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**To: All Members of the Audit Committee
(and any other Members who may wish to attend)**

Your ref:

Our ref KK/GS

Date: 18th November 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **AUDIT COMMITTEE** to be held at **1.00 pm** on **THURSDAY, 26TH NOVEMBER, 2020**, remotely via Zoom.

The proceedings of the meeting can be viewed via the following link:

<https://youtu.be/Qjj1vrO3Nms>

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Kellaway PP." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Clerk to the Authority

Encl.

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MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

AUDIT COMMITTEE

26 NOVEMBER 2020

AGENDA

Members

Cllr Linda Maloney (Chair)
Cllr Alan Brame
Cllr Edna Finneran
Cllr Jan Grace
Cllr Lisa Preston
Cllr Andrew Makinson
Anthony Boyle – Independent Person

1. Preliminary items

The Authority is requested to consider the identification of:

- a) declarations of interest by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the Agenda
- b) any additional items of business which the Chair has determined should be considered as matters of urgency; and
- c) items of business which may require the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof because of the possibility of the disclosure of exempt information.

2. Minutes of previous meeting (Pages 5 - 8)

The Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 24th September 2020, are submitted for approval as a correct record and for signature by the Chair.

3. Grant Thornton Audit Finding 2019-20 (Pages 9 - 42)

To consider the attached report from the Authority's External Auditors – Grant Thornton, concerning the Audit Finding 2019-20.

**4. statement of accounts 2019/20 - approval of audited statements
(Pages 43 - 166)**

To consider Report CFO/062/20 of the Director of Finance, concerning the audited 2019/20 Statement of Accounts for approval and request that they be authorised for issue.

If any Members have queries, comments or require additional information relating to any item on the agenda please contact Committee Services and we will endeavour to provide the information you require for the meeting. Of course this does not affect the right of any Member to raise questions in the meeting itself but it may assist Members in their consideration of an item if additional information is available.

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF THE

AUDIT COMMITTEE

24 SEPTEMBER 2020

MINUTES

Present: **Cllr Linda Maloney (Chair)** Councillors Bruce Berry, Edna Finneran, Andrew Makinson, Lisa Preston, Emily Spurrell (substitute for Cllr Grace) and Anthony Boyle (independent person)

Also Present:

Apologies of absence were received from: Cllr Janet Grace

4. Chair's Announcement

At the start of the meeting, the Chair of the Authority thanked everyone for attending and welcomed any members of the press or public who were observing the proceedings.

The Chair of the Authority then introduced the meeting and provided all present with an overview of how this remote meeting would work and some housekeeping.

A roll call was then taken of all Members present, to confirm that they could hear and be heard; and that they could see and be seen.

1. Preliminary Matters

Members considered the identification of any declarations of interest, matters of urgency or items that would require the exclusion of the press and public due to the disclosure of exempt information.

Resolved that:

- a) no declarations of interest were made by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the Agenda
- b) no additional items of business were determined by the Chair to be considered as matters of urgency; and

- c) no items of business required the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof because of the possibility of the disclosure of exempt information.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 4th June 2020 were approved as a correct record and for signature by the Chair.

3. FINANCIAL REVIEW 2020/21 - APRIL TO JUNE

Members considered Report CFO/045/20 of the Treasurer, concerning the financial position, revenue and capital, for the Authority for 2020/21. The Authority receives regular comprehensive financial reviews during the year which provide a full health check on the Authority's finances. This report covers the period April to June 2020.

Members were given a brief over view of the report, including the MFRA annual pay award assumption which has now been accepted and is 2.75% for green book staff and 2% for firefighters.

Members were advised that the McCloud remedy assumptions cost to the employer would allow Firefighter Pension Scheme (FPS) members access to their legacy schemes and would be considered as part of the 2020 FPS actuarial review and would be reflected in Employer rates from 2023/24.

The Home Office has issued guidance on 21 August 2020, informing Fire & Rescue Authorities (FRAs) that members of the FPS facing immediate detriment should be given the option to choose between their old scheme and the 2015 scheme. This Home Office guidance also stipulated that any retrospective employer and employee contributions would have to be made good. Members were informed that if the service implemented this guidance it may have significant financial implications over this and future years. However, it has now been confirmed that the Home Office guidance was an informal guide and Fire & Rescue Services are now seeking clarification through the Local Government Association (LGA) FPS. Until that clarification is available Members were told that no FRSs are acting on the Home Office guide.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (MFRA) have identified the Smoothing Reserve, as currently £2m, in order to manage any risk from the McCloud case, as an in-year source of funding if any McCloud assumptions did not hold true. The current view is that the Smoothing Reserve can cover any costs associated with McCloud and the remedy in 2020/21, but the future funding of such costs will be considered as part of the 2021/22 budget process.

MRFA have assumed no Unplanned Growth in the budget, however the spread of COVID-19 has created unprecedented circumstances within which the Authority has had to respond to as follows:-

- The anticipated financial impact in 2020/2021 is expected to be limited to a loss of commercial and other income (£0.5m) and additional expenditure on protective equipment, cleaning, ICT and other costs (£0.9m).
- To date the Government has awarded the Authority £1.419m to cover the impact of the virus.
- In addition, the Government has now made available further funds to cover loss of fees and charges income and the Service will be making a grant claim to cover some of the anticipated £0.5m income loss.
- The current position is that the grant received to date should cover the loss of income and additional costs up to the end of 2020/2021.

Members were advised by the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) at the September Strategy Day, that the Service is looking at the possibility of building a new Training Centre. To do this the CFO and Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) will look to maximise in year-savings and will seek Members approval to use any savings that materialise in the year to increase the capital reserve in order to contribute towards the cost of a potential new Training & Development Academy (TDA) build. The revenue spend is anticipated to be consistent with the budget.

Members had approved a 5 year capital programme at the Budget Authority Committee on 27th February 2020 increasing the approved re-phasing of 2019/20 schemes into 2020/21 of £3.762m. The Reserves position outlines a net contribution of £3.122m to reserves in the quarter, which reflects the £3.500m refund back to reserves as a result of the TDA investment review, and the planned drawdown of £0.378m to fund the new St Helens fire station build.

Members were advised that the performance of Treasury management has been consistent with the approved treasury management strategy for 2020/21. The Authority held £30.8m of investments at the end of June, showing all investments are consistent with the approved investment strategy and within the limits and no new loans have been taken out.

Members asked what the money would be used for if savings were not going into the Capital Reserve for TDA build and were advised that the savings would fund additional spend in the year or be put into reserves to cover any future financial challenges.

Members questioned if the £2m Smoothing Reserve was enough to manage any McCloud risk and were advised that this is a big cost to the employer and that the Home Office guidance has been confusing. It could increase and if it did MFRA would have to make changes to cover this, but the Treasurer was confident that the £2m would be sufficient cover for 20-21.

Members asked about thermal image cameras that fire fighters use and were informed that we have money allocated for this equipment to be replenished. If new equipment was to be introduced in the future and needed obtaining for operational staff, the Treasurer would be advised.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 26 November 2020

The Audit Findings for Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority

Year ended 31 March 2020
6 November 2020
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The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statements. Our audit is not designed to test all internal controls or identify all areas of control weakness. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify control weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose all defalcations or other irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in internal control that a more extensive special examination might identify. This report has been prepared solely for your benefit and should not be quoted in whole or in part without our prior written consent. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

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Headlines

This table summarises the key findings and other matters arising from the statutory audit of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority ('the Authority') and the preparation of the Authority's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2020 for those charged with governance.

<p>Covid-19</p>	<p>The outbreak of the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on the normal operations of the Authority .</p> <p>The Authority implemented the Service's pandemic business continuity plan from 18th March 2020 which ensured that the delivery of the Fire and Rescue Service has been maintained throughout the period. This has included the safe return to work during August of all staff who were shielding and working from home.</p> <p>Authorities were still required to prepare financial statements in accordance with the relevant accounting standards and the Code of Audit Practice, albeit to an extended deadline for the preparation of the financial statements up to 31 August 2020 and the date for audited financials statements to 30 November 2020.</p>	<p>We updated our audit risk assessment to consider the impact of the pandemic on our audit and issued an audit plan on 4 June 2020. In that plan we reported an additional financial statement risk in respect of Covid -19 and highlighted the impact on our VfM approach. Further detail is set out on page 6.</p> <p>Restrictions for non-essential travel has meant both Authority and audit staff have had to adapt to the challenges of the new working arrangements i.e.. remote accessing financial systems, video calling, physical verification of assets and completeness accuracy of information produced by the Authority. The draft financial statements were provided to the team on the 10 July 2020, and the finance team successfully provided all the working papers and responses to our audit queries using our Info Software.</p>
<p>Financial Statements</p>	<p>Under International Standards of Audit (UK) (ISAs) and the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to report whether, in our opinion, the Authority's financial statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority's income and expenditure for the year; and • have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting and prepared in accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. <p>We are also required to report whether other information published together with the audited financial statements (including the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and Narrative Report), is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.</p>	<p>Our audit work was completed remotely during July-November. Our findings are summarised on pages 5 to 17. We have identified a small number of adjustments to the financial statements that have resulted in a £5.9m adjustment to the Authority's Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Audit adjustments are detailed in Appendix B. We have also raised recommendations for management as a result of our audit work in Appendix A.</p> <p>Our work is substantially complete and there are no matters of which we are aware that would require modification of our audit opinion in Appendix D or material changes to the financial statements, subject to the outstanding matters listed on page 5.</p> <p>We have concluded that the other information to be published with the financial statements is consistent with our knowledge of your organisation. The financial statements we have audited is up until 31 March 2020 which was prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>Our anticipated audit report opinion will be unqualified including an Emphasis of Matter paragraph, highlighting property plant and equipment and pension fund property valuation material uncertainties.</p>

Headlines

This table summarises the key findings and other matters arising from the statutory audit of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority ('the Authority') and the preparation of the Authority's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2020 for those charged with governance.

Value for Money arrangements

Under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to report if, in our opinion, the Authority has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources ('the value for money (VfM) conclusion').

We have completed our risk based review of the Authority's value for money arrangements. We have concluded that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We have updated our VfM risk assessment to document our understanding of your arrangements to ensure critical business continuity in the current environment. We have not identified any new VfM risks in relation to Covid-19.

We therefore anticipate issuing an unqualified value for money conclusion, as detailed in Appendix D. Our findings are summarised on pages 18 to 20.

Statutory duties

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 ('the Act') also requires us to:

- report to you if we have applied any of the additional powers and duties ascribed to us under the Act; and
- To certify the closure of the audit.

We have not exercised any of our additional statutory powers or duties.

We have completed the majority of work under the Code and expect to be able to certify the completion of the audit when we give our audit opinion.

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the assistance and timely collaboration provided by the finance team and other staff during these unprecedented times.

Audit approach

Overview of the scope of our audit

This Audit Findings Report presents the observations arising from the audit that are significant to the responsibility of those charged with governance to oversee the financial reporting process, as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK) 260 and the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'). Its contents will be discussed with management and the Audit Committee.

As auditor we are responsible for performing the audit, in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and the Code, which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements.

Audit approach

Our audit approach was based on a thorough understanding of the Authority's business and is risk based, and in particular included:

- An evaluation of the Authority's internal controls environment, including its IT systems and controls; and
- Substantive testing on significant transactions and material account balances, including the procedures outlined in this report in relation to the key audit risks

Conclusion

We have substantially completed our audit of your financial statements and subject to outstanding queries being resolved, we anticipate issuing an unqualified audit opinion following the Audit Committee meeting on 26 November 2020, as detailed in Appendix D. These outstanding items include:

- Receipt of assurances from the auditor of the pension fund
- Review and consideration of post balance sheet events
- Review of the final set of financial statements and other audit completion procedures; and
- receipt of management representation letter.

Our approach to materiality

The concept of materiality is fundamental to the preparation of the financial statements and the audit process and applies not only to the monetary misstatements but also to disclosure requirements and adherence to acceptable accounting practice and applicable law.

Materiality levels have been updated from those we reported in our audit plan due to the increase in gross expenditure reported in the draft financial statements from the prior year (excluding the prior year McCloud adjustment).

	Authority Amount (£)	Qualitative factors considered
Materiality for the financial statements	£1.794m	We have determined materiality as 2% of gross operating expenditure for the year. This is in line with the standard approach and reflects the risks associated with the Authority's financial performance.
Performance materiality	£1.345m	Assessed as 75% of financial statement materiality and based on our knowledge of the Authority and consideration of previous audit findings and adjustments
Trivial matters	£89,684	Assessed as 5% financial statement materiality
Materiality for senior manager salaries and allowances	£20,000	The senior officer remuneration disclosure has been identified as an area requiring specific materiality of £20,000. This is due to the sensitivity of disclosures in this area.

Significant audit risks

Risks identified in our Audit Plan

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

The global outbreak of the Covid-19 virus pandemic has led to unprecedented uncertainty for all organisations, requiring urgent business continuity arrangements to be implemented. We expect current circumstances will have an impact on the production and audit of the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2020, including and not limited to;

- Remote working arrangements and redeployment of staff to critical front line duties may impact on the quality and timing of the production of the financial statements, and the evidence we can obtain through physical observation
- Volatility of financial and property markets will increase the uncertainty of assumptions applied by management to asset valuation and receivable recovery estimates, and the reliability of evidence we can obtain to corroborate management estimates
- Financial uncertainty will require management to reconsider financial forecasts supporting their going concern assessment and whether material uncertainties for a period of at least 12 months from the anticipated date of approval of the audited financial statements have arisen; and
- Disclosures within the financial statements will require significant revision to reflect the unprecedented situation and its impact on the preparation of the financial statements as at 31 March 2020 in accordance with IAS1, particularly in relation to material uncertainties.

We therefore identified the global outbreak of the Covid-19 virus as a significant risk, which was one of the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement.

Auditor commentary

We have:

- worked with management to understand the implications the response to the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the organisation's ability to prepare the financial statements and update financial forecasts and assessed the implications on our audit approach
- liaised with other audit suppliers, regulators and government departments to co-ordinate practical cross sector responses to issues as and when they arose
- evaluated the adequacy of the disclosures in the financial statements in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- evaluated whether sufficient audit evidence using alternative approaches had been obtained for the purposes of our audit whilst working remotely
- evaluated whether sufficient audit evidence had been obtained to corroborate significant management estimates such as recovery of receivable balances
- evaluated management's assumptions that underpin the revised financial forecasts and the impact on management's going concern assessment
- discussed with management any potential implications for our audit report if we have been unable to obtain sufficient audit evidence

Results:

Based on our work to date, we obtained sufficient audit assurance to conclude that:

- Financial forecasts and the cashflow analysis of the Authority supports the ability for the Authority to prepare the accounts on a going concern basis
- The Authority has appropriately disclosed the material uncertainty regarding the valuation of the Authority's property, plant and equipment and its share of the Local Government Pension Scheme's property and infrastructure assets. Our audit report will also contain an emphasis of matter paragraph relating to these material uncertainties.

Significant audit risks

Risks identified in our Audit Plan

The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions (rebutted)

Under ISA (UK) 240 there is a rebuttable presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.

This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to revenue recognition.

Auditor commentary

Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of revenue streams at the Authority, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:

- there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition
- opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited
- the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable.

Therefore and as reported in our Audit Plan, we do not consider this to be a significant risk. Whilst not a significant risk, we have performed audit procedures and testing of material revenue items. Our work did not identify any matters that would lead to a change in our risk assessment.

Management override of controls

Under ISA (UK) 240 there is a non-rebuttable presumed risk that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities. The Authority faces external scrutiny of its spending and this could potentially place management under undue pressure in terms of how they report performance.

We therefore identified management override of control, in particular journals, management estimates and transactions outside the course of business as a significant risk, which was one of the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement.

We have:

- evaluated the design effectiveness of management controls over journals
- Analysed the journals listing and determined the criteria for selecting high risk unusual journals
- tested unusual journals recorded during the year and after the draft accounts stage for appropriateness and corroboration
- gained an understanding of the accounting estimates and critical judgements applied made by management and considered their reasonableness with regard to corroborative evidence
- evaluated the rationale for any changes in accounting policies, estimates or significant unusual transactions

Our audit work has not identified any evidence of management over-ride of controls.

Significant audit risks

Risks identified in our Audit Plan Auditor commentary

Valuation of land and buildings

We have:

- evaluated management's processes and assumptions for the calculation of the estimate, the instructions issued to valuation experts and the scope of their work
- evaluated the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the valuation expert
- written to the valuer to confirm the basis on which the valuation was carried out to ensure that the requirements of the Code were met
- challenged the information and assumptions used by the valuer to assess completeness and consistency with our understanding
- tested revaluations made during the year to see if they had been input correctly into the Authority's asset register
- evaluated the assumptions made by management for those assets not revalued during the year and how management has satisfied themselves that these are not materially different to current value at year end.

Audit Findings:

- The Authority use an external Valuer to value its Land and Buildings. The Valuer prepared their valuations in accordance with the RICS Valuation – Global Standards using their existing knowledge of the Authority's property portfolio. A sample of 20% (seven assets) were revalued as at the 31 March 2020 with the Valuer undertaking site visits in order to carry out their valuations. For the remainder of the assets a desktop valuation was performed, using knowledge of the market conditions both nationally and locally during the period up to 31 March 2020.
- We have considered the movements in valuation and carried out the procedures set out above, including comparison of movements since the previous valuation with appropriate Market Movement indices. This provided assurance that valuation movements are in line with expectations and based on reasonable assumptions.
- In accounting for valuation movements, the Authority made adjustments to the asset register and revaluation reserve that were inconsistent with Code guidance. The annual depreciation charge was applied after the valuations had been adjusted instead of before. Whilst the overall impact is not material, management have adjusted the financial statements to correct for this matter. This has resulted in the Net Book Value of land and buildings increasing by £1,352k with a corresponding increase in the revaluation reserve. The depreciation charge disclosed for the year in note 10 has been written back to the revaluation reserve as part of this adjustment. There is no impact on general fund.

Disclosures regarding material valuation uncertainty

The outbreak of Covid 19 has caused uncertainty in property markets. As a result, the valuers have included reference to a material uncertainty in their valuation report.

The estimation uncertainty has been disclosed in note 4 to the financial statements.

We consider the disclosure is sufficiently detailed to meet the requirements of the accounting standards and that it is important to a readers understanding of the financial statements. As such, we plan to draw attention to the uncertainty through the inclusion of an Emphasis of Matter within the audit report.

We are satisfied that the value of Property, Plant and Equipment is not materially misstated within the financial statements.

The Authority values land and buildings on a rolling five-yearly basis. This valuation represents a significant estimate by management in the financial statements due to the size of the numbers involved and the sensitivity of the estimate to changes in key assumptions. Additionally, whilst we acknowledge that the Authority's whole property portfolio was revalued in 2018/19, management need to ensure the carrying value in the Authority's financial statements is not materially different from the current value at the financial statements date.

We therefore identified valuation of land and buildings, particularly revaluations and impairments, as a significant risk of material misstatement.

Significant audit risks

Risks identified in our Audit Plan

Valuation of pension fund net liability

The Authority's pension fund net liabilities, as reflected in its balance sheet as the pension liability, represents a significant estimate in the financial statements.

The pension fund net liabilities are considered significant estimates due to the size of the numbers involved and the sensitivity of the estimates to the changes in key assumptions.

We therefore identified valuation of the Authority's pension fund net liabilities as a significant risk, which was one of the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement, and a key audit matter.

Auditor commentary

We have:

- updated our understanding of the processes and controls put in place by management to ensure that the Authority's pension fund net liability is not materially misstated and evaluated the design of the associated controls
- evaluated the instructions issued by management to their management expert (an actuary) for this estimate and the scope of the actuary's work
- assessed the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the information provided by the Authority to the actuary to estimate the liability
- assessed the accuracy and completeness of the information provided by the Authority to the actuary to estimate the liability.
- tested the consistency of the pension fund asset liability and disclosures in the notes to the core financial statements with the actuarial report from the actuary.
- undertaken procedures to confirm the reasonableness of the actuarial assumptions made by reviewing the report of the consulting actuary (as auditor's expert) and performing any additional procedures suggested within the report.

Audit Findings

At the time of drafting this report, we are yet to receive the information and assurances requested from the auditor of Merseyside Pension Fund that will enable us to conclude our procedures in this area.

We are aware that there is a possibility that the Pension Fund Auditor will include an emphasis of matter in the audit report drawing attention to a material valuation uncertainty relating to the Fund's property portfolio. Where this is the case, we will need to consider the impact on our own report and the need for associated disclosure within the financial statements.

Subsequent to the publication of the draft financial statements, the proposed remedy to the McCloud judgement was published for consultation. Pension fund actuaries notified management that this could have an impact on the calculated net pension fund liability and that the liability was likely to be overstated. Management therefore obtained a revised IAS19 report which quantifies the potential impact as a £4.5m reduction in Pension Liability. This represents a non-adjusting post balance sheet event but management have adjusted the financial statements to reflect the revised valuation. We have discussed this with management and considered their rationale for adjusting. We conclude that the basis for adjusting is reasonable and that proposed disclosures within the financial statements are appropriate. We have included the impact of this matter within the adjusted misstatements on page 23. Management have also amended the accounts to reflect a £70k movement in the pension assets of the LGPS scheme, being the difference in between the estimated and actual year-end position.


Other than the matters identified above, our work in this area has progressed and to date we have not identified any significant issues.

Significant findings – other issues

This section provides commentary on new issues and risks which were identified during the course of the audit that were not previously communicated in the Audit Plan and a summary of any significant control deficiencies identified during the year.

