

Glossary of terms

Accounting policies – those principles, bases, conventions rules and practices applied by an entity that specify how the effects of transactions and other events are to be reflected in its financial statements through:

- a) recognising
- b) selecting measurement bases for, and
- c) presenting assets, liabilities, gains, losses and changes to reserves.

Accounting policies do not include estimation techniques.

Accounting policies define the process whereby transactions and other events are reflected in the financial statements. For example, an accounting policy for a particular type of expenditure may specify whether an asset or a loss is to be recognised; the basis on which it is to be measured; and where in the revenue account or balance sheet it is to be presented.

Accrual – a fundamental accounting principle is that income and expenditure should be accounted for in the period to which it relates, irrespective of the date of settlement. An accrual is a sum included in the accounts to cover income or expenditure attributable to goods or services received within the accounting period but for which payment has not been received or made.

Actuarial gains and losses – changes in the net pension liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions. Not charged to revenue.

Agency – the provision of services by one organisation on behalf of another organisation. The organisation directly providing the services is reimbursed by the responsible organisation.

Amortisation – the planned writing-down of the value of an asset (tangible or intangible) over its limited useful life.

Asset – the creation or purchase of an item/building that has a monetary value. Those assets of the council which are readily marketable are valued at market value. Those which have a specialised use, such as leisure centres, are valued at depreciated replacement cost, which assesses the cost of providing a similar facility as a replacement but also allows a discount for the age of the asset. Plant, equipment and community assets are valued at historic cost.

Asset register – a register listing the book values of all the Council's non-current fixed assets, both tangible and intangible.

Balance sheet – the balance sheet is a statement of the assets and liabilities at the end of the accounting period. It is a "snapshot" of the accounts at a single point in time.

Capital adjustment account - accumulates (on the debit side) the write-down of the historical cost of fixed assets as they are consumed by depreciation and impairments or written off on disposal. It accumulates (on the credit side) the resources that have been set aside to finance capital expenditure. The same process applies to capital expenditure that is only capital by statutory definition (Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute). 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.

Capital expenditure – expenditure on the acquisition of a fixed asset or expenditure which adds to and not merely maintains the value of an existing fixed asset.

Capital financing – assembling the money to pay for capital expenditure. This will include capital receipts, government grants and contributions from developers. Also available are revenue monies and borrowing. The council does not currently borrow to finance capital expenditure.

Capital receipts – proceeds from the sale of an asset, e.g. land, buildings, equipment, vehicles.

Central administration charges – central administration charges are an allocation of the net cost of the administrative and professional departments that support all of an authority's services, e.g. finance, personnel.

Central support services – the costs of providing those central functions which are concerned with the whole range of services and undertakings of the council and are not in the main identifiable with any particular service, e.g. the cost of office accommodation.

Code of Practice – the CIPFA Code of Practice for Local Authority accounting developed as part of the accounting standards to be followed in compiling this statement of accounts.

Collection fund – a fund maintained by collecting authorities into which is paid council taxes, NDR, and community charges. The fund then meets the requirements of the county, district and parish councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley for council tax, and the county and central government for NDR.

Community assets – assets that the council intends to hold in perpetuity, that have no determinable useful life, and that may have restrictions on their disposal. Examples of community assets are parks and historical buildings.

Consistency – the principle that the accounting treatment of like items within an accounting period and from one period to the next is the same.

Contingency - money set aside in the budget to meet the cost of unforeseen items of expenditure, or shortfalls in income, and to provide for inflation where this is not included in individual budgets.

Contingent asset – a potential asset arising from past events whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the council's control.

Contingent liability – a contingent liability is either:

- a possible obligation arising from past events whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the authority's control; or
- a present obligation arising from past events where it is not possible to measure the amount of obligation with sufficient reliability.

Council tax – a charge levied by all councils on domestic property values to contribute to the cost of providing local services. Council tax for the county council, the local police crime commissioner and local parishes is collected by this council and paid over to them throughout the year.

Council tax benefit - is the assistance provided by billing authorities to adults on low incomes to help them pay their council tax bill.

Council tax requirement - the estimated revenue expenditure on General Fund services that needed to be financed from the Council Tax after deducting income from fees and charges, certain specific grants and any funding from reserves.

Creditor – the amount owed by the council for work done, goods received or services rendered to the council within the accounting period but for which payment has not been made at the date of the balance sheet.

Current asset – an asset where the value changes on a frequent basis e.g. stores, cash, debtors (as distinct from a fixed asset such as land and buildings).

Current liability – an amount which will become payable or for which payment could be requested within the next accounting period, e.g. creditors, bank overdrafts, short term loans.

Current service costs (pensions) – the increase in pension liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year. Allocated to the revenue accounts of services for which the employees worked.

Debtor – an amount due to the council within the accounting period but not received at the date of the balance sheet.

Deferred capital receipts - capital income still to be received after disposals have taken place.

