

The Authority measures some of its financial instruments at fair value at each reporting date. Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants 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 Authority measures the fair value of an asset or liability using the assumptions that market participants would use when pricing the asset or liability, assuming that market participants act in their economic best interest.

The Authority uses valuation techniques that are appropriate in the circumstances and for which sufficient data is available, maximising the use of relevant observable inputs and minimising the use of unobservable inputs.

Inputs to the valuation techniques in respect of assets and liabilities for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the Authority's financial statements 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.

Financial instruments as set out in note 21 are classified at the following levels in the hierarchy:

- Level 1 – Short-term Creditors, Debtors, Cash & Cash Equivalents and Leases deferred liability.
- Level 2 – Borrowings including both Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) & Local Authority loans and PFI deferred liability.

x 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 when 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 Authority are not credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement until conditions attached to the grant or contribution have been satisfied. Conditions are stipulations that specify that the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset acquired using 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 creditors. When conditions are satisfied, the grant or contribution is credited to the relevant service line (attributable revenue grants and contributions) or Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income (non-ring-fenced revenue grants and all capital 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 Adjustment Account. Amounts in the Capital Grants Unapplied reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account once they have been applied to fund capital expenditure.

xi Intangible Assets

Expenditure on non-monetary assets that do not have physical substance but are controlled by the Authority as a result of past events (e.g. software licences) is capitalised when it is expected that future economic benefits or service potential will flow from the intangible asset to the Authority.

Intangible assets are measured initially at cost. Amounts are only revalued where the fair value of the assets held by the Authority can be determined by reference to an active market. In practice, no intangible asset held by the Authority meets this criterion, and they are therefore carried at amortised cost. The depreciable amount of an intangible asset is amortised on a straight line basis over its useful life of 5 years to the Fire fighting and rescue operations service line 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 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 Authority's Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account and (for sale proceeds) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

xii. Property, Plant and Equipment

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

Recognition

Assets costing individually or collectively less than £5,000 are classed as de-minimis and are not capitalised. The expenditure is charged direct to the appropriate service line.

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 maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

- the purchase price; and
- 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 Authority 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 fair 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 amount of the asset given up by the Authority.

Valuation

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

- operational land and properties and other operational assets – either depreciated replacement costs for specialised assets, or at existing use value for other assets;
- vehicles, plant and equipment – depreciated historical cost, as a proxy for fair value; and
- all other assets – fair value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use (existing use value – EUV).

Property valuations are undertaken by an external professional valuer independent of the Fire Authority in accordance with the RICS Valuation – Global Standards.

Where there is no market-based evidence of fair value because of the specialist nature of an asset, depreciated replacement cost (DRC) is used as an estimate of fair value. The depreciated replacement cost assumes that the asset would be replaced with a modern equivalent, not a building of identical design, with the same service potential as the existing asset.

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

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at fair value are revalued sufficiently regularly to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their fair value at the year-end and 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 the accumulated gains).
- Where there is no balance in the Revaluation Reserve or an insufficient balance, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against the relevant service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The Revaluation Reserve contains revaluation 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.

For the year ended March 2024 the entire property portfolio was revalued in full by Bruton Knowles with the exception of Bedminster Station which was transferred to Assets Under Construction at its March 2023 valuation plus enhancements at cost to represent the value of major capital works ongoing at year end. A full valuation of Bedminster will be carried out when it is transferred back to Land and Buildings during 2024/2025 following completion of the capital works.

Impairment

Assets are assessed at each year-end as to whether there is any indication that an asset may be impaired. Where indications exist and any possible differences are estimated to be material, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated and, where this is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognised for the shortfall.

Where impairment losses are identified, they are accounted for by:

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

Where an impairment loss is reversed subsequently, the reversal is credited to the relevant service lines 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 (i.e. freehold land and certain Community Assets).

For all assets with a finite life, depreciation is calculated on a straight line basis over the assessed useful life of the asset.

Depreciation is not charged in the year of acquisition.

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

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

When an asset is disposed of, or decommissioned, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet 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. 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.

Amounts received for a disposal in excess of £5,000 are categorised as capital receipts. The balance of receipts is required to be credited to the Capital Receipts Reserve, and can then only be used for new capital investment or set aside to reduce the Authority's underlying need to borrow (the capital financing requirement). Receipts are appropriated to the Reserve from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The written-off value of disposals is not a charge against council tax, as the cost of fixed assets is fully provided for under separate arrangements for capital financing. Amounts are appropriated to the Capital Adjustment Account from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

xiii Private Finance Initiative (PFI) 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.

Under the Joint Training PFI Scheme the Authority is deemed to control, along with the other partners, the services that are provided under the PFI scheme, and neither the Authority, other partners, nor the Service Provider, retains any residual interest in the property at the end of the 25-year service period. For these reasons the Authority carries its share of the assets used under the contracts on its Balance Sheet as part of 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.

Non-current assets recognised on the Balance Sheet are revalued and depreciated in the same way as property, plant and equipment owned by the Authority.

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 using the same principles as for a finance lease).
- Lifecycle replacement costs – recognised as non-current assets on the Balance Sheet.

The Government provides some revenue support to the project in the form of grants (PFI credits) and the three authorities fund the balance by making contributions, from within their own resources.

The grant from the Government, together with the contributions from the partners is paid into an equalisation fund, which is administered by Gloucestershire County Council on behalf of the partners. Surpluses on the equalisation fund are invested in order to ensure that adequate funding throughout the life of the contract is available. The fund is reviewed, and if necessary, contributions amended every three to five years with the intention that the balance of the fund at the end of the contract will be nil.

xiv 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 Authority becomes aware of the obligation, and are measured at the best estimate at the Balance Sheet date of the expenditure required to settle the obligation, taking into account relevant risks and uncertainties.

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

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

Contingent Liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Authority 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 Authority 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 benefits or service potential.

xv Reserves

The Authority sets aside specific amounts as reserves for future strategic priorities, aligning to the current Service Plan objectives, or to cover contingencies. Reserves are created by appropriating amounts out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When 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 in Reserves Statement so that there is no net charge against council tax for the expenditure.

Certain reserves are kept to manage the accounting processes for non-current assets, retirement and employee benefits and do not represent usable resources for the Authority – these reserves are explained in the relevant policies.

xvi VAT

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

xvii Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates

Council tax and Non-Domestic rate income included within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement includes the Fire Authority's share of the surplus or deficit from other Local Authorities' collection funds**.**

2. Critical Judgements, Assumptions and Accounting Standards not yet adopted

a. Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies

In applying the policies set out in the Statement of Accounting Policies, the Authority has to make certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events. It is felt that there are no critical judgements required in relation to applying accounting policies.

b. Assumptions made about the future and other sources of estimation uncertainty

The Statement of Accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Authority about the future or that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking into account historical experience, current trends and other relevant factors. However, because balances cannot be determined with certainty, actual results could be materially different from the assumptions and estimates.

The items in the Authority's Balance Sheet at 31 March 2024 for which there is a risk of adjustment in the forthcoming financial year are as follows:

- The actuary has provided an assessment of the effect of changes in the assumptions used in estimating pension assets and liabilities included in the accounts according to the requirements of IAS 19, as reported in note 25.

- Estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex estimates 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. Actuaries are engaged to provide the Authority with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied. Please refer to the Sensitivity analyses provided in note 25.

- Land and Buildings are subject to periodic external valuations in line with the requirements of the CIPFA code, with a full valuation being completed at least every five years. The last full valuation was completed for the year ended March 2024 by Bruton Knowles. A desktop valuation of the entire portfolio is planned for the year ended March 2025, with the exception of Bedminster Station which will be valued in full and transferred back to Land and Buildings once the current capital works are completed.

- Although the valuations are completed by industry experts, or using industry published indices, they are estimates and due to the high value of such assets there is a risk of error as the estimates could result in significant differences.

c. Accounting Standards issued but not yet adopted

The Code of Practice on Local Council Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code) requires the Authority to disclose information relating to the impact of an accounting change that will be required by a new standard that has been issued or amended but not yet 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;

IFRS 16 Leases will require local authorities that are lessees to recognise most leases on their balance sheets as right-of-use assets with corresponding lease liabilities (there is recognition for low-value and short-term leases) CIPFA/LASAAC have deferred implementation of IFRS 16 for local government to 1 April 2024 at the latest. The Authority is

still quantifying the impact of IFRS 16 for adoption in the year ended 31 March 2025 therefore no figures are presented as at 31 March 2024.

The following have also been published but it's felt that they will have no impact to the Authority.

IAS 8 Definition of Accounting Estimates (Amendments to IAS 8) issued in February 2021.

IAS 1 Disclosure of Accounting Policies (Amendments to IAS 1 and IFRS Practice Statement 2) issued in February 2021.

IAS 12 Deferred Tax related to Assets and Liabilities arising from a Single Transaction (Amendments to IAS 12) issued in May 2021.

IFRS 3 Updating a Reference to the Conceptual Framework (Amendments to IFRS 3) issued in May 2020.

For this disclosure the standards introduced only include a number of minor amendments to the following International Financial Reporting Standards and are currently not applicable or will not have a material impact to the Authority and the information provided in the financial statements.

3. Expenditure and Funding Analysis

This analysis shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources (government grants, council tax and business rates) in comparison with those resources consumed or earned. The Expenditure and Funding Analysis also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision-making purposes. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

2023/2024	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund £'000	Adjustment between Funding and Accounting Basis (Note 4) £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000
Fire fighting and rescue operations	48,920	(2,464)	46,456
Net Cost of Service	**48,920**	**(2,464)**	**46,456**
Other Income	(48,600)	9,554	(39,046)
(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services	**320**	**7,090**	**7,410**
Opening Usable Reserves Balance	14,858		
Plus deficit on Usable Reserves Balance in year	(3,947)		
Closing Usable Reserve Balance at 31 March 2024	10,911		

Restated 2022/2023	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund £'000	Adjustment between Funding and Accounting Basis (Note 4) £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000
Fire fighting and rescue operations	44,216	7,373	51,589
Net Cost of Service	**44,216**	**7,373**	**51,589**
Other Income	(44,169)	6,149	(38,020)
(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services	**47**	**13,522**	**13,569**
Opening Usable Reserves Balance	19,721		
Plus surplus on Usable Reserves Balance in year	(4,863)		
Closing Usable Reserve Balance at 31 March 2023	14,858		

Restatement of an error on the deficit on usable reserves balances in year (2022/23) to agree to Movement in Reserves Statement and reserve note, resulting in the correct Closing Balance.

4. Note to the Expenditure and Funding Analysis

This note provides a reconciliation of the main adjustments to Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund balances to arrive at the amounts in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The relevant transfers between reserves are explained in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

2023/2024	Adjustments for Capital Purposes £'000	Net change for the Pension Adjustments £'000	Other Differences £'000	Total Adjustments £'000
Fire fighting and rescue operations	3,484	(5,977)	29	(2,464)
Net Cost of Service	**3,484**	**(5,977)**	**29**	**(2,464)**
Other Income and Expenditure	(157)	9,753	(42)	9,554
Deficit on Provision of Services	**3,327**	**3,776**	**(13)**	**7,090**

Restated 2022/2023	Adjustments for Capital Purposes £'000	Net change for the Pension Adjustments £'000	Other Differences £'000	Total Adjustments £'000
Fire fighting and rescue operations	4,408	3,220	(255)	7,373
Net Cost of Service	**4,408**	**3,220**	**(255)**	**7,373**
Other Income and Expenditure	473	6,902	(1,226)	6,149
Deficit on Provision of Services	**4,881**	**10,122**	**(1,481)**	**13,522**

- Adjustments for capital purposes

Cost of Service - adds in depreciation and impairment and revaluation gains and losses.

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 as income not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices. The Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income and Expenditure line is credited with capital grants receivable in the year without conditions.

- Net 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:

Cost of services - removes the employer pension contributions made by the Authority as allowed by statute and replaces it with current and past service costs.