Issue	Commentary	Auditor view
<p>IFRS 16 implementation has been delayed by one year</p> <p>Although the implementation of IFRS 16 has been delayed to 1 April 2021, audited bodies still need to include disclosure in their 2019/2020 statements to comply with the requirement of IAS 8 para 31. As a minimum, we would expect audited bodies to disclose the title of the standard, the date of initial application and the nature of the changes in accounting policy for leases</p>	<p>The Authority has carried out a review of its leases in preparation for the implementation of IFRS 16. As a result of the review it has been able to estimate the impact of the implementation of the new standard.</p>	<p>We have reviewed the Authority's workings on the impact of the implementation of IFRS 16 and are satisfied with it's assumption that the implementation of IFRS 16 would have no material impact to the Authority's Accounts.</p> <p>The disclosures within Note 2. Accounting Standards that have been Issued but Not Yet Adopted contain the appropriate information in order to comply with the requirement of IAS 8 para .31</p>

Significant findings – key estimates and judgements

Accounting area	Summary of management's policy	Auditor commentary	Assessment
Land and Buildings – Other - £72m	<p>Other land and buildings comprises £56m of Fire Stations which are classified as specialised assets. These assets are required to be valued at depreciated replacement cost (DRC) at year end, reflecting the cost of a modern equivalent asset necessary to deliver the same service provision. The remainder of other land and buildings (£16m) are not specialised in nature and are required to be valued at existing use in value (EUV) at year end. The Authority has engaged Hardie Brock to complete the valuation of properties as at 31 March 2020 on a five yearly cyclical basis. 20% of total assets were revalued during 2019/20.</p> <p>For the remaining assets the valuer undertook a desktop valuation to provide management with an estimation of the valuation of the properties as at 31 March 2020.</p> <p>In line with RICS guidance, the Authority's valuer disclosed a material uncertainty in the valuation of the Authority's land and buildings at 31 March 2020 as a result of Covid-19. The Authority has included disclosures on this issue in Note 4.</p> <p>The valuation of properties valued by the Valuer, including those for which a desktop valuation only was performed, has resulted in a net increase/ of £3m. The total year end valuation of Other land and buildings was £71.991m, a net increase/decrease of £1.968m from 2018/19 (£70.023m).</p>	<p>We have reviewed and assessed the details supporting the estimates and judgements in this area, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the assessment of management's expert, your external valuer; the completeness and accuracy of the underlying information used to determine the estimate; the reasonableness of the overall increase in valuation as a result of the estimate; and the adequacy of the disclosure of the estimate in the financial statements. <p>Based on the procedures performed, we have no concerns over the competence, capabilities and objectivity of your valuation expert.</p> <p>We identified no issues with the completeness and accuracy of the underlying information used to determine the estimate.</p> <p>Disclosures within the financial statements are sufficient and appropriate and we have gained assurance that asset values are materially correct.</p>	

Assessment

- We disagree with the estimation process or judgements that underpin the estimate and consider the estimate to be potentially materially misstated
- We consider the estimate is unlikely to be materially misstated however management's estimation process contains assumptions we consider optimistic
- We consider the estimate is unlikely to be materially misstated however management's estimation process contains assumptions we consider cautious
- We consider management's process is appropriate and key assumptions are neither optimistic or cautious


Significant findings – key estimates and judgements

Accounting area	Summary of management's policy	Auditor commentary	Assessment																								
Net pension liability – £1,093m	<p>The Authority's total net pension liability at 31 March 2020 is £1,093m (PY £1.188m) comprising the Firefighters and Local Government Pension Scheme (Merseyside Pension Fund). The Authority uses Mercers and GAD to provide actuarial valuations of the Authority's assets and liabilities derived from these schemes. A full actuarial valuation is required every three years.</p> <p>The Authority actuary disclosed a material uncertainty in the valuation of the Authority's pension fund liability at 31 March 2020 as a result of Covid-19. The Authority has included disclosures on this issue in Note 4.</p> <p>The latest full actuarial valuation was completed in 2016. A roll forward approach is used in intervening periods which utilises key assumptions such as life expectancy, discount rates, salary growth and investment return. Given the significant value of the net pension fund liability, small changes in assumptions can result in significant valuation movements. There has been a £105.630m net actuarial gain during 2019/20.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have no material concerns over the competence, capabilities and objectivity of the actuary used by the Authority. We have used the work of PwC, as our auditors' expert, to assess your actuary, and assumptions made by your actuary. See below for consideration of key assumptions in your pension fund valuation: 																									
			<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Assumption</th> <th>Actuary Value</th> <th>PwC range</th> <th>Assessment</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Discount rate</td> <td>Mercer 2.4% GAD 2.25%</td> <td>2.4-2.3% 2.25%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pension increase rate</td> <td>Mercer 2.1% GAD 2%</td> <td>2.1% 2%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Salary growth</td> <td>Mercer 3.6% GAD 4%</td> <td>1.25 – 1.5% above CPI 2% above CPI</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Life expectancy – Males currently aged 45 / 65</td> <td>Mercer 45/65: 22.5/20.9 GAD 45/65: 23/21.3</td> <td>Mercer 45/65: 22.5- 24.7/20.9- 23.2 GAD 45/65: 22.6- 23.6/20.8- 21.9</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Life expectancy – Females currently aged 45 / 65</td> <td>Mercer 45/65: 25.9/24 GAD: 23/21.3</td> <td>Mercer 45/65: 22.5- 24.7/25.9- 27.7 GAD: 23- 25.2/21.2- 23.6</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Assumption	Actuary Value	PwC range	Assessment	Discount rate	Mercer 2.4% GAD 2.25%	2.4-2.3% 2.25%		Pension increase rate	Mercer 2.1% GAD 2%	2.1% 2%		Salary growth	Mercer 3.6% GAD 4%	1.25 – 1.5% above CPI 2% above CPI		Life expectancy – Males currently aged 45 / 65	Mercer 45/65: 22.5/20.9 GAD 45/65: 23/21.3	Mercer 45/65: 22.5- 24.7/20.9- 23.2 GAD 45/65: 22.6- 23.6/20.8- 21.9		Life expectancy – Females currently aged 45 / 65	Mercer 45/65: 25.9/24 GAD: 23/21.3	Mercer 45/65: 22.5- 24.7/25.9- 27.7 GAD: 23- 25.2/21.2- 23.6	
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Assessment

- We disagree with the estimation process or judgements that underpin the estimate and consider the estimate to be potentially materially misstated
- We consider the estimate is unlikely to be materially misstated however management's estimation process contains assumptions we consider optimistic
- We consider the estimate is unlikely to be materially misstated however management's estimation process contains assumptions we consider cautious
- We consider management's process is appropriate and key assumptions are neither optimistic or cautious

Significant findings – key estimates and judgements

Accounting area	Summary of management's policy	Auditor commentary	Assessment
Other accruals and estimates	<p>You continue to apply estimates and judgements in a number of areas, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accruals of income and expenditure; and • depreciation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policies for these items are in line with accounting standards and the requirements of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting. • Disclosure of the estimates in the financial statements is considered adequate. • As part of our testing, we have reviewed the judgements applied by the Authority relating to these items, and significant balances within these have been discussed with management in detail. • We have found no material misstatements in the financial statements relating to these balances from procedures performed during the audit. 	

Assessment

- We disagree with the estimation process or judgements that underpin the estimate and consider the estimate to be potentially materially misstated
- We consider the estimate is unlikely to be materially misstated however management's estimation process contains assumptions we consider optimistic
- We consider the estimate is unlikely to be materially misstated however management's estimation process contains assumptions we consider cautious
- We consider management's process and key assumptions to be reasonable

Significant findings – matters discussed with management

This section provides commentary on the significant matters we discussed with management during the course of the audit.

Significant matter

Commentary

The most significant event that occurred during the year was the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the audit we have considered that the Authority's response to addressing the challenges arising from Covid-19. We are satisfied that management responded swiftly and appropriately to the challenges of Covid-19 particularly in the lead role they have taken nationally for the response.

Business conditions affecting the Authority, and business plans and strategies that may affect the risks of material misstatement.

The Authority's external valuation expert, Hardie Brack has raised uncertainty regarding how the impact of Covid-19 on market conditions may affect land and buildings valuations during 2020/21.

The Local Government Pension Scheme Merseyside Pension Fund has reported a material uncertainty around the valuation of the Pension Fund's property and infrastructure assets. The Pension Fund auditor intends to include an emphasis of matter in their auditor's report in respect of the effects of Covid-19 on the valuation of its property and infrastructure holdings.

Significant matters on which there was disagreement with management, except for initial differences of opinion because of incomplete facts or preliminary information that are later resolved by the auditor obtaining additional relevant facts or information.

No disagreements with management occurred during the audit.

Other matters that are significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process.

None to report

Significant findings – going concern

Our responsibility

As auditors, we are required to “obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence about the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern assumption in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements and to conclude whether there is a material uncertainty about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern” (ISA (UK) 570).

Going concern commentary

Management's assessment process

The Authority has continued to prepare its Medium Term Financial Plan on a five year basis with annual approvals and has set a balanced budget for 2020/21. Management has prepared the budget on the basis that the Authority remains a going concern and has taken into consideration relevant and appropriate assumptions with regards to future funding and levels of expenditure.

Work performed

We evaluated management's assessment of the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern and determine whether or not a material uncertainty exists

Concluding comments

Auditor commentary

- Management have concluded that the use of the going concern basis is appropriate. In addition, management did not identify any material uncertainties related to events or conditions which may cast significant doubt about the going concern assumption.
- We are satisfied with the adequacy of management's processes for the preparation of the 2020/21 Medium Term Financial Plan.
- Management have included an assessment of the expected impact of Covid-19 on the Authority's finances and that the Government support is forecast to meet the loss of income and additional costs up to the end of 2020/21.
- Based on our review, we concur with management's assessment of the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern. We also agree that no material uncertainties related to events or conditions which may cast significant doubt about the going concern assumption exist.
- We anticipate no modification of our audit report in relation to going concern.
- We have not identified in the work completed any events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern.

Other matters for communication

We set out below details of other matters which we, as auditors, are required by auditing standards and the Code to communicate to those charged with governance.

Issue	Auditor commentary
Matters in relation to fraud	We have previously discussed the risk of fraud with the Audit Committee. We have not been made aware of any other incidents in the period and no other issues have been identified during the course of our audit procedures.
Matters in relation to related parties	We are not aware of any related parties or related party transactions which have not been disclosed.
Matters in relation to laws and regulations	You have not made us aware of any significant incidences of non-compliance with relevant laws and regulations and we have not identified any incidences from our audit work.
Written representations	A letter of representation has been requested from the Authority, which is appended
Confirmation requests from third parties	We requested from management permission to send confirmation requests to banking and investment institutions that the Authority holds deposits or loans with. This permission was granted and the requests were sent. All of these requests were returned with positive confirmation.
Disclosures	Our review identified a small number of changes to the disclosures in the financial statements. Management have made the required changes.
Audit evidence and explanations/significant difficulties	All information and explanations requested from management was provided.

Other responsibilities under the Code

Issue	Commentary
Other information	<p>We are required to give an opinion on whether the other information published together with the audited financial statements (including the Annual Governance Statement and Narrative Report) is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.</p> <p>No inconsistencies have been identified. We plan to issue an unmodified opinion in this respect – refer to appendix D</p>
Matters on which we report by exception	<p>We are required to report on a number of matters by exception in a number of areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the Annual Governance Statement does not meet the disclosure requirements set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance or is misleading or inconsistent with the other information of which we are aware from our audit • If we have applied any of our statutory powers or duties <p>We have nothing to report on these matters.</p>
Specified procedures for Whole of Government Accounts	<p>We are required to carry out specified procedures (on behalf of the NAO) on the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) consolidation pack under WGA group audit instructions.</p> <p>This work is not required as the Authority does not exceed the threshold.</p>
Certification of the closure of the audit	<p>We intend to certify the closure of the 2019/20 audit of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority in the audit report, as detailed in Appendix D.</p>

Value for Money

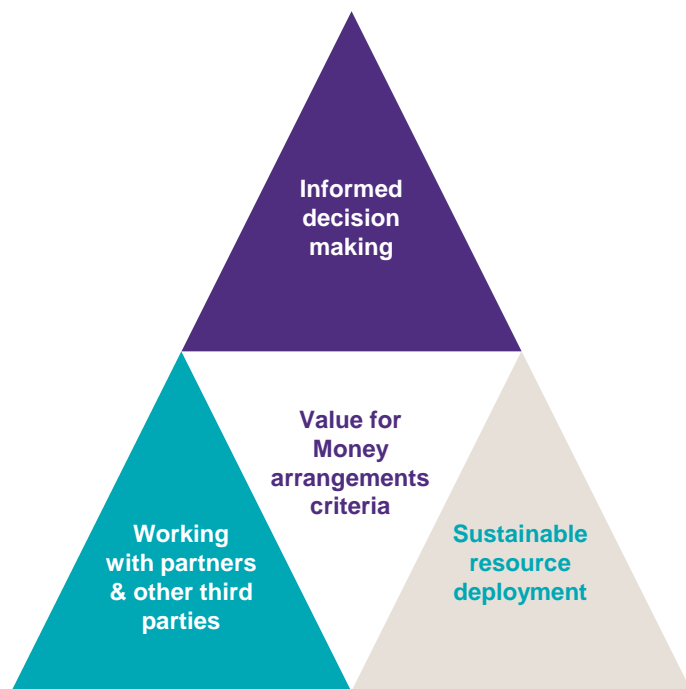
Background to our VFM approach

We are required to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as the Value for Money (VFM) conclusion.

We are required to carry out sufficient work to satisfy ourselves that proper arrangements are in place at the Authority. In carrying out this work, we are required to follow the NAO's Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03) issued in April 2020. AGN 03 identifies one single criterion for auditors to evaluate:

"In all significant respects, the audited body takes properly informed decisions and deploys resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people."

This is supported by three sub-criteria, as set out below:



Risk assessment

We carried out an initial risk assessment in February 2020 and identified a number of significant risks in respect of specific areas of proper arrangements using the guidance contained in AGN03. We communicated these risks to you in our Audit Plan dated May 2020.

We have continued our review of relevant documents up to the date of giving our report, and have not identified any further significant risks where we need to perform further work.

We have not identified any new VfM risks in relation to Covid-19 and do not consider Covid-19 to be a significant risk given the date of the pandemic.

We carried out further work only in respect of the significant risks we identified from our initial and ongoing risk assessment. Where our consideration of the significant risks determined that arrangements were not operating effectively, we have used the examples of proper arrangements from AGN 03 to explain the gaps in proper arrangements that we have reported in our VFM conclusion.

Value for Money

Our work

AGN 03 requires us to disclose our views on significant qualitative aspects of the Authority's arrangements for delivering economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

We have focused our work on the significant risks that we identified in the Authority's arrangements. In arriving at our conclusion, our main considerations were:

- The Authority's outturn position against budget for 2019/20
- The reasonableness of the assumptions on which the Medium Term Financial Plan is based.
- The appropriateness of the arrangements for monitoring and reporting financial performance with a particular focus on the capital programme and links to the levels of reserves.

We have set out more detail on the risks we identified, the results of the work we performed, and the conclusions we drew from this work on pages 20.

Overall conclusion

Based on the work we performed to address the significant risks, we are satisfied that the Authority had proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The text of our report, which confirms this can be found at Appendix D.

Significant difficulties in undertaking our work

We did not identify any significant difficulties in undertaking our work on your arrangements which we wish to draw to your attention.

Significant matters discussed with management

There were no matters where no other evidence was available or matters of such significance to our conclusion or that we required written representation from management or those charged with governance.

Value for Money

Key findings

We set out below our key findings against the significant risks we identified through our initial risk assessment and further risks identified through our ongoing review of documents.

Significant risk

Findings

Arrangements to secure medium and long term financial sustainability including delivery of the reserves and estates strategies

The Authority is operating under a current climate of funding reductions, changes in legislation and policy requirements, and changes to the regulatory bodies and frameworks.

The Authority has a significant capital programme which plans to spend £43m over five years which is key to its medium and long terms financial sustainability. The longer term plans of the Authority involve maintaining an appropriate level of reserves which are in line with financial prudence and responsible financial planning.

2019/20 outturn

The Authority has a robust approach to its medium term financial planning and budgeting and has delivered a balanced budget as forecast after an additional contribution of £0.650m from reserves to cover planned 2019/20 expenditure. The Authority has continued with its policy to utilise any revenue savings generated during the year to fund additional MRP payments in order to free up future debt servicing budget to re-invest in front line services.

The capital outturn for 2019/20 was £8.9m against a budget of £12.8m. The capital spend carried out during the year was in line with the planned capital strategy and programme for 2019/20 to 2023/24 totalling £41.2m. The Authority re-phased £3.7m of the original budget from 2019/20 to 2020/21 which due to the fact that most of the re-phasing was being funded via borrowing, the level of borrowing in the year was significantly lower than budgeted for. This demonstrates effective monitoring of the budget in year.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Authority approved its updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) in February 2020 covering the five years from 2019/20 to 2023/24 and approved a balance budget for 2020/21 with the expected income and expenditure of £61.7m. The budget was based on a number of assumptions around future income and costs including the proposed Council Tax increase of 1.98% and 2% per annum annual pay awards and general price inflation. The Authority has not planned to take out any further long term borrowing in the medium term.

Capital expenditure continues to be split across maintaining Fire Stations and other buildings, investing in IT and spending on operational equipment to ensure Firefighter safety. The construction of the new community stations, Saughall Massie and St Helens as part of the station merger programme (from 24 fire stations to 22 stations) accounts for £7.2m of the capital programme. The Authority members received detailed finance monitoring reports from management throughout the year which provided awareness of progress and the impact on the budget.

The level of general fund reserves is to be maintained at £3m, having increased this from £2m in the previous MTFP. The reserve represents 5% of the revenue forecast net operating expenditure which is deemed an appropriate level of reserves to have in place.

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on financial plans

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Authority updated its corporate risk register and implemented its Business Continuity Plan to ensure that the safety of fire fighters and other staff was paramount to the continuing delivery of services. The anticipated financial impact for 2020/21 is expected to be limited with additional expenditure identified for protective equipment, cleaning and ICT. The Authority has received £1.49m in grants to cover the initial impact of the pandemic which is expected to cover the costs to date.

Independence and ethics

We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention. We have complied with the Financial Reporting Authority's Ethical Standard and confirm that we, as a firm, and each covered person, are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements

Further, we have complied with the requirements of the National Audit Office's Auditor Guidance Note 01 issued in May 2020 which sets out supplementary guidance on ethical requirements for auditors of local public bodies.


Details of fees charged are detailed in Appendix C

Audit and Non-audit services




For the purposes of our audit we have made enquiries of all Grant Thornton UK LLP teams providing services to the Authority. No non-audit services were identified which were charged from the beginning of the financial year to November 2020 as well as the threats to our independence and safeguards that have been applied to mitigate these threats.

Action plan

We have identified 1 recommendation for the Authority as a result of issues identified during the course of our audit. We have agreed our recommendations with management and we will report on progress on these recommendations during the course of the 2020/21 audit. The matters reported here are limited to those deficiencies that we have identified during the course of our audit and that we have concluded are of sufficient importance to merit being reported to you in accordance with auditing standards.

Assessment	Issue and risk	Recommendations
 Medium	<p>Accounting for the Authority's Fixed Assets</p> <p>Our audit has identified that the Authority has not followed Code requirements in respect of processing transactions to reflect the revaluation of land and buildings. This has impacted how revaluation movements have been reported in the financial statements along with the treatment of depreciation charges.</p>	<p>The Authority should ensure that the requirements of the Code are followed when performing adjustments to reflect the impact of asset revaluations within the asset register, general ledger and financial statements.</p> <p>Management response</p> <p>We accept the code must be adhered to when making such adjustments.</p>

Controls

-  High – Significant effect on control system
-  Medium – Effect on control system
-  Low – Best practice

Audit adjustments

We are required to report all non trivial misstatements to those charged with governance, whether or not the accounts have been adjusted by management.

Impact of adjusted misstatements

All adjusted misstatements are set out in detail below along with the impact on the key statements and the reported net expenditure for the year ending 31 March 2020.

Detail	Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000	Statement of Financial Position £' 000	Impact on total net expenditure £'000
Revised actuarial valuation for McCloud ruling resulting in reduction in net pension liability			
- Impact of McCloud remedy (Firefighters) – Net cost of services	(4,500)	4,500	(4,500)
- Impact of updating pension assets to year-end actual (LGPS) – Other comprehensive income	(70)	70	-
Increase in the revaluation reserve and Net Book Value of Land & Buildings for the movement in the valuations			
Increase in value of land and buildings	(1,352)	1,352	-
Increase in revaluation reserve	-	(1,352)	-
Overall impact	(5,922)	4,570	(4,500)

Audit adjustments

Misclassification and disclosure changes

The table below provides details of misclassification and disclosure changes identified during the audit which have been made in the final set of financial statements.

Disclosure omission	Detail	Auditor recommendations	Adjusted?
Note 4 Assumptions Made about the Future and Other Major Sources of Estimation Uncertainty	The Authority has updated the note to disclose for the Pension Fund property assets material valuation uncertainty	The Note has been amended as a result of Merseyside Pension Fund updating their assumptions disclosures.	✓
Note 6 Events after the Reporting Period	The Authority amended the accounts for the updated pensions actuarial valuation following the McCloud Pension remedy update in July 2020.	The note has been amended to disclose that it is post balance sheet event adjustment.	✓
Note 12 Property Plant and Equipment	The movement in the revaluations of the Authority's Land and Buildings was not correctly disclosed in the note and did not show the depreciation charge for the revaluation assets being written back to the revaluation reserve.	The note has been amended to disclose the correct net book value for the land and buildings and revaluation movements.	✓
Note 30 Officers' Remuneration	The incorrect figures for salary, fees and allowances were disclosed in the draft financial statements for two officers	The Note has been amended for the correct information	✓
Note 31 External Audit Costs	The draft financial statements included a disclosure for a refund from Grant Thornton. This refund is a rebate from the Public Sector Auditor Appointments (PSAA)	The Note has been amended to disclose the correct information	✓

Fees

We confirm below our final fees charged for the audit and that no non-audit or audited related services have been undertaken for the Authority.

Audit fees	Proposed fee	Final fee
Authority Audit	£29,966	£29,966
Remote working has taken additional time to explain the audit trail of transactions rather than discussing processes and procedures in person. In addition to the increased level of work and challenge undertaken in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, there has also been additional work undertaken in response to the McCloud remedy and associated updated IAS 19 valuations and adjustments to the financial statements. We have also identified issues relating to accounting for PPE. We estimate that the impact of these matters has extended the audit process by seven days.		£3,800
Total audit fees (excluding VAT)	£29,966	£33,766

The fees reconcile to the financial statements.

fees per financial statements (rounded)	£33,000
• Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) refund	(£3,000)
• Remote working and additional work as disclosed above	£3,800
• total fees per above (rounded)	£33,800

Audit opinion - Draft

We anticipate we will provide the Authority with an unmodified audit report

Independent auditor's report to the members of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

Opinion

Page 34 We have audited the financial statements of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (the 'Authority') for the year ended 31 March 2020 which comprise the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Movement in Reserves Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies and include the firefighters' pension fund financial statements comprising the Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement and notes to the pension fund financial statements. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2020 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the 'Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements' section of our report. We are independent of the Authority in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Audit opinion - draft

The impact of macro-economic uncertainties on our audit

Our audit of the financial statements requires us to obtain an understanding of all relevant uncertainties, including those arising as a consequence of the effects of macro-economic uncertainties such as Covid-19 and Brexit. All audits assess and challenge the reasonableness of estimates made by the Director of Finance the related disclosures and the appropriateness of the going concern basis of preparation of the financial statements. All of these depend on assessments of the future economic environment and the Authority's future operational arrangements.

Covid-19 and Brexit are amongst the most significant economic events currently faced by the UK, and at the date of this report their effects are subject to unprecedented levels of uncertainty, with the full range of possible outcomes and their impacts unknown. We applied a standardised firm-wide approach in response to these uncertainties when assessing the Authority's future operational arrangements. However, no audit should be expected to predict the unknowable factors or all possible future implications for an authority associated with these particular events.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report to you where:

- the Director of Finance's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Director of Finance has not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the Authority's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

In our evaluation of the Director of Finance conclusions, and in accordance with the expectation set out within the CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 that the Authority's financial statements shall be prepared on a going concern basis, we considered the risks associated with the Authority's operating activities, including effects arising from macro-economic uncertainties such as Covid-19 and Brexit. We analysed how those risks might affect the Authority's financial resources or ability to continue operations over the period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue. In accordance with the above, we have nothing to report in these respects.

However, as we cannot predict all future events or conditions and as subsequent events may result in outcomes that are inconsistent with judgements that were reasonable at the time they were made, the absence of reference to a material uncertainty in this auditor's report is not a guarantee that the Authority will continue in operation.

