

BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY



PRE-AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2022/23

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

2022/23

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AUTHORITY MEMBERSHIP 2022/23

Chair

Councillor P Duckett (Central Bedfordshire Council)

Vice-Chair

Councillor Y Waheed (Luton Borough Council)

Councillors

Bedford borough Council	Central Bedfordshire Council	Luton Borough Council
C Atkins	R Berry	J Burnett
J Gambold	J Chatterley	K Choudhry
M Headley	P Duckett	D Franks
	D McVicar	Y Waheed
	I Shingler	

The Authority is made up of twelve members who are appointed in proportion to the number of local government electors in each constituent authority area.

The committee structure consisted of the full Fire Authority, Executive Committee and Audit and Standards Committee.

Members of the Executive Committee had a special responsibility for one of the following portfolios:

Cllr Duckett (Chair)	Emergency Response and Resilience
Cllr Chatterley	Assets and Collaboration
Cllr Choudhry	Workforce and Organisational Development
Cllr Headley	Digital and Data Transformation
Cllr Waheed	Prevention and Protection

Members of the Audit and Standards Committee were:

Cllr Atkins (Chair)
Cllr Berry
Cllr Burnett
Cllr Franks
Cllr Gambold
Cllr McVicar
Cllr Shingler

NARRATIVE STATEMENT

Background Information

Population

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) covers an area of approximately 1,234.45 square kilometres (476.94 square miles) and has a population of approximately 675,000 including large towns such as Luton, Bedford, Leighton Buzzard, Dunstable and Kempston.

Travel and Transport

The region is under flight paths to a number of commercial and private airports/airfields and includes Luton Airport which has its own fire and rescue service but is supported by the FRS; no permanent presence, but familiarisation and full emergency planning visits are undertaken. Other significant airfields include Cranfield and Shuttleworth.

BFRS has a number of rivers in the area, and has the use of one rescue boat located at Bedford.

A number of major motorways (A1, M1 etc.), motorway intersections and arterial roads pass through the region. This includes a number of remote roads through countryside.

In addition to the residential risks presented, the geographical area covered includes farming, woodland and forests, major motorway networks, rail network, airport, heritage sites and rivers.



Service Mission and Aims

Mission

The Service's Mission is to provide outstanding fire and rescue services that make Bedfordshire safer and we are committed to doing everything we can to achieve this within the resources we have available to us.

For us, delivering our mission means focusing on the following six aims:

1. **Preventing** fires and other emergencies from happening.
2. **Protecting** people and property when fires happen.
3. **Responding** to fires and other emergencies promptly and effectively.
4. **Empowering** our people as we work together to make Bedfordshire safer.
5. **Utilising** our assets and resources efficiently and effectively.
6. **Maximising** use of data and digital solutions to drive improvements.

We focus on achieving these aims, and use them to develop the key priorities we set out to achieve through our annual action plan.

The Service's Values

Following a period of internal working groups, staff decided on the following Values for the Service to adhere to:

- *We are accountable* – We are transparent, trustworthy, and responsible for our actions
- *We've got your back* – Striving to keep us all safe, while being supportive and inclusive
- *Every contact counts* – Making a positive difference each and every time, with respect and professionalism
- *We dare to be different* – We are bold, we welcome challenge, and we are open to innovative ideas.

Organisational Statistics and Structure

BFRS employs over 600 staff consisting of:

- Wholetime (full time) firefighters.
- On-Call (retained) firefighters.
- Central staff.
- Corporate (support) staff.

There are 14 strategically positioned Fire Stations and an Emergency Communication centre. These include five wholetime stations, crewed 24 hours a day, one day crewed and night retained station and 8 retained stations.

Other Local FRS

BFRS is bordered to the north and east by Cambridgeshire, to the north and west by Northamptonshire FRS, to the south by Hertfordshire and to the south and west by Buckinghamshire FRS.

Management and the Authority

Structure of the Service comprises a Chief Fire Officer and the following Principal Officers:

- Deputy Chief Fire Officer
 - Response and Preparedness
 - Prevention and Protection
 - Project Management Office
- Assistant Chief Fire Officer
 - Training, Technical and Fleet
 - Human Resources
 - Payroll and EDI
- Assistant Chief Officer
 - Treasurer to the FRA
 - Finance, Property and Facilities
 - ICT, Performance and Insight, Procurement
 - Strategic Planning and Performance
 - Governance, Media & Comms, Assurance

Headquarters is located at Kempston, Bedford, which houses the corporate team, directors, central operations, transport & engineering team, training facility, command & control room and a hot fire training facility.

There is a wide range of fire stations within the authority with some having cooking facilities, gyms and sleeping accommodation for fire fighters.

BFRS activities

General: BFRS undertakes day to day emergency response and community safety work and operates from 14 fire stations of varying ages (mainly purpose built and located in city/town/village centres close to residential, commercial and industrial areas with some dating back to the 1960's).

The following table summarises the incidents and activities attended over 2022/23.



As well as firefighting and rescue, the service responds to road traffic collisions, water rescue, flooding, working at height, animal rescues, chemical and decontamination incidents to name a few.

Performance

The Authority annually sets performance measures and receives monitoring reports on these indicators during the year.

There is also an annual overarching performance report presented to the Fire and Rescue Authority. This report is aligned to the Service's strategic objectives and strategies and can be viewed via the link below. The 2022/23 report is yet to be presented to the FRA. The 2021/22 Annual Report was presented to the FRA in September 2022 can be viewed via the link below:

<https://bedsfireresauth.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s5117/Item%2008a%20Appendix%20-%20Annual%20Report%202021-22%20FINAL%20for%20FRA.pdf>

Value for Money

All procurements over £25k must involve the Procurement Team and be advertised by the Authority electronically via the Find a Tender / Delta eSourcing portal. This is to ensure that the Authority appropriately makes contracts available to a wide range of suppliers and seeks to obtain value for money in its purchases of goods and services.

In accordance with the Authority's Procurement Policy and Contract Procedures, the route to procurement shall be determined by the application of a set of bandings which are based on the estimated total aggregated value of the contract over the entire contract period (initial term and all possible extension periods):

Band 1 – up to £4,999 – evidence of Best Value

Band 2 – £5,000 – £24,999 – request a minimum of three (3) written quotes in response to an Invitation to Quote

Band 3 – £25,000 – £59,999 – release of a Contracts Finder Notice as a call for a national competition or delivery of a closed tender process under an established Framework Agreement or a Dynamic Purchasing System in response to an Invitation to Tender (ITT) document

Band 4 – £60,000 – up to Find a Tender financial thresholds – release of a Contracts Finder Notice as a call for national competition or delivery of a closed tender process under an established Framework Agreement or a Dynamic Purchasing System in response to an Invitation to Tender (ITT) document

Band 5 – Find a Tender financial thresholds and above – release of a Find a Tender Service Notice as a call for competition at both a national and cross-border level (where relevant).

Bands 1 and 2 will be delivered by the relevant Service Area and Band 3, 4 and 5 Procurements shall be delivered by the Procurement Team as directed by the Authority's Procurement Manager or, in their absence, the Head of Training and Asset Management.

When procuring public contracts (except for utilities and concession contracts), the Authority must act in accordance with relevant national procurement legislation, ensuring that the principles of fairness, transparency, non-discrimination and proportionality are observed and that all procurement activity is conducted in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended from time to time).

The Authority's mission statement for procurement is:

“Achievement of best value with clearly defined benefits in the commissioning of goods, works and services procured at the right time, within budget and scope and of the required quality in an ethical and socially responsible manner”

The Authority seeks to collaborate with others across the public and private sectors in the procurement of its requirements, in order to widen the scope of its experience, explore the opportunity for new initiatives, maximise purchasing power and harness economics of scale.

TREASURERS REPORT

1. Introduction

The Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) is a precepting authority – this means that its net cost, after receipt of Government Grant, is met by a proportion of local business rates and council tax payers in Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton in proportion to the valuation band of their property.

The FRA is acutely aware, particularly in the current economic climate, of the need to keep any increase in council tax to the minimum, always bearing in mind the need to adequately fund the Fire and Rescue Service. Resources must, therefore, be sufficient to enable this emergency service to be fully operational throughout the year. However, as a result of a major exercise by Officers during the financial years 2011/12 to 2021/22 to identify efficiency savings for the 2022/23 budget, the FRA was able to keep its Council Tax increase to 1.99% for 2022/23. As a consequence of not having an increase in Council Tax for 2011/12, the Authority received a Council Tax Freeze Grant from this financial year. The Authority should still be in receipt of this grant; however it is now part of the main grant funding and is not visible.

The Authority has considered the impacts of Britain exiting the European Union and considers at this point in time there are not any significant implications that need recording in the statement of accounts.

2. 2022/23 – A Financial Commentary

Revenue Budget:

For 2022/23 the FRA approved a revenue budget requirement of £33.393m. This was felt to be the minimum required to maintain the level of service referred to above. Revenue Account details are summarised in paragraph 4 below.

Capital Budget:

What the FRA spends on capital expenditure and how that expenditure is financed is governed by a Prudential Code, which has been adopted by the Authority. The FRA each year considers and determines what can be afforded taking into account service needs and the effect of the cost of financing the expenditure at local council tax payer level. The FRA approves prudential indicators to control this activity and receives regular monitoring reports throughout the year. For 2022/23 the FRA determined that capital expenditure be approved at £1.357m, of which £0.781m was for property improvements £0.292m was to replace equipment and vehicles. The capital programme was funded from capital grant received from Central Government and revenue contributions. Capital expenditure details appear on Note 11 to the accounts.

Pensions Liability:

The pension's liability has decreased from £384.2m at the end of 2021/22 to £262.0m at the end of 2022/23. Changes in actuarial deficits or surpluses can arise as a result of events that have not coincided with the actuarial assumptions made for the last valuation or because the actuarial assumptions have changed. Further details of this increase in deficit are analysed in Note 29.

Treasurer's Report (continued)

Reserves:

The General Reserve balance as at 31 March 2023 was £2.4m. This is following work undertaken over the last few years to establish specific earmarked reserves, which as at 31 March 2023 totalled £4.925m. The year-end revenue budget underspend of £125.6k has been allocated to the Pension Reserve. This is in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy, which takes into account the back loaded, and on-going Government funding reductions to Fire and Rescue Services.

The Capital Receipts Reserve as at 31 March 2023 was £548k.

3. Statement of Accounts

The FRA's Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2023 is set out in the following pages. The Statement includes:

- a. The Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts which sets out the responsibilities of the FRA and the Treasurer to the FRA.
- b. The Annual Governance Statement.
- c. The Movement in Reserves Statement which summarises the FRA's spending against the council tax it raised, taking into account the use of reserves during the year.
- d. The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement which summarises the income and expenditure of the FRA.
- e. The Balance Sheet which displays the financial position of the FRA as at 31 March 2023.
- f. The Cash Flow Statement which summarises the changes in the FRA's funds.
- g. The Pension Fund Account for the year together with the Net Assets Statement at the year end.

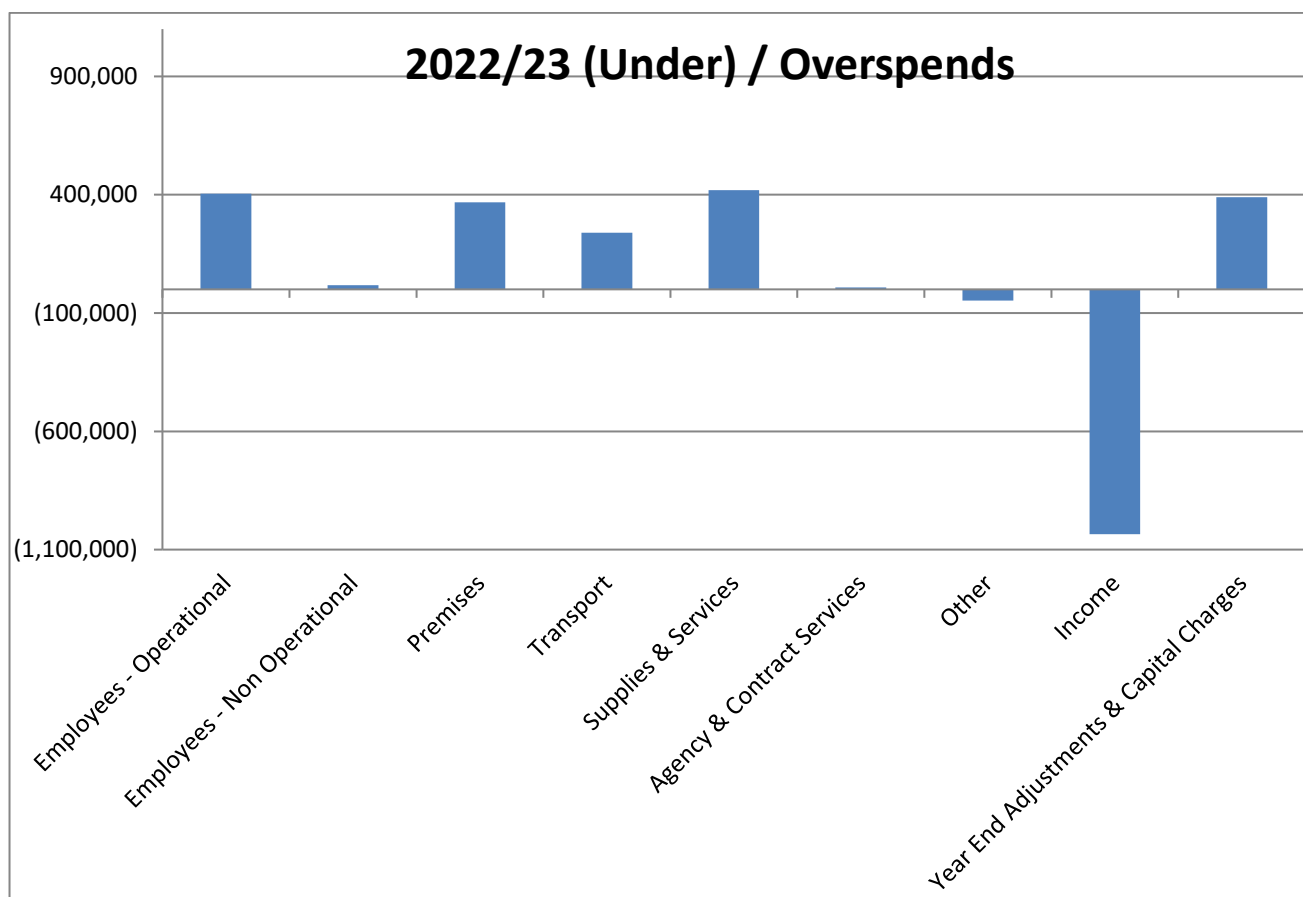
The Accounts are supported by a Statement of Accounting Policies and various Notes to the Core Financial Statements. In addition, a glossary of terms is included to provide further explanation.

4. 2022/23 Year End Contribution to Reserves

On the 2nd February 2023, the Authority received a budget monitoring report forecasting the year end outturn, based on the actuals as at 31st December 2022, as an underspend with a year-end contribution to reserves of £155.8k. The comparable year end contribution to reserves was £125.6k, with the variance between these figures explained in the Expenditure, Income and Government Grant sections below.

Treasurer's Report (continued)

Summary of Expenditure by Category 2022/23	Budget £	Actual £	Variance to Budget £
Employees - Operational	20,788,700	21,193,561	404,861
Employees - Non Operational	7,889,200	7,907,058	17,858
Premises	947,600	1,315,669	368,069
Transport	505,400	745,340	239,940
Supplies & Services	4,097,650	4,517,407	419,757
Agency & Contract Services	21,050	29,396	8,346
Other	810,500	763,172	(47,328)
Income	(2,688,000)	(3,722,152)	(1,034,152)
Year End Adjustments & Capital Charges	1,020,400	1,410,259	389,859
Year-end Contribution to reserves	33,392,500	34,159,710	767,210
Government Grants and Precepts (inc Collection Fund)	(33,392,500)	(34,285,324)	(892,824)
Year End Contributions to Reserves	0	(125,614)	(125,614)



Treasurer's Report (continued)

Variances over £50k

Employees

The out-turn figure for Operational employees is an over spend £404k which is attributable to the extra pay award of 3% above the budget figure of 4% £405k and extra spend on whole time fire fighter overtime of £161k. This increase in spend was offset by income received from EEAST first responding income of (£50k) & income for seconded officers of (£80k), these amounts are contained within the Income section below.

Premises

The overspend in Premises of £368k is a result of the increase in costs of utilities of £123k and a further £174k as a result of unbudgeted repairs, maintenance and decoration across all site within the service and other minor variances.

Transport

The overspend within the Transport area above of £240k is mainly as a result of the increase in cost of Derv £115k, a large number of unbudgeted vehicle repairs £60k, £27k for vehicle hire and other minor variances.

Supplies and Services

The overspend £420k within Supplies and Services is mainly as a result of contract inflation £160k and £56k unbudgeted spend on Ballistics PPE which was grant funded. A further £79k spend on unbudgeted equipment including, £30k for hose replacements, £15k on rope rescue equipment, £24k on thermal cameras and other minor purchases, this equipment spend was offset by £55k received for old equipment purchases. Due to the age and condition of the current BA sets a further £96k was spent on repairs and maintenance of these items in year. A further £29k relates to legal costs of for a number of work streams across the service and £25k for training the army as part of the industrial action resilience programme.

Income

The underspend of (£1.034m) in income is mainly as a result of investment income being higher than budgeted (£360k) as a result of the large increase in investment returns available in 2022/23. Unbudgeted amount of (£43k) Dementia funding and (£128k) Protection uplift grant we received and utilised in year, with a further (£80k) income received for officers seconded to other bodies in the year. As a result of training courses for outside bodies (£110k) has been received in year along with (£55k) as a result of equipment sales and (£50k) over achievement of budgeted income relating to workshop activities for servicing of vehicles and equipment for other Blue Light partners. Work by the property department has resulted in a saving in year of £25k on rates payable by the authority. A further amount of (£50k) was received from EEAST in relation to first responding across Bedfordshire.