Defined benefit pension scheme – a pension or other retirement benefit scheme where the scheme rules define the benefits independently of the contributions payable and the benefits are not directly related to the investments of the scheme.

Defined contribution pension scheme – a pension or other retirement benefit scheme into which an employer pays regular contributions fixed as an amount or a percentage of pay and will have no legal or constructive obligation to pay further contributions if the scheme does not have sufficient assets to pay all employee benefits relating to employee service in the current and prior periods.

Depreciation – the measure of the cost or revalued amount of the benefits of the fixed asset that have been consumed during the period. Consumption includes the wearing out, using up or other reduction in the useful life of a fixed asset whether arising from use, passage of time or obsolescence through either changes in technology, legislation or demand for goods and service produced by the asset.

Direct revenue financing – the financing of capital expenditure from the current year's revenue account.

Earmarked reserves - The council holds a number of reserves earmarked to be used to meet specific, known or predicted future expenditure.

Events after the balance sheet date – events after the balance sheet date are those events, favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the balance sheet date (normally 31 March) and the date when the statement of accounts is authorised for issue – also referred to as **Post**

Balance Sheet Events (PBSE). These may be classed as ‘adjusting’ or ‘non-adjusting’.

Exceptional items – material items which derive from events of transactions that fall within the ordinary activities of the authority and which need to be disclosed separately by virtue of their size or incidence to give a true and fair presentation of the accounts.

External audit - The independent examination of the activities and accounts of Local Authorities to ensure the accounts have been prepared in accordance with legislative requirements and proper practices and to ensure the council has made proper arrangements to secure value for money in its use of resources.

Extraordinary items – material items, possessing a high degree of abnormality, which derive from events of transactions that fall outside the ordinary activities of the authority and which are not expected to recur. They do not include exceptional items, nor do they include prior period items merely because they relate to a prior period.

Fair value – the fair value of an asset is the price at which it could be exchanged in an arms-length transaction less, where applicable, any grants receivable towards the purchase or use of the asset.

Finance lease – this is a lease, usually of land or buildings, which is treated as capital borrowing and for which transfers substantially all of the risks and rewards of ownership of the asset to the lessee; or where the residual interest in the asset transfers to the lessee on completion of the lease term.

Financial instrument – a financial instrument is any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another. The term ‘financial instrument’ covers both financial assets and financial liabilities and includes both the most straightforward financial assets and liabilities such as trade receivables and trade payables and the most complex ones such as derivatives and embedded derivatives.

Financial regulations - These are the written code of procedures approved by the council, intended to provide a framework for proper financial management. Financial regulations usually set out rules on accounting, audit, administrative and budgeting procedures.

Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) – accounting practice recommended by the Accounting Standards Board (ASB) for adoption in the preparation of accounts by applicable bodies.

Fixed asset – fixed assets are assets of the council that continue to have value and benefit for a period longer than one financial year.

Gains/losses on settlements and curtailments – the results of actions to relieve the council of liabilities or events that reduce the expected future service or accrual of benefits of employees. Debited to the net costs of services as part of non-distributed costs.

General fund – the main revenue account of an authority, which summarises the cost of all services provided by the council which are paid for from amounts collected from council tax payers, government grants and other income.

Going concern – the concept that the authority will remain in operational existence for the foreseeable future, in particular that the revenue accounts and Balance Sheet assume no intention to curtail significantly the scale of operations.

Heritage asset - A tangible asset with historical, artistic, scientific, technological, geophysical or environmental qualities that is held and maintained principally for its contribution to knowledge and culture.

Housing benefit - This is an allowance to persons on low income (or none) to meet, in whole or part, their rent. Benefit is allowed or paid by Local Authorities but Central Government refunds part of the cost of the benefits and of the running costs of the services to Local Authorities. Benefits paid to the Authority's own tenants are known as rent rebate and that paid to private tenants as rent allowance.

IAS 19 – International Accounting Standard 19 requires the council to account for assets and liabilities which are held in the pension fund administered by Oxfordshire County Council but relating to this authority, in the accounts of this authority.

IAS 40 - International Accounting Standard 40 relates to the accounting for investment properties.

iBoxx – iBoxx indices cover the cash bond market. Underlying bond prices and indices are available in real time.

Impairment – an unexpected or sudden decline in the value of a fixed asset, such as property or vehicle, below its carrying amount on the balance sheet.

Infrastructure assets - Fixed Assets which generally cannot be sold and from which benefit can be obtained only by continued use of the asset created. Examples of such assets are highways, footpaths, bridges and water and drainage facilities.

Intangible fixed assets – some capital expenditure does not give rise to a physical asset but the benefits last a number of years. These can be carried in the balance sheet as assets and written off over their useful life. An example is computer software.

International Accounting Standards (IAS) and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) – defined Accounting Standards that must be applied by all reporting entities to all financial statements in order to provide a true and fair view of the entity's financial position, and a standardised method of comparison with financial statements of the other entities.