Financing and investment income and expenditure - the net interest on the defined benefit liability charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

- Other Differences

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

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.

5. Expenditure and Income Analysed by Nature

This reconciliation shows how the Surplus or Deficit on Provision of Service included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is analysed by nature.

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
	Expenditure	
47,051	Employee benefits expenses	40,359
10,887	Other Service expenses	11,458
5,226	Depreciation, amortisation and impairment	4,748
510	Loss / (Profit) on disposal of non-current assets	(106)
19,036	Interest payments	24,007
-	Pension past service costs	(30)
82,710		80,436
	Income	
(1,183)	Fees & charges and other service income	(409)
(34,223)	Income from Council Tax & Business Rates	(36,903)
(33,278)	Grants and contributions	(35,135)
(103)	Capital grants and contributions	(26)
(354)	Interest and investment income	(553)
(69,141)		(73,026)
13,569	**Deficit on the provision of services**	7,410

6. External Audit Fees

The Authority has incurred the following costs in relation to the audit of the Statement of Accounts and to non-audit services provided by the Authority's external auditor.

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
71	Fees payable with regard to external audit services carried out by the appointed auditor	94
5	Additional Value for Money procedures	-

7. Un-discharged obligations – Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme (Joint Training Centre)

As set out in the Accounting policies, under a joint PFI venture, the Authority now receives a significant element of its fire training from Babcock Fire Training (Avonmouth) Limited, a company contracted to provide the training until 31 March 2028. The training is supplied at the Joint Fire Training Centre, Avonmouth, a facility that the service provider designed, built, financed and now operates (DBFO) under the PFI contract.

The Authority's share (50%) of the annual net contract payments paid during the year together with the estimated amounts payable over the remaining five years of the joint venture are as follows:

2022/2023 £'000		Service Charge £'000	Interest £'000	Repayment of Liability £'000	Total 2023/2024 £'000
1,606	Total contract payments	1,002	399	269	1,670
	Outstanding undischarged contract obligations:				
1,670	Within 1 year	1,027	391	294	1,712
7,059	Between 2 and 5 years	3,236	1,093	1,018	5,347

As detailed in the note 1 (Statement of Accounting Policies) and more specifically throughout this note the Authority has entered into a Joint Training PFI scheme. As part of this scheme the equalisation fund, administered by Gloucestershire County Council, is invested to ensure that adequate funding is available throughout the life of the contract. The fund is reviewed and if necessary, contributions from the three partners amended every three to five years with the intention that the balance on the fund at the end of the contract will be nil.

The fund as at 31 March 2024 is forecasted to be in surplus of less than £1k at the end of the contract; the surplus has decreased by £166k from the surplus that was calculated at 31 March 2023. There are unknowns regarding inflation rates over the remaining four years of the contract.

The Training Centre contributions by the three partners are to remain at current levels to mitigate the risk of future rises in inflation rates.

Summary totals for the Asset held under the PFI and accounted for as part of Long Term Assets – namely the building, including lifecycle replacement costs and the effect of revaluation are as follows:

	Property Plant & Equipment £'000
Gross Asset Value at 31 March 2023	7,975
Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment	(4,660)
Net Book Value of Asset at 31 March 2023	3,315
Movement in 2023/2024	
Life Cycle replacement costs (additions)	-
Revaluation	-
Depreciation	(663)
Net Book Value of Asset at 31 March 2024	2,652

Summary totals for the corresponding liability are as follows:

	Property Plant & Equipment £'000
PFI Lease Liability outstanding at 31 March 2023	1,581
PFI Lease Liability repaid in 2023/2024	(269)
PFI Lease Liability outstanding at 31 March 2024	1,312
PFI Lease Liability - Current	294
PFI Lease Liability - Deferred	1,018

The above listed commitments are affected by past inflation – previous price rises will be built into future payments – and also by future inflation – which gives rise to uncertainty about future payments.

8. Members' Allowances

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended) the total sums paid by Avon Fire Authority to members/co-optees under the Avon Fire Authority Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023/24 are set out on the following page. The summary of allowances, which have been paid under this scheme are as follows:

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
74	Allowances	87
74	**Total**	**87**

A copy of the Members' Allowances Scheme and of the record of payments made under the scheme are available for inspection by appointment at Police and Fire Headquarters, Valley Road, Portishead, Bristol, BS20 8JJ between 8.30am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays).

A detailed list of individual payments can be seen below:

2022/2023 £	Recipient	Basic Allowance £	Special Responsibility Allowance £	Travel & Subsistence Expenses £	2023/2024 £
2,310	Councillor A Ali	503	-	-	503
2,332	Councillor J Ashe	292	-	-	292
-	Councillor L Brennan	2,408	-	36	2,444
2,360	Councillor S Bromley	292	-	-	292
385	Councillor A Brown	-	-	-	-
2,330	Councillor E Brown	292	-	-	292
2,943	Councillor T Butters	292	-	47	339
4,733	Councillor D Davies	292	225	168	685
2,310	Councillor R Eddy	3,020	-	-	3,020
4,633	Councillor P Goggin	3,020	671	-	3,691
-	Councillor R Hardie	2,408	-	-	2,408
2,418	Councillor H Hopkinson	281	-	-	281
-	Councillor P Hulme	2,408	-	-	2,408
4,043	Councillor R Jacobs	292	234	-	526
1,160	Councillor Y Kumar	292	-	-	292
12,727	Councillor B Massey	3,973	12,981	-	16,954
1,188	Councillor P May	2,424	-	-	2,424
2,310	Councillor Y Mohamud	3,020	-	-	3,020
4,620	Councillor A Monk	520	401	-	921
-	Councillor R Moss	674	-	-	674
4,215	Councillor B Nutland	3,020	2,895	254	6,169
4,633	Councillor R Payne	3,020	2,479	-	5,499
-	Councillor M Riddle	2,408	-	-	2,408
-	Councillor O Saini	2,416	-	-	2,416
1,874	Councillor S Smith	3,020	1,878	-	4,898
-	Councillor D Stansfield	2,408	-	-	2,408
-	Councillor D Thomas	2,408	-	-	2,408
2,310	Councillor R Tucker	3,020	1,878	-	4,898
1,949	Councillor A Varney	3,020	-	128	3,148
-	Councillor K Walker	1,742	-	113	1,855
4,633	Councillor D Wilcox	3,020	2,549	-	5,569
-	Councillor M Williams	2,408	-	-	2,408
770	Councillor C Windows	-	-	-	-
1,033	Mr J Mason	-	1,000	-	1,000
	Mr D Powell	735	-	101	836
74,219		59,348	27,191	847	87,386

9. Employees' Remuneration

The Authority is required, by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, to disclose the number of employees whose remuneration, excluding employer pension contributions, was £50,000 or more in bands of £5,000 and this information is set out in the following table – staff included in the senior officer remuneration table (note 10) are not included in this table:

2022/2023 No. of Employees	Remuneration Band	2023/2024 No. of Employees
27	£50,000 - £54,999	46
26	£55,000 - £59,999	23
13	£60,000 - £64,999	16
12	£65,000 - £69,999	9
8	£70,000 - £74,999	7
3	£75,000 - £79,999	6
1	£80,000 - £84,999	2
2	£85,000 - £89,999	1
-	£90,000 - £94,999	2

The number of exit packages, with total cost per band, are set out in the table below.

2022/2023			2023/2024			
No. of departures agreed	Total cost of exit packages in each band £,000	Exit Package Cost Band (including special payments)	No. of Compulsory Redundancies	No. of other departures agreed	Total no. of exit packages by cost band	Total cost of exit packages in each band £,000
-	-	£0 - £20,000	-	-	-	-
1	26	£20,001 - £30,000	-	-	-	-
-	-	£30,001 - £40,000	-	-	-	-
1	26	Total	-	-	-	-

10. Senior Officer Remuneration

Under the CIPFA Code of Practice, the Authority is required to disclose individual remuneration details for senior employees. Senior employees are defined as those employees who have a role in the overall management of the organisation. For the Fire Authority, it is deemed that this applies to the Service Leadership Board (SLB) and the statutory officers who are the Treasurer (replaced by the Statutory Finance Officer from May 2023) and the Clerk & Monitoring Officer. The Chief Fire Officers name also needs to be disclosed.
Details of their remuneration and amounts paid to them in the year, are shown in the following table:

Post Holder		Salary Incl. Fees & Allowances	Benefits in Kind	Compensation for Loss of Office	Pension Contributions	Note	Total Remuneration Including Pension Contributions
		£	£	£	£		£
Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive - S Shilton	**2023/2024**	**174,563**	**-**	**-**	**48,281**		**222,844**
	2022/2023	155,040	-	-	42,693		197,733
Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Director of Service Delivery - S Imrie	**2023/2024**	**127,141**	**-**	**-**	**36,616**		**163,757**
	2022/2023	111,179	-	-	32,020		143,199
Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Director of Service Delivery Support - R Welch	**2023/2024**	**129,287**	**-**	**-**	**35,515**		**164,802**
	2022/2023	58,550	-	-	14,633	1	73,183
Interim Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Director of Service Delivery Support - D Pike	**2023/2024**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**		**-**
	2022/2023	40,623	-	-	-	2	40,623
Interim Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Director of Service Delivery Support	**2023/2024**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**		**-**
	2022/2023	27,795	-	-	4,440	3	32,235
Director of Corporate Services	**2023/2024**	**110,503**	**-**	**-**	**18,705**		**129,208**
	2022/2023	96,549	-	-	17,055		113,604
Statutory Finance Officer (previous Treasurer)	**2023/2024**	**66,234**	**-**	**-**	**11,846**	**4**	**78,080**
	2022/2023	52,103	-	26,492	8,059	5	86,654
Interim Treasurer	**2023/2024**	**9,033**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**6**	**9,033**
	2022/2023	20,937	-	-	-	6	20,937
Legal Advisor, Clerk & Monitoring Officer	**2023/2024**	**76,563**	**-**		**12,952**		**89,515**
	2022/2023	62,661	-		11,021		73,682
Total 2023/2024		**693,324**	**-**	**-**	**163,915**		**857,239**
Total 2022/2023		625,437	-	26,492	129,921		781,850

(1) Appointment commenced 17/10/22.

(2) Interim appointment commenced 01/07/22 and ended 30/09/22. These costs are recharged from Surrey County Council as post holder on secondment.

(3) Interim appointment commenced 01/04/22 and ended 30/06/22.

(4) Appointment commenced 02/05/23.

(5) Post holder resigned 31/12/2022.

(6) Interim appointment commenced 22/09/22 and ended 09/05/2023.

11. Related Party Transactions

The Code of Practice requires disclosure of material transactions with 'related parties' – bodies or individuals including key management / personnel that have the potential to control or influence the Authority or to be controlled or influenced by the Authority. For 2023/2024 the appropriate items are as follows:

- UK Government has effective control over the general operations of the Authority – it is responsible for providing the statutory framework within which the Authority operates; provides the majority of its funding in the form of grants (Revenue Support Grant and other specific grants) and redistributed non-domestic rates – (£20,248k) (PY (£19,822k)).

- Members of the Authority have direct control over the Authority's financial and operating policies. They have been asked to provide information regarding Related Party transactions and the table above in Note 8 has been populated with all the relevant information received.

- Officers of the Authority have been asked to provide information regarding Related Party transactions and the table above in Note 10 has been populated with all the relevant information received.

- Other local authorities:
  - Bristol City Council as a billing Authority responsible for collecting council tax & business rates on behalf of the Fire Authority for its area. Income of (£13,133k) was received plus an accrued amount of £19k (PY (£11,695k) & £111k). Also is a provider of financial services to the Fire Authority £263k (PY £245k).

  - Bath & North East Somerset Council as a billing Authority responsible for collecting council tax & business rates on behalf of the Fire Authority for its area. Income of (£6,424k) was received plus accrued amount of (£142k) ((PY (5,720k) & (£283k)) and as the Authority responsible for administering the Avon Pension Fund, with contributions paid over in respect of Fire Authority employees and, from April 2023 to February 2024, payments in respect of the Firefighters' pension scheme £22,951k (PY £20,925k).