Year End Adjustments & Capital Charges

The variance on the Year End adjustments of £390k is mainly as a result of the difference between utilised budget manager reserves from 2021/22 and the carry forward of budget manager's reserves from 2022/23 into 2023/24 for use on projects which span the financial years.

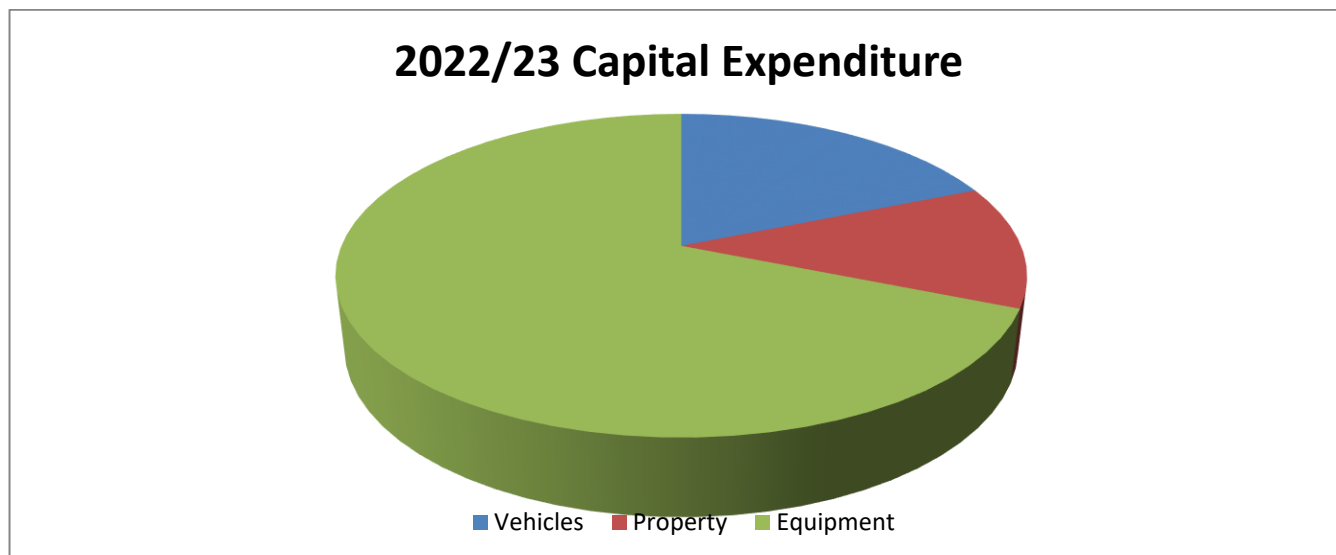
Treasurer's Report (continued)

Government Grants and Precepts (inc Collection Fund)

The underspend (£893k) within this area is as a result of (£392k) extra income received relating to Section 31 Business Rates relief above the amount which was included in the budget. In February and March 2023 the service received a further (£356k) relating to the governments reconciliation of Business Rates, (£50k) levy surplus relating to 21/22 and an amount of (£62k) for Tax income compensation.

2022/23 Capital Programme

In 2022/23 the FRA spent £1.121m on capital projects, of which £211k was spent on vehicles, £138k property spend and £772k on Equipment. The FRA funded its capital programme from capital reserves.



The table below shows capital resources used and available to fund future capital expenditure.

	Brought Forward	Transferred to in Year	Transferred from in Year	Available to fund future year expenditure
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Usable Capital Receipts	548	0	0	548
Grants and Other Contributions	159	0	0	159
Vehicle Appliance Reserve	48	0	0	48
Capital Reserve	3,772	988	(1,121)	3,639
	4,527	988	(1,121)	4,396

As reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority on the 2nd Feb 2023, the outturn on the vehicles capital scheme needs to be treated with fluidity, as the work on the vehicle build specifications and the time taken to build the vehicles moves across financial years. The non-vehicle scheme slippage includes major equipment purchases which are due to complete in future years.

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Fire 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, the officer is the Treasurer;
- Manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets;
- Approve the Statement of Accounts.

The Treasurer's Responsibilities

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

In preparing this Statement of Accounts, the Treasurer has:

- Selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- Made judgments and estimates that were reasonable and prudent;
- Complied with the local authority Code;
- Kept proper accounting records which were up-to-date;
- Taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Certificate of the Treasurer

I certify that the Statement of Accounts gives a true and fair financial position of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority at the accounting date and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Gavin Chambers CPFA
Treasurer to Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Signed on behalf of the Fire Authority

I confirm that these accounts were approved at the pre-audit stage, by the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority Audit & Standards Committee Chair on 6th July 2023.

Councillor Amjid Ali
Chair of the Audit & Standards Committee

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR 2022/23

1. Scope of Responsibility

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority is responsible for ensuring its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure the continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Authority has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*.

This Statement explains how the Authority has complied with the Code and also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in relation to the publication of an Annual Governance Statement.

The Authority's financial arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA – Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. The Treasurer/Assistant Chief Officer reports in his role directly to the Chief Fire Officer and sits on both the Strategic Command Team as well as the Corporate Management Team. The Treasurer is in a position to bring influence on all material business decisions and is involved in the daily business of the Authority as well as the strategic planning.

2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to and engages with the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Authority's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

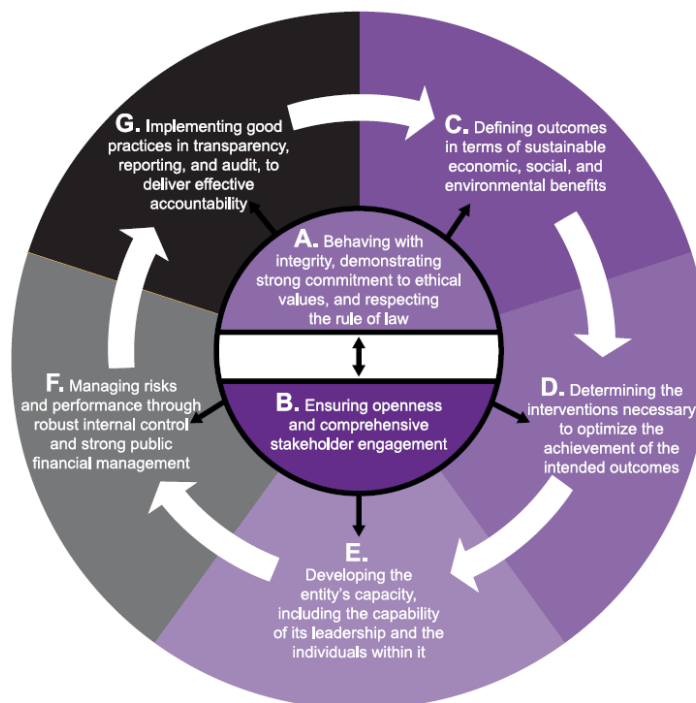
The governance framework for the Authority has been in place for the whole of the financial year 2022/23.

3. The Governance Framework

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority's governance framework derives from seven principles identified in The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC 2014). The updated framework that was reviewed by CIPFA in 2015 and published in April 2016 includes these. The seven principles are:

- a. behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law
- b. ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- c. defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
- d. determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
- e. developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
- f. managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
- g. implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

The diagram below is taken from the International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC 2014) and is reproduced in the 2016 Framework. It illustrates the various principles of good governance in the public sector and how they relate to each other.



There is a substantial element of common ground between the seven principles introduced in the 2016 framework and the six core principles used in the original 2007 framework.

The key elements of each of these core principles at Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority are as follows:

a. behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law

The behaviour of Members and Officers is regulated through separate Codes of Conduct which have been formally approved and adopted. These Codes are supported by numerous protocols that apply the principles of the codes to specific areas of Authority activity.

In addition the Authority has a Committee that covers standards, the Audit and Standards Committee, whose roles and functions relating to Standards include:

- Discharging the Authority's duty under the Localism Act 2011 to ensure that its Members (and any co-opted Members) maintain high standards of conduct.
- Advising the Authority on the operation of its Code of Conduct and any changes to the Code (including its register of interests) that may be necessary or desirable.
- Monitoring the operation of the Authority's arrangements for dealing with standards allegations against Members under the Localism Act 2011 and making any changes that may be necessary or desirable.
- Receiving regular reports on any standards allegations against Members.
- Authorising the Monitoring Officer to take action on the advice of the Committee Chair where it is necessary to appoint a Panel of Members to advise whether to investigate a complaint; or an Adjudication Committee to adjudicate upon a complaint following a finding of breach of the Code by a Member; or any other action in relation to the preparation for, or the hearing of, a matter by the Adjudication Committee.

The FRA has collaborated with local public sector organisations for the recruitment of a Panel of Independent Persons. This is noted in para 4b below.

The Authority recognises the importance of the principles of Corporate Governance and the need to apply them across all areas of the Authority's corporate activities. The Governance Framework is reviewed against the guidelines issued by CIPFA/SOLACE and the findings are reported to Committee annually.

As well as a Code of Conduct outlining behaviour for Officers, the Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer (as Section 112/151 Officer) and Monitoring Officer have specified roles within the Constitution to ensure reports prepared for Member decision comply with the budget and policy framework and are lawful.

Each Member receives copies of meeting agendas in advance. As one of the agenda items for each meeting, the Members are required to declare any interests at the outset of the meeting.

In addition, Members are encouraged to undertake any training relevant to their area of decision making.

The Internal Auditors give an annual opinion on the internal control framework. The Internal Auditors operate to standards set out in the 'Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK'.

External audit complies with the statutory requirements governing their audit, in particular:

- The Local Government Act 1999;
- The National Audit Office's Code of Audit Practice (the Code).

The Code defines the auditors' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements and the arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the audited body's use of resources.

The Authority has policies to safeguard both itself and its staff when making decisions. Both an Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy and a Whistle Blowing Policy have been developed and are communicated to staff as part of the employee induction process and on an annual basis. The Whistle Blowing Policy and the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy (including the National Fraud Initiative) were reviewed and approved by the Audit and Standards Committee in January 2023.

The financial management of the Authority is conducted in accordance with the financial rules set out within the Constitution and in the Financial Regulations.

The Authority's overall financial arrangements are governed by its Medium-Term Financial Strategy, which sets out the financial framework for the delivery of the Authority's strategies and plans. In determining the revenue and capital financial framework, a number of factors are taken into account including the national context, the distribution of local government funding from central government along with other local and external funding sources.

This is supported by robust budget setting and monitoring arrangements and detailed financial regulations, which form part of the Constitution. All designated budget managers are required to monitor their budgets in consultation with the Chief Accountant and his Finance Team. Budget managers are responsible for their expenditure (and income) and are therefore ultimately accountable to Members for their budgets. The forecast outturn position is reported in year to the CMT and FRA.

The Authority manages its investments within the guidelines of its Treasury Management Strategy, which is approved by Members on an annual basis. This is in accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy and Practices adopted by the Authority, that are in line with the CIPFA guidance.

There is a requirement for each Pension Scheme Manager (Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority in our case) to establish Local Pension Boards that will assist the Scheme Manager in ensuring that the scheme complies with legislation relating to its governance and administration, its own rules and any requirements of The Pensions Regulator. The Authority established a Pensions Board and its meeting on 31st March 2015. The Pension Board meets at least three times a year.

b. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority recognises that communication and engagement with all stakeholders plays a fundamental role in the successful delivery of high quality, cost effective services.

The Authority is constantly striving to improve its communications performance, to build on its track record of continuous improvement and to ensure that the Authority as a whole is open and accessible to the community, service users and staff. In 2022/23 the Authority has:

- Adhered to the Transparency Code and GDPR requirements, with relevant information published on the Authority's website;
- Updated and revised its Communications and Engagement Strategy and Action Plan in line with the values of the Service;
- Continued to update and promote the Service's brand to ensure the public recognise the services we provide;
- Continued to receive compliments from the public in response to our Service delivery and community support;
- Supported station open days and community events;
- Supported a wide range of National Safety Weeks and other events to promote fire, road, water and other home and outdoor safety messages to local communities;
- Work on a new website that complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (known as WCAG) for accessibility, this was launched in May 2023;
- Continuously updated the website in order to improve public access to information about the Service, safety and incident information and improved their ability to contact the Service;
- Continued the development of a Modern.gov features on the website to improve access to Fire and Rescue Authority documents and minutes of meetings;
- Provide 24/7 Comms Officer cover, supporting and working with partners on Service wide incidents, with resilience to maintain cover in the case of sickness or holiday absence;
- Developed the use of the consultation element of the BedsFireAlert community messaging system to improve engagement with local people on the Service's budget for 2023-24, and the Community Risk Management Plan 2023-2027;
- Further developed the use of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram @bedsfire content and reach to engage directly with public and promote the Service and provide information to local people to keep them informed of live incidents;
- Maintained Facebook pages for each of the 14 Community Fire Stations to increase engagement with local communities, targeting the recruitment and improve community safety;
- Produced the 2023-24 electronic Precept Leaflet (setting out the annual budget and expenditure);
- Expanded the Community Alert Messaging system, as a mechanism for integrated community engagement messaging and consultation;
- Successfully supported major recruitment campaigns for on-call and whole-time to encourage more women and members of under-represented communities to apply for jobs;
- Continued to improve internal communications including increasing the number of station visits by senior staff to Community Fire Stations to directly engage with crews and staff
- We have continued to develop the Blue Bulletins going out weekly to all staff;
- We have continued to host staff engagement forums and specific forums for managers

The Authority continues to listen to feedback from the local community and to learn from best practice across the country.

The Authority's CRMP represents the key document that outlines its mission, aims and priorities for the future, sets performance targets and outlines the Authority's accountability to its stakeholders. When identifying priorities for the Plan, the views of stakeholders are taken into account and when completed is made available to all stakeholders, ensuring that they are aware of the mission, aims, priorities and performance of the Authority.

The Authority's programme for securing continuous improvement in its services is set out in the CRMP. Actions for improvement are drawn from a variety of sources including external performance assessment, the Authority's internal reviews and audits, external inspections, issues arising from

performance management, consultation exercises, and Service improvements identified by the Authority's complaints and comments procedure.

The Fire and Rescue Authority and Audit and Standards Committees are open to the public except where personal or confidential matters are discussed. All agendas and minutes are placed on-line, along with the Authority's plans, policies and strategies. These items are also available by directly contacting the Authority, should anyone be unable to access these electronically.

c. defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits and

d. determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

A clear statement of the Authority's mission and direction is set out in the Authority's strategic aims which form an overarching guide to the development of Service strategies which are considered and reviewed as part of the annual strategic assessment. Based upon the long term strategic direction and strategic assessment the Authority consults upon, develops and publishes an annual Community Risk Management Plan which contains the Authority's priorities and key service delivery actions for a rolling four year period to coincide with the four year Medium Term Financial Strategy, and gives a detailed description of the key improvement projects for the current year.

The Corporate Management Team over 2022/23 reviewed the progress of the major change projects and individual projects are managed by way of project boards. This process was strengthened during 2021/22 by the introduction of a dedicated Programme and Project Officer and in 2022/23 a Corporate Projects and Programme Board was established. Performance outcomes and overall performance and achievements of the Authority are contained within a section of the Community Risk Management Plan.

A Medium-Term Financial Strategy, covering a rolling four-year period and aligned with the Community Risk Management Plan, is developed to resource the Authority's plans. As part of the budget cycle, Service Managers produce financial proposals for key Service priorities and associated projects which are presented to Members for approval, in conjunction with the Authority's on-going financial commitments.

Performance indicators are set and targets are agreed in line with the Authority's planning cycle and target setting methodology. Once the Community Risk Management Plan and annual budget have been finalised and approved by the Authority, employee personal appraisals and development reviews, agreeing individual targets and actions, take place.

Performance against targets is monitored on a quarterly basis by Areas/Functions, the Corporate Management Teams and Elected Members at the FRA Meetings. The Performance Management arrangements of the Service have again been enhanced over 2022/23 through improved data quality and performance information systems. An overarching performance summary is now produced publishing results for different functional groups in one report to the full Authority.

e. developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority has adopted a Constitution which sets out how the Authority operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

Following the appointment of a new Monitoring Officer during 2022/23, the Constitution and been reviewed, refreshes and approved by the FRA.

The main decision-making body is the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) whose meetings are open to the public. There is an Audit and Standards Committee and Executive Committee.

The Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee reports recommendations arising from meetings to each meeting of the Authority.

Ongoing policy and decision making are facilitated by a clear framework of delegation set out in the Authority's Constitution, with clear details of delegated authorities to officers.

All reports are reviewed for legal, HR, financial, equality and risk considerations prior to being presented to Members of the Authority for formal decision-making.

The Authority over this trial period increased its FRA meetings to seven over 2021/22 and this continues. A formal FRA Executive group has been meeting over 2022/23 and beyond too. This, together with an appropriate level of delegation to both the Authority Executive and senior managers, enables speedy decision making.

The Corporate Management Team (CMT), which is chaired by the Chief Fire Officer, met on a fortnightly basis and for the latter half of the year weekly during 2022/23, with Functional Heads attending and provides the ongoing management of the implementation of the Service strategy. It also considers other internal control issues, including risk management, performance management, compliance, efficiency, value for money and financial management. Strategic direction is provided by the Strategic Command Team comprising during 2022/23 of the Service's Principal Officers. The Service has reviewed the terms of reference for each of these management teams and has also aligned performance and project management reporting between these teams and the Fire and Rescue Authority meetings.

A full suite of job descriptions and person specifications defining the roles of officers and the statutory positions of Treasurer and Monitoring Officer are in place.