Emphasis of Matter – effects of Covid-19 on the valuation of land and buildings

We draw attention to Note 4 of the financial statements, which describes the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the valuation of land and buildings as at 31 March 2020. As, disclosed in Note 4 to the financial statements, the valuations of the assets provided by the valuers have been subject to material valuation uncertainty clauses as per the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Red Book guidance. Consequently, a higher degree of caution should be attached to the valuation. For the Authority's share of the Pension Fund assets, due to Covid 19, property assets, have been reported on the basis of material valuation uncertainty as per the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Red Book. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Audit opinion - draft

Other information

The Director of Finance is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Statement of Accounts the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge of the Authority obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

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

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

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matter required by the Code of Audit Practice

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit of the financial statements and our knowledge of the Authority gained through our work in relation to the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, the other information published together with the financial statements in the Statement of Accounts, [the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

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

- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we make a written recommendation to the Authority under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or;
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit.

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

Audit opinion - draft

Responsibilities of the Authority, the Director of Finance and Those Charged with Governance for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities set out on page 95, the Authority is required to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In this authority, that officer is the Director of Finance. The Director of Finance is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20, for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Director of Finance determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Director of Finance is responsible for assessing the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless there is an intention by government that the services provided by the Authority will no longer be provided.

The Policy and Resources Committee is Those Charged with Governance. Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Authority's financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

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

This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Report on other legal and regulatory requirements - Conclusion on the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

Conclusion

On the basis of our work, having regard to the guidance on the specified criterion issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in April 2020, we are satisfied that the Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2020.

Responsibilities of the Authority

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

Audit opinion - draft

Auditor's responsibilities for the review of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to be satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance on the specified criterion issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in April 2020, as to whether in all significant respects the Authority had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined this criterion as that necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether the Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2020.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to be satisfied that the Authority has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Report on other legal and regulatory requirements - Certificate

We certify that we have completed the audit of the financial statements of the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Authority's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

[Signature]

Michael Green, Key Audit Partner
for and on behalf of Grant Thornton UK LLP, Local Auditor

Manchester

[Date]

Management letter of representation

Grant Thornton UK LLP

Manchester

[Date] – {TO BE DATED SAME DATE AS DATE OF AUDIT OPINION}

Dear Sirs

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority
Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020

This representation letter is provided in connection with the audit of the financial statements of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority for the year ended 31 March 2020 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements are presented fairly, in all material respects in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 and applicable law.

We confirm that to the best of our knowledge and belief having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

Financial Statements

i. We have fulfilled our responsibilities for the preparation of the Authority's financial statements in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 ("the Code"); in particular the financial statements are fairly presented in accordance therewith.

ii. We have complied with the requirements of all statutory directions affecting the Authority and these matters have been appropriately reflected and disclosed in the financial statements.

iii. The Authority has complied with all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance. There has been no non-compliance with requirements of any regulatory authorities that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance.

iv. We acknowledge our responsibility for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud.

v. Significant assumptions used by us in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable and we acknowledge the material uncertainty the valuer has noted in the Authority's valuation report. This is on the basis of uncertainties in markets caused by Covid-19 and we are satisfied that there have been not impairment of asset values as assessed by the valuer.

We are satisfied that the material judgements used in the preparation of the financial statements are soundly based, in accordance with the Code and adequately disclosed in the financial statements.

- vi. We confirm that we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the valuation of pension scheme assets and liabilities for IAS19 Employee Benefits disclosures are consistent with our knowledge. We have considered the impact of HM Treasury consultation on a proposed remedy in the McCloud/Sergeant case and are satisfied that the assessed net liability is materially correct and based on the best available data and assumptions. We confirm that all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for. We also confirm that all significant post-employment benefits have been identified and properly accounted for.
- vii. Except as disclosed in the financial statements:
 - a. there are no unrecorded liabilities, actual or contingent
 - b. none of the assets of the Authority has been assigned, pledged or mortgaged
 - c. there are no material prior year charges or credits, nor exceptional or non-recurring items requiring separate disclosure.
- viii. Related party relationships and transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards and the Code.
- ix. All events subsequent to the date of the financial statements and for which International Financial Reporting Standards and the Code require adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.
- x. We have considered the adjusted misstatements, and misclassification and disclosures changes schedules included in your Audit Findings Report. The financial statements have been amended for these misstatements, misclassifications and disclosure changes and are free of material misstatements, including omissions.
- xi. Actual or possible litigation and claims have been accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards.
- xii. We have no plans or intentions that may materially alter the carrying value or classification of assets and liabilities reflected in the financial statements.

Management letter of representation - continued

- xiv. We have updated our going concern assessment and cashflow forecasts in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. We continue to believe that the Authority's financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis and have not identified any material uncertainties related to going concern on the grounds that current and future sources of funding or support will be more than adequate for the Authority's needs. We believe that no further disclosures relating to the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern need to be made in the financial statements.

Information Provided

- xvi. We have provided you with:
- a. access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
 - b. additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of your audit; and
 - c. access to persons within the Authority via remote arrangements, in compliance with the nationally specified social distancing requirements established by the government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence .
- xvii. We have communicated to you all deficiencies in internal control of which management is aware.
- xviii. All transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements .
- xix. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
- xx. We have disclosed to you all information in relation to fraud or suspected fraud that we are aware of and that affects the Authority, and involves:
- a. management;
 - b. employees who have significant roles in internal control; or
 - c. others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.

- xxi. We have disclosed to you all information in relation to allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.
- xxii. We have disclosed to you all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing financial statements.
- xxiii. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Authority's related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware.
- xxiv. We have disclosed to you all known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements.

Annual Governance Statement

- xxv. We are satisfied that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) fairly reflects the Authority's risk assurance and governance framework and we confirm that we are not aware of any significant risks that are not disclosed within the AGS. The final version of the AGS will be provided to you when available and before publication.

Narrative Report

- xxvi. The disclosures within the Narrative Report fairly reflect our understanding of the Authority's financial and operating performance over the period covered by the financial statements. The final version of the Narrative Report will be provided to you when available and before publication.

Approval

The approval of this letter of representation was minuted by the Authority's Audit Committee at its meeting on 26 November 2020.

Yours faithfully

Name.....

Position.....

Date



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MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	AUDIT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	26TH NOVEMBER 2020	REPORT NO:	CFO/062/20
PRESENTING OFFICER	IAN CUMMINS		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	IAN CUMMINS	REPORT AUTHOR:	IAN CUMMINS DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM		
TITLE OF REPORT:	STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2019/20 - APPROVAL OF AUDITED STATEMENTS		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A:	STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2019/20
	APPENDIX B:	LETTER OF REPRESENTATION

Purpose of Report

1. To present to members the audited 2019/20 Statement of Accounts for approval and request that they be authorised for issue.

Recommendation

2. That Members
 - a. approve that the unaudited Statement of Accounts 2019/20 attached as Appendix A to this report may be authorised for issue, and
 - b. approve the letter of representation in relation to the 2019/20 accounts, attached as Appendix B.

Introduction and Background

3. The Authority has a statutory duty to approve and sign-off for publication the Statement of Accounts for the previous year usually before 31st July of the following year, however for 2019/20 due to COVID19 and an amendment to the Regulations in force the deadline is 30th November 2020. The 2019/20 Statement of Accounts are attached to this report, Appendix A, for Members' consideration and approval.
4. Members have already considered the 2019/20 year-end general fund outturn position and movement on reserves within report CFO/004/20. That report identified net revenue expenditure in the year of £58.131m against a budget of £60.282m, resulting in a favourable variance of £2.151m before any adjustments for year-end reserves. The report identified that of this variance £0.650m was required to be carried forward as earmarked reserves, leaving an actual saving in 2019/20 of £1.501m. Members approved the utilisation of this saving to increase the minimum

revenue provision (MRP) to allow the early repayment of debt, and potentially releasing future debt servicing budget to re-invest back into front line services. Therefore, after taking these adjustments into account net expenditure in the year was consistent with the general fund budget.

5. The financial statements within the Statement of Accounts 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 General Fund Account (taxation). So whilst there is a neutral net General Fund Account position in 2019/20, as per paragraph 4, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) indicates a net spend of £4.535m for the year because of additional accounting transactions relating mainly to pensions but also depreciation and some other technical adjustments. These accounting entries do not impact on the approved revenue budget’s bottom line and may be viewed as notional entries that are obligatory in order to adhere to the various accounting requirements.
6. At the time of writing this report Grant Thornton, the Authority’s current external auditors, have yet to finalise the audit of the Statement of Accounts, however no major issues have been identified. Grant Thornton’s “Audit Findings” report can be found elsewhere on today’s Agenda, and it will summarise their findings in relation to the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts. However, **the outturn position on the revenue account, capital programme, and movement on reserves reported in CFO/037/18 has not changed.**

Statement of Accounts;

7. The Statement of Accounts is a record of the Authority’s financial activities for 2019/20 with comparative figures for 2018/19. They have been prepared in accordance with the accounting practices set out in the *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting* (The Code) as published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) together with guidance notes issued by them.
8. On 1st April 2010 the Authority, along with all other Local Authorities, adopted International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The accounts for 2019/20 have therefore been prepared under these regulations. The move to an IFRS-based system of accounting has resulted in a significant increase in disclosure requirements and the formats of the principal financial statements. The Statement of Accounts Narrative Report provides a brief description of each of the four core statements;
 - **The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES)**
 - **Movement in Reserves Statement (MiRS)**
 - **The Balance Sheet, and**
 - **The Cash Flow Statement**
9. The Statement of Accounts must be prepared in accordance with the relevant accounting Code and as such the statements include a number of adjustments that are significant in value but do not alter the ‘council tax’ bottom line. They effectively convert the statements into a format that is consistent with commercial accounts. For example, the financial position shown in the Consolidated Income and Expenditure Account shows the true accounting position for the year as if the

Authority was a commercial entity. It therefore includes such expenses as depreciation and amounts to reflect pension costs.

10. The Authority sets the budget and monitors expenditure during the year in terms of its General Fund account, which is a statutory account that records only those expenses that regulations allow to be charged against the amount to be collected from council tax payers. (*Paragraph 4 of this report outlined the 2019/20 General Fund position for the service*).

11. The analysis below identifies and briefly explains some of the largest movements between the figures in the formal statement of accounts for 2019/20 :-

12. The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES)

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 General Fund Account (taxation). Whilst there is a neutral net General Fund Account position in 2019/20 (after taking into account the creation of reserves) this becomes net expenditure of £4.535m on the CIES because of additional accounting transactions relating mainly to pensions but also depreciation and some other technical adjustments. The table below outlines the reconciliation between the General Fund position and that in the CIES:

		Detailed Adjustments	Total Adjustments per Expenditure and Funding Analysis	Total Adjustments per Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
		£'000	£'000	£'000
Net General Fund 2019/20 year-end position:	Not e	-	-	-
1 Net Creation of Earmarked Reserves	(a)	-	-	3,298
2 Asset Valuation / Charges and Capital Funding Adjustments				
Depreciation, Impairment and Revaluation adjustment	(b)	3,994		
Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS)	(c)	992		
Asset Disposal / Write-offs / Revaluation losses		(1,763)		
MRP / Interest adjustment	(f)	(8,545)		
Capital Expenditure Funded from the Revenue Account (CERA)		(3,737)		
Capital Grants Income		(700)	(9,759)	
3 Pension related adjustments	(d)			
Pension Contributions payable to pension fund (employer)		(10,012)		
Pension Contributions payable to pension fund (top-up grant)		(28,671)		
Pension Current Service Costs		18,753		
Pension Past Service Costs		1,969		
Net Interest on the Defined Benefit Liability Scheme		28,853	10,892	
4 Other technical accounting adjustments	(e)			
Timing Differences for Premiums and Discounts		-		
Timing Differences for Council Tax / NNDR		213		
Timing Differences for Compensated Absences		(109)	104	
Total Adjustments				1,237
Surplus or Deficit on Provision of Services				4,535

Notes to the table:

- a) *Although the creation of earmarked reserves does not form part of the CIES, they are included to ensure that the General Fund expenditure reconciles back to the CIES.*
- b) *The depreciation and impairment charge reflects the notional consumption of assets during the year, including the reversal of any prior year valuation losses and impairments.*
- c) *REFCUS relates to the installation of free smoke alarms to households in Merseyside that under proper accounting practice should be defined as revenue but which statute allows the Authority to fund from capital.*
- d) *Pension costs in the CIES reflect IAS 19 and therefore include movements in the pension fund valuations and pension contributions received in the year. Note 40 in the Financial Statements provides further details of movements in the pension funds during the year.*
- e) *The other technical accounting adjustment incorporates the adjustments made in relation to council tax indebtedness between the billing authorities and the Authority, and, the value of employee benefits accrued in the year but not taken (leave carried forward).*
- f) *Statute requires that certain expenses are charged to the General Fund that are not considered to be proper accounting charges in accordance with the Code. These are therefore not shown in the CIES. The unitary charge payments associated with the PFI contract are shown as fully charged to revenue in the General Fund but in the CIES they are broken up into the relevant revenue, capital and interest notional elements. The removal of capital financing charges relates to costs associated with; interest payments on loans and the Minimum Revenue Provision (which is the amount set aside from revenue to repay debt); the direct revenue financing of capital expenditure (CERA).*

Whilst the CIES shows the true accounting position for the year, it is the General Fund position which more directly reflects the impact on Merseyside residents as it records only those expenses which statute allows to be charged against the Authority's annual budget, the amounts to be set aside as reserves and the amounts to be collected from local council tax payers.

13. Movement in Reserves Statement (MiRS):

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Authority, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and unusable reserves (those that have been created to reconcile the technical aspects of accounting which are not generally available to spend).

Usable Reserves:- the year-end report, CFO/004/20, identified an overall net reduction in reserves of £3.297m in 2019/20 from £25.064m to £21.767m. This includes the General Fund balance of £3.000m and reflects the perceived levels of risk within the current financial plan. The MiRS figures are consistent with these figures but also include £3.590m of capital grants received from Government towards the station merger initiative and the replacement of national resilience assets that remain unapplied until the schemes are complete. If these capital grants are not applied the grant must be paid back to Government and are therefore excluded from the available reserves reported in the general fund outturn report.

The total useable reserves as at 31st March 2020, reported within the MiRS is £25.357m (£21.767m + £3.590m).

A reduction in unusable reserves of £108.426m - unusable reserves are not available to fund spend and in reality simply reflect technical adjustments required in the accounting statements to adhere to the Code. The main entries relate to charges for notional depreciation and changes to pension liabilities and assets. Most of the decrease is down to changes in the liability of the pension schemes in 2019/20, (£94.738m).

14. **The Balance Sheet**

The Balance Sheet shows the value of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Authority, at 31st March each year. The net assets of the Authority (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Authority. Reserves are reported in two categories, usable and unusable (see MiRS paragraph for explanation).

The Balance Sheet statement refers to detailed notes within the Statement of Accounts that provide a full analysis of what makes up each line, but some new or significant changes have been outlined below:

- **Long Term Assets** – increased by £6.348m. This was mainly due to the revaluation of Land and Buildings, £3.001m, and the building of St Helens Fire Station, £4.629m. Other additions less depreciation and transfers to Assets Held for Sale resulted in a net decrease of £1.282m
- **Current Assets** – increased by £2.428m. The re-phasing of planned capital spend and the receipt of grant monies in advance of expenditure has resulted in an increase in Short Term Investments, £6.031m and a reduction in Cash & Cash Equivalents, £1.594m. A reduction in short-term debtors of £1.850m is due to a decrease in the Home Office firefighter pension debtor of £1.390m. The remaining changes reflect small changes in inventory values, and assets held for sale.
- **Current Liabilities** – increased by £0.630m. An increase in short-term creditors of £0.413m due to an increase in various creditor accruals and grant prepayments at 31st March 2020. And an increase in short-term borrowing of £0.217m due to increased loan repayments due in 2020/21 for PWLB.
- **Long Term Liabilities** – reduction of £95.717m;
 - Other long-term liabilities – reduced by £94.779m. £94.738m relates to the Defined Benefit Pension Scheme and Pension Account movements in the year. This reflects the movement in liability and funds in Firefighter and Local Government pension schemes. This change is offset by a reduction in the Pensions Reserve (Unusable Reserves) of £94.738m. These accounts balance each other out and allow the inclusion of the pension liability in the balance sheet and Unusable Reserves (see Note 22 in the Statement of Accounts).

- Long-term creditors – reduced by £0.429m. This reduction relates to PFI contract payments to be paid in the coming year and moved to short term borrowing.
 - Provisions – A net reduction of £0.059m. The injury compensation provision (personal injuries sustained where the Authority is alleged to be at fault) is re-assessed at the end of each financial year. The provision for new or amended claims received in the year was reduced by £0.089m. The Business Rates Appeals provision was increased by £0.030m (see note 20 in Statement of Accounts).
 - Long-term borrowing relates to Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) and has reduced by £0.450m reflecting the fact that loans of £0.450m will be repaid in the coming year and moved to short-term borrowing.
- **Usable Reserve** reduction of £4.563m – this is the net movement in reserves in the year; A reduction in earmarked reserves of £4.297m as a consequence of reserves utilised in the year and the re-alignment of these reserves to increase the general fund reserve to £3.000m from £2.000m. Also a reduction of £1.266m in the capital grant unapplied reserve (grant received in advance of expenditure) as grant is applied to fund capital expenditure in the year.
 - **Unusable Reserves** reduction of £108.426m. As mentioned previously unusable reserves have been created to allow the technical aspects of accounting required by the Code to be reflected in the Statement of Accounts. Unusable reserves are not generally available to fund spend. The reduction in the Pension Reserve of £94.738mm to reflect changes in the liability of the pension schemes accounts for most of this increase. The other movements relate to the Capital Adjustment Account, £11.694m, (used to show various notional costs associated with capital expenditure to allow the accounts to be prepared on an IFRS basis, such as depreciation, gains and losses on the sale of properties and gains recognised on donated assets). The Revaluation Reserve has increased by £2.098m due to the Land and Building revaluation and difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation. The balance relates to small movements on other accounts of £0.104m.

15. The Cash Flow Statement

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Authority during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Authority generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Authority are funded by way of taxation and grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the Authority. Notes 23 to 26 in the Statement of Accounts provide more for detail of specific movements in the year.

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 (for an analysis of investing activities see note 25 in the Statement of Accounts).

Cash flows arising from financing activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital (i.e. borrowing, see note 26 in the Statement for details) to the Authority.

Overall the total cash and cash equivalents (cash equivalents are highly liquid investments that mature within a period of no more than three months and are readily convertible to known amounts of cash) have decreased from £4.669m to £3.075m. This in part is due to the current treasury management strategy that the overall structure of interest rates whereby short term rates are lower than long term rates means it is more sensible to reduce investments and borrow for short periods rather than seek new long term borrowing.

16. Members are requested to approve the Statement of Accounts, attached as Appendix A, and authorise them for issue. If the Statement of Accounts have been authorised for issue the public will have access to the document via the Authority's website. A summary plain English statement of accounts is also available on the website.
17. International Audit Standards require a letter of representation from the Authority to the Auditors confirming that the information in the financial statements is accurate and that all material information has been disclosed. The signature of the Chair of this Committee (which is approving the Statement of Accounts) and the Director of Finance are required on the letter. The proposed letter of representation is attached to this report as Appendix B.

Equality and Diversity Implications

18. None directly related to this report.

Staff Implications

19. None directly related to this report.

Legal Implications

20. The Authority has a statutory duty pursuant to regulation 10 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 as amended by the the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 to approve and sign-off for publication the Statement of Accounts for the previous year before the regulation deadline of 30th November in the current year for the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

21. The report confirms the 2019/20 outturn position is consistent with that previously reported.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

22. None directly related to this report.

23. The achievement of actual expenditure within the approved financial plan and delivery of the expected service outcomes is essential if the Service is to achieve the Authority's mission.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

CFO/004/20 "Revenue and Capital Outturn 2019-2020" Policy & Resources 30th July 2020.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CIES	The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
THE CODE	Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting
MIRS	Movement in Reserves Statement
IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standards
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
FRC	Financial Reporting Council – direct statutory powers in relation to audit regulations and responsible for the UK's Corporate Governance and Stewardship Codes



Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority

2019/20 Statement of Accounts UNAUDITED

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2019 – 2020

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Narrative Report by the Director of Finance

Introduction

The Statement of Accounts sets out the financial activities of the Authority for the year ended 31st March 2020, with comparative figures for the previous financial year. These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the 2019/20 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting (*the Code*) as published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and are based upon International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The Code and relevant guidance notes specifies the principles and practices of accounting required to give a “true and fair” view of the financial position and transactions of the Authority.

Due to the complex nature of the accounts, a simpler version has been prepared and this can be obtained on the Authority’s website under About / Finance and Accounts. Although this simplified statement has no formal legal standing, it does provide a quick overview of the Authority’s financial activities by eliminating many of the technical accounting adjustments.

At the end of the financial year, the Authority was responding to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The narrative report considers the impact of the virus on the Authority in more detail further on within the narrative report.

This Narrative Report provides information about Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority), including the key issues affecting the Authority in 2019/20 and the future. It also provides a summary of the financial position at 31st March 2020 and is structured as below:

- Background to the Authority & Key Information
- The Authority 2019/20 Non-Financial Performance
- The 2019/20 Revenue Budget and Financial Challenge
- 2019/20 Revenue Outturn Position
- Reserves
- Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2019/20 to 2023/24
- Treasury Management
- Balance Sheet Financial Position at 31st March 2020
- Future Financial Challenge / Corporate Risks (including COVID-19)

This is followed by an explanation of the Financial Statements, including information on significant transactions during 2019/20.

Background to the Authority & Key Information

Merseyside is an area in the north west of England, which straddles the Mersey Estuary and includes the metropolitan districts of Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral. Merseyside spans 249 square miles (645 Km²) of land containing a mix of high-density urban areas, suburbs, semi-rural and rural locations, but overwhelmingly the land use is urban. It has a focused central business district, formed by Liverpool City Centre, but Merseyside is also a polycentric county and each of the metropolitan districts has at least one major town centre and outlying suburbs. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2018 figures showed that Merseyside has a population of 1,423m. The population is split 48.9% male and 51.1% female, with 17.9% of the population being children (0-15), 63.4% being of working age (16-64) and 18.7% above 65. Merseyside has an aging population. There are some areas of affluence, for example in West Wirral and North Sefton, but large areas of Merseyside fall within the highest ratings of social deprivation. There remain large pockets of deprivation with high levels of social exclusion and crime. According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015, out of 326 Local Authorities across England, Knowsley and Liverpool both appear in the top 10 most deprived Local Authorities.

Political Structure

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (MFRA) is a local authority created by the Local Government Act 1985. It is made up of 18 elected representatives appointed by the constituent District Councils. The number of councillors from each

district is determined by statute and in most cases is representative of the political composition of that Council. During 2019/20, this was as follows:

Knowsley	2	(2 Labour)
Liverpool	6	(5 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrat)
Sefton	4	(3 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrat)
St. Helens	2	(2 Labour)
Wirral	4	(2 Labour, 2 Conservative)

The 18 elected members meet together as the Fire and Rescue Authority to decide the Authority's overall policies and set the budget each year. At the Annual General Meeting (AGM), they establish and make appointments to the various committees as well as appointing the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority and its committees.

The Authority has ultimate responsibility for decision making but delegates many decisions to committees as part of their terms of reference agreed at the AGM and to senior officers within Merseyside Fire and Rescue under the Authority's Scheme of Delegated Powers.