  - North Somerset Council as a billing Authority responsible for collecting council tax and business rates on behalf of the Fire Authority for their areas. Income of (£7,395k) was received plus accrued amount of (£152k) (PY (£6,696k) & (£171k))

  - South Gloucestershire Council as a billing Authority responsible for collecting council tax and business rates on behalf of the Fire Authority for their areas. Income of (£9,910k) was received plus accrued amount of £446k (PY(£8,887k) & £365k)

  - City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council as the Authority responsible, from March 2024, for administering the West Yorkshire Pension Fund regarding payments in respect of the Firefighters' pension scheme £1,685k

- Other public bodies:
  - Public Works Loan Board provides a long-term loan and the cost of servicing this debt is £221k (PY £221k).

- Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset own the premises of the Authority's headquarters and the cost of the service charge is £267k (PY £230k).

12. Adjustments Between Accounting Basis & 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.

2022/2023			2023/2024	
Fund balance £'000	Movement in Unusable Reserves £'000		Fund balance £'000	Movement in Unusable Reserves £'000
		Adjustments primarily involving the Capital Adjustment Account		
		Reversal of items debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:		
5,186	(5,186)	Charges for depreciation, impairment & revaluation of non-current assets	4,713	(4,713)
41	(41)	Amortisation of intangible assets	35	(35)
(103)	103	Capital Grants & Contributions applied	(26)	26
510	(510)	(Profit)/Loss on sale of non- current assets	(106)	106
		Insertion of items not debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		
(15)	15	Capital expenditure charged against Fund balance	(500)	500
(504)	504	Statutory Provision for the Repayment of Debt - MRP	(476)	476
(234)	234	Statutory Repayment of Debt - PFI	(269)	269
-	-	Voluntary Provision above MRP	(44)	44
		Adjustments primarily involving the Pensions Reserve		
16,634	(16,634)	Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (see Note 26)	12,185	(12,185)
(6,512)	6,512	Employer's pension contributions and direct payments	(8,409)	8,409
		Adjustments primarily involving the Collection Fund Adjustment Account		
(1,226)	1,226	Amount by which council tax income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from council tax income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(42)	42
		Adjustments primarily involving the Accumulated Absences Account		
(255)	255	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	29	(29)
13,522	**(13,522)**	**Total Adjustments**	**7,090**	**(7,090)**

13. Summary of Capital Expenditure and Non-Current Asset Disposals

Property, Plant and Equipment

Movements in Property, Plant and Equipment assets during the year are as follows:

	2023/2024				
	Asset under construction £'000	Land & Buildings £'000	PFI £'000	Vehicles & Equipment £'000	**Total £'000**
Cost or Valuation					
1 April 2023	1,716	58,618	7,975	29,807	**98,116**
Additions	872	2,647	-	765	**4,284**
Disposals	-	-	-	(1,624)	**(1,624)**
Revaluation (Decrease)/Increases to Revaluation Reserve	-	395	-	-	**395**
Revaluation increases to (Surplus)/Deficit on the provision of Services	-	(2,145)	-	-	**(2,145)**
Transfer	(2,275)		-	2,275	-
31 March 2024	**313**	**59,515**	**7,975**	**31,223**	**99,026**
Depreciation and impairments					
1 April 2023	-	-	(4,660)	(19,032)	**(23,692)**
Charge for year	-	(2,366)	(663)	(1,677)	**(4,706)**
Disposals	-	-	-	1,599	**1,599**
Depreciation written out to deficit on the provision of services	-	2,137	-	-	**2,137**
Depreciation written out to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-
31 March 2024	**-**	**(229)**	**(5,323)**	**(19,110)**	**(24,662)**
Net book value of assets at 31 March 2023	**1,716**	**58,618**	**3,315**	**10,775**	**74,424**
Net book value of assets at 31 March 2024	**313**	**59,286**	**2,652**	**12,113**	**74,364**

	2022/2023				
	Asset under construction £'000	Land & Buildings £'000	PFI £'000	Vehicles & Equipment £'000	**Total £'000**
Cost or Valuation					
1 April 2022	4,988	52,357	6,266	30,261	**93,872**
Additions	1,335	1,541	15	2,107	**4,998**
Disposals	-	(652)	-	(2,577)	**(3,229)**
Revaluation (Decrease)/Increases to Revaluation Reserve	1,484	2,217	1,693	-	**5,394**
Revaluation increases to (Surplus)/Deficit on the provision of Services	(1,484)	(1,435)	-	-	**(2,919)**
Transfer	(4,607)	4,590	1	16	-
31 March 2023	**1,716**	**58,618**	**7,975**	**29,807**	**98,116**
Depreciation and impairments					
1 April 2022	-	(105)	(4,000)	(19,976)	**(24,081)**
Charge for year	-	(1,665)	(660)	(1,605)	**(3,930)**
Disposals	-	106	-	2,549	**2,655**
Depreciation written out to deficit on the provision of services	-	1,664	-	-	**1,664**
Depreciation written out to the revaluation reserve	-	-	-	-	-
31 March 2023	**-**	**-**	**(4,660)**	**(19,032)**	**(23,692)**
Net book value of assets at 31 March 2022	**4,988**	**52,252**	**2,266**	**10,285**	**69,791**
Net book value of assets at 31 March 2023	**1,716**	**58,618**	**3,315**	**10,775**	**74,424**

Intangible Non-Current Assets

Movements in intangible non-current assets during the year are as follows:

2022/2023 £'000	Intangible Assets (Purchased software licences)	2023/2024 £'000
	Original Cost	
1,093	1 April 2023 (2022)	**667**
(426)	Disposals	(433)
667	31 March 2024 (2023)	**234**
	Amortisation and impairments	
(983)	1 April 2023 (2022)	**(599)**
(41)	Charge for year	(35)
425	Disposals	433
(599)	31 March 2024 (2023)	**(201)**
110	**Net book value of assets at 31 March 2023 (2022)**	**68**
68	**Net book value of assets at 31 March 2024 (2023)**	**33**

14. Capital Expenditure and Sources of Finance

Capital expenditure and sources of finance were as follows:

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
1,556	Land and buildings	2,647
1,974	Vehicles	171
1,335	Assets Under Construction	872
120	Ops equipment	302
13	IT Hardware	292
4,998		**4,284**
3,889	Unapplied Capital Receipts	-
927	Capital Reserve	3,627
64	Capital Receipts	131
15	Revenue Contributions	500
103	Capital Grants & Contributions	26
4,998		**4,284**

The Fire Authority determines its level of borrowing in accordance with the Prudential Code issued by CIPFA (subject to longstop controls). The Prudential Code requires the Fire Authority to ensure that its capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

One of the prudential indicators, which relates to affordability, is the capital financing requirement; this indicates the underlying need to borrow for capital purposes.

The table below shows how capital expenditure during the year has been financed (including the value of assets acquired under finance leases and the PFI contract), the sources of that finance and how this relates to the movement in the capital financing requirement during the year. The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes has also been analysed between borrowing supported by Government financial assistance and that which is not supported. The borrowing which is not supported relates to borrowing which the Authority has determined as prudent under the new prudential system.

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
12,631	Opening Capital Financing Requirement	11,893
	Capital Investment	
4,998	Property, Plant and Equipment	4,284
-	Intangible assets	-
	Sources of finance	
(3,889)	Unapplied Capital Receipts	-
(927)	Capital Reserves	(4,127)
(64)	Capital Receipts	(131)
(753)	Revenue Provision	(789)
(103)	Capital Grants & Contributions	(26)
11,893	Closing Capital Financing Requirement	**11,104**
	Explanation of movements in year	
(504)	Decrease in underlying need to borrow (supported by Government financial assistance)	(476)
(234)	Decrease in underlying need to borrow (unsupported by Government financial assistance)	(313)
(738)	Decrease in Capital Financing Requirement	**(789)**

15. Capital Financing - Minimum Revenue Provision

The Authority is required by regulations, issued under the provisions of the Prudential Code, to make "prudent provision" for the redemption of debt. Whilst the term "prudent provision" is not defined in the regulations separate guidance has been issued on the interpretation of this term and the Authority has a legal obligation to comply with this.

For debt incurred prior to 1 April 2008 the Authority has opted to continue to use the "Regulatory Method" to calculate its Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) as permitted under the guidance. Therefore, the amount required to be set aside is 4% of the Authority's Capital Financing Requirement.

For any borrowing made under the provisions of the Prudential Code, after 1 April 2008 the Authority is required to repay this debt over the life of the asset that it is being utilised to fund. The balance of outstanding Prudential borrowing taken after 1 April 2008 will be deducted from the Authority's Capital Financing Requirement to allow the Minimum Revenue Provision of 4% to be calculated. The repayment of prudential borrowing based on the life of the assets will then be added to this figure to arrive at the total MRP amount required to be set aside for the repayment of debt each year.

The calculation of the Authority's Capital Finance Requirement and its MRP and Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP) is as follows:

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
	Opening Capital Financing Requirement as at 1 April:	
69,900	Fixed Assets	74,492
(23,804)	Revaluation Reserve	(28,411)
(33,465)	Capital Adjustments Account	(34,188)
12,631	Opening Capital Financing Requirement	**11,893**
(738)	Less in year statutory and voluntary revenue provision	(789)
11,893	Capital Financing Requirement	**11,104**
504	MRP	476
234	VRP	313
738		789

16. Non-Current Asset Valuation

The code requires assets carried at fair value to have a valuation at least every five years as a minimum, but these should be revalued more regularly if a five-yearly valuation would be insufficient to reflect material changes in value. Where there has been no material change, the Authority has chosen to carry out the valuation of its properties on a five-year rolling basis. Land and Buildings were revalued as a full exercise by the external valuers, Bruton Knowles, as at 31 March 2024, with the exception of Bedminster Station which was transferred to Assets Under Construction at its 31 March 2023 valuation plus enhancements at cost in order to recognise the fair value of ongoing major capital works.

Where appropriate the Authority's properties have been valued on the basis of open market value for existing use. However, the nature of the Authority's portfolio in terms of design, configuration and location, e.g. fire stations, has meant that the depreciated replacement cost approach has been considered more appropriate for the majority of its premises.

The depreciated replacement cost assumes that the asset would be replaced with a modern equivalent, not a building of identical design, with the same service potential as the existing asset. The modern equivalent may well be smaller than the existing asset, for example due to technological advances in plant and machinery.

The finite useful life of the Authority's assets on which depreciation has been provided are estimated as follows:

Assets	Years
Buildings	10-60
Fire Appliances	8-17
Other Vehicles	6-10
Trailers etc	5-12
Communication equipment	12
Computer equipment	5
Other equipment	3-15

Intangible Assets are amortised on a straight-line basis over five years.

17. Debtors

An analysis of debtors, amounts due in less than one year, is shown in the table below:

Reclassified 31/03/2023 £'000		31/03/2024 £'000
76	Trade Debtor	36
340	VAT - Non trade	525
2,468	Collection Fund - Non Trade	2,484
3,616	Pension top up grant - Non trade	4,356
283	Payment in Advance - Trade	459
1,587	Payment in Advance - Non trade	2,464
1,154	Other - Non trade	898
9,524		11,222

18. Cash and Cash Equivalents

The balance of Cash and Cash Equivalents is made up of the following elements. The Authority does not hold any short-term deposits:

31/03/2023 £'000		31/03/2024 £'000
8,604	Bank Current Accounts in-hand	1,770
8,604		1,770

19. Creditors

An analysis of creditors, amounts due in less than one year, is shown in the table below:

Reclassified 31/03/2023 £'000		31/03/2024 £'000
(198)	Trade Creditors	(258)
(2,143)	Trade Accruals	(1,376)
(966)	Receipts in Advance - Collection Fund	(1,027)
(1,166)	PAYE - Non-trade	(779)
(1,526)	Other - Non-trade	(1,559)
(5,999)		(4,999)

20. Analysis of Borrowing

The loans outstanding consist of two through The Public Works Loan Board. The maturity of long-term loans is as follows:

31/03/2023 £'000		31/03/2024 £'000
-	Between 1 and 2 years	-
-	Between 2 and 5 years	-
(3,500)	Between 5 and 10 years	(3,500)
(3,500)	Over 10 years	(3,500)
(7,000)	Total long-term borrowing at year-end	(7,000)

As at 31 March 2024 (2023) the Authority had deferred borrowing of £2,792k (£3,313k).