Liabilities – these are amounts due to individuals or organisations which will have to be paid at some time in the future. Current liabilities are usually payable within one year of the Balance Sheet date.

Liquid resources – current asset investments that are readily disposable without disrupting the authority's business and are readily convertible to known amounts of cash at or close to the carrying amount or traded in an active market.

Non Domestic Rates (NDR) (also known as business rates) – NDR is a tax charged on commercial properties. It is calculated by multiplying a property's 'rateable value' by a nationally set amount (known as the 'NDR multiplier'). The council acts as a collecting agency for NDR and the proceeds are then redistributed to central government, the county council and the balance retained by the council.

Net Book Value (NBV) – the amount at which fixed assets are included in the balance sheet; i.e.: their historical cost or current value less the 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.

Net debt – the authority's borrowings less cash and liquid resources. Where the cash and liquid resources exceed borrowings, reference should be to Net funds rather than net debt.

Net realisable value – the open market value of an asset in its existing use, less the expenses to be incurred in realising the asset.

Non-operational assets – fixed assets held by the authority but not used or consumed in the delivery of services or for the service or strategic objectives of the authority. Examples of non-operational assets include investment properties and assets that are surplus to requirements, pending their sale.

Operating lease – this is a lease where ownership of the fixed asset remains with the lessor and the lease costs are revenue expenditure to the Council – generally any lease other than a finance lease.

Operational assets – fixed assets held and occupied, use or consumed by the authority in the direct delivery of those services for which it has either a statutory or discretionary responsibility or for the service or strategic objectives of the authority.

Past service cost – the increase in pension liabilities arising from current year decisions whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years, debited to the net cost of services as part of non-distributed costs interest cost, and the expected increase in the present value of liabilities during the year as they move one year closer to being paid, debited to net operating expenditure.

Post Balance Sheet Events (PBSE) – see events after the balance sheet date

Precept – the levy made by precepting authorities on billing authorities, requiring the latter to collect income from council taxpayers on their behalf. Precepts are paid from the Collection Fund.

Prior period adjustment – those material adjustments applicable to prior years arising from changes in accounting policies or from the correction of fundamental errors. A fundamental error is one that is of such significance as to destroy the validity of the financial statements. They do not include normal recurring corrections or adjustments of accounting estimates made in prior years.

Provisions - amounts set aside to meet liabilities or losses which it is anticipated will be incurred but where the amount and/or the timing of such costs is uncertain.

Remuneration – all sums paid to or receivable by an employee and sums due by way of expenses allowances (as far as those sums are chargeable to UK income tax) and the money value of any other benefits received other than cash. Pension contributions payable by the employer are excluded.

Reporting standards - the Code prescribes the accounting treatment and disclosures for all normal transactions of a Local Authority. It is based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), International Standards (IAS) and International Financial Reporting Interpretations Committee (IFRIC) plus UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (GAAP) and Financial Reporting Standards (FRS).

Revenue expenditure - expenditure incurred on the day-to-day running of the Council. This mainly includes employee costs, general running expenses and capital financing costs.

Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS) – (formerly known as a deferred charge) arises where:

- Expenditure is charged to capital but there is no tangible asset e.g. improvement grants, compensatory payments. When the expenditure is incurred it is charged to the income and expenditure account with a compensating entry in the statement of movement on the general fund balance to ensure that there is no impact on the council tax; and
- Assets are transferred to another organisation and the associated transferred debt is being repaid over time. These charges are written-down by the loan repayments so that the total equates to the relevant loan debt outstanding.

Since there are no long-term economic benefits in the control of the council, these are written off to revenue (CIES) in the year incurred and no longer feature as assets in the balance sheet.

Revenue Support Grant (RSG) – this main non-specific grant paid by central government to local authorities to help fund the services that they provide. The allocation to each authority is determined by a complex formula. This comprises the council's general government grant income.

Service Reporting Code of Practice (SeRCOP) - prepared and published by CIPFA, the Service Reporting Code of Practice (SeRCOP) replaced the previous Best Value Accounting Code of Practice (BVACOP). It is reviewed annually to ensure that it develops in line with the needs of modern local government, transparency, best value and public services reform. SeRCOP establishes proper practices with regard to consistent financial reporting for services and in England and Wales, it is given legislative backing by regulations which identify the accounting practices it propounds as proper practices under the Local Government Act 2003.

Trading account – a method of matching income and expenditure for a particular activity or group of activities. An example of this is building control.

Transferred debt – this is the term given to housing assets transferred to another council, for which the council receives repayment in the form of a loan.

Useful life – the period over which the authority will derive benefits from the use of a fixed asset.

Annual governance statement

The annual governance statement forms part of the audited accounts and can be found by accessing the link below:

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/about-us/how-we-work/our-finances/annual-governance-statement-0>