Management Structure

Supporting the work of the elected members is the organisational structure of the Authority led by a Chief Fire Officer (CFO), supported by a Strategic Leadership Team (SLT). The current makeup of the SLT is detailed below:

1. Chief Fire Officer
2. Deputy Chief Fire Officer
3. Assistant Chief Fire Officer
4. Director of Legal, Procurement, Estates and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)
5. Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer)
6. Director of People and Organisational Development
7. Director of Strategy and Performance
8. Area Manager for Operational Preparedness
9. Area Manager for Operational Response
10. Area Manager for National Resilience
11. Area Manager for Community Risk Management

Integrated Risk Management Plan

In line with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2018, MFRA publish an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). The IRMP requires the Authority to identify all foreseeable risks and develop plans to manage those risks, which may affect the community of Merseyside, regional authorities and national authorities. A new IRMP 2017-20 was approved by the Fire Authority and published on 23rd February 2017. On the recommendation of the CFO, following a number of significant local and national incidents, the Authority approved an IRMP supplement in July 2019 that increased the number of available fire appliances from 26 to 30 and increased the number of firefighters from 620 to 642. The plan also increased the number of staff in Protection roles (legislative fire safety) to help make commercial and public buildings safer. The IRMP supplement extended the IRMP to 2021.

The IRMP continues to affirm the Authority's commitment to maintain operational response times despite continuing reductions in Government financial support. The IRMP aims to match resources to demand by having more fire appliances available during the day to attend emergency incidents and deliver home and business safety advice, with numbers decreasing as demand decreases during the evening.

Mission & Aims

The Authority's Mission and Aims are:

Our Mission;

To Achieve; Safer, Stronger Communities - Safe Effective Firefighters

Our Aims;

Excellent Operational Preparedness

We will provide our firefighters with the training, information, procedures and equipment to ensure they can safely and effectively resolve all emergency incidents.

Excellent Operational Response

To maintain an excellent emergency response to meet risk across Merseyside with safety and effectiveness at its core.

Excellent Prevention and Protection

We will work with our partners and our community to protect the most vulnerable.

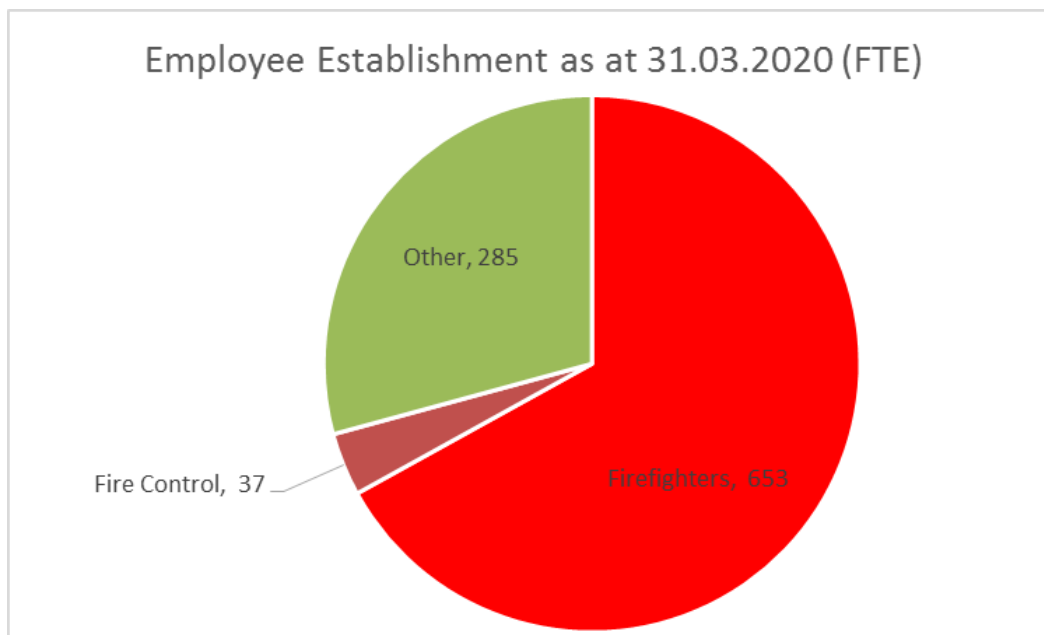
Excellent People

We will develop and value all our employees, respecting diversity, promoting opportunity and equality for all.

The mission & aims along with the approved IRMP determine the Authority's priorities that are reflected in the allocation of resources within the approved budget and financial plan agreed by the Authority in the February before the commencement of the new budget year.

Staffing, Fire Appliances & Fire Stations

The Authority employed circa 990 employees at the end of March 2020 (approximately 975 full time equivalents) to deliver its services. Most of the staff are involved in front line service delivery (Firefighters, Marine Rescue, Community Prevention and Protection work).



As a direct consequence of the scale of Government cuts over the last decade, there has been an inevitable impact on frontline services.

In 2010/11, the budgeted establishment for firefighters was approximately 1,000 firefighters. The 2019/20 approved establishment is 642, a reduction of -358 or -36%. Over the same period, support staff have reduced from 425 to 285 a reduction of -140 or -33%. The loss of support posts has an impact on the front line as some of these post reductions carried out fire prevention and response work within the Merseyside community.

Following the approval of the IRMP supplement, the Authority has moved to an operational response model that had 30 fire appliances available day and night (a combination of Wholetime and Retained). This was an increase on the 26 proposed in the original 2017/20 IRMP. In practical terms, this will mean that during the day the Authority will have 27 appliances immediately available with a further 3 available within 30 minutes. Ten years ago, the Authority had 42 appliances, which were crewed on 24-hour immediate response.

Prior to 2015, the Authority had 26 permanently crewed community fire stations. Following the closure and merger of a number of stations, the number fell to 23 and by the end of 2020 this will reduce to 22. The planned 22 stations will incorporate a variety of duty systems and will reflect the operational model described in the previous paragraph. These stations act as hubs for providing services to our communities. In addition to the community fire stations, the Authority has a Water Rescue Unit, a Training and Development Academy, a Headquarters and an Operational Workshop/Stores.




The above reductions reflect year-on-year cuts in Government grant support over the period.

The Authority 2019/20 Non-Financial Performance

The Authority monitors its performance and delivery of its objectives through a comprehensive performance management framework. The IRMP and other service projects are incorporated into one document – the Service Delivery Plan. There is an ongoing system of monitoring and reporting on the achievement of projects in the Service Delivery Plan via regular reports to the Community Safety and Protection Committee and the Strategic Leadership Team. Station Community Safety Plans have also been developed to give details of the activities taking place in each fire station area. The reporting process applies traffic light status to each action point in the Service Delivery Plan and attention is drawn to the progress achieved and matters to be addressed. Copies of the Service Delivery Plan can be found on the Authority’s website. The 2019/20 Authority’s performance against the key performance indicators (KPI’s) is summarised in the table below:

BENCHMARK KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS		Performance 2018/19	Target 2019/20	Performance 2019/20	Status
TO00	Total number of emergency calls received	27215	Quality Assurance	20679	QA Only
TC01	Total number of incidents attended	16101	15921	15193	On target
TC02	Total number of fires in Merseyside	7523	7304	5638	On target
TC03	Total number of primary fires attended	2247	2407	2093	On target
TC04	Total number of secondary fires attended	5276	4897	3545	On target
TC05**	Total number of special services attended	3270	Quality Assurance	3911	QA Only
TC06	Total number of false alarms attended	5308	5521	5644	Target missed
TR08*	Attendance standard – first attendance of an appliance at a life risk incidents in 10 mins	94%	90%	93.90%	On target
TD09	The % of available shifts lost to sickness absence, all personnel	3.41%	4%	4.05%	Target missed
TE10	Total carbon output of all MFRS buildings	88.1	86.4	58.5	On target
TO00	Total number of emergency calls received	27215	Quality Assurance	20679	QA Only
DWELLING FIRES					
DC11	Number of accidental dwelling fire	899	960	867	On target
DC12	Number of deaths in accidental dwelling fires	4	8	5	On target
DC13	Number of injuries in accidental dwelling fires attended	82	98	87	On target
DC14	Number of deliberate dwelling fires in occupied properties	126	150	136	On target
DC15	Number of deliberate dwelling fires in unoccupied properties	24	33	16	On target
DC16	Number of deaths in deliberate dwelling fires	0	1	1	On target
DC17	Number of injuries in deliberate dwelling fires	9	15	15	On target

NON-DOMESTIC PROPERTY					
NC11	Number of deliberate fires in non-domestic premises	76	86	73	On target
NC12	Number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises	192	195	165	On target
ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR					
AC11	Number of deliberate vehicle fires attended	510	569	459	On target
AC12	Number of accidental vehicle fires attended	199	197	206	Target missed
AC13	Number of deliberate anti-social behaviour fires (small)	4259	4157	2774	On target
AC14	Number of accidental small fires attended	1017	740	771	Target missed
AC15	Number of 'other' primary fires attended	221	217	171	On target
ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS					
RC11	Number of road traffic collisions (RTC's) attended	617	568	718	Target missed
RC12	Number of injuries in road traffic collisions attended	325	352	343	On target
RC13	Number of fatalities in road traffic collisions attended	12	7	7	On target
FALSE ALARMS					
FC11	The number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarm equipment in Non-Domestic properties	590	661	570	On target
FC12	The number of false alarm calls due to smoke alarm actuation in Domestic properties	2679	2812	3137	Target missed
STAFF WELFARE, RISKS & COMPETENCY RELATED INDICATORS					
WD11	% of available shifts lost to sickness absence per wholetime equivalent GREY book (operational) personnel	3.61%	4%	3.88%	On target
WD12	% of available shifts lost to sickness absence per wholetime equivalent GREY book (operational) personnel	3.13%	4%	4.29%	Target missed
WR13	Total number of operational staff injuries	45	52	26	On target

	Within 10% of Target
	Target Achieved
	Performance 10% worse than last year

The total number of incidents and emergency calls received are considerably lower than in 2018/19. There are areas where the number of incidents have decreased such as primary fires, secondary fire and accidental dwelling fires, which is a reflection of the hard work staff put into targeting those most at risk of either setting fires or being a victim of fire. The Authority has continued to meet its attendance standard of the first appliance being in attendance at all life risk incidents within 10 minutes.

Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) attended were not within target. However, this indicator is based on the RTCs that the Service is requested to attend and does not reflect the total number of RTCs in Merseyside or the RTCs involving the Service's targeted age group of people aged 16-24. As a result, the indicator does not reflect the success or otherwise of our preventative educational measures taken in collaboration with the Merseyside Road Safety Partnership. MFRS now has access to Police RTC data that for 2020/21 allows us to set a target that better reflects the impact of our RTC reduction work, whilst continuing to monitor this indicator as a measure of Service emergency response activity.

At the end of 2019/20, sickness among all personnel at **4.05%** shifts lost to sickness absence is within 10% of the 4% target for all staff groups.

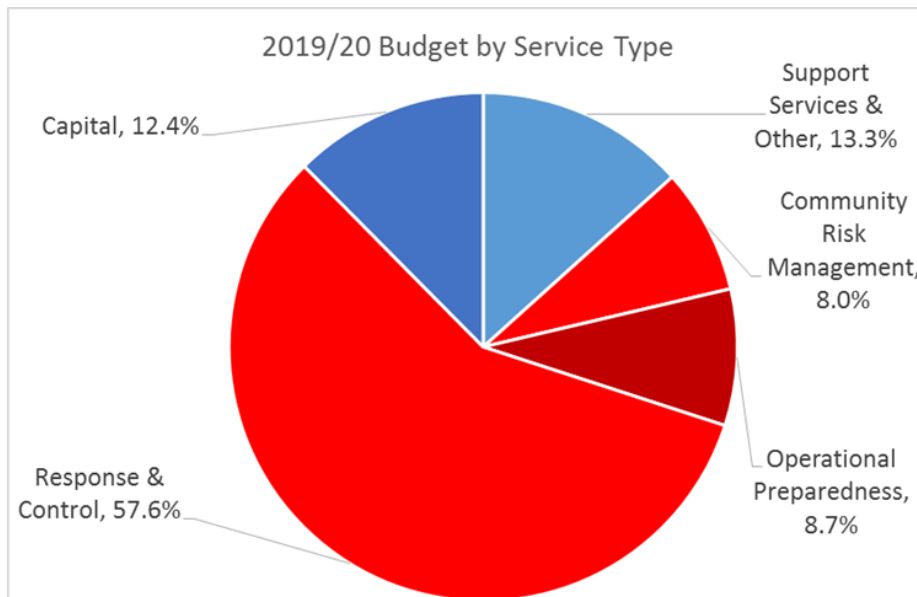
The 2019/20 Revenue Budget and Financial Challenge

The Authority determines its budget requirement by assessing the service commitments that are financed through its General Fund. The General Fund is a statutory account that records only those expenses that regulations allow to be charged against the amount to be collected from council taxpayers. The Authority then monitors and manages expenditure throughout the year against the General Fund budget to ensure all expenditure is affordable and planned. The General Fund position for the year is shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The Authority faced an unprecedented financial challenge over the period 2011/12 – 2019/20 as the Government implemented an austerity plan in an attempt to reduce national debt. A significant element of the plan was to reduce the level of Government funding for local government (this includes fire and rescue authorities). As the Authority had a relatively low council tax base, it was more reliant upon Government grant funding to support its revenue budget and therefore suffered a more proportionate financial loss than almost every other fire and rescue authority in the country. The cumulative percentage reduction in Government revenue support for the Authority between 2011/12 and 2019/20 equated to a 33% cash reduction or approximately 50% in real terms. The impact on the Authority's revenue budget was significant, in 2010/11 the budget was £73.3m, if this was uplifted to 2019/20 prices it would equate to approximately £85m, in reality the 2019/20 budget at £60.3m is 29% lower in real terms. This scale of cuts meant unavoidable reductions in the front line operational services over this period.

The Authority has historically maintained a rolling five-year comprehensive medium term financial plan (MTFP) and has continued to plan prudently to deal with all known or anticipated reductions in Government funding. The impact on the Authority of this level of cut in funding has resulted in significant reductions in the level of resources and the Authority has approved savings to ensure the MTFP remained in a balanced position over the period. The plan included significant efficiency savings, a cut in management costs, a reduction in support services, and, unfortunately, in order to balance the plan it includes an unavoidable reduction in frontline services. The impact of the required savings over the 2011/12 – 2019/20 period on staffing, fire appliances & fire stations has already been outlined.

The Authority set its General Fund budget for 2019/20 at £60.282m, approximately 74% of the budget directly funds activities related to fire response or prevention work.



The Authority adopted a reserves strategy that maintained a General Reserve of £2.000m and anticipated (based on the estimated forecast when the 2019/20 budget was approved) Earmarked Reserves as at 01.04.19 of £23.122m to cater for specific risks, projects and one-off initiatives and in particular to help it manage effectively the financial pressures.

The 2019/20 Revenue Outturn Position

Throughout the year, the Authority received regular financial review reports detailing:-

- the service's progress in implementing the approved savings options,
- any additional budget amendments required,
- plus the movements from and to reserves.

The cash savings required to balance the budget were delivered.

The approved General Fund budget remained constant throughout the year at £60.282 million. The table overleaf summarises the **general revenue fund position** at year-end and compares it to that budget. Overall, the Authority spend matched the budget after taking into account £0.650 million of reduced earmarked reserves drawdown at the year-end to cover planned expenditure incurred in 2019/20:

Programme	Fire Service Budget £'000	Fire Authority £'000	National Resilience £'000	Total Budget £'000	Actual £'000	Variance £'000
Expenditure						
Employee Costs	47,868	390	2,023	50,281	49,276	(1,005)
Premises Costs	3,056	-	-	3,056	3,056	-
Transport Costs	1,304	-	6,027	7,331	7,104	(227)
Supplies and Services	3,763	22	1,893	5,678	4,706	(972)
Agency Services	6,181	-	730	6,911	6,823	(88)
Central Support Services	488	127	184	799	717	(82)
Capital Financing	12,320	-	6	12,326	13,827	1,501
Income	(11,214)	-	(10,863)	(22,077)	(21,628)	449
Net Expenditure	63,766	539	-	64,305	63,881	(424)
Contingency Pay & Prices	97	-	-	97	-	(97)
Interest on Balances	(172)	-	-	(172)	(301)	(129)
	63,691	539	-	64,230	63,580	(650)
Movement on Reserves	(3,948)	-	-	(3,948)	(3,298)	650
Overall Financial Position	59,743	539	-	60,282	60,282	-

In light of the recent years of financial pressures, the Authority had adopted a strategy that would aim as far as possible to maximise its level of reserves in order to provide a temporary resource to enable the service changes that would deliver the required savings without compulsory redundancy.

During the 2019/20 budget making process the Authority confirmed its support, as outlined in the IRMP supplement, to increase the frontline firefighter response and protection establishment from 620 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to 642 FTE, (plus a new fire engineer post in protection). This allowed an increase in the available fire appliances from 26 to 30, at a cost of £1m p.a. The additional £1m required to implement the proposals was possible as the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) moved from a deficit to a fully funded position following the 2019 actuarial review, releasing the annual deficit contribution budget.

The Authority's current minimum revenue provision, MRP, policy is to utilise any in year revenue savings to fund additional MRP payments in order to free up future debt servicing budget to re-invest in front line services. Therefore throughout the year managers looked at every opportunity to maximise savings against the approved budget to enable an increase

in the repayment of debt servicing costs. The 2019/20 year-end “underspend” of £1.501m, after taking into account the net year-end earmarked reserves drawdown, was used to increase the MRP actual and therefore the net position on the revenue account was that actual overall spend was consistent with the budget.

Whilst the General Fund shows a neutral position for the year (after the drawdown of year-end reserves), the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) indicates a net spend of £4.535m for the year. The CIES is prepared on a different basis to the General Revenue Fund, the CIES shows the accounting cost in the year in accordance with the relevant generally accepted accounting principles, rather than the amount funded from taxation (General Fund). The CIES includes such expenses as depreciation and amounts to reflect pension costs, which are not charged to council tax and are excluded from the General Fund statement. The CIES represents the amount by which the Authority’s overall net worth has moved over the year as shown in the Balance Sheet. The table below reconciles the General Fund to the CIES “Deficit on Provision of Services” statement:

Notes to the table:

		Detailed Adjustments £'000	Total Adjustments per Expenditure and Funding Analysis £'000	Total Adjustments per Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000
Net General Fund 2019/20 year-end position:	Note	-	-	-
1 Net Creation of Earmarked Reserves	(a)	-	-	3,298
2 Asset Valuation / Charges and Capital Funding Adjustments				
Depreciation, Impairment and Revaluation adjustment	(b)	3,994		
Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS)	(c)	992		
Asset Disposal / Write-offs / Revaluation losses		(1,763)		
MRP / Interest adjustment	(f)	(8,545)		
Capital Expenditure Funded from the Revenue Account (CERA)		(3,737)		
Capital Grants Income		(700)	(9,759)	
3 Pension related adjustments	(d)			
Pension Contributions payable to pension fund (employer)		(10,012)		
Pension Contributions payable to pension fund (top-up grant)		(28,671)		
Pension Current Service Costs		18,753		
Pension Past Service Costs		1,969		
Net Interest on the Defined Benefit Liability Scheme		28,853	10,892	
4 Other technical accounting adjustments	(e)			
Timing Differences for Premiums and Discounts		-		
Timing Differences for Council Tax / NNDR		213		
Timing Differences for Compensated Absences		(109)	104	
Total Adjustments				1,237
Surplus or Deficit on Provision of Services				4,535

Notes to the table:

- a) Although the creation of earmarked reserves does not form part of the CIES, they are included to ensure that the General Fund expenditure reconciles back to the CIES.
- b) The depreciation and impairment charge reflects the notional consumption of assets during the year, including the reversal of any prior year valuation losses and impairments.
- c) REFCUS relates to the installation of free smoke alarms to households in Merseyside that under proper accounting practice should be defined as revenue but which statute allows the Authority to fund from capital.

- d) *Pension costs in the CIES reflect IAS 19 and therefore include movements in the pension fund valuations and pension contributions received in the year. Note 40 in the Financial Statements provides further details of movements in the pension funds during the year.*
- e) *The other technical accounting adjustment incorporates the adjustments made in relation to council tax indebtedness between the billing authorities and the Authority, and, the value of employee benefits accrued in the year but not taken (leave carried forward).*
- f) *Statute requires that certain expenses are charged to the General Fund that are not considered to be proper accounting charges in accordance with the Code. These are therefore not shown in the CIES. The unitary charge payments associated with the PFI contract are shown as fully charged to revenue in the General Fund but in the CIES they are broken up into the relevant revenue, capital and interest notional elements. The removal of capital financing charges relates to costs associated with; interest payments on loans and the Minimum Revenue Provision (which is the amount set aside from revenue to repay debt); the direct revenue financing of capital expenditure (CERA).*

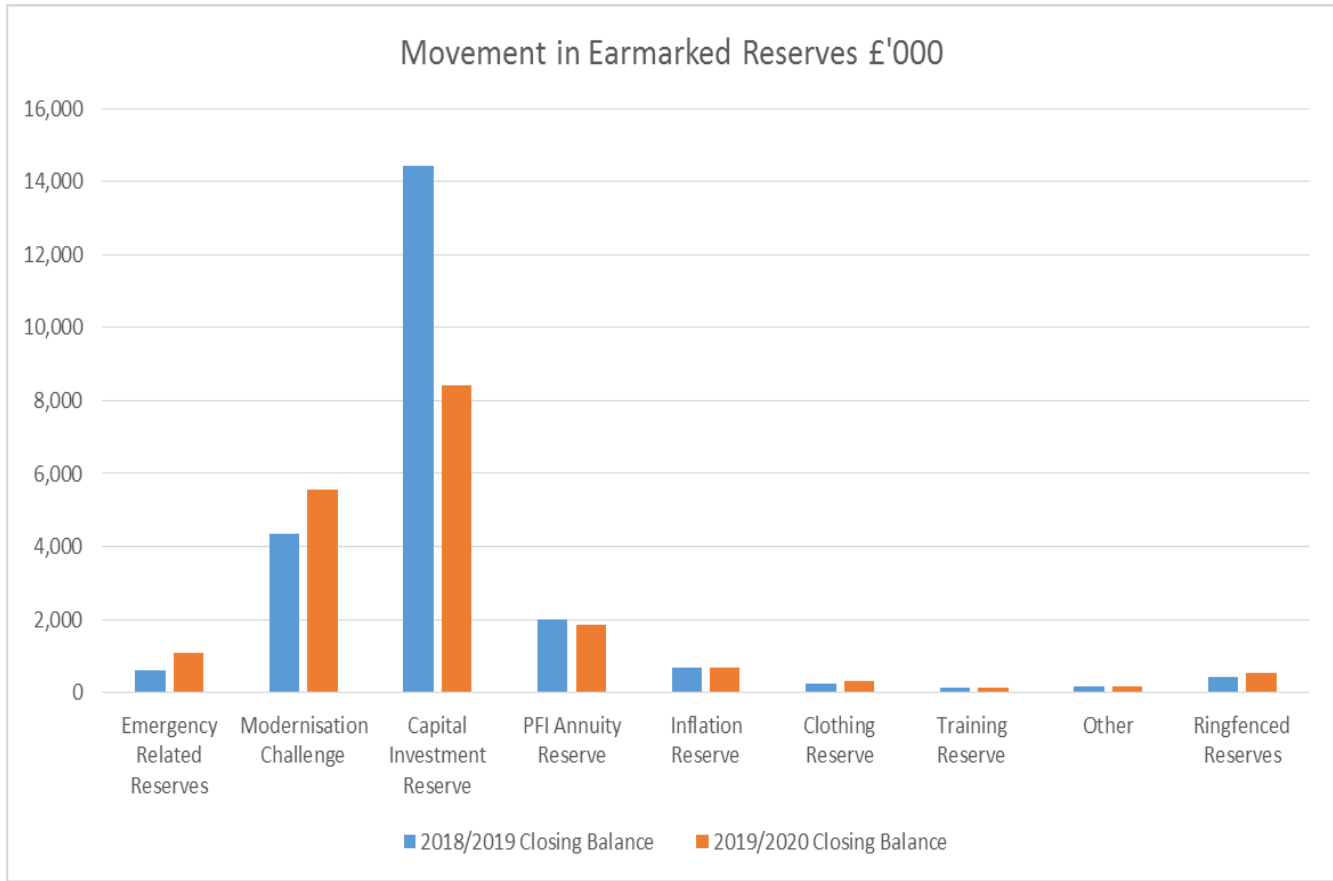
Whilst the CIES shows the true accounting position for the year, it is the General Fund position which more directly reflects the impact on Merseyside residents as it records only those expenses which statute allows to be charged against the Authority's annual budget, the amounts to be set aside as reserves and the amounts to be collected from local council tax payers.