21. Financial Instruments

The borrowings and investments disclosed in the Balance Sheet are made up of the following categories of financial instruments:

	Long-term		Current	
	31 March 2023 £'000	31 March 2024 £'000	Restated 31 March 2023 £'000	31 March 2024 £'000
Financial Liabilities at amortised cost	(8,312)	(8,018)	(2,744)	(2,054)
Total borrowings	**(8,312)**	**(8,018)**	**(2,744)**	**(2,054)**
Financial Assets at amortised cost	-	-	13,453	7,063
Total debtors	**-**	**-**	**13,453**	**7,063**

A restatement has taken place for the 2022/23 comparative figures included within the Financial Instruments notes for current Financial Liabilities at amortised cost. The PFI current liability of £269k has been included as an instrument in line with the treatment prescribed in the CIPFA Code.

Reconciliation note

The code requires a reconciliation to be made between the Balance Sheet and the Financial Instruments note where figures differ. The amounts listed in the table below have been excluded because they are not considered Financial Instruments.

	Current	
	Restated 31 March 2023 £'000	31 March 2024 £'000
Financial Liabilities at amortised cost as above	**(2,744)**	**(2,054)**
Statutory debt in relation to HMRC	(1,166)	(779)
Receipts in advance and overpayments in relation to Council Tax	(966)	(1,027)
Short-term liabilities in relation to the Collection Fund	(847)	(911)
Accumulated Absence	(71)	(100)
Fire Fighter pension scheme - Ill health	(205)	(128)
Short-term Creditors per note 19	**(5,999)**	**(4,999)**

Financial Instruments Gains/Losses

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

2023/2024	Financial Liabilities measured at amortised costs £'000	Financial Assets Loans & Receivables £'000	Total £'000
Interest expense			
- Loan	221	-	221
- PFI	651	-	651
Interest payable and similar charges	**872**	**-**	**872**
Interest income	-	(546)	(546)
Interest and Investment Income	**-**	**(546)**	**(546)**
Net loss/(gain) for the year	**872**	**(546)**	**326**

Fair Values

Financial Liabilities and Financial Assets represented by loans and receivables are carried on the Balance Sheet at amortised cost. The fair value through profit and loss can be assessed by calculating the present value of the cash flows that take place over the remaining life of the instruments, using the following assumptions:

- For loans, the new maturity rates from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) as available at 31 March have been applied to provide the fair value;
- For loans receivable prevailing benchmark market rates have been used to provide the fair value;
- No early repayment or impairment is recognised;
- Where an instrument has a maturity of less than 12 months or is a trade or other receivable the fair value is taken to be the principal outstanding or the billed amount; and
- The fair value of trade and other receivables is taken to be the invoiced or billed amount.

The fair values calculated are as follows:

Financial Liabilities

	Restated 31 March 2023		31 March 2024	
	Carrying Amount	Fair Value	Carrying Amount	Fair Value
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Loan Debt				
Public Works Loan Board	(7,000)	(6,781)	(7,000)	(6,562)
Deferred Liability - PFI	(1,312)	(1,312)	(1,018)	(1,018)
Total debt	**(8,312)**	**(8,093)**	**(8,018)**	**(7,580)**
Trade and other creditors	(2,744)	(2,477)	(2,054)	(2,054)
Total Financial Liabilities	**(11,056)**	**(10,570)**	**(10,072)**	**(9,634)**

The fair value is less than the carrying amount because the Authority's portfolio of loans includes a number of fixed rate loans where the interest rate payable is lower than the rates available for similar loans in the market at the Balance Sheet date.

Financial assets held at amortised cost

	31 March 2023 Carrying Amount £'000	31 March 2023 Amortised Cost £'000	31 March 2024 Carrying Amount £'000	31 March 2024 Amortised Cost £'000
Financial assets held at amortised cost Bank and cash	8,604	8,604	1,770	1,770
Total debt / (credit)	**8,604**	**8,604**	**1,770**	**1,770**
Trade and other debtors	4,849	4,849	5,293	5,293
Total Loans and Receivables	**13,453**	**13,453**	**7,063**	**7,063**

Reconciliation note

The Code of Practice requires a reconciliation to be made between the Balance Sheet and the Financial Instruments note where figures differ. The amounts listed in the table below have been excluded because they are not considered Financial Instruments.

	Current 31 March 2023 £'000	Current 31 March 2024 £'000
Trade and other Debtors per above	**4,849**	**5,293**
Payments in advance	1,870	2,923
Short-term Debtors in Council Tax	3,500	3,573
Short-term Debtors in relation to the Collection Fund	818	739
Provision for bad debt	(1,853)	(1,831)
Short-term Debtors in VAT	340	525
Short-term Debtors per note 17	**9,524**	**11,222**

Nature and Extent of Risk Arising from Financial Instruments and How the Authority Manages those Risks

Key Risks

The Authority's activities expose it to a variety of financial risks; the key risks are:

- Credit risk - the possibility that other parties might fail to pay amounts due to the Authority;
- Liquidity risk - the possibility that the Authority might not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments;
- Re-financing risk - the possibility that the Authority might be requiring to renew a financial instrument on maturity at disadvantageous interest rates or terms; and
- Market risk - the possibility that financial loss might arise for the Authority as a result of changes in such measures as interest rate movements.

Overall Procedures for Managing Risk

The Authority's overall risk management procedures focus on the unpredictability of financial markets, and implementing restrictions to minimise these risks. The procedures for risk management are set out through a legal framework set out in the *Local Government Act 2003* and the associated regulations. These require the Authority to comply with the CIPFA Prudential Code, the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice and Investment Guidance issued through the Act. Overall these procedures require the Authority to manage risk in the following ways:

- by formally adopting the requirements of the Code of Practice;
- by approving annually in advance prudential indicators for the following three years limiting:
    - The Authority's overall borrowing;
    - Its maximum and minimum exposures to fixed and variable rates;
    - Its maximum and minimum exposures to the maturity structure of its debt;
    - Its maximum annual exposures to investments maturing beyond a year; and
- by approving an investment strategy for the forthcoming year setting out its criteria for both investing and selecting investment counterparties in compliance with the Government Guidance.

These are required to be reported and approved at or before the Authority's annual budget and council tax setting at the Fire Authority committee. These items are reported with the annual treasury management strategy which outlines the detailed approach to managing risk in relation to the Authority's financial instrument exposure. Actual performance is also reported annually to Members.

These policies are implemented by Bristol City Council under the terms of a Financial Services contract. The Authority maintains written principles for overall risk management, as well as written policies covering specific areas, such as interest rate risk, credit risk, and the investment of surplus cash through Treasury Management Practices (TMPs). These TMPs are a requirement of the Code of Practice and are reviewed regularly.

The Authority's treasury portfolio is not of a significant size to provide significant treasury risk.

Credit risk

Credit risk arises from deposits with banks and financial institutions, as well as credit exposures to the Authority's customers. Deposits are not made with banks and financial institutions unless they meet the minimum requirements of the investment criteria outlined above, which gives priority to security and liquidity rather than yield.

The Authority's surplus cash is invested with Bristol City Council. A fixed payment, or charge if overdrawn, on the daily cash balance is set at overnight SONIA, less 25 basis points. As such this further reduces the credit risk to negligible amounts.

The following analysis summarises the Authority's potential maximum exposure to credit risk, based on experience of default of payment due assessed by the ratings agencies and the Authority's experience of its customer collection levels over the last five financial years, adjusted to reflect current market conditions.

	Amount at 31 March 2024 £'000	Historical experience of default	Adjustments for market conditions at 31 March 2024	Estimated maximum exposure to default at 31 March 2024 £'000	Estimated maximum exposure to default as reported 31 March 2023 £'000
Other counterparties - Local Authorities	1,560	0.0%	0.0%	-	-
Other counterparties - NHS	-	0.0%	0.0%	-	-
Other counterparties - Central Government	4,356	0.0%	0.0%	-	-
Trade and other debtors	3,561	0.1%	0.1%	3	3
	9,477			**3**	**3**

No breaches of the Authority's counterparty criteria occurred during the reporting period and the Authority does not expect any losses from non-performance by any of its counterparties in relation to deposits.

The Authority does not generally allow credit for its trade debtors. An analysis of debtors with reference to specific debtors and individual debts, not a formula basis, at the year-end has been carried out and an impairment to financial assets provision of £3k has been created to cover the risk of default. Due to the small number and value of debts the Authority's write off policy is on a case by case basis when there is no reasonable expectation of recovery, which is seen a definition of default, even though they are still subject to enforcement activity. There has been no change in our approach during the year and no material change from one year to another or expected in future years.

Liquidity risk

The Authority's Treasury Management function is managed by Bristol City Council under a Financial Services contract. Bristol City Council has ready access to borrowings from the Money Markets to cover any day-to-day cash flow need. There is therefore no significant risk that the Authority will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments under financial instruments.

The Authority manages its liquidity position through the risk management procedures above (the setting and approval of prudential indicators and the approval of the treasury and investment strategy reports), as well through cash flow management procedures, undertaken on its behalf by Bristol City Council, required by the Code of Practice.

Refinancing and Maturity Risk

The approved prudential indicator limits for the maturity structure of debt and the limits placed on investments placed for greater than one year in duration are the key parameters used to address this risk. The Authority approved treasury and investment strategies address the main risks and Bristol City Council manages the operational risks within the approved parameters.

The maturity analysis of financial liabilities is as follows:

2023/2024	£'000
Less than one year	(2,054)
Between 1 and 2 years	(319)
Between 2 and 5 years	(699)
More than 5 years	(7,000)
	(10,072)

The maturity analysis of financial assets is as follows:

2023/2024	£'000
Less than one year	7,063
Between 1 and 2 years	-
Between 2 and 5 years	-
More than 5 years	-
	7,063

Market risk

Interest rate risk

Interest on the Authority's existing borrowing is based upon long-term fixed interest rate maturity loans and therefore there is minor exposure to interest rate movements. However, as previously indicated the Authority has deferred borrowing of £2,792k which is being funded by utilising balances to offset borrowing in the short term in accordance with the Authority's approved Treasury Management Strategy.

A differential increase in interest rates between long-term and short-term rates would lead to an interest rate exposure for the Authority. This risk can be mitigated against increased counterparty risks associated with lending surplus balances as part of the treasury management function. The effect of a 1% change (rise or fall) in rates on interest rate risk relating to deferred borrowing of £2,792k would be £28k.

The Authority has earned interest on bank balances based on the average monthly overnight SONIA, less 25 basis points. This is paid by Bristol City Council as part of the Financial Services Contract. During 2023/24 the Authority has earned interest at an average rate of just over 4.7%. Based on current market conditions, the Authority does not expect interest rates to rise or fall by more than 1% in the next 12 months.

The Authority has applied a discount rate of 4.1% to calculate the fair value of loans.