During 2022/23 the Authority had a Treasurer and Monitoring Officer. Between them, they ensure that the Authority complies with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures and that expenditure is lawful. They act as independent advisors to the Authority.

The Treasurer will ensure that appropriate financial advice is given on all financial matters, that proper financial records and accounts are maintained and that there is an effective system of internal financial control. The Monitoring Officer ensures that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes and regulations are complied with.

Both the Monitoring Officer and the Treasurer see all draft Authority reports before they are published. They also attend the Authority briefing meetings as required by the Chief/FRA Chair, that are prior to the formal meetings and attend the formal public meetings too.

There is a robust budget and policy framework and detailed financial regulations, which are monitored by the Treasurer and the Monitoring Officer. The financial regulations were updated and approved by the Audit and Standards Committee on 4th March 2021. The Constitution is updated continually to reflect any changes in structure and as noted above, has received a thorough review and refresh by the new Monitoring Officer during 2022/23.

ICT Shared Service

A formal shared ICT service agreement was signed under seal by the Secretary and Monitoring Officers for both Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Services in October 2013. Schedule 4 of that document defines the terms of reference for the Shared Services Governance Board. The board's role is to:

- Ensure that the ICT Shared Service is effective, efficient and resilient
- Agree Budget for the following Financial Year
- Identify opportunities for improvement
- Ensure an annual review of the agreement

The Governance Board currently meets regularly and is quorate with the attendance of Principal Officers of each party.

The Authority has devoted resources to ensuring the high standards of its Members and staff to ensure that the Authority's employees have the right knowledge, skills and motivation to work effectively.

For all operational staff, the Authority continues to embed the requirements of the national Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) which supports a competency based personnel management approach using role maps underpinned by National Occupational Standards. The system is designed to improve efficiency and develop staff effectively, and ensures that all staff are recruited, developed and progressed fairly and transparently, with overall performance and competencies regularly reviewed.

Job Descriptions and Person Specifications have been drawn up for all posts to ensure that the best candidates are appointed into each position. All officers (operational and non-operational) employed by the Authority receive an annual Personal Development Review (appraisal) at which performance is measured against set objectives. Training needs are also identified as part of this process and addressed via the Service Training Manager or the individual's Line Manager as appropriate.

A significant commitment has also been made towards retaining staff, by offering various 'flexible working schemes' and where possible encouraging succession planning and promotion from within. This ensures that valuable skills and experience are retained and passed on, rather than being lost.

The Authority's Chair and Chief Fire Officer over 2022/23 had a good working relationship and held regular meetings to discuss any emerging issues. There were regular formal meetings between Members and Senior Officers through the Audit and Standards Committee and the FRA. At each meeting there is also a review of the work programme for the year ahead. A formal member and employee protocol has been developed and adopted by the Authority.

There is a significant amount of training available to Members throughout their term of office. As well as an initial induction programme, training is also provided through bespoke training days and information reports on various subjects such as the Statement of Accounts, budget setting process, treasury management and risk management.

f. managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

The Authority had one committee during 2022/23, the Audit and Standards Committee.

The Audit and Standards Committee is outlined at Section a) *Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law*. The Audit and Standards Committee has been established to evaluate Audit Activity, Regulatory Framework, Accounts and Standards. In February 2011, the Authority increased the powers of the Audit and Standards Committee to oversee the production of, and approve, the Authority's Annual Governance Statement and the Statement of Accounts.

Following a Governance audit and review undertaken during 2021/22, the Authority for a trial period increased the number of FRA meetings and the one committee, the Audit & Standards Committee. The Policy and Challenge Groups that met during 2018/19 ceased to meet at the end of that year, as noted below. The trial period proved successful and these arrangements have now continued.

During 2022, there was a thorough review of the governance arrangements of the FRA by the Local Government Association. The outcome of the review can be found here, where the action plan post review was presented to the FRA in October 2022:

<https://bedsfireresauth.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=498&Ver=4>

The management of risk and business continuity continues to develop across the Authority. There are a range of Business Continuity events scheduled each year, to test the plans in place are effective. The Service has also engaged with RSM our internal auditors, for the second time, to review our Corporate Risk register and work with our CMT on it to ensure it is fit for purpose, reflecting clearly our key corporate risks with appropriate mitigating actions in place.

The Service's business continuity arrangements are tested as part of the assurance framework to ensure delivery of service during times of business disruption, in particular during a trade dispute or reduced staffing due to pandemic. Following the trade dispute between the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and the Government in May 2013 over pension arrangements the Service's business continuity arrangements have been formally tested on a number of occasions where national strike action has taken place. With strikes potentially happening over 2022/23, planning was again put in place for operational business continuity arrangements. During all periods of strike action the Service has successfully implemented business continuity plans ensuring that fire cover has been provided in line with current arrangements.

In addition to the development of risk management and business continuity processes the Service's Corporate Risk Register has recently undergone further refinements. These improvements continued during early 2020 with the Corporate Risk Register having a full re write. This was following a review of risks and a training session with RSM. These refinements allow for the assessment and prioritisation of risks providing for full and detailed evaluation of control measures thereby minimising any potential impacts of identified risks within the monitoring framework. As noted above, there is currently a review taking place again with RSM that should conclude in the summer of 2023.

The identification and management of corporate risk remains a priority for the Service with it being a standard agenda item for strategic meetings, cascaded across the Service through managerial chains and reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority through the Audit and Standards committee. All identified risks within the Service have an owner assigned from the Corporate Management Team who is responsible for the development of an appropriate action plan. The action plan is used as the basis to mitigate risk and is regularly reported to members of the Corporate Management Team for progress and amendments including changes to levels of risk and associated actions

The Service's Risk Management – An audit of Risk Management was undertaken in 2019 that focused on the key controls in place. It was also to provide assurance over the effectiveness of the risk management framework and the supporting governance processes, to ensure risks to the achievement of the Authority's objectives are identified and managed effectively. Improvements have continued since with the more recent transition during 2022 of risks from spreadsheet to a system (BMIS).

Information Security - The Service has an identified Senior Information Risk Officer (The Treasurer) and a newly formed group commenced meeting in early 2020, the Information Management and Assurance Board. The ICT Team have also secured Cyber Essentials plus accreditation and hold their own Security meetings too.

g. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

The Service fully meets the requirements of the Transparency Code. This published information can be found via the following website link:

<https://www.bedsfire.gov.uk/About/Governance/Transparency.aspx>

Transparent decision making is evident through many sources, including the Fire and Rescue Authority. All decisions of the Fire and Rescue Authority are captured in the publicly available reports and minutes. The reports are written in an understandable style, ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate, without too much detail.

The Authority uses the Modern.gov system to enable easy access to committee papers and decisions.

Key reports, demonstrating the above include this Annual Governance Statement, the statement of accounts, the annual external and internal audit reports and numerous annual committee reports which can be viewed via the link below.

<https://bedsfireauth.moderngov.co.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

Internal audit recommendations are reported on to ensure these are completed in a timely manner. Where medium or high recommendations, these are followed up by internal audit to ensure that they have been implemented appropriately as reported.

Both internal and external audit have access to the Treasurer, Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee, FRA Chair, Monitoring Officer and the Chief Fire Officer.

The Authority welcomes peer challenge, review and inspections. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), was welcomed to the Service in the summer of 2018, as part of tranche one of inspections. The tranche 1 (judged Good at Effectiveness) and 2 inspection reports can be found via the following link:

<https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/>

In the 2021 tranche 2 inspection report, the Service and Authority were delighted to be judged as "Good" at "effectively keeping people safe and secure" within our communities and "Good" at how well it looks after its people.

A Covid inspection was undertaken during 2020 (see link below) and in early 2021 the Service welcomed its second main inspection. The most recent inspection was undertaken during early 2023, with report on the findings of this inspection expected in summer 2023.

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/covid-19-inspection-bedfordshire-fire-and-rescue-service/>

Where formal working partnerships have developed, such as the Shared ICT Services with Cambridgeshire FRS, there are clear governance arrangements in place. These include Board meetings and minutes. Another example is the Blue Light Collaboration Board, where there are formal meetings held between the Fire & Rescue Service, the Police and Ambulance Services.

The Corporate Programme Board (CPB) was established in November 2020 and is another layer of Governance to deliver Corporate Objectives (CRMP) with support from the central Programme Management Office. The CPB reports to CMT.

4. Review of Effectiveness of System of Internal Control

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the Corporate Management Team, who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment, and also by the reports and recommendations of the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The key features of the Authority's internal control framework which directly contribute to the review of effectiveness are:

- a. The Authority
- b. The Audit and Standards Committee
- c. Internal Audit
- d. External Audit
- e. Assurance Statements
- f. Internal Performance Management Framework

a. *The Authority*

The key formal documents governing the internal control framework for the Authority are within its Handbook. All delegation of decision-making is made in accordance with the requirements of the policies within the Handbook and the Scheme of Delegation.

The formal rules governing the way in which the Authority and Officers conduct their business are also set out in the Handbook and include:

- Standing Orders
- Procurement Policy and Procedures
- The Financial Regulations;
- Code of Conduct
- Information Security

Authority reports are reviewed by the Monitoring Officer to ensure that they are lawful and by the Treasurer (Section 112/151 Officer) for financial and risk implications prior to being presented to Members.

The Monitoring Officer has a duty to monitor and review the Constitution to ensure that its aims and principles are current. The Constitution is reviewed regularly and updates are issued as necessary. Recent changes to the Constitution have included updates to the Financial Regulations and the updates to the Procurement Policy and Contract Procedures to the revised Procurement Policy and Procedures.

As mentioned at Section a) *Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law*, the Authority, in 2011/12, agreed to review its effectiveness on an annual basis. A Review of the Authority's Effectiveness was put on hold for 2021/22 and during 2022/23 the review of governance and effectiveness was undertaken externally by the LGA. A link to the action plan is included below. A Record of Members Attendance is available on request.

b. Standards

There have been no complaints against Members during 2022/23.

The Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) discharges its duty under the Localism Act 2011 (the Act) through its Audit and Standards Committee. The standards provisions of the Act came into force on 1 July 2012 and place a duty on authorities to ensure that its Members (and any co-opted Members) maintain high standards of conduct. The Act also requires authorities to adopt a Code of Conduct (in place of the former National Code) and have in place arrangements to investigate any written complaints of breach of the Code of Conduct by a Member.

The FRA has adopted a Code of Conduct and updated its registration of interests arrangements to reflect the change to disclosable pecuniary and other interests required by the Act.

The Act also required the FRA to put in place arrangements for the appointment of at least one independent person whose views must be sought and taken into account before the FRA can take any decision on an allegation it has decided to investigate. The views of the independent person may also be sought in relation to an allegation at other stages in the process and s/he may also be consulted by a Member who is the subject of an allegation.

Since the relevant provisions of the Localism Act 2011 came into force on 1 July 2012 the Authority has worked jointly with neighbouring local authorities to appoint independent persons. In 2016 joint appointments were made with Bedford Borough Council. The terms of office of the independent persons expired at the end of July 2020 but were extended until July 2021 because of the pandemic. It has since been approved via the Audit Committee and the FRA that these arrangements continue.

c. Audit Committee

The Audit Committee was established in 2010/11 and now meets quarterly as the Audit and Standards Committee. Its Committee ensures that the following areas of the Fire and Rescue Authority are functioning efficiently and effectiveness, challenging areas of underperformance as required and approving any associated policy or activity as necessary:

- Audit activity
- Regulatory Framework
- Accounts
- Standards

d. Internal Audit

The role of internal audit is to review the internal control framework that governs the operations of the Authority and, in so doing, provide an independent opinion to both Management and Members of the Authority on the robustness of the Authority's internal control environment.

RSM continue as the Authority's internal auditors following a successful procurement tender process in 2016 (and more recently in 2021). The work of the team complies fully with the requirements of CIPFA's Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK.

An Annual Audit Plan is developed by the auditors, in conjunction with the Treasurer and is based on a risk assessment of all the services/systems of the Authority. Members and Service Managers are directly involved in the development of the plan. The plan is subject to review by CMT, prior to being approved by the Audit and Standards Committee. The plan identifies the audits to be completed each year, including core fundamental systems and other operational systems.

The reporting process for internal audit requires a report of each audit to be submitted to the relevant Corporate Management Team member and other relevant Service Managers. The Treasurer also receives a report of all audits completed.

Each audit report includes agreed recommendations for improvement. All recommendations are followed up by Internal Audit where above low, to ensure they have been implemented. An opinion of the overall internal control environment is also provided. Where assurance is deemed to be unsatisfactory, immediate action is required.

The work contained within the 2022/23 Audit Plan is shown in the Table below. Where applicable, management action plans have been agreed to address issues raised.

The table below shows the evaluation received for each area of work. There are four levels of assessment – No Assurance, Partial, Reasonable and Substantial. There was one high recommendation made in an "Advisory" audit. This was on ensuring that where audit recommendations had been deemed as actioned/closed, that there was adequate evidence to demonstrate this for the Follow Up audit. This has been deemed as actioned and not raised in the more recent Follow Up audit.

The level of recommendations made is also identified below:

Assignments	Assurance Level	Actions agreed		
		L	M	H
Follow Up 1.22/23	Advisory	0	6	1
ICT – Digitalised Systems User Proficiency 2.22/23	Reasonable	2	2	0
Follow Up Part Two 3.22/23	Advisory	1	5	0
Data Quality – Information Management and Governance Arrangements including GDPR (Draft)	Reasonable	2	3	0
Key Financial Controls (Draft)	Substantial	3	0	0
Implementation of Actions from HMICFRS – Engagement with Local Community	In Progress			

The Annual Internal Audit report for 2022/23 by RSM, advises that “The organisation has an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance and internal control. However, our work has identified further enhancements to the framework of risk management, governance and internal control to ensure that it remains adequate and effective”.

e. External Audit

This Authority remains committed to continuing to improve its performance towards achieving excellence in all areas. Value for Money (VFM) is still part of an annual review carried out by the external auditors. The Authority’s external auditors, Ernst and Young, will report on the adequacy of the Authority’s arrangements.

Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) regulate the local public audit market, where signed up to its framework, and monitor the performance of the firms providing audit services.

Value for Money

Our external auditors will consider whether the Authority has put in place ‘proper arrangements’ to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness for the use of our resources. This is known as the value for money conclusion.

For 2022/23 this is based on the overall evaluation criterion:

“In all significant respects, the audited body had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people”

Proper arrangements are defined by statutory guidance issued by the National Audit Office. They comprise of arrangements to:

- Take informed decisions;
- Deploy resources in a sustainable manner; and
- Work with partners and other third parties.

In considering proper arrangements, E&Y will draw on the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework for local government, to ensure that our assessment is made against a framework that the Authority is already required to have in place and to report on through documents such as this Annual Governance Statement.

For the 2022/23 financial year, the review has yet to take place and is currently being scheduled.

f. Assurance Statements

An integral element of the production of this Annual Governance Statement is completion, by all of CMT, of an annual Assurance Statement. The statement is based on the seven core governance principles that this AGS follows. The individual assurance statement gives each CMT member the opportunity to independently comment on their own area and that of the Service as a whole. All returns were received from CMT.

g. Internal Performance Management Framework

The Authority has a Performance Management Framework through which quality of service can be measured by local performance indicators. Performance targets are set and agreed for the coming year and are monitored on a bi-monthly basis by the Corporate Management Team in order that corrective action can be taken where areas of service are deemed to be underperforming.

Performance is also reported to the FRA. Individual performance is monitored through the appraisal system as previously mentioned.

5. Governance Issues

Governance training was requested by the FRA and in November 2021, members received this training provided by an external organisation.

Following further discussions on governance and as reflected in the action point below for 2022/23, a full review of the FRA governance arrangements was undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA).

As noted above, Members portfolio areas were introduced during 2022/23.

FRA Meetings during 2022/23

During 2022/23, post the Covid pandemic, there are no governance issues to raise in this AGS. The dates of the meetings are available on the Authority's website via the link below:

<https://bedsfireresauth.moderngov.co.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

The meetings consisted of the Fire & Rescue Authority, the Audit & Standards Committee and the FRA Executive. The pandemic did not hinder the FRA Governance of the Authority and the use of virtual meetings proved successful.

Review of Issues and Actions identified within 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement

The following Table briefly summarises the issues identified through the 2021/22 review of effectiveness process and the improvement actions that have been taken to address them during 2022/23:

Issue/Area for improvement	Improvement Action Planned	Actions Completed
Medium Term Budget/CRMP.	An updated medium-term budget position will be presented to the FRA in July 2022 and in February 2023 the budget for 2023/24 will be presented for approval.	An updated 2022/23 budget was presented to Members and the 2023/24 budget and council tax was set in February 2023.
Review of Authority Effectiveness and Member portfolio leads.	The Authority has requested the Local Governments Association (LGA) to carry out a Governance Review during 2022/23.	A Governance review was completed during 2022/23 with actions from this either have taken place or are in train (such as Member inductions for new Members post the AGM in June 2023)

Issues and Improvement Actions identified by 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement

The following Table summarises the issues and improvement actions identified through the 2022/23 review of effectiveness process, to address over 2023/24. As in previous years, a summary review of their implementation will be included within the next Annual Governance Statement.

Issue/Area for improvement	Source	Improvement Action Planned
Medium Term Budget/CRMP.	Assurance Statements.	An updated medium-term budget position will be presented to the FRA during 2023/24 and in February 2024 the budget for 2024/25 will be presented for approval.
New Members will be joining the FRA at the AGM in June 2023.	FRA effectiveness reviews	To carry out a comprehensive induction programme for new Members.

Approval of the Annual Governance Statement

We are satisfied that these planned actions will improve our governance arrangements and we will monitor their implementation and operation throughout the year and report their progress as part of our next annual review.