Reserves

The Authority maintains a number of useable reserves, as detailed in the Balance Sheet and in Note 8 of the core financial statement explanatory notes. Note 8 also provides a comment of the purpose of each of the useable reserves. In general, though, the Authority sets aside money in the form of useable reserves to fund future planned investment, to mitigate financial risks, and to smooth savings.

Excluding National Assurance reserves that are held by the Authority on behalf of the Home Office and are not available to fund general MFRA spend, at the end of 2019/20 the Authority's earmarked reserves were £18.767m, a net reduction of £3.298m on the value at the start of the year. These earmarked reserves are required in order to carry forward 2019/20 funds into 2019/20 to meet projects now re-phased or to offset identified potential risks to the Authority's financial plan such as higher than anticipated pay awards. The Authority General Reserve was increased in the year to £3.000m or 5% of the gross budget, and this provides a relatively small cushion to enable the Authority to cover the risk of unexpected events within the year leading to significant unplanned expenditure and was increased due to committed reserves being reduced.

The table overleaf summarises the main types of committed reserves, most notable is the Capital Investment Reserve. Note that the Capital Investment Reserve will be drawn-down in the coming years to fund investment in buildings and in its Training and Development Academy, and repays historic pension and capital debt.



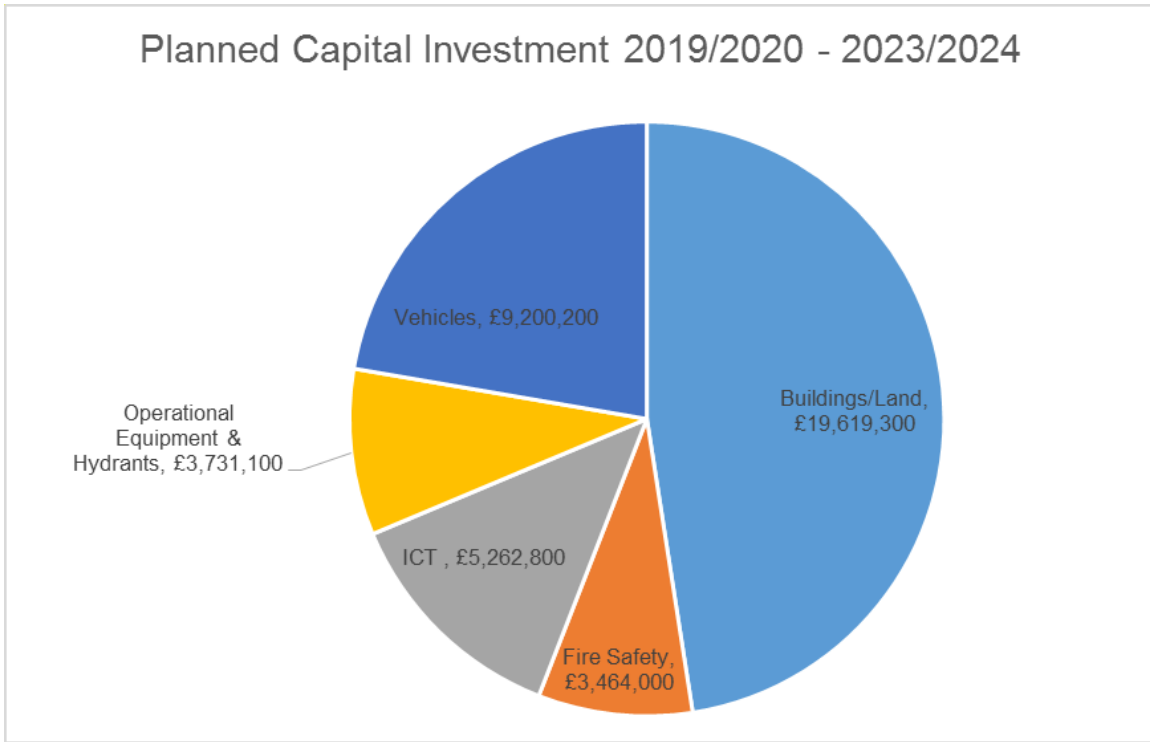
Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2019/20 to 2023/24

Each financial year the Authority produces a capital programme to manage major capital schemes. Owing to the nature of capital expenditure, a large number of schemes span more than one financial year, therefore the programme is a rolling programme covering five financial years.

The starting point for the programme is an assessment of the capital investment requirements for the Authority for future years based upon needs identified by the various expert professionals in areas such as buildings, vehicles, ICT, and operational equipment. The Authority manages its capital investment plans through its asset management plans and capital programme.

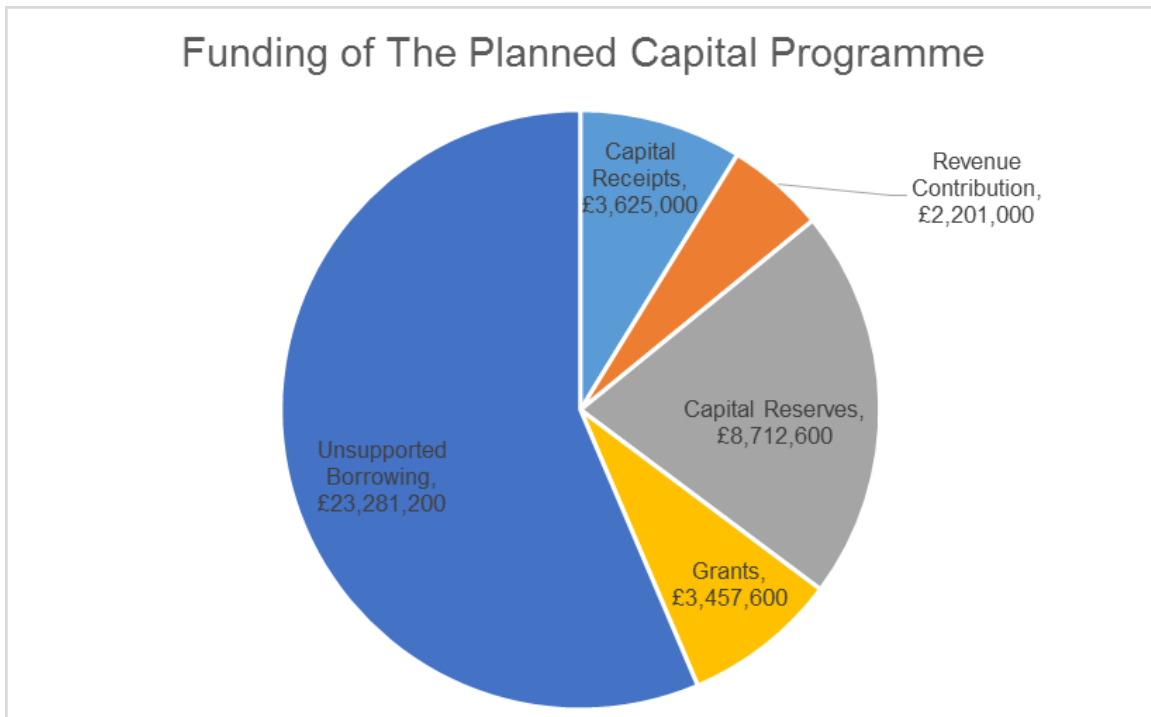
The chart overleaf summarises the 2019/20 – 2023/24 capital budget of £41.277m over its planned investments which are mainly in the Authority’s property, vehicles, fire safety (household smoke alarms) and ICT assets:

Planned Capital Investment 2019/2020 - 2023/2024



This capital programme has a borrowing requirement of £23.281m across the whole life of the plan. The proposed borrowing is unsupported borrowing or prudential which means the Government no longer provides any revenue grant funding to meet the revenue costs associated with the borrowing. This means all new borrowing is “prudential” and the Authority must determine if it can afford and sustain the servicing of the associated debt and revenue costs. Current and future debt servicing costs as a consequence of the proposed capital programme have been built into the Authority’s financial plan and revenue budget and are therefore deemed as affordable and sustainable. The chart below breaks down how the capital programme is funded:

Funding of The Planned Capital Programme



The 2019/20 capital budget and final expenditure together with the various sources of funding are shown below:

Programme	Final Budget £'000	Actual Expenditure £'000	Re-Phased from 2019/20 into 2020/21 £'000	Variance £'000
Expenditure				
Building/Land	7,256.0	5,702.1	1,502.3	(51.6)
Fire Safety	827.5	784.2	4.5	(38.8)
ICT	2,021.4	535.3	1,485.4	(0.7)
Operational Equip & Hydrants	932.6	481.9	420.0	(30.7)
Vehicles	1,762.1	1,411.9	350.2	-
TOTAL	12,799.6	8,915.4	3,762.4	(121.8)
Financing				
Capital Receipts	2,300.0	2,313.1	-	13.1
Revenue and Reserves	3,737.2	3,737.2	-	-
Grants	2,206.2	1,966.3	239.9	-
Unsupported Borrowing	4,556.2	898.8	3,522.5	(134.9)
TOTAL	12,799.6	8,915.4	3,762.4	(121.8)

The most significant items of capital expenditure have been:

- The building of a new fire station in St Helens
- New firefighter accommodation unit at Formby Fire Station
- Installation of smoke alarms
- Upgrades and replacement of ICT software and hardware
- The purchase of new appliances and specialist vehicles.

Treasury Management

The Authority's Treasury Management Strategy is reviewed annually as part of the budget approval process. The Strategy Statement sets out the Authority's policies and parameters to provide an approved framework within which Officers undertake the day-to-day capital and treasury activities. The Treasury Management strategy is contained within the 2019/20-2023/24 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), which is available on the Authority's website. The key elements are:

- The Treasury Management Strategy 2019/20
- The External Debt and Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and Limits for 2019/20 to 2021/22
- The Investment Strategy 2019/20
- The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement, which sets out the Authority's policy on MRP.

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement sets out how the Authority's treasury service supports capital decisions, day to day treasury management and the limitations on activity through treasury prudential indicators. The key indicator is the Authorised Limit required by S3 of the Local Government Act 2003 and is in accordance with the CIPFA (The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy) Code of Practice.

The External Debt and Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and Limits is required by the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice and identified within the Strategy statement.

The Investment Strategy sets out the Authority's criteria for choosing investment counterparties and limiting exposure to the risk of loss. This strategy is in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

(MHCLG) Guidance on Local Government Investments updated in 2010. The Authority's minimum long-term credit rating requirement is Fitch A- or equivalent.

The Authority's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement, sets out how the Authority will pay for capital assets through revenue each year as required by Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations 2008.

Borrowing:

As already stated, a large proportion of the capital programme is funded by borrowing. When undertaking borrowing, the Authority ensures that its plans are prudent and affordable in both the short and long term. The Authority adheres to CIPFA's Prudential Code and Treasury Management Guidelines and it determines before the start of each financial year the limits for the next three years on:-

- overall level of external debt;
- operational boundary for debt;
- upper limits on fixed interest rate exposure;
- upper limits on variable rate exposure;
- limits on the maturity structure of debt;
- limits on investments for more than 364 days.

The Authority's borrowing with the Public Works Loan Board reduced from £37.6m at the start of the year to £37.3m at the end following the repayment of £0.3m of loans in the year. Interest paid during the year on existing long-term borrowing totalled £1.9m.

Balance Sheet Financial Position at 31st March 2020

The net worth (total reserves) of the Authority is shown in the Balance Sheet. From the CIES it can be seen that the Authority's net worth has increased by £103.863m over the year, and as a consequence the current net liability on total reserves has reduced from (£1,135.235m) to (£1,031.372m). However, the reason for the net liability (negative reserve) is that a number of reserves making up the net worth relate to technical adjustments arising from the pensions reserve and the capital adjustments reserve, and these reserves are not available to spend. Note 22 provides more detail on unusable reserves. The pensions reserve alone has a net liability of £1,093.024m reflecting underlying commitments that the Authority has with regards to retirement benefits, however arrangements are in place for funding the pension liability:

- the deficit on the Local Government Pension Scheme will be made good by increased contributions over the remaining working life of employees (i.e. before payments fall due), as assessed by the scheme actuary,
- any shortfall on the Firefighter Pension Schemes is met by grant funding from Central Government and the Authority is only required to cover discretionary benefits when the pensions are actually paid.

Note 40 to the accounts provides detail on the two pension schemes the Authority participates in.

Future Financial Challenge and Corporate Risks 2020/21

Following the announcement of the 2016/17 - 2019/20 Local Government Finance Settlement the Authority faced a significant reduction in the level of Government grant support over this period. The reduction in Government support meant the Authority faced a significant financial challenge requiring the delivery of approximately £12m over this period. The Authority had an approved financial plan to meet this challenge.

The Authority continues to plan prudently and approved a balanced 2020/2021 Budget and five year medium term financial plan (MTFP) at its meeting on 27 February 2020. However, as the Government announced only a one year settlement for 2020/2021, this has meant a lack of certainty and predictability over future Government funding making it difficult to plan beyond 2020/2021 (Government funding contributes nearly 50% of the total Authority revenue funding). The MTFP relies upon some key assumptions around future pay; council tax levels; government support; and other factors. The current MTFP indicates that the Authority may potentially face a financial challenge beyond 2020/2021, but due to the level of uncertainty around the forecasts, the Authority will consider any future challenges as part of the 2021/22 budget making process when some of these uncertainties should be resolved. It is expected that the Government will have announced a multi-year financial settlement for 2021/2022 and future years in the next Local Government spending settlement, although the outcome of proposed local government funding reforms may not be known until 2022/2023.

The Authority understands that the recruitment of sufficient firefighters to maintain the required response staffing levels is crucial over the future medium term in light of the fact the Authority may lose approximately half of its current firefighters through natural retirements over the next five years or so. The Authority has established a recruitment reserve so it can fund the required recruitment in advance of the expected retirements over the period.

Reliable financial monitoring and forecasting processes are in place to allow the Director of Finance to report to the Authority any variation to assumptions made in MTFP at the earliest possible time and recommend corrective action to the Authority for consideration.

COVID-19 Financial Impact

The spread of COVID-19 has created unprecedented challenges to which the Authority has had to respond. In terms of financial consequences these were minimal during the year ending 31 March 2020 and the potential impact on post balance sheet date values, particularly for property and pension, is considered in "Note 4 in the Statements ...Assumptions Made about the Future and Other Major Sources of Estimation Uncertainty".

The anticipated financial impact in 2020/2021 is expected to be limited to a loss of commercial and other income of £0.5m and additional expenditure on protective equipment, cleaning, ICT and other costs of £0.9m. To date the Government has awarded the Authority £1.419m to cover the impact of the virus, and subject to the implications of any second wave, this grant should cover the loss of income and additional costs up to the end of 2020/2021.

The 2020/2021 budget anticipates a level of Council Tax and Business Rate income based on the collection rates assumed by the five Merseyside local authorities. The Government has announced it will meet the cost of the impact of the virus on collection rates for Council Tax and Business Rates in 2020/2021 on the Collection Fund, over the 2021/22 – 2023/2024 period.

Any permanent impact on the Authority's MTFP beyond 2020/2021 is difficult to determine at this point, as the impact of the virus on future local government funding is unknown. In addition, the Government have announced the reforms to the Fairer Funding Formula and Business Rates Retention scheme that were expected to impact on the Local Government Settlement for 2021/2022 will now be delayed.

The Authority has a strong reputation for dealing with the financial challenges it faces and it will consider its options for meeting any financial challenge during 2020/2021.

COVID-19 Service Impact

The Authority's responses have been very much guided by advice and guidance provided by Central Government, National Fire Chief's Council, and the Chief Fire Officer and Strategic Leadership Team.

On the 18 March 2020 the CFO implemented the Service's pandemic business continuity plan to ensure that the delivery of the fire and rescue service to the public of Merseyside was maintained, whilst wherever possible supporting partner agencies. Effective mobilising and response to all emergency life risk incidents has and continues to be maintained, however the introduction of a series of lockdown measures by the Government meant Preventative and Protection services had to be temporarily reduced. As the lockdown measures are eased the Preventative and Protection services will resume although the delivery of them will be amended to ensure practices are as COVID-19 safe as possible.

Agreements are in place with partner agencies to enable the Service to support:

- North West Ambulance Services,
- Mortuary services,
- Deliver essential items to vulnerable people / care homes.

Explanation of the Key Financial Statements

The accounts consist of the core financial statements grouped together along with detailed disclosure notes. The core financial statements include:

The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure 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 (and rents). Authorities raise taxation (and rents) to cover expenditure in accordance with statutory requirements; this may differ from

the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in the Expenditure and Funding Analysis and the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The Movement in Reserves Statement (MiRS)

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

The Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the 31 March 2020 of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Authority. The net assets of the Authority (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Authority. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category of reserves are usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the Authority may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use (for example the Capital Receipts Reserve that may only be used to fund capital expenditure or repay debt). The second category of reserves is those that the Authority is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example the Revaluation Reserve), where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold; and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement line 'Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'.

The Cash Flow Statement

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

Significant Changes in Accounting Policies

Since 2010/11 the Authority is required to prepare its accounts based on International Financial Reporting Standards, the move to an IFRS-based set of accounts resulted in a considerable number of changes in accounting practices and disclosures.

The 2019/20 Code has built upon the changes introduced by IFRS and has made some small changes to accounting policies and disclosure requirements, none of which are of any significance or have any material impact.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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The Financial Statements

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement

The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure 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 (or rents). Authorities raise taxation (and rents) to cover expenditure in accordance with statutory requirements; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in the Expenditure and Funding Analysis and the Movement in Reserves Statement.

2018/19			Notes	2019/20		
Gross Expenditure £000	Gross Income £000	Net Expenditure £000		Gross Expenditure £000	Gross Income £000	Net Expenditure £000
112,702	(8,421)	104,281		68,857	(11,752)	57,105
1,007	-	1,007		1,108	-	1,108
9,995	(9,914)	81		10,060	(9,875)	185
-	-	-		5,169	-	5,169
123,704	(18,335)	105,369		85,194	(21,627)	63,567
-	(31,880)	(31,880)	9	-	(30,434)	(30,434)
33,632	(2,281)	31,351	10	34,435	(2,259)	32,176
-	(61,754)	(61,754)	11	-	(60,774)	(60,774)
		43,086	(Surplus) or Deficit on Provision of Services	27		4,535
		5,257	Impairment losses charged to revaluation reserve			233
		(17,359)	(Surplus) or deficit on revaluation of fixed assets			(3,001)
		31,137	Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability			(105,630)
		19,035	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			(108,398)
		62,121	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			(103,863)

Note a – Fire & Rescue Service Operations in 2019/20 has included a credit of (£3,200m) (£46,041m in 2018/19) of Pension Past Service Costs relating to the recent McCloud judgement.

Note b – A Past Service Cost was recognised in 2017/18 reflecting an interim solution regarding Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) indexation for individuals who reach state pension age on or after 6 December 2018 and before 6 April 2021. In 2019/20, this has been extended to include members reaching state pension age after 6 April 2021 (£5,169m).

Movement in Reserves Statement

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

	Notes	General Fund Balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied £000	Total Usable Reserves £000	Unusable Reserves £000	Total Authority Reserves £000
Balance at 31 March 2019		(25,064)	-	(4,856)	(29,920)	1,165,155	1,135,235
<u>Movement in reserves during 2019/20</u>							
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		4,535	-	-	4,535	(108,398)	(103,863)
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations	7	(1,238)	-	1,266	28	(28)	-
Increase or Decrease in 2019/20		3,297	-	1,266	4,563	(108,426)	(103,863)
Balance at 31 March 2020 carried forward		(21,767)	-	(3,590)	(25,357)	1,056,729	1,031,372

	Notes	General Fund Balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied £000	Total Usable Reserves £000	Unusable Reserves £000	Total Authority Reserves £000
Balance at 31 March 2018		(27,715)	-	(5,045)	(32,760)	1,105,874	1,073,114
<u>Movement in reserves during 2018/19</u>							
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		43,086	-	-	43,086	19,035	62,121
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations	7	(40,435)	-	189	(40,246)	40,246	-
Increase or Decrease in 2018/19		2,651	-	189	2,840	59,281	62,121
Balance at 31 March 2019 carried forward		(25,064)	-	(4,856)	(29,920)	1,165,155	1,135,235

Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Authority. The net assets of the Authority (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Authority. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category of reserves are usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the Authority may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use (for example the Capital Receipts Reserve that may only be used to fund capital expenditure or repay debt). The second category of reserves 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 2019 £000		Notes	31 March 2020 £000
80,995	Property, Plant and Equipment	12	87,382
149	Intangible Assets	13	110
-	Assets Held for Sale	18	-
-	Long-term Investments	14	-
-	Long-term Debtors	14	-
81,144	Long-term Assets		87,492
17,088	Short-term Investments	14	23,119
550	Assets Held for Sale	18	350
608	Inventories	15	649
16,309	Short-term Debtors	16	14,459
4,669	Cash and Cash Equivalents	14 & 17	3,075
39,224	Current Assets		41,652
(1,084)	Short-term Borrowing	14	(1,301)
(10,271)	Short-term Creditors	19	(10,684)
(11,355)	Current Liabilities		(11,985)
(17,753)	Long-term Creditors	14	(17,324)
(1,155)	Provisions	20	(1,096)
(37,335)	Long-term Borrowing	14	(36,885)
(1,188,005)	Other Long-term Liabilities	14 & 40	(1,093,226)
(1,244,248)	Long-term Liabilities		(1,148,531)
(1,135,235)	Net Liabilities		(1,031,372)
(29,920)	Usable Reserves	21	(25,357)
1,165,155	Unusable Reserves	22	1,056,729
1,135,235	Total Reserves		1,031,372

Cash Flow Statement

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

2018/19 £000		Notes	2019/20 £000
43,086	Net (surplus) or deficit on the provision of services		4,535
(45,530)	Adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	23	(18,594)
357	Adjustments for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities	24	(303)
(2,087)	Net cash flows from Operating Activities		(14,362)
1,372	Investing Activities	25	11,628
4,606	Financing Activities	26	4,328
3,891	Net increase or decrease in cash and cash equivalents		1,594
(8,560)	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		(4,669)
(4,669)	Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	17	(3,075)

Notes to the Core Financial Statements

1. Accounting Policies

i. General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Authority's transactions for the 2019/20 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31st March 2020. The Authority is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, which those regulations require to be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 and the Service Reporting Code of Practice 2019/20, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and statutory guidance.