Effects of a 1% rise in rates:

The effect of a 1% interest rate rise on Bank Interest receivable:

2023/2024	£'000
Increase in interest receivable on variable rate investments	104
Impact on Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	**104**

The effect of a 1% rise in the Discount rate used to calculate the Fair Value of the loans:

2023/2024	£'000
Decrease in fair value of fixed rate borrowings liabilities (no impact on the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services or Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure)	(547)

Effects of a 1% fall in rates:

The effect of a 1% interest rate fall on Bank Interest receivable:

2023/2024	£'000
Decrease in interest receivable on variable rate investments	(104)
Impact on Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	**(104)**

Effect of a 1% fall in the Discount rate used to calculate the Fair Value of the loans:

2023/2024	£'000
Increase in fair value of fixed rate borrowings liabilities (no impact on the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services or Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure)	582

The methodology and assumptions are based on a 1% movement in rates as this is a simple visual comparator. Obviously, rates could change by different amounts and so the impact would be proportionate.
These assumptions are using the same methodology as used in this Financial Instrument Note – Fair value of Assets and Liabilities carried at Amortised Cost on page 57.

Price risk - The Authority does not generally invest in instruments with this type of risk.

Foreign exchange risk - The Authority has no financial assets or liabilities denominated in foreign currencies. It therefore has no exposure to loss arising from movements in exchange rates.

22. Short Term Provisions

	Balance at 31 March 2022	Additional Provisions Made in 2022/2023	Amounts Utilised in 2022/2023	Balance at 31 March 2023	Additional Provisions Made in 2023/2024	Amounts Utilised in 2023/2024	Balance at 31 March 2024
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
NDR Appeals	633	560	(633)	560	409	(560)	409
Major Repairs	203	-	-	203	-	(203)	-
Ill Health Scheme Benefits	75	-	(75)	-	-	-	-
Legal Costs	-	93	-	93	-	-	93
	911	653	(708)	856	409	(763)	502

Details of the Authority's Short-term Provisions are as follows:

- National Domestic Rates (NDR) Appeals
  This provision has been created to allow for the cost of possible NDR Appeals. The timing is dependent on the Valuation Office hearing and passing judgement on these appeals.

- Major Repairs
  During 2017/18 an accommodation block attached to one of the Authority's fire stations suffered a significant structural failure. Rectification works commenced during 2023/2024 therefore the remaining provision has been released to capital.

- Ill Health Scheme Benefits
  Following settlement and payment this provision has been released to revenue in 2022/2023 to cover cost incurred.

- Legal Costs
  This provision has been created in response to ongoing cases which will require the Fire Authority to pay an amount, currently being reviewed to determine the exact figure, likely to be paid in 2024/2025.

23. Usable Reserve

	Balance at 1 April 2022	Transfers between in 2022/2023	Transfers in 2022/2023	Transfers out 2022/2023	Balance at 31 March 2023	Transfers between in 2023/2024	Transfers in 2023/2024	Transfers out 2023/2024	Balance at 31 March 2024
	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Working Fund Balance	1,500		-	-	1,500	-	-	-	1,500
	1,500	**-**	**-**	**-**	**1,500**		**-**	**-**	**1,500**
Pension & Budget Pressures Reserves Incl.									
Priority Programmes (formally Invest to Save) Reserve	3,098	(3,097)	417	-	418	1	235	-	654
PPE / ICP Replacement Reserve	60	(60)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Premises / H&S Critical Works Reserve	33	(33)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pension Reserve	347	-	-	-	347	(244)	-	(53)	50
Legal Fees Reserve	100	(70)	-	-	30	150	392	(30)	542
Community Safety Reserve	25	-	-	-	25	(25)	-	-	-
Document Management & Retention System Reserve	60	-	-	-	60	-	-	-	60
ESMCP Reserve	611	-	-	-	611	-	-	-	611
Strategic Development software Reserve	10	(10)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transformation Reserve	1,355	-	-	(489)	866	-	-	(581)	285
Communication - UPS / Station End upgrade Reserve	30	-	-	-	30	(30)	-	-	-
Control & Communications - Welfare Reserve	25	-	-	-	25	(25)	-	-	-
National Operational Guidance Reserve	300	-	-	-	300	(300)	-	-	-
IT Infrastructure Reserve	253	-	-	-	253	(52)	-	-	201
Ill Health Reserve	230	-	-	-	230	-	-	(155)	75
TFS Protection & Review Grants Reserve	167	-	360	(170)	357	-	403	(278)	482
Investment Fund Reserve	848	(750)	-	-	98	-	-	-	98
Contingency Reserve	119	(119)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medical Intervention Reserve	31	-	-	-	31	(31)	-	-	-
Cultural Improvement Reserve	-	-	-	-	-	100	-	-	100
PFI Exit Reserve	-	-	-	-	-	201	-	-	201
	7,702	**(4,139)**	**777**	**(659)**	**3,681**	**(255)**	**1,030**	**(1,097)**	**3,359**
PFI Equalisation Fund	1,240	-	-	(166)	1,074	-	-	(253)	821
Unapplied Capital Receipts Reserve	3,889	-	-	(3,889)	-	-	-	-	-
General Capital Reserve	5,391	4,139	-	(927)	8,603	255	500	(4,127)	5,231
Total Usable Reserve	**19,722**	**-**	**777**	**(5,641)**	**14,858**	**-**	**1,530**	**(5,477)**	**10,911**

Details of the Authority's approved designated reserves are shown in the table above, and explanations of any movement during the year are as follows:

a. Priority Programmes (formally Invest to Save) Reserve

This reserve has been maintained to fund future initiatives and programmes to assist the Authority in achieving its medium-term financial targets. It is anticipated that this reserve will be utilised over the next three to four years.

In 2023/2024 an amount of £236k has been added / transferred to this reserve to ensure future investment requirements can be met.

b. PPE/ICP Replacement Reserve
This reserve was fully transferred to other reserves in 2022/2023.

c. Premises / H&S Critical Works Reserve
This reserve was fully transferred to other reserves in 2022/2023.

d. Pension Reserve
This reserve has been created to assist in financing the additional costs expected relating to Immediate Detriment cases. £53k has been used and £244k transferred out in 2023/2024. The balance of the reserve reflects the remaining costs expected to be incurred during 2024/2025.

e. Legal Fees Reserve
This reserve has been set up to fund expenditure associated with legal claims, primarily property and employee costs. This reserve will be utilised as required.
£30k has been used and £542k added / transferred in during 2023/2024, due tom a number of ongoing legal claims.

f. Community Safety Reserve
This reserve was fully transferred to other reserves in 2023/2024.

g. Document Management and Retention System Reserve
This reserve has been set up to fund the development of a document management system to improve administration and ensure legal compliance.

h. Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP) Reserve
Government grants have been received by Avon Fire and Rescue to fund the ESMCP project. These funds cannot be used for any other purpose.

i. Strategic Development Software Reserve
This reserve was fully transferred to other reserves in 2022/2023.

j. Transformation Reserve
This reserve has been created to undertake digitalisation and corporate level projects of the Authority. Digitalisation includes the implementation of Office 365, incident resource management and business process re-engineering. Corporate level projects include collaboration and Firewatch enhancement.

£457k was set aside in 2018/2019, with a further £1,354k being transferred from the Improvement Programme Reserve during 2019/2020. £113k was used in 2020/2021, £343k in 2021/2022, £489k in 2022/2023 and £581k in 2023/2024.This balance will be utilised during 2024/2025, with the transformation programme planned to be completed by 31 March 2025.

k. Communication – Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS) / Station End Upgrade Reserve
This reserve was fully transferred to other reserves in 2023/2024.

l. Control & Communications – Welfare Reserve
This reserve was fully transferred to other reserves in 2023/2024.

m. National Operational Guidance Reserve
This reserve was fully transferred to other reserves in 2023/2024.

n. IT Infrastructure Reserve
To address problems identified with the existing IT structure resulting from the recent review undertaken. An amount of £406k was transferred in during 2019/2020. £56k was utilised in 2020/2021, £97k in 2021/2022 and £52k transferred out in 2023/2024. The balance will be utilised in 2024/2025.

o. Ill Health Reserve
This reserve has been created to assist in the financing of ill-health pension retirements where costs of two or four times the retiree's salary are paid to the Department for Communities and Local Government. £155k was used in 2023/2024.

p. TFS Protection & Review Grants Reserve
This reserve has been created from funds received from the Home Office to support the work specified as part of the Building Risk Review which is currently underway. In 2023/2024 £403k has been added to this reserve and £278k has been utilised. The balance will be utilised in 2024/2005 in line with guidance from Central Government.

q. Investment Fund Reserve
This reserve has been created to provide funding for projects evaluated and approved in year for investment in Service Developments. This balance will be utilised during 2024/2025 to fund the first year of the appointment of the new ICT Manager post.

r. Contingency Reserve
This reserve was fully transferred to other reserves in 2022/2023.

s. Medical Intervention Reserve
This reserve was fully transferred to other reserves in 2023/2024.

t. Cultural Improvement Reserve
This reserve has been created during 2023/24 to fund additional costs expected to be incurred by the Service when addressing cultural issues recognised by HMIC FRS as part of the Spotlight review, as well as the Round 3 inspection during 2023/24. This is expected to be utilised during 2024/25.

u. PFI Exit Reserve
This reserve has been created in anticipation of the additional costs the Service is likely to incur over the coming years, ahead of the end of the PFI arrangement at the Severn Park Training Facility.

v. PFI Equalisation Fund
A grant from the Government for the PFI project, along with contributions from partners, is paid into an Equalisation Fund. This fund is administered by Gloucestershire County Council, on behalf of the partners.

w. Unapplied Capital Receipts Reserve
This reserve was fully utilised in 2022/2023.

x. General Capital Reserve
This reserve has been created to fund the ongoing capital commitments of the service. £3,627k has been utilised during 2023/2024 and £255k transferred in from other reserves. The remaining is expected to be utilised over the next two years.

24. Unusable Reserves

Balance at 31 March 2023 £'000		Balance at 31 March 2024 £'000
28,411	**Revaluation Reserve**	27,798
34,188	**Capital Adjustment Account**	35,496
(507,914)	**Pensions Reserve**	(505,791)
95	**Collection Fund Adjustment**	137
(71)	**Accumulated Absences Account**	(100)
(445,291)	**Total Unusable Reserves**	**(442,460)**

Revaluation Reserve

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
23,804	**Balance at 1 April**	**28,411**
5,358	Adjustment to revaluation of assets	395
29,162	**Surplus or Deficit on revaluation of non-current assets not posted to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services**	**28,806**
(751)	Difference between fair value depreciation and historic cost depreciation	(1,008)
-	Reserve transfer with Capital Adjustment Account	-
28,411	**Balance at 31 March**	**27,798**

The revaluation reserve records the accumulated gains on the non-current assets held by the Authority arising from increases in value, as a result of inflation or other factors, to the extent that these gains have not been consumed by subsequent downward movements in value.

Where assets have been revalued the excess current value depreciation over the historic depreciation is charged to this reserve. On disposal, the revaluation reserve balance for the asset disposed of is written out to the Capital Adjustment Account. The overall balance on the reserve therefore represents the amount by which the value of non-current assets carried in the Balance Sheet is greater because they are carried at revalued amounts rather than depreciated historic cost.

Whilst these gains arising from revaluations increases the net worth of the Authority they would only represent an increase in spending power if the relevant assets were sold and capital receipts generated.

Capital Adjustment Account

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
33,465	**Balance at 1 April**	**34,188**
	Reversal of items relating to Capital Expenditure debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:	
(5,186)	Depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(4,713)
(41)	Amortisation of intangible assets	(35)
(538)	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	(25)
27,700		**29,415**
751	Adjusting amounts written out of the Revaluation Reserve	1,008
28,451	Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in the year	**30,423**
	Capital Financing applied in the year	
4,983	Capital Grants and Capital Receipts credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	3,784
505	Minimum revenue provision for capital financing	476
234	Voluntary revenue provision for capital financing	313
15	Capital expenditure charged in-year to the fund balance	500
34,188	**Balance at 31 March**	**35,496**

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 which 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 also contains revaluation gains accumulated on Property before 1 April 2007, the date that the Revaluation Reserve was created to hold such gains.