JACQUELINE BURNETT
Chair - Bedfordshire
Bedfordshire FRA

ANDREW HOPKINSON
Chief Fire Officer
Bedfordshire FRS

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1. General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Authority's transactions for the 2022/23 financial year and its position at the year end of 31 March 2023. The Authority is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, which those Regulations require to be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23, 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.

2. Property, Plant and Equipment

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

Recognition: All 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. Amounts in excess of £10,000 are categorised as capital expenditure.

Measurement:

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

- the purchase price
- any costs attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management

The Authority does not capitalise borrowing costs incurred while 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.

Donated assets are measured initially at fair value. The difference between fair value and any consideration paid is credited to the Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, unless the donation has been made conditionally. Until conditions are satisfied, the gain is held in the Donated Assets Account. Where gains are credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

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

- assets under construction — historical cost

- all other assets — current value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use (existing use value — EUV).
- Where non-property assets that have short useful lives or low values (or both), depreciated historical cost basis is used as a proxy for current value

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

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at current value are reviewed every three years or sooner if there has been a significant movement in values, to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their current value at the year end. Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains. (Exceptionally, gains might be credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services 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(s) 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.

Impairment: The values of each category of assets are reviewed at the end of each financial year for evidence of reductions in value. Where impairment is identified as part of this review or as a result of a valuation exercise, this is accounted for by:

- where there is a balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the amount of accumulated gains).
- where there is no balance in the Revaluation Reserve or an insufficient balance, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.
- where an impairment loss is reversed subsequently, the reversal is credited to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, up to the amount of the original loss, adjusted for depreciation that would have been charged if the loss had not been recognised.

Disposals: When an asset is disposed of, the value 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 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 the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal). Any revaluation gains in the Revaluation Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Amounts in excess of £10,000 are categorised as capital receipts and are credited to the Capital Receipts Reserve. 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 noncurrent 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.

Depreciation: Depreciation is provided for on all Property, Plant and Equipment assets with a finite useful life. An exception is made for assets without a determinable finite useful life (i.e. freehold land) and assets that are not yet available for use (i.e. assets under construction). Depreciation is calculated on the following bases

Buildings

Depreciation is calculated using the straight line method over the useful life of the property as estimated by the valuer.

Whenever a full revaluation takes place the accumulated depreciation charged up to that year is reset to zero (the asset values are debited and the Revaluation Reserve is credited with this amount).

Revaluation gains are also depreciated, with an amount equal to the difference between current value depreciation charges 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.

Buildings are not depreciated in any year when a full revaluation occurs, nor in their year of acquisition nor in their year of disposal.

Vehicles, Plant, Furniture and Equipment

Depreciation is calculated using the straight line method over the anticipated life of the asset which has been assessed as between three and twenty years, or in the case of assets acquired under a finance lease, the length of the lease. Assets are not depreciated in their year of acquisition nor in their year of disposal.

3. Heritage Assets

Heritage Assets, defined as those assets that are intended to be preserved in trust for future generations because of their cultural, environmental or historical associations, are recognised and measured (including the treatment of revaluation gains and losses) in accordance with the Authority's accounting policies on property, plant and equipment. The Authority's heritage asset is accounted for as follows.

Steam Boiler on Shand Mason Fire Engine.

The Authority has obtained a valuation from a suitably qualified external valuer. The valuation will be reviewed on a regular basis. This is a current valuation based upon expert opinion and knowledge of similar assets types within the UK.

4. 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 over its useful life to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement from its date of acquisition. An asset is tested for impairment whenever there is an indication that the asset might be impaired — any losses recognised are posted to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Any gain or loss arising on the disposal of an intangible asset is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where expenditure on intangible assets qualifies as capital expenditure for statutory purposes, amortisation, impairment losses and disposal gains and losses are not permitted to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account.

5. Charges to Revenue for Non-current Assets

Service revenue accounts and support services are debited with the following amounts to record the cost of holding non-current 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.
- Amortisation of intangible assets attributable to the service.

The Authority is not required to raise council tax to cover depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisation. However, it is required to make an annual contribution from revenue towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement equal to an amount calculated on a prudent basis determined by the Authority in accordance with statutory guidance. Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses and amortisation are therefore replaced by the contribution of Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) to the General Fund Balance, by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the two. The calculation of MRP is based on the Equal Instalment Method.

6. Financial Instruments – Borrowing

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. 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.

There is full compliance with the Treasury Management Code of Practice issued by CIPFA (updated in 2011). A Treasury Policy Statement issued under this Code sets out the Treasury Management Strategy and the Treasury Management Policies to be pursued. From 1 May 1995

CIPFA also introduced a Standard of Professional Practice on Treasury Management which sets out the obligations for Treasury Management.

7. Financial Instruments – Investments

Loans and receivables 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. They are subsequently measured at their amortised cost. Annual credits to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset, multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. This means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal receivable (plus accrued interest) and interest credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount receivable for the year in the loan agreement.

Where assets are identified as impaired because of a likelihood arising from a past event that payments due under the contract will not be made, the asset is written down and a charge made to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The impairment loss is measured as the difference between the carrying amount and the present value of the revised future cash flows discounted at the asset's original effective interest rate.

Any gains and losses that arise on the de-recognition of the asset are credited/debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

8. Debtors and Creditors

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

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

Where income 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 it is doubtful that debts will be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.

9. Inventories

Inventories are included in the Balance Sheet at the lower of cost and net realisable value. Inventories held for distribution at no charge are measured at the lower of cost and current replacement cost. The cost of inventories is assigned using the first-in, first-out (FIFO) or average cost as appropriate. Where stocks have been identified as being of no further use to the Authority, and the appropriate procedures have been complied with, the obsolete stock has been written off.

10. Employee Benefits

Post-Employment Benefits – Pensions

The FRA participates in two Pension Schemes:

- a. Firefighters -
The Firefighters' Pension Scheme is an unfunded, defined benefit scheme which is available to firefighters.
- b. Control and Non-Uniformed Personnel -
The Local Government Superannuation Scheme is a funded, defined benefit scheme which is available to control and non-uniformed staff. The Scheme's assets are valued on a bid basis annually as at 31 March.

The costs of retirement benefits are charged when they are earned by the employees rather than when they are actually paid as benefits. This charge is estimated by an actuarial valuation. Past service costs, where officers are awarded injury benefits, are charged to Assistant Chief Officer subdivision of the Net Cost of Service in the CIES Expenditure Analysis on Page 47.

Interest cost of liabilities and any actuarial gains or losses on assets are also charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. International Accounting Standard 19 (IAS 19) accounting entries are then reversed out from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement in order that they do not represent a charge to the council tax payer. The pension information provided by the actuary is included within Note 29.

Termination Benefits

Where a firefighter is retired on ill health grounds the Authority makes a contribution to the pension fund towards the cost of the additional pension awarded. Where a firefighter is retired on injury grounds any injury award and injury pension costs will be charged to the Net Cost of Service. Termination benefits relating to compulsory and voluntary redundancies are charged, on an accruals basis, to the appropriate service area.

Benefits Payable during Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled within 12 months of the year end. They include such benefits as wages and salaries, paid annual leave and paid sick leave, bonuses and non-monetary benefits (e.g. cars) 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 made at the wage and salary rates applicable at current year rates, which is not in line with IAS 19 but the difference is not deemed to be material. 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.

11. Leases

Finance Leases:

The Authority accounts for leases as finance leases where the terms of the lease transfer substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the property, plant or equipment from the lessor to the lessee.

Where a lease covers both land and buildings, the land and buildings elements are considered separately for classification.

Arrangements that do not have the legal status of a lease but convey the right to use an asset in return for payment are accounted for under this policy where fulfilment of the arrangement is dependent on the use of specific assets.

Property, plant and equipment held under finance leases is recognised on the Balance Sheet at the commencement of the lease at its fair value measured at the lease's inception (or the present value of the minimum lease payments, if lower). The asset recognised is matched by a liability for the obligation to pay the lessor. Initial direct costs of the Authority are added to the carrying amount of the asset. Premiums paid on entry into a lease are applied to writing down the lease liability. Contingent rents are charged as expenses in the periods in which they are incurred. Lease payments are apportioned between:

- A charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property, plant or equipment —applied to write down the lease liability, and
- A finance charge (debited to Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement).

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

The Authority is not required to raise council tax to cover depreciation or revaluation and impairment losses arising on leased assets. Instead, a prudent annual contribution is made from revenue funds towards the deemed capital investment in accordance with statutory requirements. Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses are therefore substituted by a revenue contribution in the General Fund Balance, by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the two.

Operating Leases - Authority as Lessee

Leases that do not meet the definition of finance leases are accounted for as operating leases. Rentals payable are charged to the relevant service revenue account on a straight line basis over the term of the lease, generally meaning that rentals are charged when they become payable.

Operating Leases — Authority as Lessor

Where the Authority grants an operating lease over a property, the asset is retained in the Balance Sheet. Rental income is credited to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

12. 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.

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.

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.

13. Reserves

Reserves are specific amounts set aside for either future policy purposes, called Earmarked Reserves, or to cover contingencies, called General Reserve. Reserves are created by appropriating amounts out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Expenditure is then debited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when it is incurred. The reserve is then appropriated back into the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement so there is no net charge against council tax for the expenditure.

Certain reserves are kept to manage the accounting processes for non-current assets, financial instruments, retirements and employee benefits and do not represent usable resources for the Authority — these reserves are explained in the relevant notes.

14. Support Services Allocation

The segmental reporting structure in the CIES is now structured in the way we report to our management internally.

15. 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 contributions 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.

The Government pay a 'Top Up' grant to cover the net costs of the Pension Fund Account. This grant is not shown as income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement but is paid direct to the Pension Fund Account.

16. VAT

Income and expenditure excludes any amounts related to VAT, as VAT collected is payable to HM Revenues and Customs and all VAT paid is recoverable from it.

17. Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute

Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provisions but that does not result in the creation of a non-current asset has been charged as expenditure to the

relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year. Where the Authority has determined to meet the cost of this expenditure from existing capital resources or by borrowing, a transfer in the Movement in Reserves Statement from the General Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account then reverses out the amounts charged so that there is no impact on the level of council tax.

18. 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 less than three months from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change of 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.

19. Events after the Balance Sheet Date

Events after the Balance Sheet date are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue. Two types of events can be identified:

- those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period - the Statement of Accounts is adjusted to reflect such events.
- those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period — the Statement of Accounts is not adjusted to reflect such events, but where a category of events would have a material effect, disclosure is made in the notes of the nature of the events and their estimated financial effect.
- Events taking place after the date of authorisation for issue are not reflected in the Statement of Accounts.

20. Foreign Currency Transactions

Where the Authority has entered into a transaction denominated in a foreign currency, the transaction is converted into sterling at the exchange rate applicable on the date the transaction was effective. Where amounts in foreign currency are outstanding at the year end, they are re-converted at the spot exchange rate at 31 March. Resulting gains or losses are recognised in the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

21. Prior period adjustments, changes in accounting policies and estimates and errors

2022/23 presentational changes to the statement of accounts

There are no prior year adjustments, changes in accounting policies or estimates and errors within the 2022/23 financial year.

Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies

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

There is a high degree of uncertainty about future levels of funding for local government. However, the Authority has determined that this uncertainty is not yet sufficient to provide an indication that the assets of the Authority might be impaired as a result of a need to close stations and reduce levels of service provision.

Standards that have been issued but not yet adopted, which may require disclosure in 2022/23 accounts, are anticipated to be listed in Appendix C of the 2022/23 Code when it is published. In the interim potentially relevant standards include:

- IFRS 16 (Leases)
- Definition of Accounting Estimates (Amendments to IAS 8) issued in February 2021.
- Disclosure of Accounting Policies (Amendments to IAS 1 and IFRS Practice Statement 2) issued in February 2021.

It is not anticipated that any of the revised standards will have a material impact on the amounts disclosed.

Assumptions made about future and other major sources of estimation uncertainty

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported for assets and liabilities as at the balance sheet date and the amounts reported for the revenues and expenses during the year. However, the nature of estimation means that actual outcomes could differ from those estimates. The key judgements and estimation uncertainty that have a significant risk of causing material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year are on the pension liabilities for both the Firefighters Pension Scheme and the Local Government Pension Scheme.

The estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex judgements relating to the discount rate used, the rate at which salaries are projected to increase, changes in retirement ages, mortality rates and expected return on pension fund assets (LGPS Scheme only). The actuaries have been appointed to provide the Authority with expert advice about both assumptions made in the pension calculations and about sensitivities to these assumptions.

Depreciation — the remaining useful lives of all assets are estimated. The Authority relies on the expertise of an external valuer to determine the lives of all building assets. The lives of vehicles, plant and equipment and intangible assets are based on historical experience and professional estimates. If the estimates were to differ from the actuals this would affect the level of depreciation and amortisation charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, as well as the carrying amounts of non-current assets in the Balance Sheet. The carrying amounts of non-current assets as at 31 March 2023 was £44.362m. Total depreciation for the year was £1.852m and impairment for the year was £0k.

Revaluations and Impairments — the value of non-current assets are reviewed annually by a qualified valuer based on the latest guidance from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and the recently observed market information. If the estimates were to differ from the actual results this would result in a higher or lower carrying amount for non-current assets in the Balance Sheet.

Assumptions made about the future and other major sources of estimation uncertainty

Estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex judgements relating to the discount rate used, the rate at which salaries are projected to increase, changes in retirement ages, mortality rates and expected returns on pension fund assets.

The sensitivities regarding principal assumptions used to measure the scheme liabilities are set out below;

Fire Fighters Pension Sensitivity Analysis	£'000
Increase to the discount rate of 0.5%	
Decrease on Present Value of total scheme liabilities	(19,000)
Increase in salary increase rate of 0.5%	
Increase on Present Value of total scheme liabilities	3,000
Increase in the Pensions Increase Rate (CPI) of 0.5%	
Increase on Present Value of total scheme liabilities	18,000
Increase in life expectancy of one (1) year	
Increase on Present Value of total scheme liabilities	6,000
LGPS Pension Scheme Sensitivity Analysis	£'000
Decrease to the discount rate of 0.1%	
Increase on Present Value of total scheme liabilities	1,129
Increase in salary increase rate of 0.1%	
Increase on Present Value of total scheme liabilities	1,093
Increase in pension increases & deferred revaluation 0.1%	
Increase on Present Value of total scheme liabilities	1,129
Increase in the Life Expectancy Assumptions of 1Yr	
Increase on Present Value of total scheme liabilities	1,133

Going Concern Statement

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 (the Code), which is based upon International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), as amended for the UK public sector. The accounts have been prepared on the going concern basis.

In carrying out its assessment that this basis is appropriate, made for the going concern period to 31st March 2026, management of the Service have undertaken forecasting of both income and expenditure, the expected impact on reserves, and cashflow forecasting.

The Authority, as detailed in note 24 to the accounts, is in a strong reserves position and this is forecast to be the case over the medium term. The below summarises the position as in the spring of 2023, following the setting of the 2023/24 budget.

Existing Reserves as at 31/03/23 with 2023/24 budget updates:

- General Fund £2.400m - continues
- Transformational £3.320m - contributions to and from, so replenished.
- Earmarked £1.605m (ESMCP, H&S, BC, Ill health retirements, HR, contaminants)
- Pensions / Pay Reserve - £1.126m
- Capital £3.639m – adjusts between years depending on slippage
- Budget Managers Earmarked Reserve £0.322m – rolls between years
- Collaboration £2.378m - remains
- Vehicle Appliance Reserve £0.048m – used as part of 23/24 budget
- Capital Receipts Reserve £0.548m – to be used as part of 23/24 budget

Our cash flow forecasting and assessment of the adequacy of our liquidity position demonstrates positive cash balances throughout the going concern period, and there is currently no planned external borrowing. This may change when a position is reached on the strategic estates position.

The Authority set a balanced 2023/24 budget in February 2023, following a further one-year Government Funding settlement despite a three-year CSR. With inflation at very high rates over 2022 and 2023, the Authority opted to build in realistic pay awards at 4% for both operational and non-operational staff in the 2022/23 budget, so the financial planning incorporated these key pressures. Pay awards and pensions are the two key uncertainties facing our Authority and the wider public sector. The Authority as noted above had set aside a realistic pay budget and also earmarked reserve for pay and pensions at £1.1m. This was prudent financial planning, as the average pay built into FRS budgets for 2022/23 was 2.4%. The Firefighters pay award was ultimately agreed at 7% for July 2022 and 5% for 2023. The increased costs due to general inflation of supplies and services, including gas and electricity was also therefore impacted by the pay awards too. The council tax flexibility of up to £5, the first time for the Service, was a welcome addition to the budget process for 23/24. Inflationary pressures continue and were built into the 22/23 and 23/24 budgets and will be managed over the 2023/24 financial year.

Positively, grant income from Government continues, with additional grants received during 2022/23 for New Burdens, Prevention & Protection, external audit and Tariff/Top adjustments. Some of these are expected in 2023/24 too. There was overall a Collection Fund surplus forecast for 2022/23 that was built into the 2023/24 budget.

The link to the 2023/24 budget and associated supporting papers is below. The forecast General Reserve balance as at 31st March 2024 and also 2025 is £2.4m and the earmarked reserves

continue in a strong funded position. The reserves strategy contains the full detail via the link below:

[Agenda for Fire and Rescue Authority on Thursday, 2nd February, 2023, 10.00 am - Modern Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

There is uncertainty if the £5 council tax flexibility will continue into 2024/25 and also the Services Grant. The Home Office have confirmed that the employer's pension grant will continue and potentially included as part of the overall settlement rather than a specific grant. Based on these uncertainties, different planning scenarios will be worked on for 2024/25, as it was for the 2023/24 budget. This will include additional savings and efficiencies, linked in with the work from the Productivity & Efficiency Board.