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

ii. Going Concern

Local authorities that can only be discontinued under statutory prescription shall prepare their financial statements on a going concern basis of accounting; that is, the financial statements shall be prepared on the assumption that the functions of the Authority will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Transfers of services under combinations of public sector bodies (such as local government reorganisation) do not negate the presumption that the financial statements shall be prepared on a going concern basis of accounting.

iii. Accruals of Income and Expenditure

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

- Revenue from contracts with service recipients, whether for services or the provision of goods, is recognised when (or as) the goods or services are transferred to the service recipient in accordance with the performance obligations in the contract.
- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed – where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption; they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet.
- Expenses in relation to services received (including services provided by employees) are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made.
- Interest receivable on investments and payable on borrowings is accounted for respectively as income and expenditure on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instrument rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract.
- Where revenue and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor accrual for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where debts may not be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that may not be collected.

iv. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of no more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are highly liquid investments that mature in a specified period; no more than three months or less from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

In the 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.

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

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

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

Material errors discovered in prior period figures are corrected retrospectively by amending opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period.

vi. Charge to Revenue for Non-current Assets

Services 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 fixed assets attributable to the service.

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

vii. Employee Benefits

Benefits Payable During Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled wholly within 12 months of the year-end. They include such benefits as wages and salaries, paid annual leave, paid sick leave 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 in the following accounting year, being the period in which the employee takes the benefit. The accrual is charged to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services, but then reversed out through the Movement in Reserves Statement so that holiday entitlements are charged to revenue in the financial year in which the holiday absence occurs.

Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Authority to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits and are charged on an accruals basis to the appropriate service or, where applicable, to the Non Distributed Costs line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement at the earlier of when the Authority can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Authority recognises costs for a restructure. Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the General Fund Balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Authority to the pension fund or pensioner in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, appropriations are required to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for pension enhancement termination benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

Post-employment Benefits

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

- The Firefighters Pension Schemes for uniformed employees, administered by LPP - Your Pension Service (LPP Your Pension Service, PO Box 1382, Preston, Lancashire, PR2 0WQ).



- The Local Government Pensions Scheme for civilian employees, administered by Wirral Borough Council through Merseyside Pension Fund (Merseyside Pension Fund, 7th Floor, Castle Chambers, 43 Castle Street, Liverpool, L69 2NW).
- Both schemes provided defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), earned as employees worked for the Authority.

The Firefighters Pension Scheme

The Firefighters Pension Scheme is an unfunded scheme, meaning that there are no investment assets built up to meet pension liabilities. Cash has to be generated to meet actual pension payments as they fall due. The Government changed the funding mechanism for this scheme in 2006/07. This alleviated concerns about the possibility of large year on year fluctuations on local taxpayers by creating a pension fund account. The primary objective is to allow the separation of the cost of providing pensions from the cost of running a fire and rescue service.

Transactions in the Firefighters Pension Fund include:

Credits to the Pension Fund

- Employees' contributions from firefighters
- Transfer values received from other authorities
- The employer's contributions due from the Authority
- Additional contributions required from the Authority for ill health retirements.

Debits to the Pension Fund

- Awards payable under any provision of the pension scheme
- Transfer values payable to other authorities
- Any repayment to the Authority of contributions towards ill health retirements.

The Pension fund account is balanced to zero by either:

- Crediting a top-up grant receivable from the Home Office where income to the fund is less than its expenditure.
- Debiting an amount payable to the Home Office where the expenditure of the fund is less than its income.

Firefighters' Injury Schemes

Under the Firefighters Compensation Scheme (England) Order 2006, a firefighter receives an injury award where they have retired and are permanently disabled because of an injury received in the execution of their duty. Under IAS 19, the Authority is required to account for contingent future injury benefits. The liability is based on an estimate of future benefits earned by members, and movements in the liability are treated in the same way as for the Firefighters pension schemes.

The Local Government Pension Scheme

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

- The liabilities of the Merseyside Pension Fund attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method – i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc, and projections of projected earnings for current employees.
- Liabilities are discounted to their present value at current prices, using a discount rate of 3.6% (based on the indicative rate of return on high quality corporate bond).
- The assets of Merseyside Pension Fund attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:



- quoted securities – current bid price
- unquoted securities – professional estimate
- unitised securities – current bid price
- property – market value.

The change in the net pension's liability is analysed into the following components:

- Service cost comprising:
 - current service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year – allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the services for which the employees worked.
 - past service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of a scheme amendment or curtailment whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years – debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non-Distributed Costs.
 - net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset), i.e. net interest expense for the Authority – the change during the period in the defined benefit liability (asset) that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement – this is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability (asset) at the beginning of the period – taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability (asset) during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments.
- Remeasurements comprising:
 - the return on plan assets – excluding amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset) – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure
 - actuarial gains and losses – changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure
 - contributions paid to the Merseyside Pension Fund – cash paid as employer's contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund Balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Authority to the pension fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, this means that there are transfers to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end. The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits that are earned by employees.

Discretionary Benefits

The Authority also has restricted powers to make discretionary awards of retirement benefits in the event of early retirements. Any liabilities estimated to arise as a result of an award to any member of staff are accrued in the year of the decision to make the award and accounted for using the same policies as are applied to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

viii. Events after the Reporting Period

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.

ix. Financial Instruments

Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument, are initially measured at fair value, and are carried at their amortised cost. Annual charges to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest payable are based on the carrying amount of the liability, multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. The effective interest rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash payments over the life of the instrument to the amount at which it was originally recognised.

For most of the borrowings that the Authority has, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable (plus accrued interest); and interest charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount payable for the year according to the loan agreement.

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

Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified based on a classification and measurement approach that reflects the business model for holding the financial assets and their cash flow characteristics. There are three main classes of financial assets measured at:

- amortised cost, and
- fair value through profit or loss (FVPL), and
- fair value through other comprehensive income (FVOCI).

The Authority's business model is to hold investments to collect contractual cash flows. Financial assets are therefore classified as amortised cost, except for those whose contractual payments are not solely payment of principal and interest (i.e. where the cash flows do not take the form of a basic debt instrument).

Financial Assets Measured at Amortised Cost

Financial assets measured at amortised cost 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 (CIES) for interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. For most of the financial assets held by the Authority, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal receivable (plus accrued interest) and interest credited to the CIES is the amount receivable for the year in the loan agreement.

Any gains and losses that arise on the derecognition of an asset are credited or debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the CIES.

Expected Credit Loss Model

The Authority recognises expected credit losses on all of its financial assets held at amortised cost, either on a 12-month or lifetime basis. The expected credit loss model also applies to lease receivable and contract assets. Only lifetime losses are recognised for trade receivables (debtors) held by the Authority.

Impairment losses are calculated to reflect the expectation that the future cash flows might not take place because the

borrower could default on their obligations. Credit risk plays a crucial part in assessing losses. Where risk has increased significantly since an instrument was initially recognised, losses are assessed on a lifetime basis. Where risk has not increased significantly or remains low, losses are assessed on the basis of 12-month expected losses.

Financial Assets Measured at Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income

Financial assets that are measured at FVOCI are recognised on the balance sheet when the Authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured and carried at fair value. Fair value gains and losses are recognised as they arise in Other Comprehensive Income.

Financial Assets Measured at Fair Value through Profit or Loss

Financial assets that are measured at Fair Value through Profit or Loss (FVPL) are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured and carried at fair value. Fair value gains and losses are recognized as they arrive in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services.

Fair Value Measurement of Financial Assets

Fair value of an asset is the price that would be received to sell an asset in orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. The fair value measurements of the authority's financial assets are based on the following techniques:

- instruments with quoted market prices – the market price
- other instruments with fixed and determinable payments – discounted cash flow analysis.

The inputs to the measurement techniques are categorised in accordance with the following three levels:

- Level 1 inputs – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets that the authority can access at the measurement date.
- Level 2 inputs – inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset, either directly or indirectly.
- Level 3 inputs – unobservable inputs for the asset.

Any gains and losses that arise on the derecognition of the asset are credited or debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The Authority entered into a number of financial guarantees that are not required to be accounted for as financial instruments. These guarantees are reflected in the Statement of Accounts to the extent that provisions might be required or a contingent liability note is need under the policies set out in the section on Provision, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets.

x. Foreign Currency Translation

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 reconverted at the spot exchange rate at 31st March. Resulting gains or losses are recognised in the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

xi. 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 in the form of the grant or contribution are required to be consumed by the recipient as specified, or future economic benefits or service potential must be returned to the

transferor.

Monies advanced as grants and contributions for which conditions have not been satisfied are carried in the Balance Sheet as 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-ringfenced 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.

xii. 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.

Internally generated assets are capitalised where it is demonstrable that the project is technically feasible and is intended to be completed (with adequate resources being available) and the Authority will be able to generate future economic benefits or deliver service potential by being able to sell or use the asset. Expenditure is capitalised where it can be measured reliably as attributable to the asset and is restricted to that incurred during the development phase (research expenditure cannot be capitalised).

Expenditure on the development of websites is not capitalised if the website is solely or primarily intended to promote or advertise the Authority's goods or services.

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

Where expenditure on intangible assets qualifies as capital expenditure for statutory purposes, amortisation, impairment losses and disposal gains and losses are not permitted to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account and (for any sale proceeds greater than £10,000) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

xiii. Inventories and Long-term Contracts

Inventories are included in the Balance Sheet at the lower of cost and net realisable value. The cost of inventories is assigned using the weighted average costing formula. The Authority holds inventories of uniforms, smoke alarms, consumable items, stationery and vehicle parts.

Long-term contracts are accounted for on the basis of charging the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services with the value of works and services received under the contract during the financial year.

xiv. Joint Operations

Joint operations are arrangements where the parties that have joint control of the arrangements have rights to the assets and obligations for the liabilities relating to the arrangement. The activities undertaken by the Authority in conjunction with other joint operators involve the use of the assets and resources of those joint operators. In relation to its interest in a joint operation, the Authority as a joint operator recognises:

- its assets, including its share of any assets held jointly
- its liabilities, including its share of any liabilities incurred jointly
- its revenue from the sale of its share of the output arising from the joint operation

- its share of the revenue from the sale of the output by the joint operation
- its expenses, including its share of any expenses incurred jointly.

xv. Leases

Leases are classified 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. All other leases are classified as operating leases.

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

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

The Authority as Lessee

Finance Leases

Property, plant and equipment held under finance leases are 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 the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement).

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

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as an expense of the services benefitting from use of the leased property, plant or equipment. Charges are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments (e.g. there is a rent-free period at the commencement of the lease).

The Authority as Lessor

Finance Leases

Where the Authority grants a finance lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the relevant asset is written out of the Balance Sheet as a disposal. At the commencement of the lease, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet (whether Property, Plant and Equipment or Assets Held for Sale) is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. A gain, representing the Authority's net investment in the lease, is credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal), matched by a lease (long-term debtor) asset in the Balance Sheet.

Lease rentals receivable are apportioned between:

- a charge for the acquisition of the interest in the property – applied to write down the lease debtor (together with any premiums received), and
- finance income (credited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement)

The gain credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on disposal is not permitted by statute to increase the General Fund Balance and is required to be treated as a capital receipt. Where a premium has been received, this is posted out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Receipts Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Where the amount due in relation to the lease asset is to be settled by the payment of rentals in future financial years, this is posted out of the General Fund Balance to the Deferred Capital Receipts Reserve in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When the future rentals are received, the element for the capital receipt for the disposal of the asset is used to write down the lease debtor. At this point, the deferred capital receipts are transferred to the Capital Receipts Reserve.

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

Operating Leases

Where the Authority grants an operating lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the asset is retained in the Balance Sheet. Rental income is credited to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Credits are made on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease, even if this does not match the pattern of payments (e.g. there is a premium paid at the commencement of the lease). Initial direct costs incurred in negotiating and arranging the lease are added to the carrying amount of the relevant asset and charged as an expense over the lease term on the same basis as rental income.

xvi. Overheads and Support Services

The costs of overheads and support services are charged to those that benefit from the supply or service in accordance with the costing principles of the CIPFA *Service Reporting Code of Practice 2019/20 (SeRCOP)*. The total absorption costing principle is used – the full cost of overheads and support services is shared between users in proportion to the benefits received, with the exception of:

- Corporate and Democratic Core – costs relating to the Authority’s status as a multi-functional, democratic organisation.
- National Resilience / International Search and Rescue – costs not apportioned.
- Non-Distributed Costs – the cost of discretionary benefits awarded to employees retiring early and impairment losses chargeable on Assets Held for Sale.

These two cost categories are defined in SeRCOP and accounted for as separate headings in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, as part of Net Expenditure on Continuing Services.

xvii. 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

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 assets potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:



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

The Authority does not capitalise borrowing costs incurred whilst assets are under construction.

The cost of assets acquired other than by purchase is deemed to be its fair value, unless the acquisition does not have commercial substance (i.e. it will not lead to a variation in the cash flows of the Authority). In the latter case, where an asset is acquired via an exchange, the cost of the acquisition is the carrying amount of the asset given up by the Authority.

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:

- 23 Community Fire Stations (plus 1 Marine Rescue Station) are measured on a Depreciated Replacement Cost basis as the property is classed as specialised with no readily made market available.
- the balance of the property portfolio consisting of Headquarters, Training Academy, Fire Control Centre, Engineering Centre of Excellence and Houses are valued on a current value basis as buildings could be used for alternative purposes. One house is currently up for sale and valued at current value less costs to sell.
- assets under construction are valued on depreciated historical cost basis
- all other assets are measured at the current value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use (existing use value – EUV).

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.

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

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at current value are revalued sufficiently and regularly to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their current value at the year-end, but as a minimum every five years. Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains.

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

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

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

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

Where an impairment loss is reversed subsequently, the reversal is credited to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, up to the amount of the original loss, adjusted for depreciation that would have been charged if the loss had not been recognised.

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided for on all Property, Plant and Equipment assets by the systematic allocation of their depreciable amounts over their useful lives. An exception is made for assets without a determinable finite useful life (i.e. freehold land and certain community assets) and assets that are not yet available for use (i.e. assets under construction).

Depreciation is calculated on the following bases:

- Buildings – straight-line allocation over the remaining life of the property as estimated by the valuer. The remaining life of the buildings range from 2 – 50 years
- Vehicles, plant and equipment – straight-line allocation over the remaining useful life as estimated by a suitably qualified officer. Vehicles are depreciated over 5 – 20 years and plant and equipment is depreciated over 3 – 25 years
- Land – depreciation is not applied to land
- No residual value is accounted for.

Where an item of property, plant and equipment asset has major components whose cost is significant in relation to the total cost of the item, the components are depreciated separately. Only components above 10% of the total asset value would be considered for componentisation.

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

Disposals and Non-current Assets Held for Sale

When it becomes probable that the carrying amount of an asset will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through its continuing use, it is reclassified as an Asset Held for Sale. The asset is revalued immediately before reclassification and then carried at the lower of this amount and fair value less costs to sell. Where there is a subsequent decrease to fair value less costs to sell, the loss is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Gains in fair value are recognised only up to the amount of any previous losses recognised in the Surplus or Deficit on Provision of Services. Depreciation is not charged on assets held for sale.

If assets no longer meet the criteria to be classified as assets held for sale, they are reclassified back to non-current assets and valued at the lower of their carrying amount before they were classified as held for sale; adjusted for depreciation, amortisation or revaluations that would have been recognised had they not been classified as Held for Sale, and their recoverable amount at the date of the decision not to sell.

Assets that are to be abandoned or scrapped are not reclassified as Assets Held for Sale.

When an asset is disposed of or decommissioned, the carrying amount of the asset in the Balance Sheet (whether Property, Plant and Equipment or Assets Held for Sale) is written off to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of the gain or loss on disposal. Receipts from disposals (if any) are credited to the same line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement also as part of the gain or loss on disposal (i.e. netted off against the carrying value of the asset at the time of disposal). Any revaluation gains accumulated for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account.

Amounts received for a disposal in excess of £10,000 are categorised as capital receipts. The balance of receipts is required to be credited to the Capital Receipts Reserve, and can then only be used for new capital investment or set aside to reduce the Authority's underlying need to borrow (the capital financing requirement). Receipts are appropriated to the Reserve from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The written-off value of disposals is not a charge against council tax, as the cost of non-current 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.

xviii. Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and Similar Contracts

The Authority lead a North West PFI project to replace 16 fire stations across Merseyside, Lancashire and Cumbria. Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service built 7 new PFI Stations. The building programme for Merseyside started in April 2011, with first station opening in April 2012 and the last station opening July 2013.

PFI and similar contracts are agreements to receive services, where the responsibility for making available the property, plant and equipment needed to provide the services passes to the PFI contractor. As the Authority is deemed to control the services that are provided under its PFI schemes, and as ownership of the property, plant and equipment will pass to the Authority at the end of the contracts for no additional charge, the Authority carries the assets used under the contracts on its Balance Sheet as part of Property, Plant and Equipment.

The original recognition of these assets at fair value (based on the cost to purchase the property, plant and equipment) was balanced by the recognition of a liability for amounts due to the scheme operator to pay for the capital investment.

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

The amounts payable to the PFI operator each year are analysed into five elements:

- **fair value of the services received during the year** – debited to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- **finance cost** – interest is charged on the outstanding Balance Sheet liability, debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- **contingent rent** – increases in the amount to be paid for the property arising during the contract, debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- **payment towards liability** – applied to write down the Balance Sheet liability towards the PFI operator (the profile of write downs is calculated using the same principles as for a finance lease)
- **lifecycle replacement costs** – proportion of the amounts payable is posted to the Balance Sheet as a prepayment and then recognised as additions to Property, Plant and Equipment when the relevant works are eventually carried out.

xix. Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets

Provisions

Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the Authority a legal or constructive obligation that probably requires settlement by a transfer of economic benefits or service potential, and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation. For instance, the Authority may be involved in a court case that could eventually result in the making of a settlement or the payment of compensation.

Provisions are charged as an expense to the appropriate service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year that the Authority becomes aware of the obligation, and are measured at the best estimate at the balance sheet date of the expenditure required to settle the obligation, taking into account relevant risks and uncertainties.

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

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

Contingent Liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Authority a possible obligation whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Authority. Contingent liabilities also arise in circumstances where a provision would otherwise be made but either it is not probable that an outflow of resources will be required or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured reliably.

Contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts.

Contingent Assets

A contingent asset arises where an event has taken place that gives the Authority a possible asset whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Authority.

Contingent assets are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts where it is probable that there will be an inflow of economic benefits or service potential.

xx. Reserves

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

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

xxi. 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.

xxii. VAT

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

xxiii. Local Taxation

Council Tax

In their capacity as billing authorities the District Councils of Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral act as agents: they collect and distribute council tax income on behalf of the major preceptors and themselves. The cash collected by the billing authorities from council tax debtors belongs proportionately to the billing authorities and the major preceptors. There will therefore be a debtor/creditor position between the billing authorities and the Fire Authority to be recognised since the net cash paid to the Fire Authority in the year will not be its share of cash collected from council taxpayers.

NNDR

From the 1st April 2013 the District Councils of Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St. Helens and Wirral collect National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) income on behalf of Central Government and the Fire Authority as well as themselves. The relevant shares of NNDR income are Central Government (50%), District Council (49%) and the Fire Authority (1%), being the shares as defined by the Business Rates Retention Regulations 2012. The NNDR income distributed to each of the three parties is the amount after deducting an allowance for the District Councils cost of collection. The NNDR cash collected by the billing authority belongs proportionately to Central Government, the District Council and the Fire Authority; there will therefore be a debtor/creditor position between these parties to be recognised since the net cash paid in the year to each party will not be their share of the cash collected from business ratepayers.

For both council tax and NNDR, the income reflected in the CIES in year is the Fire Authority's share of the income relating to that year. However, the amount of council tax / NNDR income that can be credited to the General Fund for the year is determined by statute and may be different from the accrued income position shown in the CIES. An adjustment is made via the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the income due under proper



accounting practice and the income per statute.

Prior to the 1st April 2013, the Districts Councils collected NNDR solely on behalf of Central Government and not the Fire Authority.

2. Accounting Standards that have been Issued but Not Yet Adopted

The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 (the Code) has introduced several changes in the accounting policies, which will be required from 1st April 2020. The Code requires the disclosure of information relating to the expected impact of an accounting change required by a new standard that has been issued but not yet adopted.

IFRS 16 Accounting for leases will have an impact on the Authority's Accounts. This standard, however, has been deferred from 2020/21 to 2021/22 due to pressures on Local Government due to the Pandemic. The only Asset deemed affected by standard would be the car lease scheme. Currently this relates to 17 vehicles with a valuation of £317,000. Although this would have no material impact to the Accounts the envisaged changes for current year Accounts would have been:

DR	CIES - Depreciation charge	£97,000
CR	CIES - Operating Lease Reversal	£99,000
DR	CAA - Unusable Reserves	£2,000
DR	Property, Plant and Equipment (vehicles)	£317,000
CR	Lease Liability	£317,000

IAS 19 Employee Benefits will require the remeasurement of net pension liability following plan amendments, curtailments or settlements to be used to determine current service cost and net interest for the remainder of the year after the change of the plan. The updating of these assumptions only applies from 1st April 2020 and no prediction can be made of the possible accounting impact.

3. Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies

In applying the accounting policies set out in Note 1, 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:

- Insurance – The Authority's fleet of vehicles are insured for third party fire and theft only. Based on historical experience of incidents the decision was made to self-insure vehicles. Previously the vehicles were insured fully comprehensive, but premiums were deemed too expensive in comparison to self-insurance. However, costs are closely monitored to ensure best value for money.
- No Residual Value of Assets - The Authority assumes that the residual value of all property plant and equipment will be nil when they are de-commissioned, as the assets are held to provide a service rather than for resale at the end of their useful life. The Authority has determined that the amounts received when assets are decommissioned are negligible and depend on the market demand for the assets at time of disposal.
- Property valued at Depreciated Replacement Cost – The Authority has measured its fire stations as depreciated replacement cost as there is no market-based evidence of fair value because of the specialist nature of the assets.