Pensions Reserve Summary – See Note 25 for further information

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
(695,010)	**Balance at 1 April**	**(507,914)**
197,218	Remeasurements of pensions assets and liabilities	5,899
(16,634)	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	(12,185)
6,512	Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	8,409
(507,914)	**Balance at 31 March**	**(505,791)**

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 pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance on the Pensions Reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefit 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.

This reserve relates to the two pension schemes, Firefighters and Local Authority, and additional information is shown in note 25.

Collection Fund Adjustment Account

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
(1,131)	**Balance at 1 April**	**95**
169	Bath and North East Somerset	(1)
788	Bristol City Council	130
144	North Somerset	(42)
125	South Gloucestershire	(45)
95	**Balance at 31 March**	**137**

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 Fire Authority from the billing authorities. The annual movement attributable to each of the four billing authorities is shown in the table above.

Accumulated Absences Account

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
(326)	**Balance at 1 April**	**(71)**
326	Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year	71
(71)	Amount accrued at the end of the current year	(100)
255	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	(29)
(71)	**Balance at 31 March**	**(100)**

25. Retirement Benefits

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 these 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 two pension schemes:

- Local Government Pension Scheme

All staff, other than uniformed Firefighters, are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). The scheme is administered by Bath & North East Somerset Council and is called the Avon Pension Fund. The Fund provides members with benefits related to length of service and final or average salary. It is a 'defined benefit' scheme. The Fund's Actuary carries out a valuation of the Fund every three years in accordance with government regulations. If the valuation indicates that there are insufficient assets to meet future liabilities, employer contribution rates are increased to make up the shortfall. The latest valuation was undertaken at 31 March 2022 and assessed the overall funding level at 91%.

- Firefighters' scheme

Regular Firefighters employed before 6 April 2006 were eligible to join the Firefighters' Pension Scheme but this scheme closed to new entrants from April 2006. The Employer contribution rate for this scheme was 37.3%.

A New Firefighters' Pension Scheme was introduced for regular and retained (on-call) Firefighters employed since 6 April 2006, which has different contribution rates payable into the scheme and benefits available to scheme members. The employer contribution rate for this scheme was 27.4%.

The arrangements for financing Firefighters' pensions which came into effect in April 2006 required the Authority to set up a new ring-fenced 'Pensions Account' from which pension payments, retirement lump sums and transfers out have been made. The Pensions account is funded by employee and employer contributions, the reimbursement by the employer of charges for ill-health early retirements and transfers into the scheme with any deficit / surplus at the year-end being met by / paid to central government. The employer contribution rate is determined by central government.

With effect from 1 April 2015 a new firefighters' pension scheme, "The 2015 Firefighters' Pension Scheme", was introduced to replace both the 1992 and 2006 schemes. All firefighters in the 1992 or 2006 schemes transferred to the new scheme on 1 April 2015 unless they were eligible for taper protection. Eligibility for taper protection was dependent on the age of the individual firefighter as at 1 April 2012. Following an age discrimination legal challenge, the transition to the 2015 scheme moved back to 01 April 2022 and there are remedy arrangements being put in place with reference to the 2015 to 2022 period. The Employer contribution rate for this scheme is 28.8%. Employee contributions vary according to salary, as shown in the table under Note 2 to the Firefighters' Pension Fund Account on page 88.

As part of the Retained Firefighters' Pension Settlement the Government has introduced the terms under which individuals that were employed as Retained (on-call) Firefighters between 1 July 2000 and 5 April 2006 are entitled to purchase pension rights. The pension benefits are incorporated within the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 as it does not constitute a scheme on its own but rather a new modified section of the 2006 Scheme with different benefits. The modified scheme will be subject to the reforms that apply to the 1992 and 2006 schemes.

Transactions Relating to Retirement Benefits

The costs of retirement benefits are recognised in the Surplus or Deficit on Provision of Services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions.

However, the charge required to be met from council tax is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of retirement benefits is reversed out in the Movement in Reserves Statement. The transactions shown in the table on the next page have been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the Movement in Reserves Statement during the year:

	Restated					
	Local Government Pension Scheme		Firefighters' Scheme		Total of Schemes	
	2022/2023	2023/2024	2022/2023	2023/2024	2022/2023	2023/2024
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement						
Costs of Services:						
Current Service Cost	2,550	1,289	9,190	2,630	11,740	3,919
Past Service Cost	-	-	-	(30)	-	(30)
Firefighters' Pension Top-up Grant	-	-	(11,448)	(13,430)	(11,448)	(13,430)
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure:						
Net Interest expense	699	325	17,610	22,810	18,309	23,135
Administration expenses	41	48	-	-	41	48
Total Post-employment Benefits charged to the Surplus or Deficit on Provision of Services	3,290	1,662	15,352	11,980	18,642	13,642
Other Post-employment Benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:						
Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability comprising:						
(Return)/Loss on Plan Assets (excluding the amount included in the Net Interest expense)	4,268	(1,250)	-	-	4,268	(1,250)
Actuarial gains / (losses) arising on changes in experience assumptions	4,605	411	37,330	6,460	41,935	6,871
Actuarial gains / (losses) arising on changes in demographic assumptions	-	(659)	(20,330)	-	(20,330)	(659)
Actuarial gains / (losses) arising on changes in financial assumptions	(27,831)	(1,551)	(195,260)	(9,310)	(223,091)	(10,861)
Total Post-employment Benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(15,668)	(1,387)	(162,908)	9,130	(178,576)	7,743
Movement in Reserves Statement						
Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or Deficit for the Provision of Services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the code	(3,290)	(1,662)	(15,352)	(11,980)	(18,642)	(13,642)
Actual amount charged against the Fund Balance for pensions in the year:						
Employer's contributions payable to the scheme	1,218	2,556	7,302	7,310	8,520	9,866
Retirement Benefits payable to pensioners			0	0	0	0

The cumulative amount of remeasurements recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to 31 March 2024 is £45,980k. (31 March 2023 was £24,635k)

Assets and Liabilities in relation to Retirement Benefits

Reconciliation of present value of the scheme liabilities:

	Funded liabilities Local Government		Unfunded liabilities Firefighters' Scheme		Total liabilities for Schemes	
	2022/2023	2023/2024	2022/2023	2023/2024	2022/2023	2023/2024
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Liabilities at beginning of year	(67,556)	(47,522)	(669,510)	(499,300)	(737,066)	(546,822)
Current Service Cost	(2,550)	(1,289)	(9,190)	(2,630)	(11,740)	(3,919)
Past Service Cost	-	-	-	30	-	30
Transfers In	-	-	(90)	(480)	(90)	(480)
Interest Cost	(1,876)	(2,260)	(17,610)	(22,810)	(19,486)	(25,070)
Contributions by scheme participants	(452)	(533)	(2,330)	(2,590)	(2,782)	(3,123)
Remeasurements gains and (losses):					-	-
Actuarial gains / (losses) from changes in demographic assumptions	-	659	20,330	-	20,330	659
Actuarial gains / (losses) from changes in financial assumptions	27,831	1,551	195,260	9,310	223,091	10,861
Actuarial gains / (losses) from experience	(4,605)	(411)	(37,330)	(6,460)	(41,935)	(6,871)
Benefits Paid	1,686	1,388	21,170	23,810	22,856	25,198
Liabilities at end of year	(47,522)	(48,417)	(499,300)	(501,120)	(546,822)	(549,537)

Reconciliation of fair value of the scheme assets:

	Funded Assets Local Government		Unfunded Assets Firefighters' Scheme		Total Assets for Schemes	
	2022/2023	2023/2024	2022/2023	2023/2024	202/2023	2023/2024
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Assets at beginning of year	42,056	38,908	-	-	42,056	38,908
Interest Income	1,177	1,935	-	-	1,177	1,935
Return on Plan Assets, excluding the amount included in the net interest expense	(4,268)	1,250	-	-	(4,268)	1,250
Administration expenses	(41)	(48)	-	-	(41)	(48)
Employer contributions	1,218	2,556	-	-	1,218	2,556
Contributions by scheme participants	452	533	-	-	452	533
Benefits paid	(1,686)	(1,388)	-	-	(1,686)	(1,388)
Assets at end of year	38,908	43,746	-	-	38,908	43,746

The expected return on LGPS scheme assets is determined by considering the expected returns available on the assets underlying the current investment policy. Expected yields on fixed interest investments are based on gross redemption yields as at the Balance Sheet date. Expected returns on equity investments reflect long-term real rates of return experienced in the respective markets.

The actual return on scheme assets in the year was (£3,185k) (2022/2023: (£3,091k)).

Scheme History

	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Present value of liabilities					
Local Government Scheme	(52,298)	(63,019)	(67,556)	(47,522)	(48,417)
Firefighters' Scheme	(610,160)	(668,170)	(669,510)	(499,300)	(501,120)
	(662,458)	(731,189)	(737,066)	(546,822)	(549,537)
Fair value of assets in the Local Government Scheme	30,990	38,042	42,056	38,908	43,746
Deficit in the scheme:					
Local Government Scheme	(21,308)	(24,977)	(25,500)	(8,614)	(4,671)
Firefighters' Scheme	(610,160)	(668,170)	(669,510)	(499,300)	(501,120)
Total	(631,468)	(693,147)	(695,010)	(507,914)	(505,791)

The liabilities show the underlying commitments that the Authority has in the long run to pay post-employment (retirement) benefits. The total liability of £506m (2022/2023 £508m) has a substantial impact on the net worth of the Authority as recorded in the Balance Sheet, resulting in a negative overall balance of £506m (2022/2023 £508m).

However, statutory arrangements for funding the deficit mean that the financial position of the Authority remains healthy:

- The deficit on the Local Government scheme will be made good by increased contributions over the remaining working life of employees (i.e. before payments fall due), as assessed by the scheme actuary.
- The deficit on the Firefighters' scheme will be made good by annual contributions by central government to the ring-fenced "Pensions Account" together with revised future employer contributions as determined by central government.
- The total contribution expected to be made by the Authority in the year to 31 March 2025 for the Local Government Pension Scheme is £1,451k.
- The total contribution expected to be made by the Authority in the year to 31 March 2025 for the Firefighters' pension schemes is £7,961k

Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels, etc. The Local Government Scheme liabilities have been assessed by Mercer Limited the independent actuary to the Avon Pension Fund, which manages the Local Government Scheme on behalf of the Authority. The Firefighters' scheme liabilities have been assessed by the Government Actuary's Department (GAD). The estimates for the Local Government scheme are based on the latest full valuation as at 31 March 2022 updated for the following years.

The main assumptions used by the actuary have been:

	Local Government		Fire Fighters' Scheme	
	2022/2023	2023/2024	2022/2023	2023/2024
Mortality assumptions:				
Longevity at 65 for current				
Men	22.4	22.0	21.2	21.3
Women	24.4	24.1	21.2	21.3
Longevity at 65 for future				
Men	23.7	23.3	22.9	22.9
Women	26.4	25.8	22.9	22.9
Rate of inflation CPI	2.7%	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%
Rate of increase in salaries	4.2%	4.1%	3.9%	3.9%
Rate of increase in pensions	2.8%	2.7%	2.6%	2.6%
Rate of discounting scheme	4.8%	4.9%	4.7%	4.8%

The actuary has not carried out any specific investigations in relation to whether the average age of the membership has increased, but does not believe that there have been substantial changes since the 2022 valuation. For any employers who are not admitting new entrants to the Fund, the average age can be expected to increase gradually over time.