On this basis, the Authority has reasonable expectation that it will have adequate resources to continue in operational existence throughout the going concern period maintaining the provision of its services. For this reason, alongside the statutory guidance, we continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing these financial statements.

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 Surplus or (Deficit) on the Provision of Services line shows the true economic cost of providing the Authority's services, more details of which are shown in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. This is different from the statutory amount 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.

Usable Reserves

	General Fund Balance	Earmarked Reserves	Capital Grants & Other Contributions Unapplied	Capital Receipts Reserve	Total Usable Reserves	Unusable Reserves (see below)	Total Authority Reserves
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance at 31 March 2021	2,400	13,505	159	507	16,571	(357,291)	(340,720)
Movement in Reserves 2021/22							
Surplus or (deficit) on provision of service (accounting basis)	(9,479)	0	0	0	(9,479)	0	(9,479)
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0	16,001	16,001
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(9,479)	0	0	0	(9,479)	16,001	6,522
Adjustment between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	8,698	0	0	41	8,739	(8,739)	0
Net Increase/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	(781)	0	0	41	(740)	7,262	6,522
Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves	781	(781)	0	0	0	0	0
Increase/Decrease in Year	0	(781)	0	41	(740)	7,262	6,522
Balance at 31 March 2022	2,400	12,724	159	548	15,831	(350,029)	(334,198)
Movement in Reserves 2022/23							
Surplus or (deficit) on provision of service (accounting basis)	(11,930)	0	0	0	(11,930)	0	(11,930)
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0	135,411	135,411
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(11,930)	0	0	0	(11,930)	135,411	123,481
Adjustment between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	11,644	0	0	0	11,664	(11,644)	0
Net Increase/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	(286)	0	0	0	(286)	123,767	123,481
Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves	286	(286)	0	0	0	0	0
Increase/Decrease in Year	0	(286)	0	0	(286)	123,767	123,481
Balance at 31 March 2023	2,400	12,438	159	548	15,545	(226,262)	(210,717)

Movement in Reserve Statement (continued)

Unusable Reserves

	Revaluation Reserve	Capital Adjustment Account	LGPS Pension Reserve	Firefighters Pension Reserve	Collection Fund Adjustment Account	Accumulated Absences Account	Total Unusable Reserves
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance at 31 March 2021	13,610	17,383	(23,913)	(363,000)	(1,211)	(160)	(357,291)
Movement in Reserves 2021/22							
Surplus or (deficit) on provision of service (accounting basis)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	4,495	0	6,301	5,205	0	0	16,001
Total Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	4,495	0	6,301	5,205	0	0	16,001
Adjustment between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	(342)	(358)	(1,616)	(7,175)	1,157	(405)	(8,739)
Net Increase/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	4,153	(358)	4,685	(1,970)	1,157	(405)	7,262
Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Increase/Decrease in Year	4,153	(358)	4,685	(1,970)	1,157	(405)	7,262
Balance at 31 March 2022	17,763	17,025	(19,228)	(364,970)	(54)	(565)	(350,029)
Movement in Reserves 2022/23							
Surplus or (deficit) on provision of service (accounting basis)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	2,193	0	19,219	113,999	0	0	135,411
Total Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	2,193	0	19,219	113,999	0	0	135,411
Adjustment between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations	(422)	31	(1,517)	(9,479)	(207)	(50)	(11,644)
Net Increase/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	1,771	31	17,702	104,520	(207)	(50)	123,767
Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Increase/Decrease in Year	1,771	31	17,702	104,520	(207)	(50)	123,767
Balance at 31 March 2023	19,534	17,056	(1,526)	(260,450)	(261)	(615)	(226,262)

COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2023

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

2021/22				2022/23		
Gross Expenditure £'000	Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000	By Service	Gross Expenditure £'000	Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000
1,050	(1)	1,049	Strategic Management	1,077	(11)	1,066
2,643	(595)	2,048	Assistant Chief Officer	2,231	(1,034)	1,197
18,379	(34)	18,345	Head of Response	19,520	(152)	19,368
1,122	(1)	1,121	Head of Strategic Support and Assurance	1,533	0	1,533
4,257	(189)	4,068	Head of Training and Asset Management	4,944	(318)	4,626
4,236	(332)	3,904	Head of Information Communications	4,021	(240)	3,781
2,232	(277)	1,955	Head of Protection and Prevention	2,578	(242)	2,336
1,541	(12)	1,529	Head of Human Resources	1,436	(22)	1,414
35,460	(1,441)	34,019	Net Cost of Services	37,340	(2,019)	35,321
			Other Operating Expenditure			
0	(41)	(41)	(Gains) and Losses on the Disposal of Fixed Assets	11	0	11
			Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure			
422	0	422	Interest Payable and Similar Charges	422	0	422
0	(56)	(56)	Interest and Investment Income	0	(425)	(425)
7,715	0	7,715	Net Interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset)	10,150	0	10,150
			Non-Specific Grant Income:			
0	(3,687)	(3,687)	General Government Grants (incl. council tax freeze grant)	0	(2,831)	(2,831)
0	(2,406)	(2,406)	Retained Business Rate	0	(2,300)	(2,300)
0	(3,886)	(3,886)	Business Rates Top Up and Grants	0	(4,731)	(4,731)
			Taxation Precepts:			
0	(6,324)	(6,324)	Bedford Borough Council	0	(6,500)	(6,500)
0	(10,773)	(10,773)	Central Bedfordshire Council	0	(11,441)	(11,441)
0	(5,504)	(5,504)	Luton Borough Council	0	(5,746)	(5,746)
43,597	(34,118)	9,479	(Surplus) or Deficit on Provision of Service	47,923	(35,993)	11,930
		(4,495)	(Surplus) or Deficit of Non-Current Assets			(2,193)
		(11,506)	Re-measurement of the net defined benefit/liability			(133,218)
		(6,522)	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			(123,481)

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2023

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 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 are 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-March-22 £'000		31-March-23 £'000	See Note
	Non-Current Assets		
35,805	Land and Buildings	37,394	11
6,646	Vehicles, Plant and Equipment	6,863	11
	Non-Operational Assets		
49	Assets Under Construction	51	11
42,500	Total Property, Plant and Equipment	44,308	
30	Heritage Assets	30	11
36	Intangible Assets	24	12
44	Long term Debtors	31	14
42,610	Total Long Term Assets	44,393	
	Current Assets		
346	Inventories	352	13
3,860	Short Term Debtors	3,189	14
1,448	Prepayments	1,686	15
16,756	Short Term Investments	14,165	20
1,233	Cash and Cash Equivalents	5,356	21
23,643	Total Current Assets	24,748	
66,253	Total Assets	69,141	
	Current Liabilities		
0	Short Term Borrowing	0	
(4,183)	Short Term Creditors	(5,703)	16
(1,345)	Other Creditors	(1,269)	17
(92)	Lease Creditors	(167)	10
(5,620)	Total Current Liabilities	(7,139)	
	Non-Current Liabilities		
(9,987)	Long Term Borrowing	(9,987)	19
(414)	Lease Creditors	(565)	10
(232)	Provisions	(191)	23
(384,198)	Defined Benefit Pension Scheme	(261,976)	29
(394,831)	Total Non-Current Liabilities	(272,719)	
(400,451)	Total Liabilities	(279,858)	
(334,198)	Net Assets/Liabilities	(210,717)	

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2023 (continued)

31-March-22 £'000		31-March-23 £'000	See Note
	Reserves		
	Unusable Reserves		
17,763	Revaluation Reserve	19,533	25
17,025	Capital Adjustment Account	17,057	25
(54)	Collection Fund Adjustment Account	(261)	18
(565)	Accumulated Absences Account	(615)	25
(384,198)	Pension Reserve	(261,976)	25/29
(350,029)	Total Unusable Reserves	(226,262)	
	Usable Reserves		
548	Capital Receipts Reserve	548	24
159	Grants and Other Contributions Unapplied	159	24
12,724	Earmarked Reserves	12,438	24
2,400	General Reserves	2,400	24
15,831	Total Usable Reserves	15,545	
(334,198)	Total Tax Payers Equity	(210,717)	

The unaudited accounts were approved and issued by G Chambers on 3rd July 2023.

Gavin Chambers CPFA

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Authority during the reported 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 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.

2021/22 £'000		2022/23 £'000	2022/23 £'000
	Operating Activities		
	Cash Outflows:		
24,954	Cash paid to and on behalf of Employees	27,066	
7,122	Cash Paid to Suppliers of Goods and Service	5,894	
422	Interest Paid	422	
32,498	Cash Outflows Generated from Operating Activities		33,382
	Cash Inflows:		
(21,961)	Council Tax Receipts	(23,864)	
(5,775)	National Non-Domestic Rates	(7,061)	
(2,333)	Revenue Support Grant	(2,405)	
(2,488)	Other Grants	(1,327)	
(622)	Sales of Goods and Rendering of Services	(1,043)	
0	Other Operating Cash Receipts	0	
(49)	Interest Received	(270)	
(33,228)	Cash Inflows Generated from Operating Activities		(35,970)
(730)	Net Cash Outflow/(Inflow) on Operating Activities:		(2,588)
	Investing Activities		
	Cash Outflows:		
744	Purchase of Property, Plant and Equipment	1,092	
6,750	Purchase of Long term and Short Term Investments	27,000	
	Cash Flows:		
(41)	Sale of Property, Plant and Equipment	(0)	
(5,000)	Sale of Long Term and Short Term Investments	(29,746)	
2,453	Net Cash Outflow/(Inflow) from Investing Activities		(1,654)
	Financing Activities:		
	Cash Outflows:		
0	Cash Payments for the Reduction of the Outstanding Liabilities relating to Finance Leases	119	
	Cash Inflows:		
0	Net Cash Outflow/(Inflow) from Financing:		119
1,723	Net (Increase)/Decrease in Cash and Cash Equivalents		(4,123)
(2,956)	Cash and Cash Equivalents at the beginning of the reporting year		(1,233)
(1,233)	Cash and Cash equivalents at the end of the reporting year		(5,356)
1,723	Net Change in Cash and Cash equivalents in the Year		(4,123)

NOTES TO THE CORE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. Expenditure and Funding Analysis

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

2021/22			By Service	2022/23		
Net Expenditure chargeable to the General Fund £'000	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis £'000	Net Expenditure in the CIES £'000		Net Expenditure chargeable to the General Fund £'000	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis £'000	Net Expenditure in the CIES £'000
1,009	40	1,049	Head of Strategic Management	1,010	56	1,066
1,931	116	2,047	Assistant Chief Officer	1,073	124	1,197
17,010	1,335	18,345	Head of Response	18,106	1,262	19,368
1,007	114	1,121	Head of Strategic Support and Assurance	1,405	128	1,533
3,440	628	4,068	Head of Training and Asset Management	4,133	493	4,626
3,539	364	3,903	Head of Information Communications	3,376	405	3,781
1,723	233	1,956	Head of Prevention and Protection	2,107	229	2,336
1,275	255	1,530	Head of Human Resources	1,247	167	1,414
30,934	3,085	34,019	Net Cost of Services	32,457	2,864	35,321
(30,153)	5,613	(24,540)	Other Income & Expenditure	(32,171)	8,780	(23,391)
781	8,698	9,479	(Surplus)/Deficit on provision of Services	286	11,644	11,930
(2,400)			Opening General Fund Balance	(2,400)		
781			Less/Plus (Surplus)/Deficit on General Fund	286		
(781)			Transfer to Earmarked Reserves	(286)		
(2,400)			Closing General Fund Balance @ 31 March	(2,400)		

1.a. Segmental Income

For information regarding income please see CIES.

1.b. Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis

2022/23

Adjustments from General Fund to Arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Amounts	Adjustments for Capital Purposes	Net Change for Pension Adjustments	Other Differences	Total Adjustments
Head of Strategic Management	29	27	0	56
Assistant Chief Officer	261	(137)	0	124
Head of Response	1,025	237	0	1,262
Head of Strategic Support and Assurance	0	128	0	128
Head of Training and Asset Management	305	188	0	493
Head of Information Communications	195	210	0	405
Head of Prevention and Protection	29	200	0	229
Head of Human Resources	8	159	0	167
Net Cost of Services	1,852	1,012	0	2,864
Other Income & Expenditure from the EFA Analysis	(1,461)	9,984	257	8,780
Differences between the General Fund Surplus or Deficit and CIES Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	391	10,996	257	11,644

2021/22

Adjustments from General Fund to Arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Amounts	Adjustments for Capital Purposes	Net Change for Pension Adjustments	Other Differences	Total Adjustments
Head of Strategic Management	0	40	0	40
Assistant Chief Officer	247	(131)	0	116
Head of Response	1,072	263	0	1,335
Head of Strategic Support and Assurance	0	114	0	114
Head of Training and Asset Management	416	212	0	628
Head of Information Communications	146	218	0	364
Head of Prevention and Protection	29	204	0	233
Head of Human Resources	55	200	0	255
Net Cost of Services	1,965	1,120	0	3,085
Other Income & Expenditure from the EFA Analysis	(1,306)	7,671	(752)	5,613
Differences between the General Fund Surplus or Deficit and CIES Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	659	8,791	(752)	8,698

i. Adjustments for Capital Purposes

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

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

ii. Net Change for the Pensions Adjustments

Net change for the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS19 Employee Benefits pension related expenditure and income:

- For services this represents the removal of the employer pension contributions made by the Authority as allowed by statute and the replacement with current service costs and past service costs.

iii. Other Differences

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

- For Financing and investment income and expenditure - the other differences column recognises adjustments to the General Fund for the timing differences for premiums and discounts.
- The charge under Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure represents the difference between what is chargeable under statutory regulations for council tax and NDR that was projected to be received at the start of the year and income recognised under generally accepted accounting practises in the code. This is a timing difference as any difference will be brought forward in the future Surplus or deficit on the Collection Fund.
- The Accumulated Absences Account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the General Fund balance from accruing for Compensated Absences earned but not taken in year.

1.c Expenditure and Income Analysed By Nature

The Authority's expenditure and income is analysed as follows:

Expenditure / Income Service Analysis	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000
Fees, Charges and Other Service Income	(840)	(995)
Interest and Investment Income	(56)	(425)
Income from Council Tax	(22,601)	(23,687)
Government Grants and Contributions	(10,580)	(10,886)
Disposal on non-current assets	(41)	(0)
Total Income	(34,118)	(35,993)
Employee Expenses	26,908	29,100
Employee Absence Accrual	405	50
Other Operating Expenses	6,182	6,337
Depreciation, Amortisation and Impairment	1,965	1,852
Interest Payments	422	422
Pensions Interest Cost and Return on Pension Fund Assets	7,715	10,150
Disposal on non-current assets	0	12
Total Operating Expenses	43,597	47,923
Surplus (-) or deficit on the provision of Services	9,479	11,930

2022/23

Usable Reserves

	General Fund Balance £'000	Earmarked Reserves £'000	Capital Receipts Reserve £'000	Capital Grants and Other Contributions £'000	Total Useable Reserves £'000
Adjustments primarily Involving the Capital Adjustment Account:					
Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(1,852)				(1,852)
Difference between historic cost and current cost depreciation	0				0
Amount by which finance costs calculated in accordance with the Code are different from the amount of finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements	119				119
Statutory provision for the financing of Capital investment	233				233
Write out on disposal of fixed assets	(12)				(12)
Capital expenditure charged to the General Fund Balance	1,121				1,121
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Pensions Reserve:					
Amount by which pension costs calculated in accordance with the Code (i.e.; in accordance with IAS 19) are different from the contributions due under Local Government pension Scheme regulations	(1,517)				(1,517)
Amount by which pension costs calculated in accordance with the Code (i.e.; in accordance with IAS 19) are different the contributions due under Uniformed pension scheme regulations	(9,479)				(9,479)
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Capital Receipts Reserve:					
Transfer of cash sale proceeds credited as part of the gain/loss on disposals to the CIES	0		0		0
Capital receipts applied	0		0		0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Capital Grants Unapplied Account:					
Capital Grants Received in prior years applied	0				0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Accumulated Absences Account:					
Amounts by which officer remuneration included in the CIES is different from the amount taken to the General Fund in accordance with regulations	(50)				(50)
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Collection Fund Adjustment Account:					
Amount by which council tax and non-domestic rating account income included in the Comp. I & E Account is different from the amount taken to the General Fund in accordance with regulations	(207)				(207)
	(11,644)	0	0	0	(11,644)

2. Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations

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

2022/23**Unusable Reserves**

	Total Usable Reserves £'000	Revaluation Reserve £'000	Capital Adjustment Account £'000	LGPS Pension Reserve £'000	Firefighters Pension Reserve £'000	Collection Fund Adjustment Account £'000	Accumulated Absences Account £'000	Unusable Reserve Total £'000	Total £'000
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Capital Adjustment Account:									
Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(1,852)		1,852					1,852	0
Difference between historic cost and current cost depreciation	0	422	(422)					0	0
Amount by which finance costs calculated in accordance with the Code are different from the amount of finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements	119		(119)					(119)	0
Statutory provision for the financing of Capital investment	233		(233)					(233)	0
Write out on disposal of fixed assets	(12)		12					12	0
Capital expenditure charged to the General Fund Balance	1,121		(1,121)					(1,121)	0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Pensions Reserve:									
Amount by which pension costs calculated in accordance with the Code (i.e.; in accordance with IAS 19) are different from the contributions due under Local Government pension Scheme regulations	(1,517)			1,517				1,517	0
Amount by which pension costs calculated in accordance with the Code (i.e.; in accordance with IAS 19) are different the contributions due under Uniformed pension scheme regulations	(9,479)				9,479			9,479	0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Capital Receipts Reserve:									
Transfer of cash sale proceeds credited as part of the gain/loss on disposals to the CIES	0							0	0
Capital receipts applied	0							0	0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Capital Grants Unapplied Account:									
Capital Grants Received in prior years applied	0							0	0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Accumulated Absences Account:									
Amounts by which officer remuneration included in the CIES is different from the amount taken to the General Fund in accordance with regulations	(50)						50	50	0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Collection Fund Adjustment Account:									
Amount by which council tax and non-domestic rating account income included in the Comp. I & E Account is different from the amount taken to the General Fund in accordance with regulations	(207)					207		207	0
	(11,644)	422	(31)	1,517	9,479	207	50	11,644	0