4. Assumptions Made about the Future and Other Major Sources of Estimation Uncertainty

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

The items in the Authority's Balance Sheet at 31st March 2020 for which there is a significant risk of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year are as follows:

Item	Uncertainties	Effect if Actual Results Differ from Assumptions
Property, Plant and Equipment	<p>Assets are depreciated over useful lives that are dependent on assumptions about the level of repairs and maintenance that will be incurred in relation to individual assets. The current economic climate makes it uncertain that the Authority will be able to sustain its current spending on repairs and maintenance, bringing into doubt the useful lives assigned to assets.</p>	<p>If the useful life of assets are reduced, depreciation increases and the carrying amount of the assets falls.</p> <p>It is estimated that the annual depreciation charge for buildings would increase by £63,000 for every year that useful lives have to be reduced.</p>
	<p>The Authority operates a 5-year revaluation programme for Land and Buildings held on the Balance Sheet. The Authority in conjunction with its valuer had all its land and buildings valued at 31 March 2019, taking into account various factors such as buildings cost indices and local knowledge of markets. In order to keep costs up to date 20% of the land and buildings are fully revalued each year from 2020 on a 5-year rolling basis. These figures are then used to update property portfolio on an annual basis.</p> <p>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, at the year-end date, valuers could attach less weight to previous market evidence for comparison purposes, to inform opinions of value. The valuations of assets provided by the valuers have been subject to “material valuation uncertainty” clauses, as per the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Red Book guidance. Consequently, a higher degree of caution should be attached to the valuation.</p>	<p>Land and building revaluations increased by £2m to £72m and therefore a 1% change in valuation would result in an increase/decrease in valuation of £720,000.</p>
Pensions Liability	<p>Estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex judgements relating to the discount rate used, the rate at which salaries are projected to increase, changes in retirement ages, mortality rates and expected returns on pension fund assets. A firm of consulting actuaries is engaged to provide the Authority with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied. (Note 40)</p>	<p>The estimates and assumptions involve many variables all of which interact in complex ways and will have an impact on figures produced by professional actuaries. If pensions liability were to change by 1% this would result in a gain/loss of £11.0m.</p>

<p>Pension Assets</p>	<p>The outbreak of COVID-19, declared by the World Health Organisation as a 'Global Pandemic' on the 11 March 2020, has impacted on global markets. This will have had an impact on Pension Funds worldwide. Below are some key issues and risks that have been identified by the Merseyside Pension Fund.</p> <p>Unquoted Investments</p> <p>For 2019/20 there is additional uncertainty regarding the valuations of illiquid assets, due to the time it will take to fully realise the impact of COVID-19 on such assets. The valuations have been updated based upon the available information as at 31 March 2020 and maybe subject to variations as further information becomes available. There are assets such as Private Equity investments that are not publicly listed and as such there is a degree of estimation involved in these valuations. The International Private Equity and Venture Capital Valuation 57 (IPEV) Board issued additional guidance on these given the magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis as at 31 March.</p> <p>Hedge funds are valued at the fair value provided by the Administrators of the underlying Funds plus adjustments that the Hedge Fund Directors or Independent Administrators feel necessary. These investments are not publicly listed and as such there is a degree of estimation involved in the valuations.</p> <p>Direct property and pooled property funds use valuation techniques to determine the carrying amount. Where possible these valuations are based on observable data, but where this is not possible management of the Fund uses the best available data.</p> <p>For 2019/20 property valuations due to COVID-19, has been reported on the basis of 'material valuation uncertainty' as per VPS3 and VPGA10 of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Red Book Global.</p>	<p>The effects on the net pensions liability for changes in the assumptions used have been evaluated for their potential impact (see page 84 for potential changes in assumptions of 0.1%). An additional impact has been included for Investment returns on the LGPS.</p>
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Item	Uncertainties	Effect if Actual Results Differ from Assumptions
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<p>Pensions McCloud</p>	<p>The decisions of the Court of Appeal in the Sargeant/McCloud (McCloud) cases have ruled that the transitional protections afforded to older members when the Firefighter Pension Scheme(s), FPS, and Local Government Pension Scheme, LGPS, constituted unlawful age discrimination. On 27th June 2019, the Supreme Court denied the Government permission to appeal this decision.</p> <p>The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) has carried out costings of the potential effect of McCloud on the FPS, and Mercers on the Authority's LGPS fund. The Authority has received updated past service liability costs from the relevant actuaries based on these costings and assumptions.</p> <p>In 2019/20 the Authority's FPS liability was updated to include specific membership data, rather than using data for the Fire Service as a whole, in line with CIPFA Guidance</p> <p>At this stage, it is uncertain what the final compensation or remedy will be, and if the proposal will require primary legislation before it can be implemented.</p>	<p>The additional past service costs assumed for the McCloud case are very sensitive to the assumptions made by the actuaries.</p> <p>In particular, judgement is expected to be highly sensitive to the gap between CPI inflation and the assumed rate of salary growth. Under the approach and remedy adopted by the actuaries:-</p> <p>FPS assumes Pay growth of +2.0% above CPI, if the long term salary growth assumptions were 1.0% pa lower, then the impact on the past service cost is expected to be a change of around -10% on the provision.</p> <p>LGPS assumes Pay growth of +1.5% above CPI, if the long term salary growth assumptions were equal to CPI the costs in relation to McCloud would be insignificant and could be assumed to be neutral.</p>
<p>Arrears</p>	<p>At 31st March 2020, the Authority had a balance of sundry debtors of £443,000. A review of significant balances suggested that a credit loss provision of 16.25% (£72,000) was appropriate.</p>	<p>If collection rates were to deteriorate, a doubling of the amount of the impairment of doubtful debts would require an additional £72,000 to set aside as an allowance.</p>
<p>Provisions</p>	<p>The Authority has made provision for Injury and Damage Compensation claims based on an estimate of potential payouts. As at 31st March 2020, this totalled £254,000.</p>	<p>Claims calculations are based on past-experience. If the estimate were to change by 10%, this would result in a change of £25,000 in the provision.</p>
	<p>The Authority has made provisions for the proportion of Business Rates Appeals from all 5 Precepting Authorities. As at 31st March 2020, this totalled £842,000.</p>	<p>Figures are provided by the 5 Local Precepting Authorities. Concern on collection rates and Appeals could be affected by the COVID 19 Pandemic.</p>

COVID-19 Pandemic

The current and ongoing Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has created further uncertainty around all estimates including mortality rates, asset values and the general economic climate.

5. Material Items of Income and Expense

The following services have been outsourced to an external provider.



	2019/20 £000	2018/19 £000
IT & Communications	1,913	1,869
Estates	1,296	1,213

6. Events After the Reporting Period

After the McCloud Pension Remedy consultation published in July 2020, the actuaries reviewed the existing Pension Liability in line with specific data to each Fire Authority and calculated a reduction in liability of £4.5m (£3.2m past service costs and £1.3m current service cost) this has been amended in the Accounts as at 31 March 2020. See assumptions on estimates Note 4 page 37.

7. Adjustments between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulations

This note details the adjustments that are made to the total comprehensive income and expenditure recognised by the Authority in the year, in accordance with proper accounting practice to the resources that are specified by statutory provisions as being available to the Authority to meet future capital and revenue expenditure. The following sets out a description of the reserves that the adjustments are made against.

General Fund Balance

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

Capital Receipts Reserve

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

Capital Grants Unapplied

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

Adjustments between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulations 2019/20



2019/20	Usable Reserves		
	General Fund Balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied £000
Adjustments to Revenue Resources			
Amounts by which income and expenditure included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement are different from revenue for the year calculated in accordance with statutory requirements:			
- Pensions costs (transferred to (or from) the Pensions Reserve)	(10,892)	-	-
- Financial instruments (transferred to the Financial Instruments Adjustments Account)	-	-	-
- Council Tax and NDR (transferred to the Collection Fund Adjustments Account)	(214)	-	-
- Holiday pay (transferred to the Accumulated Absences Reserve)	109	-	-
- Reversal of entries included in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in relation to capital expenditure (these items are charged to the Capital Adjustment Account):	(4,836)	-	(700)
Total Adjustments to Revenue Resources	(15,833)	-	(700)
Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources			
Transfer of non-current asset sale proceeds from revenue to the Capital Reserve	2,349	(2,349)	-
Administrative costs of non-current asset disposals (funded by a contribution from the Capital Receipts Reserve)	(36)	36	-
Statutory provision for the repayment of debt (transfer from the Capital Adjustment Account)	8,545	-	-
Capital expenditure financed from revenue balances (transfer to the Capital Adjustment Account)	3,737	-	-
Total Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources	14,595	(2,313)	-
Adjustments to Capital Resources			
Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance capital expenditure	-	2,313	-
Application of capital grants to finance capital expenditure	-	-	1,966
Cash payments in relation to deferred capital receipts	-	-	-
Total Adjustments to Capital Resources	-	2,313	1,966
Total Adjustments	(1,238)	-	1,266

Adjustments between Accounting Basis and Funding Basis under Regulations 2018/19

2018/19	Usable Reserves		
	General Fund Balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied £000
Adjustments to Revenue Resources			
Amounts by which income and expenditure included in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement are different from revenue for the year calculated in accordance with statutory requirements:			
- Pensions costs (transferred to (or from) the Pensions Reserve)	(47,821)	-	-
- Financial instruments (transferred to the Financial Instruments Adjustments Account)	(14)	-	-
- Council Tax and NDR (transferred to the Collection Fund Adjustments Account)	(58)	-	-
- Holiday pay (transferred to the Accumulated Absences Reserve)	(70)	-	-
- Reversal of entries included in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in relation to capital expenditure (these items are charged to the Capital Adjustment Account):	(5,810)	-	(2,100)
Total Adjustments to Revenue Resources	(53,773)	-	(2,100)
Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources			
Transfer of non-current asset sale proceeds from revenue to the Capital Reserve	1,673	(1,673)	-
Administrative costs of non-current asset disposals (funded by a contribution from the Capital Receipts Reserve)	(8)	8	-
Statutory provision for the repayment of debt (transfer from the Capital Adjustment Account)	8,234	-	-
Capital expenditure financed from revenue balances (transfer to the Capital Adjustment Account)	3,439	-	-
Total Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources	13,338	(1,665)	-
Adjustments to Capital Resources			
Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance capital expenditure	-	1,665	-
Application of capital grants to finance capital expenditure	-	-	2,289
Cash payments in relation to deferred capital receipts	-	-	-
Total Adjustments to Capital Resources	-	1,665	2,289
Total Adjustments	(40,435)	-	189

8. Movements in Earmarked Reserves

This note sets out the amounts set aside from the General Fund balances in earmarked reserves to provide financing for future expenditure plans and the amounts posted back from earmarked reserves to meet General Fund in 2019/20.

	Balance at 31 March 2018 £000	Transfers Out 2018/19 £000	Transfers In 2018/19 £000	Balance at 31 March 2019 £000	Transfers Out 2019/20 £000	Transfers In 2019/20 £000	Balance at 31 March 2020 £000
Emergency Related Reserves:							
Bellwin Reserve	147	-	75	222	-	-	222
Insurance Reserve	859	(476)	-	383	-	116	499
Emergency Planning Reserve	75	(75)	-	-	-	-	-
Catastrophe Reserve	100	(100)	-	-	-	-	-
Facing the Future / COVID-19 Reserve	-	-	-	-	-	355	355
Modernisation Challenge:							
Smoothing Reserve	1,806	(1,356)	-	450	-	1,550	2,000
Pensions Reserve	322	(322)	-	-	-	-	-
Recruitment Reserve	3,000	-	-	3,000	-	-	3,000
Invest To Save Reserve	1,000	(364)	259	895	(463)	117	549
Capital Investment:							
Capital Investment Reserve	12,321	(2,770)	4,880	14,431	(11,324)	5,319	8,426
Emerging Technologies Reserve	58	(58)	-	-	-	-	-
PFI Annuity Reserve	2,092	(106)	-	1,986	(2,221)	2,097	1,862
Equality and Accessibility Reserve	285	(285)	-	-	-	-	-
Specific Projects:							
Health & Safety Reserve	6	-	24	30	-	3	33
Equipment Reserve	347	(263)	8	92	(14)	13	91
Community Engagement Reserve	24	-	-	24	(16)	-	8
Clothing Reserve	308	(66)	-	242	(264)	350	328
Health & Wellbeing Reserve	35	-	-	35	(20)	5	20
Training Reserve	450	(300)	-	150	-	-	150
Inflation:							
Inflation Reserve	700	-	-	700	-	-	700
Total	23,935	(6,541)	5,246	22,640	(14,322)	9,925	18,243
Ringfenced Reserves							
Princes Trust Reserve	121	(82)	-	39	(39)	82	82
Community Risk Management Reserve	325	-	-	325	(7)	-	318
Energy Reserve	141	(162)	40	19	(83)	72	8
New Dimensions Reserve	1,193	(1,193)	41	41	-	75	116
Total	1,780	(1,437)	81	424	(129)	229	524
Total Committed Reserves	25,715	(7,978)	5,327	23,064	(14,451)	10,154	18,767

Bellwin Reserve

This reserve is set aside for expenditure in exceptional circumstances, which is below the threshold for Central Government assistance under the Bellwin scheme.

Insurance Reserve

Due to an Authority decision to increase self-insurance (particularly vehicle insurance), a reserve has been set up to hedge against the risk of unidentified future claims. A specific provision is made for claims that have already been lodged.

Emergency Planning Reserve

This reserve was created due to the increased threat of terrorism and would give the Authority an immediate budget to spend in an emergency. This reserve has been realigned with the Bellwin Reserve.

Catastrophe Reserve

This reserve was set up in light of any risk to the Authority and the need for resources to cope with any major or protracted incidents. This reserve has been realigned with the Capital Investment Reserve.

Facing the Future / COVID-19 Reserve

This reserve was created from Grants received at the end of March 2020 in order to alleviate financial pressures on the service due to the effect of the pandemic. This money will be spent in 2020/21 along with further Grants expected.

Smoothing Reserve

This reserve is used to support the significant financial challenges that the Authority faces as public spending is reduced. It is intended to smooth out expenditure patterns when savings take time to deliver and to help avoid firefighter redundancies.

Pensions Reserve

This reserve was created to contribute towards the cost of any ill health retirements the Authority may have. The Authority is required to contribute towards the pension costs when a firefighter retires on ill health over a three-year period. Also due to recent changes in commutation factors for firefighters in terms of any backdated claims.

Recruitment Reserve

Over the next decade, almost two thirds of firefighters are expected to retire. In addition, it takes almost a year to train a firefighter across the full range of competencies. In order to meet this challenge in a prudent and structured fashion a reserve of £3m has been created to support staff recruitment to manage effective succession planning.

Invest To Save Reserve

Some reserves were realigned in the year to create a more generic reserve for schemes to invest in up front in order to establish long-term savings.

Capital Investment Reserve

This reserve was created to contribute towards unforeseeable costs associated with large strategic capital schemes and to provide a resource for future station merger schemes and the refurbishment of the Training and Development Academy.

Emerging Technologies Reserve

This reserve has been created to invest in Information Technology within the Fire & Rescue Service. This reserve has been realigned with the Capital Investment Reserve.

PFI Annuity Reserve

This reserve was created to account for the differences in PFI credits received from the Government and actual payments to the PFI contractor.

Equality and Accessibility Reserve

Following a recent station access audit, the service needs to carry out some works to ensure all its property portfolio is compliant with current regulations. This reserve has been realigned with the Capital Investment Reserve.

Health & Safety Reserve

This reserve was created to assist the Authority's investment in health and safety issues in the workplace.

Equipment Reserve

This reserve was created to fund the purchase of equipment, furniture and small community based schemes.

Community Engagement Reserve

This reserve has been created for investment in fire related academic research.

Clothing Reserve

This reserve has been created for investment in fire clothing/boots/helmets.

Health & Wellbeing Reserve

To improve community health where it links to fire & rescue service outcomes and to exploit and maximise opportunities and initiatives arising from the World Firefighter Games.

Training Reserve

This reserve has been created to allow additional resources and training for the additional costs required for emergency services collaboration.

Inflation Reserve

To cope with variations in pay and price inflation compared to the rates assumed in the financial plan. This reserve would provide short term funding for any excessive inflationary cost. It should be noted that assumptions on pay increases in the budget are low (1%).

Ringfenced Reserves

The Authority has a number of ringfenced reserves for specific initiatives for which dedicated funding / resources have been earmarked. These schemes often cover more than one financial year and therefore these reserves were created to cover the planned spend over future years.

9. Other Operating Expenditure

2018/19 £000		2019/20 £000
(581)	(Gains)/losses on the disposal of non-current assets	(1,763)
(31,299)	Gain in relation to Government grant payable to Pension Fund on Authority's behalf	(28,671)
(31,880)	Total	(30,434)

10. Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure

2018/19 £000		2019/20 £000
3,694	Interest payable and similar charges	3,624
29,938	Pensions interest cost	30,811
(2,015)	Expected return on pensions assets	(1,958)
(266)	Interest receivable and similar income	(301)
-	Other investment income	-
31,351	Total	32,176

11. Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income

2018/19 £000		2019/20 £000
(28,147)	Council tax income	(29,182)
(4,173)	National non-domestic rates (local share)	(4,307)
-	National non-domestic rates pool	-
(15,273)	National non-domestic rates top up grant	(15,585)
(12,050)	Revenue support grant	(11,000)
(2,111)	Capital grants and contributions	(700)
(61,754)	Total	(60,774)

12. Property, Plant and Equipment

Movements in 2019/20:

	Land & Buildings	Assets Under Construction	Vehicles & Equipment	Total Property, Plant and Equipment	PFI Assets Included in Property Plant and Equipment
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost or Valuation					
At 1 April 2019	70,023	491	21,412	91,926	22,185
Additions	391	5,285	2,043	7,719	14
Donations	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	3,001	-	-	3,001	1,229
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition – disposals	-	-	(21)	(21)	-
Derecognition – other	(1,750)	-	(3,060)	(4,810)	(543)
Assets reclassified (to)/from held for sale	(330)	-	-	(330)	-
Other movements in cost or valuation	656	(656)	-	-	-
At 31 March 2020	71,991	5,120	20,374	97,485	22,885
Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment					
At 1 April 2019	-	-	(10,931)	(10,931)	-
Depreciation charge	(1,750)	-	(2,235)	(3,985)	(543)
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-	-	-
Depreciation written out to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment losses/(reversals) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment losses/(reversals) recognised in Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition – disposals	-	-	3	3	-
Derecognition – other	1,750	-	3,060	4,810	543
Assets reclassified (to)/from held for sale	-	-	-	-	-
Other movements in depreciation and impairment	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2020	-	-	(10,103)	(10,103)	-
Net Book Value					
At 31 March 2020	71,991	5,120	10,271	87,382	22,885
At 31 March 2019	70,023	491	10,481	80,995	22,185
Nature of Asset Holding					
Owned	46,956	5,120	10,271	62,347	-
Finance Lease	2,150	-	-	2,150	-
PFI	22,885	-	-	22,885	22,885
Total	71,991	5,120	10,271	87,382	22,885

Property, Plant and Equipment

Comparative Movements in 2018/19:

	Land & Buildings	Assets Under Construction	Vehicles & Equipment	Total Property, Plant and Equipment	PFI Assets Included in Property Plant and Equipment
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost or Valuation					
At 1 April 2018	63,934	193	19,780	83,907	18,825
Additions	610	5,231	2,829	8,670	59
Donations	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	17,359	-	-	17,359	5,201
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	(6,052)	-	-	(6,052)	-
Derecognition – disposals	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition – other	(9,052)	-	(1,197)	(10,249)	(1,900)
Assets reclassified (to)/from held for sale	(1,709)	-	-	(1,709)	-
Other movements in cost or valuation	4,933	(4,933)	-	0	-
At 31 March 2019	70,023	491	21,412	91,926	22,185
Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment					
At 1 April 2018	(7,338)	-	(9,778)	(17,116)	(1,425)
Depreciation charge	(2,478)	-	(2,350)	(4,828)	(475)
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-	-	-
Depreciation written out to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment losses/(reversals) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-	-	-
Impairment losses/(reversals) recognised in Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition – disposals	-	-	-	-	-
Derecognition – other	9,052	-	1,197	10,249	1,900
Assets reclassified (to)/from held for sale	764	-	-	764	-
Other movements in depreciation and impairment	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2019	-	-	(10,931)	(10,931)	-
Net Book Value					
At 31 March 2019	70,023	491	10,481	80,995	22,185
At 31 March 2018	56,596	193	10,002	66,791	17,400
Nature of Asset Holding					
Owned	45,838	491	10,481	56,810	-
Finance Lease	2,000	-	-	2,000	-
PFI	22,185	-	-	22,185	22,185
Total	70,023	491	10,481	80,995	22,185

Depreciation

The following useful lives and depreciation rates have been used in the calculation of depreciation:

- Buildings – Straight-line allocation over the remaining life of the property as estimated by the valuer. The remaining life of the buildings range from 2 – 50 years. This is due to the station merger programme. Fire stations are being depreciated over the remaining useful life in line with the forecast openings of new fire stations.
- Vehicles, plant and equipment – straight-line allocation over the remaining useful life as estimated by a suitably qualified officer. Vehicles are depreciated over 5 – 20 years and plant and equipment is depreciated over 3 – 25 years
- Land – depreciation is not applied to land
- No residual value is accounted for

Depreciation / Impairment Reconciliation 2019/20

The attached analysis gives a complete breakdown of all depreciation charges, impairments and reversal of prior year impairments and revaluation losses.

	I&E Account £000	MIRS Reversal £000	Fixed Assets £000	Intangible Assets £000	AHFS £000	Revaluation Reserve £000
Depreciation						
Fixed assets	3,986	(3,986)	3,986	-	-	-
Intangible assets	261	(261)	-	261	-	-
Total	4,247	(4,247)	3,986	261	-	-
Impairments						
(Gain)/loss on asset sales	-	-	-	-	-	-
General impairments (L&B)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation (Gain)/ loss on reclassification	(20)	20	-	-	(20)	-
Total	(20)	20	-	-	(20)	-
Reversal of Prior Year						
Impairments	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revaluation losses	(233)	233	-	-	-	(233)
Total	(233)	233	-	-	-	(233)
Grand Total	3,994	(3,994)	3,986	261	(20)	(233)
Revaluation Gain	-	-	3,001	-	-	(3,001)
Reversal of PY impairments	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversal of PY revaluation gain	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net Gain			3,001	-	-	(3,001)

Capital Commitments

At 31st March 2020, the Authority had entered into a number of contracts for the construction or enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment. The value of these commitments in 2020/21 and future years is £5.0m. Similar commitments at 31st March 2019 were £2.3m. The commitments can be analysed as follows:

• Building Schemes	£3.0m
• Equipment and ICT Schemes	£1.3m
• Vehicles	<u>£0.7m</u>
	<u>£5.0m</u>

Effects of Changes in Estimates

Formby LLAR House was put up for sale in 2019/20 and transferred to Assets Held for Sale.

• Formby LLAR House	£350,000
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Various properties were sold in 2019/20:-

• West Kirby Fire Station	£1,180,000
• Upton Fire Station	£1,083,000
• Old Swan Land Covenant Release	<u>£50,000</u>
	<u>£2,313,000</u>

Revaluations

The Authority carries out a rolling programme that ensures all Property, Plant and Equipment required to be measured at current value is revalued at least every five years. All properties were valued by an external valuer (Hardie Brack Chartered Surveyors). Valuations of land and buildings are carried out in accordance with the methodologies and bases for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. The last complete property portfolio valuation was completed in March 2019 and became effective as at 31/03/2019. The Authority now evaluates 20% of its Land & Buildings every year and updates its valuations based on use in line with valuer's assumptions. Valuations of vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment are based on historical prices where there is an active second-hand market or latest list prices adjusted for the condition of the asset.

Componentisation

After consulting with the fire & rescue service valuers (Hardie Brack Chartered Surveyors) we have concluded that no material changes to depreciation would be incurred by componentisation and that all components have a similar asset life or their values are not material. All fire stations have been valued on a depreciated replacement cost basis as there is no market value and the balance of property has been valued on a current value basis. All land and buildings were revalued at 31 March 2019 and then 20% on a rolling 5-year basis, however the asset portfolio has been adjusted in line with the rolling basis according to asset categories.