The Firefighters' scheme has no assets to cover its liabilities. The Local Government Scheme's assets consist of the following categories, by proportion of the total assets held:

Local Government Scheme		31 March 2023	31 March 2024
		%	%
Equities	Global quoted	34.9	50.0
Bonds	UK Government indexed	19.2	23.0
	Sterling Corporate Bonds	8.9	9.0
Property	UK Property Funds	6.4	5.2
Alternatives	Hedge funds	0.6	0.4
	Diversified Growth Funds	6.3	6.4
	Infrastructure	8.8	7.4
	Secured Income	8.1	10.3
	EFT's	2.4	0.1
	Private Debt	2.4	3.5
Cash	Cash accounts	2.0	-15.3
		100	100

History of Experience Gains and Losses

The experience adjustments arising on scheme assets and liabilities expressed as a percentage of the asset or liability at the year-end are as follows:

Local Government	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
	%	%	%	%	%
Experience gains on assets	7.0%	14.7%	9.0%	7.9%	7.3%
Experience gains and (losses) on liabilities	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Sensitivity Analysis Firefighters' Scheme

The Code of Practice requires disclosure of information that describes how its defined benefit plans may affect the amount, timing and uncertainty of the Authority's future cash flows. Sensitivity analyses have been provided by the actuaries to illustrate the impact of changes in the key industry financial and demographic assumptions for the pension schemes as follows:

Sensitivity Analysis Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992		2022/2023		2023/2024	
Change in assumption *		%	£ Million	%	£ Million
Rate of discounting scheme liabilities	+1/2% a year	(6.5)%	(28.0)	(6.5)%	(28.0)
Rate of increase in salaries	+1/2 % a year	0.5%	3.0	0.5%	3.0
Rate of increase in pensions / deferred revaluation	+1/2 % a year	6.5%	28.0	6.5%	28.0
Life Expectancy: each pensioner subject to longevity of an individual one further year younger than assumed		2.5%	12.0	2.5%	12.0

The weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation (DBO) is around 14 years (2022/2023 14 years).

Sensitivity Analysis Firefighters' 2006 scheme		2022/2023		2023/2024	
Change in assumption *		%	£ Million	%	£ Million
Rate of discounting scheme liabilities	+1/2% a year	(19.0)%	(1.0)	(9.5)%	(1.0)
Rate of increase in salaries	+1/2 % a year	6.0%	1.0	3.0%	0.0
Rate of increase in pensions / deferred revaluation	+1/2 % a year	15.5%	1.0	7.5%	1.0
Life Expectancy: each pensioner subject to longevity of an individual one further year younger than assumed		4.5%	0.0	2.0%	0.0

The weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation is around 27 years (2022/2023 27 years).

Sensitivity Analysis Firefighters' 2015 scheme		2022/2023		2023/2024	
Change in assumption *		%	£ Million	%	£ Million
Rate of discounting scheme liabilities	+1/2% a year	(12.0)%	(3.0)	(12.0)%	(4.0)
Rate of increase in salaries	+1/2 % a year	5.0%	1.0	5.0%	2.0
Rate of increase in pensions / deferred revaluation	+1/2 % a year	8.5%	2.0	8.5%	3.0
Life Expectancy: each pensioner subject to longevity of an individual one further year younger than assumed		2.0%	0.0	2.0%	1.0

The weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation is around 26 years (2022/2023 26 years).

Note: Employer Contributions of £5,853,097 were received during 2023/2024 (2022/2023 £5,293,948).

* Opposite changes in the assumptions will produce approximately equal and opposite changes in the DBO. Doubling the changes in the assumptions will produce approximately double the change in the DBO. The sensitivities show the change in assumptions in isolation. In practice such assumptions rarely change in isolation and given the interdependencies between the assumptions the impacts may offset to some extent.

Sensitivity Analysis Local Government Pension Scheme

The Code of Practice requires disclosure of information that describes how its defined benefit plans may affect the amount, timing and uncertainty of the Authority's future cash flows. Sensitivity analyses have been provided by the actuaries to illustrate the impact of changes in the key industry financial and demographic assumptions for the pension schemes as follows:

Sensitivity Analysis Local Government Pension scheme		Sensitivity 1	Sensitivity 2	Sensitivity 3	Sensitivity 4
Disclosure item		+0.5% pa discount rate	+0.25% pa inflation	+0.25% pa pay growth	1 year increase in life expectancy
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Liabilities	48,417	44,778	50,347	48,769	49,527
Assets	(43,746)	(43,746)	(43,746)	(43,746)	(43,746)
Deficit	4,671	1,032	6,601	5,023	5,781
Projected Service Cost for next year	1,164	980	1,266	1,164	1,196
Projected Net Interest Cost for next year	193	17	288	211	248

The weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation is around 18 years.

As previously mentioned, the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is administered by Bath and North East Somerset Council and is called the Avon Pension Fund. If, in the very exceptional circumstance, a member authority including Avon Fire Authority were to leave the scheme that authority would be responsible for any liabilities owed to the fund and the liability would not pass on to the remaining members. The LGPS is a funded defined benefit pension arrangement for local authorities and is governed by statute principally now the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013.

The sensitivity analyses above for both schemes 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 in longevity, for example, assume that life expectancy increases or decreases for men and women. In practice, this is unlikely to occur, and changes in some of the assumptions may be interrelated. The estimations in the sensitivity analysis have followed the accounting policies for the schemes, i.e. on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method. The methods and types of assumptions used in preparing the sensitivity analysis above did not change from those used in the previous period.

26. Analysis of Income

The Authority credited the following grants, contributions and donations to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in 2023/2024.
Under IFRS 15 we have assessed for contracts and no further disclosure is required:

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
	Credited to Taxation and Non-specific Grant	
103	General Capital Grant & Contributions	25
29,642	Precepts	31,671
11,438	General Government Grants	12,036
4,581	Non-domestic Rates Distribution	5,232
45,764	**Total**	**48,964**
	Credited to Services	
878	New Dimension / USAR Grants	897
369	Fire Link Grant	277
403	Fire Safety Grant	403
2,642	Business Rate Relief Grant	2,745
895	PFI Grant	895
2,407	Fire Fighters Pension Contribution Grant	2,407
752	Service Grant	404
1,221	Other income	593
9,567	**Total**	**8,621**

None of the grants received by the Authority in 2022/2023 or 2023/2024 have conditions attached to them and therefore they are recognised as income in their year of receipt.

27. Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure

The Authority incurred and received the following interest and investment to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in 2023/2024:

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
	Interest Payable and Similar Charges	
221	Loans	221
506	PFI	651
727		872
18,309	Net Interest on the net defined benefit liability	23,135
(346)	Interest Receivable and Similar Income	(546)
(8)	Other Investment Income	(7)
18,682	Total	**23,454**

28. Cash Flow Statement – Operating Activities

The deficit on the provision of services has been adjusted for the following non-cash movements and that are investing or financing activities:

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
3,931	Depreciation	4,706
1,255	Impairment charge / (reversals)	7
41	Amortisation	35
(3,728)	Increase / (decrease) in Creditors	(1,024)
(46)	Decrease / (increase) in Debtors	(1,697)
-	Decrease / (increase) in Inventories	(346)
10,122	Movements in Pension Liability	3,776
574	(Profit) / loss on disposal of Property, Plant & Equipment	25
(55)	Increase / (decrease) in Provisions	(354)
12,094		5,128
(64)	Proceeds from sale of Property, Plant & Equipment	(131)
(103)	Capital Grants	(25)
(167)		(156)
11,927	Net cash flow from operating activities	4,972

Cash Flow Statement – Operating Activities (Interest)

The cash flows for operating activities include the following items:

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
321	Interest received	500
(382)	Interest paid	(361)

29. Cash Flow Statement – Investing Activities

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
(4,172)	Purchase of property, plant and equipment	(4,284)
64	Proceeds from Sale of non-current assets	131
103	Other receipts from investing activities	26
(4,005)	Net cash flows from investing activities	(4,127)

30. Cash Flow Statement – Financing Activities

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
(234)	Cash payments for the reduction of a PFI liability	(269)
(234)	Net cash flows from investing activities	(269)

31. Contingent Liabilities

A November 2018 ruling on the legal case involving part time judges (O'Brien v MoJ) has a direct impact on the equivalent case for retained firefighters (Matthews). Home Office Ministers agreed to extend the pension entitlement to eligible retained firefighters to cover service pre-July 2000. The Memorandum of Understanding signed in March 2022 sets out the intended scope and operation of the options exercise required to enact remedy in this case.

This options exercise will increase the pension entitlement for some current special retained members and also allow access to the scheme for additional historic retained firefighters. The potential increase in liability from the second Matthew's exercise is estimated to be £2m.

32. Events after the Balance Sheet date

There are no events after the Balance Sheet date which require disclosure at this time.

Firefighters' Pension Fund Account

Under the arrangements for financing Firefighters' pensions which came into effect from April 2006 the Authority was required to set up a new ring-fenced 'Pensions Account'.

Details of the transactions on this account during the year are as follows:

2022/2023 £'000		2023/2024 £'000
	Contributions receivable:	
	Fire Authority	
(5,549)	- contributions in relation to pensionable pay	(5,853)
(316)	- early retirements	(248)
(2,482)	Firefighters' contributions	(2,620)
(8,347)	**Total**	**(8,721)**
(122)	**Transfers in from other authorities**	**(497)**
	Benefits payable:	
16,694	Pensions	18,464
2,558	Commutations and lump-sum retirement benefits	3,798
329	Other	386
19,581	**Net amount payable for the year**	**22,648**
	Payments to and on account of leavers:	
336	Transfers out to other authorities	**-**
11,448	**Deficit for the year before top-up grant receivable from central government**	**13,430**
(11,448)	Top-up grant payable by the Government	(13,430)
-		**-**

Net assets statement

The assets and liabilities of the pensions account as at 31 March 2024 are as follows:

31/03/2023 £'000		31/03/2024 £'000
	Current assets	
3,616	Top-up grant receivable from the Government	4,356
1,587	Payment in Advance	1,727
5,203		**6,083**
	Current liabilities	
(5,203)	Amounts due to/from general fund	(6,083)
-	Creditor	-
(5,203)		**(6,083)**
-	**Net assets**	**-**

Notes to the Firefighters' Pension Fund Account

1. Operation of the Fund

The Firefighters' Pension Fund Account was established under the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) (England) Order 2006 and the Fire Authority is responsible for its administration.

The Scheme is available to all Firefighters whether whole-time or part-time and whether regular, retained (on-call) or volunteer, who satisfy one of the eligibility conditions set out in Part 2 of the Order.

The Firefighters' Pension scheme is an unfunded scheme and there are no investment assets. Benefits payable are funded by employer and employee contributions with the difference being met by top-up grant receivable from or payable to Central Government. The fund is balanced to nil each year by the inclusion of a Central Government debtor or creditor in respect of the amount of top-up grant due to or payable from Central Government for the year.

2. Contributions

Employees' and employer's contribution levels are based on percentages of pensionable pay set nationally by the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities and are subject to triennial revaluation by the Government Actuary's Department.

With effect from 1 April 2022 employees have transferred to the 2015 scheme as the 1992, 2006 and retained Firefighters' modified scheme have been disbanded. Therefore, employee's and employer's contributions to the Firefighters' pension schemes are paid in relation to the four salary ranges as shown in the table below:

	2023/2024			
Salary range from	£0	£27,819	£51,516	£142,501
Salary range up to	£27,818	£51,515	£142,500	or more
Firefighters' pension scheme:				
2015 Scheme				
Employer	28.80%	28.80%	28.80%	28.80%
Employee	11.00%	12.90%	13.50%	14.50%
Total	39.8%	41.7%	42.3%	43.3%

	2022/2023			
Salary range from	£0	£27,819	£51,516	£142,501
Salary range up to	£27,818	£51,515	£142,500	or more
Firefighters' pension scheme:				
2015 Scheme				
Employer	28.80%	28.80%	28.80%	28.80%
Employee	11.00%	12.90%	13.50%	14.50%
Total	39.8%	41.7%	42.3%	43.3%

In addition, the Employer is required to reimburse charges for any ill-health early retirements.

3. Benefits payable from the fund

Pension benefits are payable from the fund in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions and include ordinary and ill-health awards.