2021/22

Usable Reserves

	General Fund Balance £'000	Earmarked Reserves £'000	Capital Receipts Reserve £'000	Capital Grants and Other Contributions £'000	Total Useable Reserves £'000
Adjustments primarily Involving the Capital Adjustment Account:					
Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(1,965)				(1,965)
Difference between historic cost and current cost depreciation	0				0
Amount by which finance costs calculated in accordance with the Code are different from the amount of finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements	241				241
Statutory provision for the financing of Capital investment	277				277
Write out on disposal of fixed assets	0				0
Capital expenditure charged to the General Fund Balance	747				747
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Pensions Reserve:					
Amount by which pension costs calculated in accordance with the Code (i.e.; in accordance with IAS 19) are different from the contributions due under Local Government pension Scheme regulations	(1,616)				(1,616)
Amount by which pension costs calculated in accordance with the Code (i.e.; in accordance with IAS 19) are different the contributions due under Uniformed pension scheme regulations	(7,175)				(7,175)
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Capital Receipts Reserve:					
Transfer of cash sale proceeds credited as part of the gain/loss on disposals to the CIES	41		(41)		0
Capital receipts applied	0		0		0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Capital Grants Unapplied Account:					
Capital Grants Received in prior years applied	0				0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Accumulated Absences Account:					
Amounts by which officer remuneration included in the CIES is different from the amount taken to the General Fund in accordance with regulations	(405)				(405)
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Collection Fund Adjustment Account:					
Amount by which council tax and non-domestic rating account income included in the Comp. I & E Account is different from the amount taken to the General Fund in accordance with regulations	1,157				1,157
	(8,698)	0	(41)	0	(8,739)

2. Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations

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

2021/22

Unusable Reserves

	Total Usable Reserves £'000	Revaluation Reserve £'000	Capital Adjustment Account £'000	LGPS Pension Reserve £'000	Firefighters Pension Reserve £'000	Collection Fund Adjustment Account £'000	Accumulated Absences Account £'000	Unusable Reserve Total £'000	Total £'000
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Capital Adjustment Account:									
Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(1,965)		1,965					1,965	0
Difference between historic cost and current cost depreciation		342	(342)					0	0
Amount by which finance costs calculated in accordance with the Code are different from the amount of finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements	241		(241)					(241)	0
Statutory provision for the financing of Capital investment	277		(277)					(277)	0
Write out on disposal of fixed assets	0		0					0	0
Capital expenditure charged to the General Fund Balance	747		(747)					(747)	0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Pensions Reserve:									
Amount by which pension costs calculated in accordance with the Code (i.e.; in accordance with IAS 19) are different from the contributions due under Local Government pension Scheme regulations	(1,616)			1,616				1,616	0
Amount by which pension costs calculated in accordance with the Code (i.e.; in accordance with IAS 19) are different the contributions due under Uniformed pension scheme regulations	(7,175)				7,175			7,175	0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Capital Receipts Reserve:									
Transfer of cash sale proceeds credited as part of the gain/loss on disposals to the CIES	0		0					0	0
Capital receipts applied	0							0	0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Capital Grants Unapplied Account:									
Capital Grants Received in prior years applied	0							0	0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Accumulated Absences Account:									
Amounts by which officer remuneration included in the CIES is different from the amount taken to the General Fund in accordance with regulations	(405)						405	405	0
Adjustments Primarily Involving the Collection Fund Adjustment Account:									
Amount by which council tax and non-domestic rating account income included in the Comp. I & E Account is different from the amount taken to the General Fund in accordance with regulations	1,157					(1,157)		(1,157)	0
	(8,739)	342	358	1,616	7,175	(1,157)	405	8,739	0

3. Members' Allowances

A Members' Allowance Scheme for the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) was implemented on 31 December 2003 in accordance with the Local Government (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The Authority paid the following amounts to Members of the CFA during the year:

	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000
Allowances	66	66
Expenses	1	0
Total	67	66

4. Officers' Remuneration

The number of employees whose remuneration, excluding employer's pension contributions, was £50,000 or more in bands of £5,000 were:

2021/22 No. of Employees	Remuneration Band	2022/23 No. of Employees
7	50,000 to 54,999	9
12	55,000 to 59,999	7
4	60,000 to 64,999	8
3	65,000 to 69,999	9
0	70,000 to 74,999	3
3	75,000 to 79,999	2
1	80,000 to 84,999	2
2	85,000 to 89,999	1
0	90,000 to 94,999	1
0	105,000 to 109,999	1
1	110,000 to 114,999	1
0	115,000 to 119,999	1
0	125,000 to 129,999	1
1	150,000 to 154,999	0
0	155,000 to 159,999	1
34	Total	47

For this purpose 'remuneration' means all amounts paid to or receivable by an employee and includes sums due by way of taxable expenses, allowances and the estimated money value of any benefit received by an employee other than in cash.

NB - Includes officers that have retired and returned in different roles. The increase of 13 between 2021/22 and 2022/23 is mainly as a result of the July 2022 fire fighter pay award of 7%.

The following tables set out the remuneration disclosures for Senior Officers whose salary is less than £150,000 but equal to or more than £50,000 per annum:

2022/23

	Notes	Salary (excluding fees & allowances) £	Expenses & Allowances £	Benefits in Kind £	Total Remuneration (excluding) Pension Contributions £	Employer's Pension Contributions £	Total Remuneration (including pension contributions) £
Chief Fire Officer	1	156,390	0	0	156,390	45,040	201,430
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	2	126,885	0	0	126,885	36,543	163,428
Secretary/ Monitoring Officer	3	6,272	156	0	6,428	1,285	7,712
Assistant Chief Officer		108,705	5,168	0	113,873	22,284	136,157
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	4	117,294	421	0	117,715	33,781	151,496
		515,546	5,745	0	521,291	138,933	660,224

Notes

1/ 2 & 4 – Salaries as at 01/01/2021 (prior to the 2022 pay award)

3 – To 30/09/22 * Since 01/10/22 the Secretary / Monitoring Officer is no longer directly employed by the service and forms part of an SLA with Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service at the cost of approximately £30k per annum, these costs are contained within the service expenditure for Head of Strategic Support and Assurance within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on page 47.

2021/22

	Notes	Salary (excluding fees and allowances) £	Expenses & Allowances £	Benefits in Kind £	Total Remuneration (excluding) Pension Contributions £	Employer's Pension Contributions £	Total Remuneration (including pension contributions) £
Chief Fire Officer	1	51,781	0	0	51,781	0	51,781
Chief Fire Officer	2	109,291	0	0	109,291	40,946	150,237
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	3	20,835	0	0	20,835	2,813	23,648
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	4	44,512	0	0	44,512	14,820	59,332
Secretary/ Monitoring Officer	5	12,589	204	0	12,793	2,581	15,374
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	6	28,019	0	0	28,019	3,680	31,699
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	7	42,005	12	0	42,017	13,981	55,998
Assistant Chief Officer		110,346	46	0	110,392	22,367	132,759
		419,378	262	0	419,640	101,188	520,828

Notes to 2021/22 Officers Remuneration table

1. Abated Salary to 7 June 2021 includes backdated arrears
2. From 1 June 2021
3. To 31 May 2021
4. From 5 November 2021 (DN Secondment 24 May 21 to 30 November 2021
5. Based on 30 days per year ACO FT salary £108,705
6. To 31 May 2021
7. Secondment from 1 June 2021 to 1 November 2021. This data from 2 November 2021 only

Termination Benefits/Exit Packages

In 2021/22 there was one termination benefit/exit package totalling £27k.

In 2022/23 there were 12 redundancies in 2022/23 totalling £29.4k.

5. Related Party Transactions

Introduction

The UK Government exerts significant influence through legislation and funding. This funding can be identified in the Non-Specific Grants Income section of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Account (the Top Up Grant and General Government Grants). The Fire Authority is also funded by taxation precepts from Local Authorities which are identified in the Taxation Precepts section of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Declarations

All Members, Senior Officers and Budget Managers, the Monitoring Officer and Treasurer of the Authority have been consulted with regard to related party transactions. From the declarations received, there were no material transactions to report.

During 2022/23, works and services to the value of £59.2k were commissioned from the National Fire Chiefs Council (formerly the Chief Fire Officers Association – CFOA). These are all entities of which an Officer had an interest. This officer has declared their interest in accordance with IAS24.

The Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company

Until 31 October 2015 insurances for the Authority were arranged as part of a consortium of nine Fire and Rescue Authorities. These Fire and Rescue Authorities, including Bedfordshire, are now members of the Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company Limited. The company commenced trading in November 2015. The Authority's risk protection arrangements are provided through the pooled funds of the company. During 2022/23 the Authority made a contribution of £359k to the company for the year to 31 October 2023 with £149k of this treated as an expense in 2022/23.

6. Disclosure of Audit Costs

2021/22 £'000		2022/23 £'000
37	Fees payable to Ernst & Young with regard to external Audit services carried out by the appointed auditor.	53
0	Fees payable in respect of other services provided by the Audit Commission and Ernst & Young.	0
37	Total	53

7. Capital Expenditure and Financing

	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000
Opening Capital Financing Requirement	7,550	7,779
Capital Investment: Property, Plant and Equipment	1,494	1,466
Intangible Assets	0	0
Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute	0	0
Sources of Finance: Capital receipts Government Grants and Other Contributions	0 0	0 0
Sums Set Aside from Revenue: Direct Revenue Contributions MRP and Finance Lease repayment	(747) (518)	(1,121) (353)
Closing Capital Financing Requirement	7,779	7,771
Explanation of Movements in Year: Assets acquired under finance leases Increase/(Decrease) in underlying need to borrowing (unsupported by Government financial assistance)	747 (518)	345 (353)
Increase/(decrease) in Capital Financing Requirement	229	(8)

8. Information on Assets Held

Non-Current Assets owned by the FRA include the following:

Non-Current Assets	31 March 2022	31 March 2023
Operational Buildings:		
Headquarters (including Training Centre, Control and Workshops)	1	1
Fire safety Area Offices	2	2
Fire Stations: Wholetime	5	5
Day Crewing	1	1
Retained	8	8
Houses	7	7
Garages	6	6

Non-Current Assets	31 March 2022			31 March 2023		
	Leased	Owned	Total	Leased	Owned	Total
Operational Appliances:						
Pumping Appliances	0	22	22	0	22	22
Aerial Appliances	0	2	2	0	2	2
Fire Boats	0	1	1	0	1	1
Other Special Appliances	0	22	22	0	22	22
Modules	0	4	4	0	4	4
Appliances under construction	0	0	0	0	0	0
Special appliances under construction	0	0	0	0	0	0
Appliances awaiting disposal	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-Operational Appliances:						
Reserve/Training Appliances	0	6	6	0	6	6
Ancillary Vehicles	0	60	60	0	66	66
Trailers etc.	0	8	8	0	7	7
Specials/Vans awaiting disposal	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	125	125	0	130	130

9. Operating Leases:

Under the IFRS rules governing leases, specifically IFRIC 4 (International Financial Reporting Interpretations Committee), 'Determining Whether an Arrangement Contains a Lease', this Authority has sought to identify contractual and other arrangements which involve the provision of services using specific underlying assets and which therefore can be considered as containing a lease for those assets.

Authority as a Lessee:

Vehicles and Equipment — the Authority had three operating leases in 2022/23. The amount paid under these arrangements in 2022/23 was £11k (£7k in 2021/22).

A 2 year extension to an ICT lease was taken out in 2021/22 for the Authority's Multi-functional Devices (Printers) at a cost of £10k per year. A further extension to a lease was taken out in December 2022 for a reprographics machine at the cost of £9.4k for 1 year only.

The expenditure charged into Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement during the year in relation to these leases was:

	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000
Minimum Lease Payments	33	30

Authority as a Lessor:

Under the IFRS rules governing leases, specifically IFRIC 4 (International Financial Reporting Interpretations Committee), 'Determining Whether an Arrangement Contains a Lease', this Authority has sought to identify contractual and other arrangements which involve the provision of services using specific underlying assets and which therefore can be considered as containing a lease for those assets.

In 2022/23, it was determined that there were ten embedded leases for renting out part various Fire Stations to the East of England Ambulance Service, Bedfordshire Police and The Road Victims Trust, which should be classified as leases under IFRIC 4.

The Authority leases out property and equipment under operating leases for the provision of community services, such as the support for emergency services and its associated entities. The income received into the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement during the year in relation to these leases were:

	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000
Income Receivable	61	59

The minimum lease payments receivable do not include rents that are contingent on events taking place after the lease was entered into, such as adjustments following rent reviews. In 2022/23, £NIL contingent rents were receivable by the Authority (2021/22 £NIL).

10. Finance Leases

Under the IFRS rules governing leases, specifically IFRIC 4 (International Financial Reporting Interpretations Committee), 'Determining Whether an Arrangement Contains a Lease', this Authority has sought to identify contractual and other arrangements which involve the provision of services using specific underlying assets and which therefore can be considered as containing a lease for those assets.

The Authority entered into one contract in 2011-12 for the Firelink Radios under the Airwaves Contract, this lease ceased at 31 March 2017 however the radios continue to be in use. A further lease for the Managed Services for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was entered into in 2019/20 and in 2022/23 the service entered into a finance lease for Local Area Network (LAN) ICT equipment.

Under IFRIC 4 these leases contract are determined as being embedded leases.

The following values of assets were held under finance leases by the Authority, accounted for as part of non-current assets: (Gross value £64k Firelink Radios, £747k PPE and £345k for LAN)

	Vehicles, Plant and Equipment		
	Gross Value	Accumulated Depreciation	Net Value
	£'000	£'000	£'000
As at 1 April 2022	811	(251)	560
Write Outs in the Year (adjustments)	(0)	(0)	(0)
Additions	345	0	345
Disposals	(0)	0	0
Depreciation	(0)	(93)	(93)
As at 31 March 2023	1,156	(344)	812

The outstanding obligations to make payments under these finance leases (excluding finance costs) at 31 March 2023 are:

	PPE £'000	LAN £'000	Total £'000
Not later than one Year	95	72	167
Later than one Year	319	246	565
	414	318	732

11. Property, Plant and Equipment and Heritage Assets - Movement on Balances
2022/23

	Land and Buildings	Vehicles, Plant and Equipment	Assets Under Construction	Total Property, Plant and Equipment	Heritage Assets
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost of Valuation					
At 1 April 2022	37,155	15,668	49	52,872	30
Additions	125	831	510	1,466	0
Donations	0	0	0	0	0
Revaluation increases /(decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	2,193	0	0	2,193	0
Revaluation increases /(decreases) recognised in the CIES	0	0	0	0	0
Disposals/Write Outs	0	(45)	0	(45)	0
Reclassifications	10	498	(508)	0	0
At 31 March 2023	39,483	16,952	51	56,486	30
Depreciation and Impairments					
At 1 April 2022	(1,350)	(9,022)	0	(10,372)	0
Depreciation Charge for 2022/23	(739)	(1,101)	0	(1,840)	0
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	0	0	0	0	0
Disposals/Write Outs	0	34	0	34	0
Reclassifications	0	0	0	0	0
At 31 March 2023	(2,089)	(10,089)	0	(12,178)	0
Balance Sheet Amount as at 31 March 2023	37,394	6,863	51	44,308	30
Balance Sheet Amount as at 31 March 2022	35,805	6,646	49	42,500	30
Nature of Asset Holding					
Owned	37,394	6,051	51	43,496	30
Finance Lease	0	812	0	812	0

Comparative Movements 2021/22

	Land and Buildings	Vehicles, Plant and Equipment	Assets Under Construction	Total Property, Plant and Equipment	Heritage Assets
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost of Valuation					
At 1 April 2021	32,435	15,013	62	47,510	35
Additions	240	1,007	247	1,494	0
Donations	0	0	0	0	0
Revaluation increases /(decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	4,500	0	0	4,500	(5)
Revaluation increases /(decreases) recognised in the CIES	(58)	0	0	(58)	0
Disposals/Write Outs	0	(574)	0	(574)	0
Reclassifications	38	222	(260)	0	0
At 31 March 2022	37,155	15,668	49	52,872	30
Depreciation and Impairments					
At 1 April 2021	(689)	(8,362)	0	(9,051)	0
Depreciation Charge for 2021/22	(661)	(1,234)	0	(1,895)	0
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	0	0	0	0	0
Disposals/Write Outs	0	574	0	574	0
Reclassifications	0	0	0	0	0
At 31 March 2022	(1,350)	(9,022)	0	(10,372)	0
Balance Sheet Amount as at 31 March 2022	35,805	6,646	49	42,500	30
Balance Sheet Amount as at 31 March 2021	31,746	6,651	62	38,459	35
Nature of Asset Holding					
Owned	35,805	6,086	49	41,940	30
Finance Lease	0	560	0	560	0

Valuation information — Non-Current Assets

A desktop valuation as at 31 March 2023 was carried out on all on land and buildings by NPS Group and have been signed by Deborah O'Shea MRICS, an external valuations expert. This valuation included consideration of all property works carried out in the year, space utilisation across all sites and collaboration occupancy at relevant sites for Buildings and Land, including vehicle parking spaces.

Land Value approach:

A Fire station is a sui generis, non-income generating use and not all locations would be suitable. Many of the sites are small, so are not directly comparable with large industrial sites. A residential site would be unlikely to obtain planning permission today and location on an out of town industrial or retail park would not be suitable.

In accordance with the Confirmation of Instruction, the valuers have assumed that each station will remain in its current location, to provide the necessary geographical coverage required to comply with required response times. However, a prudent purchaser (local authority spending public money) would look to purchase the cheapest suitable site were it to be replaced.

Each site is different and its particular location, nature, benefits and disadvantages have been reflected in the land value ascribed, after careful consideration and using professional judgement. In the absence of recent, directly relevant transactional evidence, consideration was given to market reports, sites available on the market, local agent commentary and market trends. Evidence nationally shows the demand for and value of land for both industrial and residential purposes increasing over the past 12 months, which has been individually reflected in the valuations at 31/3/2023, while bearing in mind that the subject use is sui generis.

The basis for valuation is set out in the Statement of Accounting Policies.

The Heritage Asset is a 1908 Shand Mason Steam Fire Pump (Steamer) which was valued as at 31 March 2022 by Jeremy Curzon MNAVA of Cheffins, an external valuer. The Steamer is taken to various outdoor events where it is exhibited by a team of volunteers. The Thorney Steamer webpage has a history of the Steamer which includes details of its renovation.

Capital Commitments

There are outstanding capital commitments as at 31 March 2023 of £0k.

12. Intangible Assets — Movement on Balances 2022/23

The Authority accounts for its software as intangible assets, to the extent that the software is not an integral part of a particular IT system and accounted for as part of the hardware item of Property, Plant and Equipment. The intangible assets only include purchased licences.

All software is given a finite useful life, based on assessments of the period that the software is expected to be of use to the Authority. The useful life assigned to the major software suites used by the Authority is five years.

The carrying amount of intangible assets is amortised on a straight line basis.

The table below shows movements on Intangible Assets during the year.

	2021/22 Intangible Assets £'000	2022/23 Intangible Assets £'000
Balance at start of the year		
Gross carrying amounts	368	368
Accumulated amortisation	(320)	(332)
Net carrying amount at start of year	48	36
Additions	0	0
Amortisation for the period	(12)	(12)
Net carrying amount at the end of the year	36	24
Comprising:		
Gross Carrying amounts	368	368
Accumulated amortisation	(332)	(344)

13. Inventories

2021/22 £'000	Inventories	2022/23 £'000
123	Technical	95
75	Smoke Alarms	91
28	Uniforms & protective Clothing	48
58	Workshops	56
41	Fuel	42
21	Other	20
346	Total	352

14. Debtors

2021/22 £'000	Debtors	2022/23 £'000
669	H M Revenues and Customs (re-VAT)	287
820	Pension Fund Account	632
0	Employees	3
1,997	Collection Fund	1,935
416	Accounts Rendered	331
1	Investment Income	29
1	General	3
3,904	Total	3,220

The figures above contain Long Term and Short Term Debtors with the figures for Long Term Debtors being £44k in 2021/22 and £31k in 2022/23.

15. Payments in Advance

2021/22 £'000	Payments in Advance	2022/23 £'000
434	IT	588
18	Car Leasing Scheme	23
218	Insurance	230
696	Firefighting pension Payments	772
82	General	73
1,448	Total	1,686

16. Short Term Creditors

2021/22 £'000	Short Term Creditors	2022/23 £'000
3	Capital	32
812	Employees	867
0	Pension Fund Account	723
25	Public Utilities	38
111	Other Local Authorities	219
197	IT/Communications	210
607	Third Party Payments	897
608	General	702
1,820	Collection Fund – Taxpayers	2,015
4,183	Total	5,703

17. Other Creditors

2021/22 £'000	Other Creditors	2022/23 £'000
1,227	Government Grants	1,103
118	Other Grants	166
1,345	Total	1,269

18. Collection Fund

The Collection Funds, wholly shown within the Billing Authorities (Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton) accounts are treated as agency accounts. This means that this Authority, as a precepting authority, is to be allocated a proportion of the council tax arrears, prepayments etc., to raise as creditors and debtors in its accounts. The proportion is based on this Authority's precept demand to the total of all precept demands as calculated by each Billing Authority for the Collection Fund under their control.

2021/22 Total £'000		Bedford Borough £'000	Central Beds £'000	Luton Borough £'000	2022/23 Total £'000
4,141	Council tax Arrears	848	1,020	2,993	4,861
(934)	Impairment Allowance for doubtful debts	(451)	(251)	(178)	(880)
(607)	Council Tax overpayments and prepayments	(202)	(135)	(223)	(560)
(489)	Collection Fund (surplus)/deficit	(100)	168	(380)	(312)
(2,111)	Cash (Balancing Item)	(95)	(802)	(2,212)	(3,109)
0		0	0	0	0

A similar agency arrangement has now been introduced for National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) with the Authority's proportion calculated at the statutory rate of 1%.

2021/22 Total £'000		Bedford Borough £'000	Central Beds £'000	Luton Borough £'000	2022/23 Total £'000
281	NNDR Arrears	36	45	211	292
(42)	Impairment Allowance for doubtful debts	(32)	(7)	(3)	(42)
(120)	NNDR overpayments and prepayments	(22)	(13)	(82)	(117)
(232)	Appeals Provisions	(94)	(59)	(28)	(181)
543	Collection Fund (surplus)/deficit	(14)	570	17	573
(430)	Cash (Balancing Item)	126	(536)	(115)	(525)
0		0	0	0	0

In addition this Authority is to account for its share of the surplus/deficit of the Collection Funds as at 31 March 2023 by transferring amounts to the Collection Fund Adjustment Account, previously the amount provided under regulation in January 2016 was used and included under precepts in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. This method for calculating the surplus/deficit is reversed through the Movement on Reserves Statement so the impact against the council tax requirement, for the year, will still be based on the actual cash paid by the Billing Authorities.

	Bedford Borough £'000	Central Beds £'000	Luton Borough £'000	Total £'000
Collection Fund Adjustment Account - Council Tax	(100)	168	(380)	(312)
Collection Fund Adjustment Account - NNDR	(14)	570	17	573
Collection Fund Adjustment Account - Total	(114)	738	(363)	261

19. Long Term Borrowing

Long-term Borrowing by the Authority comprises £9.987M of PWLB loans. An analysis by date of maturity is as follows:

31 March 2022 £'000	Date of Maturity	31 March 2023 £'000
6,300	30 – 35 years	6,300
3,687	35 – 40 years	3,687
9,987	Total	9,987

19. Long Term Borrowing (continued)

Loan	Lender	Start Date	Maturity Date	Original principal £	Interest Rate %	Current Principal £	Discount Rate %	Discount £	Market Value £	Accrued Interest £	Fair Value £	Duration Remaining Years
492471	PWLB	08/11/2006	30/09/2056	6,300,000	4.100	6,300,000	4.620	555,543	5,744,457	706	5,745,163	33.50
494762	PWLB	18/08/2008	31/03/2058	3,687,000	4.4300	3,687,000	4.600	108,518	3,578,482	446	3,578,929	35.00
				9,987,000		9,987,000		664,061	9,322,939	1,152	9,324,092	

Under the rules laid down by the 2022/23 Code, the Fair Value of any loans taken out must be disclosed in addition to the above carrying value to enable a comparison to be made. The Fair Value has been calculated by Link Asset Management using the rate available for new borrowing (New loan rate). At 31 March 2023 the Fair Values of the above loans were £9.324m calculated as above:

20. Short Term Investments

31 March 2022 £'000		31 March 2023 £'000
16,756	Short Term Investments	14,165
16,756	Total	14,165

20. Short Term Investments (continued)

Short-term investments are temporary surplus funds, invested short term with those financial institutions included within the Authority's approved lending list. Under the rules laid down by the 2022-23 Code the Fair Value states that fair value disclosures are not required for short-term trade payables and receivables since the carrying amount is a reasonable approximation of fair value. Below are the investments held at 31st March 2023 valued at their cash value.

Loan To:	Issue Date	Maturity Date	Nominal Amount £	Issue Rate %	Accrued Interest £	Fair Value £	Duration Remaining Years
First Abu Dhabi Bank	27/05/2022	26/05/2023	1,000,000	2.24	18,902	1,018,902	0.15
Goldman Sachs	11/11/2022	11/05/2023	2,000,000	3.85	29,745	2,029,745	0.11
Standard Chartered Bank	11/11/2022	11/05/2023	1,000,000	3.93	15,182	1,015,182	0.11
Lloyds Corporate Markets	25/11/2022	25/05/2023	3,000,000	4.24	44,259	3,044,259	0.15
Qatar National Bank	05/01/2023	05/07/2023	3,000,000	4.51	31,879	3,031,879	0.26
Standard Chartered Bank	09/02/2023	09/08/2023	2,000,000	4.27	11,932	2,011,932	0.36
Qatar National Bank	09/02/2023	09/08/2023	2,000,000	4.53	12,659	2,012,659	0.36
			14,000,000		164,558	14,164,558	

21. Cash and Cash Equivalents

2021/22 £'000	Cash and Cash Equivalents	2022/23 £'000
4	Cash	5
1,229	Bank Current Accounts	5,351
1,233	Total	5,356

22. Nature and Extent of Risks Arising from Financial Instruments

- ***Credit Risk***

Credit risk is the possibility that other parties might fail to pay amounts due to the Authority.

The risk is minimised through the Annual Investment Strategy, which requires that deposits are not made with financial institutions unless they meet identified minimum credit criteria, as laid down by Fitch and Moody's Ratings Services. The Annual Investment Strategy also imposes a maximum sum to be invested with a financial institution located within each category. The credit criteria in respect of financial assets held by the Authority are as detailed below:

Minimum Credit Ratings Required: AA-

Maximum amount of £7m per Organisation

Lending lists are reviewed and updated as necessary if the rating of any institution on the list has altered. The financial press and other media sources are also utilised for information on the credit strength of banks and other institutions and the list amended if appropriate.

- ***Liquidity Risk***

Liquidity risk is the possibility that the Authority might not have funds available to meet the commitments to make payments.

The Authority seeks to minimise liquidity risk by securing adequate available sources of short term financing and by effective cash flow forecasting and monitoring.

Any long term borrowing is through PWLB thereby minimising the potential liquidity risks. The maturity analysis of the Authority's borrowings is shown in the table under Note 19.

- ***Market Risk***

The Market Risk is the possibility that financial loss might arise for the Authority as a result of changes in such measures as interest rates and stock market movements.

The Authority seeks to minimise market risk by maintaining reliable sources of information regarding market conditions to allow for informed assessment of treasury transactions. The Authority employs the services of Sector to advise it on Treasury Management issues.

The Authority does not make investments that are subject to market fluctuations (e.g. gilts, certificates of deposit etc.).

Cash flow forecasts are regularly monitored to ensure the Authority's financing targets are met.

Loans and short-term investment balances shown in the Balance Sheet are at fixed rates and therefore not effected by market fluctuations as at 31 March 2023.

- ***Price and Foreign Currency Risk***

The authority has no financial assets or liabilities in equity shares, joint ventures or denominated in foreign currency and therefore has no exposure to these risks.

23. Provisions

The creation of provisions is permitted by Section 41 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

2021/22 £'000		2022/23 £'000
232	NDR Appeals	181
0	Insurance	10
232	As at 31 March	191

24. Details of Movements on Usable Reserves

	2022/23				
	Earmarked Reserves £'000	Capital Receipts Reserve £'000	Government Grants and Other Contributions Unapplied £'000	General Reserve £'000	Total £'000
Surplus (Deficit) for the year	0	0	0	0	0
Appropriations to/from Revenue	(286)	0	0	0	(286)
New Receipts/Grant received in Year	0	0	0	0	0
Financing of Capital Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Total	(286)	0	0	0	(286)
Balance b/fwd at 1 April 2022	12,724	548	159	2,400	15,831
Balance c/fwd at 31 March 2023	12,438	548	159	2,400	15,545

Earmarked Reserves

Earmarked Reserves are those revenue reserves which have been created and earmarked for specific purposes. The analysis of earmarked reserves is shown below:

Earmarked Reserves	Balance at 31 March 2022 £'000	Movement in year £'000	Balance at 31 March 2023 £'000
Corporate Earmarked Reserves	5,136	(211)	4,925
Capital Reserves	3,772	(133)	3,639
Budget Managers' Earmarked Reserves	390	(68)	322
Collaboration Reserve	2,378	0	2,378
Pension Reserve	1,000	126	1,126
Vehicle Appliance Reserve	48	0	48
Total	12,724	(286)	12,438

General Reserves

General Reserves are those revenue reserves which have been created and are not specifically earmarked for expenditure.

The table below details the transfers to the General Reserve during 2022/23.

General Reserve	£'000
Balance brought forward from 1 April 2022	2,400
In Year surplus	(286)
Funding to/(from) reserve agreed by Members during 2022/23	286
Total at 31 March 2023	2,400

Capital Grants and Other Contributions Unapplied

Capital grants or capital contributions where the income has been received but the expenditure to be financed from that grant or contribution has not been incurred at the balance sheet date.

Capital Receipts Reserve

Capital receipts from the sale of assets owned by the Service that have yet to be used to finance future capital expenditure.

25. Details of Movements on Unusable Reserves

Unusable Reserves	Revaluation Reserve	Capital Adjustment Account	LGPS Pension Reserve	Firefighters' Pension Reserve	Collection Fund Adjustment Account	Accumulated Absences	Total Unusable Reserves
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance at 31 March 2022	17,763	17,025	(19,228)	(364,970)	(54)	(565)	(350,029)
Balance at 31 March 2023	19,533	17,057	(1,526)	(260,450)	(261)	(615)	(226,262)

Revaluation Reserve:

The Revaluation Reserve records the accumulated gains on the fixed assets held by the Authority arising from increases in value, as a result of inflation or other factors.

	2021/22	2022/23	2022/23
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance 1 April	13,610		17,763
Upward revaluation of assets	4,584	2,309	
Downward revaluation of assets and impairment losses not charged to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	(89)	(116)	
Surplus or deficit on revaluation of non-current assets not posted to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	4,495		2,193
Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation	(342)		(423)
Balance at 31 March	17,763		19,533

Capital Adjustment Account:

The Capital Adjustment Account accumulates the write down of the historic cost of fixed assets as they are consumed by depreciation or impairment or written off on disposal. It accumulates the resources set aside to finance capital expenditure. The balance on the account thus represents timing differences between the amount of the historical cost of fixed assets that has been consumed and the amount that has been financed in accordance with statutory requirements.

	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2022/23 £'000
Balance 1 April	17,383		17,025
Reversal of items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the CIES:			
Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(1,965)	(1,852)	
Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the CIES	0	(12)	
	(1,965)		(1,864)
Adjusting amounts written out of the Revaluation Reserve	342		422
Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in the year	15,760		15,583
Capital financing applied in the year:			
Capital grants and contributions credited to the CIES that have been applied to capital expenditure	0		0
Application of grants to capital financing from the Capital Grants	0		0
Unapplied Account			
Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment charged against the General Fund	518		353
Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund or Reserves	747		1,121
Balance at 31 March	17,025		17,057

Pension Reserves:

The Pensions Reserves are maintained in order that the IAS 19 accounting adjustments are reversed out of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and do not impact on the amount to be met from local taxation, see Note 29 for further details.

	LGPS Pension Reserve		Firefighters' Pension Reserve	
	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000
Balance at 1 April	(23,913)	(19,228)	(363,000)	(364,970)
Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability/(assets)	6,301	19,219	5,205	113,999
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	(3,013)	(3,070)	(15,590)	(16,380)
Employer's pension contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	1,397	1,553	8,415	6,901
Balance at 31 March	(19,228)	(1,526)	(364,970)	(260,450)

Collection Fund Adjustment Account:

See under Note 18 for explanation of Collection Fund Adjustment Account.

Accumulated Absences Account:

The Accumulated Absences Account has been set up to cover the cost of any annual and flexi leave untaken as at 31 March 2023. Leave not taken in the year is normally carried forward and allowed to be taken in the following year: therefore unless an officer leaves it is unlikely that any payments will be made for untaken leave.

	2021/22	2022/23	2022/23
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance 1 April	(160)		(565)
Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year	160	565	
Amounts accrued at the end of the current year	(565)	(615)	
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the CIES on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements.	(405)		(50)
Balance 31 March	(565)		(615)

26. Contingent Liabilities

In accordance with the Code of Practice, the following Contingent Liabilities have been identified:

In accordance with the Code of Practice, the following Contingent Liabilities have been identified:

1. Following a European Court of Justice Case (Ville de Nivelles v Matzak) time 'on call' has been determined as 'working time'. This may have implications for the Retained Duty Service. The matter is currently being considered at a national level. Guidance received so far indicates that the situation is not clear cut. There is potential for a 'test case'. Ultimately further costs may arise.
2. The Service is one of a number of FRAs with ET claims lodged as part of a group action by Retained Duty System (RDS) employees regarding the Part Time Workers Regulations and their respective terms and conditions of employment and pension eligibility/entitlement. The Terms and Conditions element of the claims has been settled however the pension elements remain unresolved. The consultation document is due out within the next few months, with the regulations expected in October/November 2023. Implementation will be necessary in the 12 months following that. It is still unclear at this stage what the potential liabilities are.
3. Following the legal dispute between the FBU and Central Government (McCloud judgment) it has been determined that the transitional protections associated with the new 2015 Fire pension scheme are discriminatory. Remedy (to put pension members back into the position they would have been but for the discrimination) is now being considered but this is a lengthy and complex process. The regulations are expected in September 2023 in order for Remedy to commence in October 2023. The eventual outcome is highly likely to have significant financial implications but these cannot be estimated at this time.
4. The Service has four Employment Tribunal Cases pending if the claimants are successful then costs will be incurred. Costs are unknown but are unlikely to be material.