4. Accounting Policies

As an unfunded scheme there are no investment assets and the Net Assets Statement does not include liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits after the Balance Sheet date. In all other respects the accounting policies followed are the same as set out in the Statement of Accounting Policies on pages 22 – 33. Details of the pension liability of the Firefighters scheme, calculated in accordance with IAS 19, and included in the Core Financial Statements are set out in note 25 to the Core Financial Statements.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF AVON FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

Opinion on financial statements

We have audited the financial statements of Avon Fire and Rescue Authority (the 'Authority') for the year ended 31 March 2024, which comprise the Authority Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Authority Balance Sheet, the Authority Movement in Reserves Statement, the Authority Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and include the Fire Fighters' Pension Fund Account and notes to the Fire Fighters' Pension Fund Account. 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 2023-24.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2024 and of the Authority's expenditure and income for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023-24; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law, as required by the Code of Audit Practice 2024 ("the Code of Audit Practice") approved by the Comptroller and Auditor General. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the 'Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements' section of our report.

We are independent of the Authority in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, 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

The Statutory Finance Officer has prepared the financial statements on the going concern basis as they have not been informed by the relevant government body of the intention to dissolve the Authority without the transfer of its services to another public sector entity. They have also concluded that there are no material uncertainties that could have cast significant doubt over its ability to continue as a going concern for at least a year from the date of approval of the financial statements.

In auditing the financial statements and having regard to the guidance provided in Practice Note 10 Audit of financial statements and regularity of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom (Revised 2022) on the application of ISA (UK) 570 Going Concern to public sector entities, we have concluded that the Statutory Finance Officer's 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 at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Statutory Finance Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

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 Statutory Finance Officer is responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit, 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 audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Other information we are required to report on by exception under the Code of Audit Practice

Under the Code of Audit Practice published by the National Audit Office in November 2024 on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General (the Code of Audit Practice) we are required to consider whether the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 Edition' published by CIPFA and SOLACE, or is misleading or inconsistent with the information of which we are aware from our audit. We are not required to consider whether the Annual Governance Statement addresses all risks and controls or that risks are satisfactorily addressed by internal controls.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters required by the Code of Audit Practice

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit of the financial statements, the other information published together with the financial statements in the Statement of Accounts for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

Under the Code of Audit Practice, we are required to report to you if:

- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or

- we make a written recommendation to the Authority under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- 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 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or;
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit.

We have nothing to report in respect of the above matters.

Responsibilities of the Authority and the Statutory Finance Officer

As explained more fully in the Statement of 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 this Authority, that officer is the Statutory Finance Officer. The Statutory Finance Officer 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 2023-24, for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Statutory Finance Officer determines 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 Statutory Finance Officer 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 they have been informed by the relevant national body of the intention to dissolve the Authority without the transfer of its services to another public sector entity.

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.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud.

The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

- We have considered the nature of the sector, control environment and financial performance;

- We have considered the results of enquiries with management, internal audit and the Audit, Governance and Oversight Committee in relation to their own identification and assessment of the risk of irregularities within the entity, and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations or whether they had any knowledge of actual, suspected or alleged fraud;
- We have reviewed the documentation of key processes and controls and performed walkthroughs of transactions to confirm that the systems are operating in line with documentation;
- Any matters identified having obtained and reviewed the Authority's documentation of their policies and procedures relating to:
    - Identifying, evaluation and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
    - Detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud;
    - The internal controls established to mitigate risks of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- We have considered the matters discussed among the audit engagement team regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

In common with all audits under ISAs (UK) we are required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override.

We have also obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks that the Authority operates in, focusing on provisions of those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The key laws and regulations we considered in this context are those related to the reporting frameworks (the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023-24, the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024), the Local Government Act 2003, Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Government Finance Act 2012)). We also identified the following additional regulatory frameworks in respect of the firefighters' pension fund – Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) Regulations 2014 and The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) Order 2006.

In addition, we considered the provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which may be fundamental to the Authority's ability to operate or avoid a material penalty. These include data protection regulations, health and safety regulations, employment legislation, and money laundering legislation.

Our procedures to respond to risks identified included the following:

- Reviewing the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with provisions of relevant laws and regulations described as having a direct effect on the financial statements;
- Performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud;
- Reviewing Committee meeting minutes;
- Enquiring of management in relation to actual and potential claims or litigations;

- Challenging assumptions and judgements made by management in its significant accounting estimates in respect of valuation of land and buildings, and defined benefit pensions liability valuations; and
- In addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgments made in accounting estimates are indicative of potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

We also communicated identified laws and regulations and potential fraud risks to all members of the engagement team and remained alert to possible indicators of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

As a result of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that not all irregularities, including material misstatements in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation, will be detected by us, even though the audit is properly planned and performed in accordance with the ISAs (UK). The risk increases the further removed compliance with a law or regulation is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, given we will be less likely to be aware of it, or should the irregularity occur as a result of fraud rather than a one-off error, as this may involve intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Report on other legal and regulatory matters

Matter on which we are required to report by exception – the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

Under the Code of Audit Practice, we are required to report to you if, in our opinion, we have not been able to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2024.

We have reported to the Authority a significant weakness in the Authority's governance arrangements. The significant weakness was included by the previous auditors in their 2022/23 audit opinion and the issues identified were originally identified in a HMICFRS report published in November 2023. In the follow up visit in September 2024, HMICFRS identified that although progress had been made, there were still significant issues and that several recommendations were yet to be addressed. Our audit work in relation to assessing the arrangements in place at the Authority raises some concern that progress is still required in respect of one 'Accelerated cause of concern' and two 'Causes of concern'.

Responsibilities of the Authority

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Auditor's responsibilities for the review of the Authority's arrangements for securing 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 be satisfied 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.

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2024 and related statutory guidance. We considered whether the Authority has proper arrangements in place to ensure financial sustainability, proper governance and the use of information about costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

We document our understanding of the arrangements the Authority has in place for each of these three specified reporting criteria, gathering sufficient evidence to support our risk assessment and commentary in our Auditor's Annual Report. In undertaking our work, we consider whether there is evidence to suggest that there are significant weaknesses in arrangements.

Report on other legal and regulatory requirements – Delay in certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate for Avon Fire Authority for the year ended 31 March 2024 in accordance with the requirements of Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice until we have:

- confirmation from the NAO that no additional work (beyond submission of the Assurance Statement) will be required in respect of the Whole of Government Accounts exercise.

We are satisfied that this work does not have a material effect on the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Authority's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's 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 Authority and Authority's members, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Craig Sullivan, Key Audit Partner
for and on behalf of Bishop Fleming LLP
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditors

Plymouth

20 February 2025

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACCOUNTING PERIOD - This is the length of time covered by the accounts. This is normally a period of 12 months commencing on 1 April. The end of the accounting period is the Balance Sheet date.

ACCRUALS - The accruals basis of accounting ensures that income and expenditure is reflected in the financial statements in the accounting period that they were earned or incurred, not as any cash is received or paid.

ACTUARY - One who makes calculations for pensions and insurance purposes.

ACTUARIAL GAINS AND LOSSES - For a defined benefit pensions scheme, the changes in actuarial deficits or surpluses that arise because:

- Events have not coincided with the actuarial assumptions made for the last valuation; or
- The actuarial assumptions have changed.

ASSET - An asset is something that the Authority owns that has a monetary value. Assets are either current or long-term.

- A current asset is one that will be used by the end of the next financial year (e.g. stock, debtors).
- A long-term (fixed) asset provides the Authority with benefits for a period of more than one year (e.g. property, plant and equipment).

BALANCE SHEET - The Balance Sheet is a financial statement summarising the overall financial position of the Authority at the end of the financial year.

BUDGET - A budget is a statement that sets out the Authority's service delivery plans and capital expenditure in monetary terms.

CAPITAL ADJUSTMENT ACCOUNT - This is the money set aside in the Authority's accounts for capital spending and to repay loans.

CAPITAL CHARGES - This is a charge made to the Authority's service revenue accounts to reflect the cost of utilising fixed assets in the provision of services.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE - Expenditure on the acquisition of a fixed asset that will be used to provide services beyond the current accounting period.

CAPITAL FINANCING - This describes the various sources of money used to pay for capital expenditure. Capital expenditure can be funded from external sources, such as borrowing, capital grants and by contributions from the internal sources, such as capital receipts and reserves.

CAPITAL RECEIPT - A capital receipt is the income that results from the sale of land, buildings and other capital assets. A specified portion of this may be used to fund new capital expenditure. The balance must be set-aside and may only be used for paying off debt, not for funding new revenue services.

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.

CONTINGENT LIABILITIES - A possible liability relating to future expenditure at the Balance Sheet date, depending on the outcome of future uncertain events.

CREDITORS - Amounts owed by the Authority to others for goods and services that have been supplied but not yet paid for by the end of financial year.

CURRENT ASSETS - Items that can be readily converted into cash.

CURRENT LIABILITIES - Items that are due to be paid immediately or in the short term.

DEBTORS - Amounts owed to the Authority for goods and services, where the income has not been received at the end of the financial year.

DEPRECIATION - This is a charge made to the revenue account each year, which reflects the loss in value of an asset due to age, wear and tear, deterioration or obsolescence.

EVENTS AFTER THE BALANCE SHEET DATE (POST BALANCE SHEET EVENTS) - 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.

FIXED ASSETS - These are assets that yield benefits to the Authority and the services it provides for a period of more than one year.

GENERAL FUND - The account that summarises the cost of providing Authority services (excluding the Housing Revenue Account).

GOVERNMENT GRANTS - Grants made by the Government towards either revenue or capital expenditure to help with the cost of providing services and capital projects. Some of these grants have restrictions on how they may be used whilst others are general purpose.

IMPAIRMENT - The reduction in value of an asset in the Balance Sheet owing to a change in the market value. This can be as a result of market fluctuations, physical damage or obsolescence.

INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT - This is the Authority's main revenue account. It summarises the income received from Council Tax and business rates, grants and fees and charges along with the associated expenditure on services provided.

INTANGIBLE ASSETS - These are fixed assets on the Balance Sheet such as software licences that don't have physical form but still have value.

LIABILITIES - Amounts the Authority either owes or anticipates owing to others, whether they are due for immediate payment or not.

MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP) - The minimum amount that the Authority must charge to the revenue account to provide for the repayment of debt.

NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATE (NNDR) - A flat rate in the pound set by Government and levied on businesses in the City. The money is collected by the Council then pooled and redistributed by the Government to local authorities based on the resident population.

OPERATIONAL ASSETS - These are fixed assets owned by the Authority and used in the direct delivery of services.

PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVE (PFI) – A third party provides and maintains a fixed asset. Ownership and use of the asset is held by the authority and as such is included within the authorities balance sheet.

PROVISIONS - Amounts set aside to meet liabilities or losses which are likely or certain to be incurred but where the amount due or the timing of the payment remains uncertain.

PUBLIC WORKS LOAN BOARD (PWLB) - A Government body that lends money to local authorities for periods in excess of one year, often at preferential interest rates.

RELATED PARTIES - Two or more parties are related parties when at any time during the financial period:

- one party has direct or indirect control of the other party;
- the parties are subject to common control from the same source;
- one party has influence over the financial and operational policies of the other party to the extent that the other party might be inhibited from pursuing its own interests; or
- the parties, in entering a transaction, are subject to influence from the same source to such an extent that one of the parties to the transaction has subordinated its own interests. Examples of related parties include central government, other local authorities and other bodies precepting or levying demands on the Council Tax, its members and its chief officers.

RESERVES - An amount set aside for a specific purpose in one financial year and carried forward to meet expenditure in future years. A distinction is drawn between reserves and provisions (see above), which are set up to meet known liabilities.

REVENUE EXPENDITURE - Spending on day-to-day items including salaries and wages and other running costs associated with the provision of services.

REVENUE SUPPORT GRANT (RSG) - The main grant paid to a local authority by Central Government to help fund the cost of its services.

VOLUNTARY REVENUE PROVISION (VRP) - The amount over and above MRP that the Authority has charged to the revenue account to provide for the repayment of debt.

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