5. The FRA determination in relation to a successful Internal Disputes Resolution Procedures (IDRP) pension claim, and subsequent claim to The Pensions Ombudsman may give rise to additional costs in respect of addressing underpayments to the pension fund and in turn, the pension fund to employees. This is ongoing work, hence the estimated pension obligations from this matter have not been captured within the pension liability estimates in these accounts.

27. Contingent Assets

In accordance with the Code of Practice, no Contingent Assets have been identified.

28. Authorisation of Accounts

The pre-audited accounts were approved by G Chambers on 3rd July 2023.

29. Pension Arrangements

As part of the terms and conditions of its 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:

- a. The Firefighters' Pension Scheme for firefighters is an unfunded defined benefit final salary scheme. This means that there are no investment assets built up to meet the pension's liabilities and cash has to be generated to meet actual pension's payments as they eventually fall due.
- b. The Local Government Pension Scheme for control and non-uniformed staff, administered from 1 April 2009 by Bedford Borough Council, is a funded defined benefit final salary scheme, meaning that the Authority and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension's liabilities with investment assets.

The cost of retirement benefits are recognised in the Net Cost of Service when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are actually paid out as pensions. However, the charge required to be made against council tax is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of retirement benefits is reversed out of the Movement on Reserves Statement.

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

	Firefighters' Pension Scheme — All Schemes £'000		Local Government Pension Scheme £'000		Total £'000	
	2021/22	2022/23	2021/22	2022/23	2021/22	2022/23
Net Cost of Service:						
Current Service Cost	(8,340)	(6,710)	(2,517)	(2,565)	(10,857)	(9,275)
Past Service (Cost)/Gain	0	0	0	0	0	0
Administration Fee	0	0	(31)	(25)	(31)	(25)
Net Operating Expenditure:						
Net interest expense	(7,250)	(9,670)	(465)	(480)	(7,715)	(10,150)
Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Service	(15,590)	(16,380)	(3,013)	(3,070)	(18,603)	(19,450)
Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability:						
Return on Plan assets excluding amounts included in interest	0	0	1,813	(1,127)	1,813	(1,127)
Actuarial gains and losses arising on changes in demographic assumptions	0	13,000	801	0	801	13,000
Actuarial gains and losses arising on changes in financial assumptions	4,605	120,399	3,012	24,391	7,617	144,790
Other	600	(19,400)	675	(4,045)	1,275	(23,445)
Total Charge to the CIES	(10,385)	97,619	3,288	16,149	(7,097)	113,768
Movement in Reserves Statement						
Reversal of Net Charges made to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the code	15,590	16,380	3,013	3,070	18,603	19,450
Amount charged against Council Tax for pensions in the year:						
Employer's contributions payable to the Scheme	7,575	6,031	1,397	1,553	8,972	7,584
Retirement benefits payable to Pensioners	840	870	0	0	840	870

The underlying assets and liabilities for retirement benefits attributable to the Authority at 31 March 2023 are as follows:

	Fire Fighters' Pension Scheme - All Total £'000 2021/22	Fire Fighters' Pension Scheme - All Total £'000 2022/23	Local Govt Pension Scheme £'000 2021/22	Local Govt Pension Scheme £'000 2022/23	Total £'000 2021/22	Total £'000 2022/23
Estimated Liabilities in Scheme	(364,970)	(260,450)	(50,631)	(33,879)	(415,601)	(294,329)
Estimated Assets in Scheme	0	0	31,403	32,353	31,403	32,353
Net Liability	(364,970)	(260,450)	(19,228)	(1,526)	(384,198)	(261,976)

The liabilities show the underlying commitments that the Authority has in the long-run to pay retirement benefits. The total net liability of £262.0m has a substantial impact on the net worth of the Authority as recorded in the Balance Sheet, resulting in a negative overall balance on the Authority's Balance Sheet of £210.7m. Statutory arrangements for funding the deficit mean that the financial position of the Authority remains healthy:

- Any deficit on the Firefighters' Pension Account will be met by Government Grant.
- The deficit on the Local Government Pension Scheme will be made good by increased contributions over the remaining working life of employees as assessed by the Scheme's Actuary.

The total contributions expected to be made to the Local Government Pension Scheme by the Authority in the year to 31 March 2024 will be approximately £1.426m. Expected contributions to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme in the year to 31 March 2024 are £3.911m.

Liabilities have been assessed on an Actuarial Basis using the projected unit credit method: an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels, etc. The Firefighters' Pension Scheme liabilities have been assessed by Government Actuarial Department and the Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities have been assessed by Barnett Waddingham, an independent firm of Actuaries; estimates for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme and the Local Government Pension Scheme being based on the Actuarial Valuation (IAS 19) of the scheme as at 31 March 2023.

The significant assumptions used by the Actuary have been:

	Firefighters Scheme	Firefighters Scheme	LGPS	LGPS
Mortality Assumptions:	2021/22	2022/23	2021/22	2022/23
Longevity at 65 for current pensioners:				
Men	21.5 years	21.2 years	21.3 years	21.4 years
Women	21.5 years	21.2 years	24.1 years	24.2 years
Longevity at 65 for future pensioners:				
Men	23.2 years	22.9 years	22.4 years	22.4 years
Women	23.2 years	22.9 years	25.7 years	25.8 years
Rate of Inflation	3.00%	2.60%		
Rate of Increase in Salaries	4.75%	3.85%	4.20%	3.85 %
Rate of Increase in Pensions	3.00%	2.60%	3.20%	2.85 %
Rate for discounting scheme liabilities	2.65%	4.65%	2.60%	4.80%
Take up option to convert annual pension into retirement lump sum			50%	50%

Changes to the Local government Pension Scheme permit employees retiring on or after 6 April 2006 to take an increase in their lump sum payment on retirement in exchange for a reduction in their future pension. For 2022/23 the Actuary has assumed that all retirees will exchange half their commutable pension for cash at retirement.

The Firefighters' Pension Scheme has no assets to cover its liabilities.

Local Government Pension Scheme assets comprised:

Fair Value of Scheme Assets

Asset Break Down	2021/22	2021/22	2022/23	2022/23
	£000's	%	£000's	%
Equities	19,200	61	20,738	64
Bonds	7,793	25	5,914	19
Property	3,762	12	4,335	13
Cash	648	2	1,366	4
Total	31,403	100	32,353	100

Bedford Borough Council has overall responsibility for the investment of the Local Government Pension Scheme Assets (the Fund). The major objective of the Fund is to maintain a portfolio of secure and sufficiently liquid assets, which together with new contributions from active members of the Fund will generate sufficient income and capital growth to meet the cost of current and future benefits that the Fund provides. The Council's Pensions Fund Panel has set an overall asset allocation for the Fund and for each asset class the Fund has a benchmark against which performance can be measured.

As is required by the pensions and (where relevant) investment regulation, the suitability of various types of investments have been considered, as the need to diversify investments to reduce risk of investment in too narrow range. The risk associated with the investments is controlled through the diversification of asset classes and investment managers. A small cash balance is also maintained to meet the liquid requirements of the Fund. A large proportion of the assets relate to equities (64% of scheme assets) and UK Government bonds (19%). The Bedfordshire Pension Funding Strategy is monitored annually or more frequently if necessary.

The table below shows the reconciliation of the present value of the Scheme's liabilities:

	Unfunded Liabilities Firefighters Scheme		Funded Liabilities LGPS	
	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000
Opening Defined Benefit Obligation	363,000	364,970	50,827	50,631
Current Service Costs	8,340	6,710	2,517	2,565
Interest Costs	7,250	9,670	1,017	1,313
Contributions from Scheme Participants	1,425	1,549	402	430
Transfers in/(out)	32	596	0	0
Actuarial losses/(Gains) due to changes in demographic assumptions	0	(13,000)	(801)	0
Actuarial losses/(Gains) due to changes in financial assumptions	(4,605)	(120,399)	(3,012)	(24,391)
Other	(600)	19,400	118	4,045
Past Service Cost	0	0	0	0
Past Service Cost as a result of McCloud Judgement	0	0	0	0
Benefits Paid	(9,032)	(8,176)	(429)	(706)
Injury Award Expenditure	(840)	(870)	0	0
Backdated Commutation Payments	0	0	0	0
Estimated unfunded benefits paid	0	0	(8)	(8)
Closing Defined Benefit Obligation	364,970	260,450	50,631	33,879

The objectives of the scheme are to keep employers contributions at as constant a rate as possible. In 2019 the Borough Council agreed a Strategy with the scheme's actuary to achieve a funding level of 100% over 14 years. Funding levels are monitored on an annual basis. The last triennial valuation for the Local Government Pension Scheme was 31/03/2022 and Firefighters Pension Scheme (quadrennial valuations) was as at 31/03/2019.

The table below shows the membership details of the respective pension schemes in relation to the number of pensioner members.

2022/23

			Total Salaries for current members £'000	Total Deferred Pension £'000	Total Pensions payable £'000	Total Unfunded Pensions £'000
Fire Fighters Pension Scheme	Number	%				
Active Members	386	36.3%	9,860			
Deferred Members	232	21.8%		860		
Pensioner Members	445	41.9%			7,110	
	1,063	100%	9,860	860	7,110	
LGPS Pension Scheme						
Active Members	184	46.2%	5,440			
Deferred Members	97	24.4%		293		
Pensioner Members	115	28.9%			725	
Unfunded Pensioners	2	0.5%				8
	398	100 %	5,440	293	725	8

Notes

1. The Total Salaries is the average pensionable pay with allowance for part time workers
2. The above amounts (£) for Deferred Members and Pension payments include the Price Index (PI) awarded in April 2022.

The table below shows the reconciliation of the Fair Value of the Scheme's Assets:

	Firefighters' Pension Schemes		Local Government Pension Scheme	
	2021/22	2022/23	2021/22	2022/23
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Reconciliation of Fair value of Scheme Assets				
Opening Fair Value of Employer Assets	0	0	26,914	31,403
Interest - Income	0	0	552	833
Return on Plan Assets	0	0	1,813	(1,127)
Employer Contributions	7,575	6,031	1,397	1,553
Contributions by Scheme Participants	1,425	1,549	402	430
Benefits Paid	(9,032)	(8,176)	(437)	(714)
Other Actuarial Gains / (Losses)	0	0	793	0
Unfunded Benefits Paid	(840)	(870)	(8)	(8)
Contributions in respect of Unfunded Benefits	840	870	8	8
Transfers in/(out)	32	596	0	0
Admin Expenses	0	0	(31)	(25)
Closing Fair Value of Employer Assets	0	0	31,403	32,353

30. Grants and Contributions

The Authority credited the following grants and contributions to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in 2021/22 and 2022/23

Credited to Services:	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000
CLG – New Dimensions Resilience Training	10	21
CLG – Firelink	194	158
CLG – New Risk	14	70
Home Office – Covid19 Grant	77	110
Building Risk Review	0	0
Protection Grant	167	128
Grenfell Infrastructure	2	0
Home Office - RPL	7	0
ESMCP	118	44
Pension Admin	12	22
Redmond Review Grant	0	11
Revenue Service Grant	0	410
Levy Account Surplus Grant	0	50
Total	601	1,024

31. Post Balance Sheet Events

There are no post balance sheet events to report.

BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
PENSION FUND ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2023

2021/22 Net Expenditure £'000		2022/23 Net Expenditure £'000	See Note
	Contributions Receivable From Employer		
(3,191)	• Normal	(3,461)	4*
(127)	• Other	(106)	
(1,425)	From Members	(1,549)	
(32)	Transfers In	(596)	
(4,775)	Total Receivable	(5,712)	
	Benefits Payable		
7,449	• Pensions	7,689	6*
1,582	• Communications and lump sum retirement benefits	483	
20	• Other	38	7*
	Payment to and on account of leavers		
0	• Individual transfers out to other schemes	0	
4,276	Net amount payable for the year	2,498	
(4,276)	Top-up grant payable by the Government	(2,498)	3*
	Net Amounts		
	NET ASSETS STATEMENT		
753	Net current Assets due from/(Net Current Liabilities owed to) Government	(723)	3*
(753)	Other current assets and liabilities	723	
0		0	

NOTES TO THE PENSION FUND ACCOUNT

1. Due to the changes in the way that Firefighters' pensions are to be managed a separate Pension Fund Account is required to show the transactions related to those pensions. The fund was legally established under the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) (England) Order 2006 and administered by London Pension Fund authority but is managed by Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority.
2. The Pension Fund Accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and follow the Statement of Accounting Policies as detailed on pages 31 to 42. Similarly, the general management and administrative arrangements of the Pension Fund are the same as for the core accounts.
3. The Firefighters' Pension Fund is an unfunded scheme which means that there are no investment assets built up to meet the liabilities to pay pensions or other benefits in the future. Cash has to be generated to meet actual payments on a 'pay-as-you-go' basis from contributions from the FRA and employees. The Pension Fund has to be balanced to nil each year and so where the income generated is not sufficient to cover the costs, central government pay a top-up grant to cover any deficit. If, however, surplus income is generated then the surplus grant is repaid to the government.
4. Employee's and Employer's contribution levels are based on percentages of pensionable pay set nationally by the Home Office and subject to four year revaluation by the Government's Actuary Department.
5. The Net Assets Statement does not include liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits after the Balance Sheet date.
6. The April 2023 pension payments are paid out to the pensioners in March 2023. As income from employer and employees' contributions is not received until April, the payments have been funded from the FRA which is treated as a creditor of the Pension Fund Account.
7. The payment of £38k relates to Annual Allowance charges, where individuals' annual pension pot contributions have exceeded their individual annual allowance.

The annual allowance is a limit on the amount that can be contributed to an individual's pension each year, while still receiving tax relief. It is based on an individual's earnings for the year and is capped at £40,000.

These payments by the Authority to the HMRC are offset by the Home Office reimbursing the Authority via the Pension Top Up Grant. The individuals' relating to this £38k will ultimately pay back the Government when receiving their pensions, as their pensions will be reduced by the relevant amounts relating to their Annual Allowance charges. This is called the Mandatory Scheme Pays (MSP) option. If an individual did not take up the MSP option, they would have to pay the Annual Allowance via their own self-assessment tax return.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACCRUAL

A sum included in the final accounts to cover income or expenditure attributable to an accounting period for goods received or work done, but for which payment has not been received/made by the end date of the period for which the accounts are prepared.

AUDIT

An independent examination of the Authority's activities, either by internal audit or the Authority's external auditor, which is Ernst & Young LLP (EY).

BALANCE SHEET

A statement of the recorded assets, liabilities and other balances at a specific date at the end of an accounting period.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Expenditure on the acquisition of a non-current asset or expenditure which adds to and not merely maintains the value of an existing non-current asset, i.e. by extending the economic life of the asset or increasing its value.

CAPITAL RECEIPT

Proceeds from the sale of a non-current asset, i.e. land or a building.

CONSISTENCY

The concept that the accounting treatment of like items within an accounting period and from one period to the next are the same.

CREDITOR

An amount owed by an organisation for work done, goods received, or services rendered to the organisation within the accounting period but for which payment has not been made.

CURRENT ASSET

An asset where the value may change because the volume held can vary through day to day activity, e.g. physical stockholdings.

CURRENT LIABILITY

The amount which will become payable or could be called in within the next accounting period e.g. creditor, cash overdrawn.

CURRENT VALUE

The measurements that reflect the economic environment prevailing to the service or function the asset is supporting at the reporting date. Current value measurement basis include; Existing Use Value, Existing Use Value Social Housing, Depreciated Replacement Cost and Fair Value.

DEBTOR

An amount due to the Authority within the accounting period but not received at the balance sheet date.

DEBT OUTSTANDING

Amounts borrowed which are still to be repaid.

DEPRECIATION

The measure of the wearing out, consumption, or other reduction in the useful economic life of a non-current asset, whether arising from use, effluxion of time or obsolescence through technological or other changes.

FAIR VALUE

The fair value of a non-current asset is the price that will be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants on the measurement dates.

IFRS (International Financial Reporting Standards)

A set of rules, governed by the IASB (International Accounting Standard Board) for application in the compilation of Local Authority accounts.

INVENTORIES

Comprise consumable goods.

LOANS OUTSTANDING

The total amounts borrowed from external lenders for capital and temporary revenue purposes but not repaid at the balance sheet date.

LONG TERM CONTRACTS

A contract entered into for the design, manufacture or construction of a single substantial asset or the provision of a service (or combination of asset or services which together constitute a single project), where the time taken substantially to complete the contract is such that the contract activity falls into different accounting periods. Some contracts with a shorter duration than one year should be accounted for as long term contracts if they are sufficiently material to the activity of the period.

MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP)

The minimum amount which must be charged each year to an authority's revenue account to repay the principal sum of borrowing for capital purposes.

NET BOOK VALUE

The amount at which non-current assets are included in the balance sheet, i.e. their historical cost or current value less cumulative amounts provided for depreciation.

NET CURRENT REPLACEMENT COST

The cost of replacing or recreating the particular asset in its existing condition and in its existing use, i.e. the cost of its replacement or of the nearest equivalent asset, adjusted to reflect the current condition of the existing asset.

NON-CURRENT ASSETS

An asset which has value beyond one financial year.

OPERATING LEASES

A means of renting an asset for part of its life.

OPERATIONAL ASSETS

Non-current assets held and occupied, used or consumed by the authority in the direct delivery of those services for which it has either a statutory or discretionary responsibility.

PUBLIC WORKS LOAN BOARD (PWLB)

A government agency which provides long-term loans to local authorities at interest rates only slightly higher than those at which the government itself can borrow.

REVENUE EXPENDITURE

The day-to-day running expenses incurred by an authority in providing services.

REVENUE EXPENDITURE FUNDED FROM CAPITAL UNDER STATUTE

Represents expenditure which is capitalised but does not result in the creation of or enhancement to a non-current asset.

TRANSFER VALUE

A payment one pension fund makes to another when a member changes employment.

USEFUL LIFE

The period over which the authority will derive benefits from the use of a non-current asset.