	Land and Buildings £000	Assets Under Construction £000	Vehicles & Equipment £000	Total £000
Carried at historical cost	-	5,120	10,271	15,391
Valued at Depreciated Replacement Cost (DRC) at:				
31 March 2020	56,009	-	-	56,009
Values at current value as at:				
31 March 2020	15,982	-	-	15,982
Total Cost or Valuation	71,991	5,120	10,271	87,382

13. Intangible Assets

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 include purchased licenses only.

The movement on intangible asset balances during the year is as follows:

	2019/20 Software Licenses	2018/19 Software Licenses
	£000	£000
Balance at start of year:		
▪ Gross carrying amounts	374	374
▪ Accumulated amortisation	(225)	-
Net carrying amount at start of year	149	374
Additions:		
▪ Internal development	-	-
▪ Purchases	222	197
▪ Acquired through business combinations	-	-
Assets reclassified as held for sale	-	-
Other disposals	-	-
Revaluations increases or decreases	-	-
Impairment losses recognised or reversed directly in the Revaluation Reserve	-	-
Impairment losses recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-
Reversals of past impairment losses written back to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	-	-
Amortisation for the period	(261)	(422)
Other changes	-	-
Net carrying amount at end of year	110	149
Comprising:		
▪ Gross carrying amounts	184	374
▪ Accumulated amortisation	(74)	(225)
Total	110	149

14. Financial Instruments

Reclassification of Financial Instruments Due to the Adoption on IFRS 9

To meet Code requirements, financial assets are now classified into one of three categories:

- Financial assets held at amortised cost: These represent loans and loan-type arrangements where repayments of interest and principal take place on set dates and at specified amounts. The amount presented in the Balance Sheet represents the outstanding principal received plus accrued interest. Interest credited to the CIES is the amount receivable as per the loan agreement.
- Financial assets at Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income (FVOCI): These assets are measured and carried at fair value. All gains and losses due to changes in fair value (both realised and unrealised) are accounted for through a reserve account, with the balance debited or credited to the CIES when the asset is disposed of, depreciation is not applied to land
- Fair Value through Profit and Loss (FVTPL): These assets are measured and carried at fair value. All gains and losses due to changes in fair value (both realised and unrealised) are recognised in the CIES as they occur.

IFRS 9 also applies to financial liabilities, which have been assessed to be categorised as amortised cost, which is equivalent to the old classification of loans and receivables, under which all of the Authority's financial liabilities fall (excluding PFI and leases).

All of the information that follow are based on the new standard.

Categories of Financial Instruments

The Authority's financial instruments include financial assets (investments and receivables) and financial liabilities (trade payables arising from day-to-day operations and borrowings). The main purposes of the Authority's financial instruments are to raise finance to support the Authority's day-to-day operations (by investing surplus cash balances where appropriate) and finance investment undertaken through the capital programme.

The following categories of financial instruments are carried on the Balance Sheet, were financial assets and liabilities have been identified which do not meet the financial instrument criteria they have been included in non-financial instruments for completeness.

	Non-Current		Current	
	31 March 2020	31 March 2019	31 March 2020	31 March 2019
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Financial Assets				
Investments at amortised	-	-	23,119	17,088
Cash & Bank	-	-	3,075	4,669
Total Investments	-	-	26,194	21,757

Debtors				
Debtors at amortised cost	-	-	8,037	9,667
Non-financial instruments	-	-	6,422	6,642
Total Included in Debtors	-	-	14,459	16,309

Financial Liabilities				
Financial liabilities at amortised cost (PWLB)	(36,885)	(37,335)	(450)	(265)
Financial liabilities at fair value through profit and loss	-	-	-	-
Total Borrowings	(36,885)	(37,335)	(450)	(265)
Other Long-Term Liabilities				
Finance lease liabilities at amortised cost	-	-	-	-
PFI liabilities at amortised cost	(17,324)	(17,753)	(429)	(394)
Merseyside Residual Debt at amortised cost	(202)	(243)	(41)	(41)
Total Other Long-Term Liabilities	(17,526)	(17,996)	(470)	(435)
Creditors				
Creditors at amortised cost	-	-	(3,126)	(4,240)
Non-financial instruments	-	-	(7,558)	(6,031)
PWLB interest carried at amortised cost	-	-	(381)	(384)
Total Creditors	-	-	(11,065)	(10,655)
Total Borrowing	(54,411)	(55,331)	(11,985)	(11,355)

Income, Expense, Gains and Losses

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

	2019/20		2018/19	
	Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Net gains/losses on:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial assets measured at fair value through profit or loss 	-	-	-	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial assets measured at amortised cost 	-	-	-	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investments in equity instruments designated at fair value through other comprehensive income 	-	-	-	-
Total net gains/losses	-	-	-	-
Interest revenue:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial assets measured at amortised cost 	(301)	-	(266)	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other financial assets measured at fair value through other comprehensive income 	-	-	-	-
Total interest revenue	(301)	-	(266)	-
Interest expense:	3,624	-	3,694	-
Fee income:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial assets or financial liabilities that are not at fair value through profit or loss 	-	-	-	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust and other fiduciary activities 	-	-	-	-
Total fee income	-	-	-	-
Fee expense:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial assets or financial liabilities that are not at fair value through profit or loss 	-	-	-	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust and other fiduciary activities 	-	-	-	-
Total fee expense	-	-	-	-

Fair Values of Assets and Liabilities

Financial liabilities and financial assets represented by loans and receivables and long-term debtors and creditors are carried in the Balance Sheet at amortised cost. Their fair value can be assessed by calculating the present value of the cash flows that will take place over the remaining term of the instruments, using the following assumptions:

- actual ranges of interest rates at 31st March 2020 of 4.25% to 11.125% for loans from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)
- no early repayment or impairment is recognised
- where an instrument will mature in the next twelve months, carrying amount is assumed to approximate to fair value
- the fair value of trade and other receivables is taken to be the invoiced or billed amount

The fair values calculated are as follows:

	31 March 2020		31 March 2019	
	Carrying amount	Fair value	Carrying amount	Fair value
	£000	£000	£000	£000
PWLB Short & Long term loans	37,335	56,444	37,600	58,047
PFI Liability	17,753	18,239	18,147	18,945

The PWLB fair value of the liabilities is higher than the carrying amount because the Authority's portfolio of loans includes a number of fixed rate loans where the interest rate payable is higher than the prevailing rates at the Balance Sheet date. This shows a notional future loss (based on economic conditions at 31st March 2020) arising from a commitment to pay interest to lenders above current market rates.

The PFI fair value of the liability is higher than the carrying amount and is defined as the price that would be paid to transfer the liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date.

The fair value of the Merseyside residual debt is taken to be the same as the amount of principal outstanding.

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

Short-term investments carrying amount is assumed to approximate to fair value.

15. Inventories

	Clothing / Consumable Stores		Diesel / Maintenance Materials		Total	
	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance outstanding at start of year	497	416	111	111	608	527
Purchases	656	128	744	787	1,400	915
Recognised as an expense in the year	(616)	(47)	(743)	(787)	(1,359)	(834)
Written-off balances	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reversals of write-offs in previous years	-	-	-	-	-	-
Balance outstanding at year-end	537	497	112	111	649	608

16. Debtors

	31 March 2020	31 March 2019
	£000	£000
Central Government bodies	10,312	11,513
Other local authorities	3,366	3,410
NHS bodies	-	-
Public corporations and trading funds	-	-
Other entities and individuals	781	1,386
Total	14,459	16,309

17. Cash and Cash Equivalents

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

31 March 2019		31 March 2020
£000		£000
8	Cash held by the Authority	5
(441)	Bank current accounts	(932)
5,102	Short-term deposits with building societies	4,002
4,669	Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	3,075

18. Assets Held for Sale

	Current		Non-Current	
	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance outstanding at start of year	550	650	-	-
Assets newly classified as held for sale:				
▪ property, plant and equipment	-	-	330	945
▪ intangible assets	-	-	-	-
▪ other assets/liabilities in disposal groups	-	-	-	-
Revaluation losses	-	-	-	(72)
Revaluation gains	-	-	20	111
Impairment losses	-	-	-	-
Assets declassified as held for sale:				
▪ property, plant and equipment	-	-	-	-
▪ intangible assets	-	-	-	-
▪ other assets/liabilities in disposal groups	-	-	-	-
Assets sold	(550)	(1,084)	-	-
Transfers from non-current to current	350	984	(350)	(984)
Other movements	-	-	-	-
Balance outstanding at year-end	350	550	-	-

19. Creditors

	31 March 2020	31 March 2019
	£000	£000
Central Government bodies	(5,473)	(4,010)
Other local authorities	(3,021)	(2,941)
NHS bodies	-	-
Public corporations and trading funds	-	-
Other entities and individuals	(2,190)	(3,320)
Total	(10,684)	(10,271)

The accrual for Compensated Absences is included in other entities and individuals.

20. Provisions

	Outstanding Legal Cases £000	Injury and Damage Compensation Claims £000	Business Rates Appeals £000	Total £000
Balance at 1 April 2019	-	(343)	(812)	(1,155)
Additional provisions made in 2019/20	-	-	(30)	(30)
Amounts used in 2019/20	-	14	-	14
Unused amounts reversed in 2019/20	-	75	-	75
Unwinding of discounting in 2019/20	-	-	-	-
Balance at 31 March 2020	-	(254)	(842)	(1,096)

Injury Compensation Claims

All of the injury compensation claims have currently been assessed as at 31st March 2020. They relate to personal injuries sustained where the Authority is alleged to be at fault. Provision is made for those claims where it is deemed probable that the Authority will have to make a settlement, based on past experience of court decisions about liability and the amount of damages payable. All outstanding claims are expected to be settled in future years but no precise date can be estimated. The Authority will only be reimbursed by the insurers for claims above £0.5m.

Business Rates Appeals

This relates to Merseyside Fire Service's share of appeals at 31st March 2020 from the five precepting authorities.

21. Usable Reserves

31 March 2019 £000		31 March 2020 £000
-	Usable Capital Receipts Reserve	
(4,856)	Usable Capital Grants Unapplied	(3,590)
(2,000)	General Fund Balance	(3,000)
(23,064)	Earmarked Reserves (Note 8)	(18,767)
(29,920)	Total Usable Reserves	(25,357)

22. Unusable Reserves

31 March 2019 £000		31 March 2020 £000
(18,129)	Revaluation Reserve	(20,227)
(5,225)	Capital Adjustment Account	(16,919)
-	Financial Instruments Adjustment Account	-
1,187,762	Pensions Reserve	1,093,024
(286)	Collection Fund Adjustment Account	(72)
1,033	Accumulating Compensated Absences Adjustment Account	923
1,165,155	Total Unusable Reserves	1,056,729

Revaluation Reserve

The Revaluation Reserve contains the gains made by the Authority arising from increases in the value of its property, plant and equipment. The balance is reduced when assets with accumulated gains are:

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

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

2018/19 £000		2019/20 £000
(7,665)	Balance at 1 April	(18,129)
(12,102)	Upward revaluation of assets	(2,767)
-	Downward revaluation of assets and impairment losses not charged to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	-
(12,102)	Surplus or deficit on revaluation of non-current assets not posted to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(2,767)
866	Difference between fair value depreciation and historical cost depreciation	467
772	Accumulated gains on assets sold or scrapped	202
1,638	Amount written off to the Capital Adjustment Account	669
(18,129)	Balance at 31 March	(20,227)

Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve

The Financial Instruments Revaluation Reserve contains the gains made by the Authority arising from increases in the value of its investments that have quoted market prices or otherwise do not have fixed or determinable payments. The balance is reduced when investments with accumulated gains are:

- revalued downwards or impaired and the gains are lost
- disposed of and the gains are realised.

The Authority had no available for sale financial instruments at 31st March 2020.

Capital Adjustment Account

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

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

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

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

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
4,131	Balance at 1 April	(5,225)
	Reversal of items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:	
4,646	• Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	3,986
977	• Revaluation losses on property, plant and equipment	(233)
422	• Amortisation of intangible assets	261
830	• Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute	992
1,045	• Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	530
7,920		5,536
(1,638)	Adjusting amounts written out of the Revaluation Reserve	(669)
6,282	Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in the year	4,867
	Capital financing applied in the year:	
(1,665)	• Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure	(2,313)
-	• Use of the Major Repairs Reserve to finance new capital expenditure	-
(11)	• Capital grants and contributions credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement that have been applied to capital financing	-
(2,289)	• Application of grants to capital financing from the Capital Grants Unapplied Account	(1,966)
(8,234)	• Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment charged against the General Fund	(8,545)
(3,439)	• Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund	(3,737)
(15,638)		(16,561)
-	Movements in the market value of Investment Properties debited or credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-
-	Movement in the Donated Assets Account credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-
(5,225)	Balance at 31 March	(16,919)

Financial Instruments Adjustment Account

The Financial Instruments Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for income and expenses relating to certain financial instruments and for bearing losses or benefiting from gains per statutory provisions. The Authority uses the Account to manage premiums paid and discounts received on the early redemption of loans. Premiums are debited and discounts credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when they are incurred, but reversed out of the General Fund to the Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Over time, the expense or income is posted back to the General Fund Balance in accordance with statutory arrangements for spreading the burden on council tax. In the Authority's case, this period is the unexpired term that was outstanding on the loans when they were redeemed. As a result, the balance on the Account at 31st March 2020 is zero – all premiums have now been written back over the unexpired term.



2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
(14)	Balance at 1 April	-
-	Premiums incurred in the year and charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	-
14	Proportion of discounts received in previous financial years to be charged against the General Fund Balance in accordance with statutory requirements	-
14	Amount by which finance costs charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement are different from finance costs chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	-
-	Balance at 31 March	-

Pensions Reserve

The Pensions Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Authority accounts for post-employment benefits in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed as the Authority makes employer's contributions to pension funds or eventually pays any pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance on the Pensions Reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Authority has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
1,108,804	Balance at 1 April	1,187,762
31,137	Remeasurements of the net defined benefit liability/(asset)	(105,630)
86,147	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	49,575
(38,326)	Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	(38,683)
1,187,762	Balance at 31 March	1,093,024

Collection Fund Adjustment Account

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

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
(344)	Balance at 1 April	(286)
58	Amount by which council tax and non-domestic rates income credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is different from council tax and non-domestic rates income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	214
(286)	Balance at 31 March	(72)

Unequal Pay Back Pay Account

The Unequal Pay Back Pay Account compensates for the differences between the rate at which the Authority provides for the potential costs of back pay settlements in relation to Equal Pay cases and the ability under statutory provisions to defer the impact on the General Fund Balance until such time as cash might be paid out to claimants. The Authority has no back pay claims in relation to equal pay.

Accumulating Absences Account

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

2018/19 £000		2019/20 £000
962	Balance at 1 April	1,033
(533)	Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year	(647)
604	Amounts accrued at the end of the current year	537
71	Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(110)
1,033	Balance at 31 March	923

23. Cash Flow Statement – The surplus or deficit on the provision of services has been adjusted for the following non-cash movements

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
(4,646)	Depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	(3,986)
(977)	Revaluation losses on property plant and equipment	233
(422)	Amortisation of intangible assets	(261)
(830)	Revenue expenditure treated as capital under statute	(992)
-	Movement in the donated assets account	-
(47,821)	Movement in pension liability	(10,892)
(1,045)	Carrying amount of non-current assets and non-current assets held for sale, sold or derecognised	(530)
5,370	(Increase)/decrease in creditors	(88)
4,882	Increase/(decrease) in debtors	(2,207)
81	Increase/(decrease) in stocks	41
(122)	(Increase)/decrease in provisions	88
(45,530)		(18,594)

24. Cash Flow Statement – The surplus or deficit on the provision of services has been adjusted for the following items that are investing and financing activities

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
266	Proceeds from short-term (not considered to be cash equivalents) and long-term investments	301
1,674	Proceeds from the sale of property plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	2,320
(3,694)	Loan interest	(3,624)
2,111	Capital grants	700
357		(303)

25. Cash Flow Statement – Investing Activities

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
9,697	Purchase of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	8,915
(5,000)	Purchase of short-term and long-term investments	6,000
700	Other payments for investing activities	-
(1,674)	Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	(2,320)
-	Proceeds from short-term and long-term investments	-
(2,351)	Other receipts from investing activities	(967)
1,372	Net cash flows from investing activities	11,628

26. Cash Flow Statement – Financing Activities

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
-	Cash receipts of short-term and long-term borrowing	-
-	Other receipts from financing activities	-
363	Cash payments for the reduction of the outstanding liabilities relating to finance leases and on-Balance Sheet PFI contracts	394
541	Repayments of short term and long term borrowing	306
3,702	Other payments for financing activities	3,628
4,606	Net cash flows from financing activities	4,328

27. Expenditure and Funding Analysis

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis below outlines in more detail the reconciliation of the General Fund and CIES statements. The EFA 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 services/departments. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

2018/19			Notes	2019/20		
Net Expenditure Chargeable to General Fund £000	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis £000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account £000		Net Expenditure Chargeable to General Fund £000	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis £000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account £000
62,143	42,138	104,281	Fire & Rescue Service Operations	63,361	(1,087)	62,274
475	532	1,007	Corporate and Democratic Core	520	588	1,108
-	81	81	National Resilience / International Search and Rescue	-	185	185
-	-	-	Non-Distributed Costs	-	-	-
62,618	42,751	105,369	Net Cost of Services	63,881	(314)	63,567
(59,967)	(2,316)	(62,283)	Other Income and Expenditure	(60,584)	1,552	(59,032)
2,651	40,435	43,086	Surplus or Deficit	3,297	1,238	4,535
(27,715)	-	-	Opening General Fund Balance	(25,064)	-	-
2,651	-	-	Less/Plus (Surplus) or Deficit on General Fund	3,297	-	-
(25,064)	-	-	Closing General Fund Balance at 31 March	(21,767)	-	-

Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis

Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statements Amounts	2018/19			
	Adjustments for Capital Purposes	Net Change for Pension Adjustments	Other Differences	Total Adjustments
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Fire & Rescue Service Operations	(9,087)	51,142	83	42,138
Corporate and Democratic Core	476	55	1	532
National Resilience / International Search and Rescue	81	-	-	81
Non-Distributed Costs	-	-	-	-
Exceptional Items	-	-	-	-
Net Cost Services	(8,530)	51,197	84	42,751
Other Income and Expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis	1,002	(3,376)	58	(2,316)
Difference between General Fund Surplus or Deficit and Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(7,528)	47,821	142	40,435

Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statements Amounts	2019/20			
	Adjustments for Capital Purposes	Net Change for Pension Adjustments	Other Differences	Total Adjustments
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Fire & Rescue Service Operations	(11,561)	10,582	(108)	(1,087)
Corporate and Democratic Core	461	128	(1)	588
National Resilience / International Search and Rescue	185	-	-	185
Non-Distributed Costs	-	-	-	-
Exceptional Items	-	-	-	-
Net Cost Services	(10,915)	10,710	(109)	(314)
Other Income and Expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis	1,156	182	214	1,552
Difference between General Fund Surplus or Deficit and Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(9,759)	10,892	105	1,238

1. Adjustments for Capital Purposes

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

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

2. 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.
- For **financing and investment income and expenditure** – the net interest on the defined benefit liability is charged to the CIES.

3. Other Statutory Adjustments

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

Segmental Income

Income received on a segmental basis is analysed below:

Services	2019/20	2018/19
	Income from Services £000	Income from Services £000
Fire & Rescue Service Operations	(11,752)	(8,421)
Corporate and Democratic Core	-	-
National Resilience / International Search and Rescue	(9,875)	(9,914)
Non-Distributed Costs	-	-
Exceptional Items	-	-
Total income analysed on a segmental basis	(21,627)	(18,335)

Expenditure and Income Analysed By Nature

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

Expenditure/Income	2019/20 £000	2018/19 £000
Expenditure		
Employee benefits expenses	54,326	50,558
Past service costs	5,169	46,041
Other services expenses (Including REFCUS)	21,287	20,704
Support service recharges	418	394
Depreciation, amortisation, impairment.	3,994	6,007
Interest payments	34,435	33,632
(Gain)/loss on disposal/transfer of assets	(1,763)	(581)
Total Expenditure	117,866	156,755
Income		
Fees, charges and Government Grant Revenue income	(21,627)	(18,335)
Interest and investment income	(2,259)	(2,281)
Income from council tax, non-domestic rates, district rate income	(60,074)	(59,643)
Government grants and contributions (Capital)	(700)	(2,111)
Government grant (Pension Fund top-up grant)	(28,671)	(31,299)
Total Income	(113,331)	(113,669)
(Surplus) or Deficit on the Provision of Services	4,535	43,086

28. Agency Services

The Authority currently acts as lead Authority for a North West PFI scheme, building 16 new fire stations of which 4 relate to Lancashire Fire & Rescue and 5 relate to Cumbria Fire & Rescue. All these fire stations are completed and fully operational.

29. Members' Allowances

The Authority comprises of 18 councillors from the 5 districts of Merseyside. The total allowances paid to members within the year were:

	2019/20 £000	2018/19 £000
Allowances	200	201
Expenses	17	22
Total	217	223

30. Officers' Remuneration

The remuneration paid to the Authority's senior employees is as follows:

		Salary, Fees and Allowances £	Bonuses £	Expenses Allowances £	Compensation for Loss of Office £	Benefits in Kind (e.g. Car Allowance) £	Pension Contribution Note b £	Total
Chief Fire Officer – Dan Stephens	2019/20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Note a	2018/19	68,352	-	-	-	-	5,585	73,937
Chief Fire Officer – Phil Garrigan	2019/20	167,475	-	-	-	-	47,693	215,168
	2018/19	163,247	-	-	-	-	22,086	185,333
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	2019/20	142,607	-	-	-	-	41,071	183,678
	2018/19	135,194	-	-	-	-	16,500	151,694
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	2019/20	117,233	-	-	-	-	33,763	150,996
	2018/19	110,713	-	-	-	-	14,023	124,736
Director of Legal, Procurement, Estates & Democratic Services	2019/20	103,391	-	-	-	-	14,581	117,972
	2018/19	95,363	-	-	-	-	14,296	109,659
Director of Finance	2019/20	91,515	-	-	-	-	13,712	105,227
	2018/19	89,537	-	-	-	-	13,443	100,980

Note a

The Chief Fire Officer Dan Stephens retired from the Service in May 2018.

Note b

The employer's pension contributions increased in 2019/20 from 21.7% to 37.3%.

The numbers of Authority staff receiving more than £50,000 remuneration for the year (excluding employer's pension contributions) are shown in bands of £5,000 in the table below:

Remuneration Band	2019/20 Number of Employees	2018/19 Number of Employees
£50,000 - £54,999	31	21
£55,000 - £59,999	26	22
£60,000 - £64,999	20	19
£65,000 - £69,999	10	9
£70,000 - £74,999	9	2
£75,000 - £79,999	2	3
£80,000 - £84,999	4	1
£85,000 - £89,999	-	-
£90,000 - £94,999	-	-
£95,000 - £99,999	-	1
£100,000 - £104,999	-	-
£105,000 - £109,999	1	-
£135,000 - £140,999	-	1
Total	103	79

Note a – In 2019/20, 95 of the 103 staff receiving over £50,000 are firefighting staff (in 2018/19 this was 69 of the 79), who provide fire cover (many of whom are receiving additional payments for working extra time or working more flexibly and providing resilience).

Note b – The bandings only include the remuneration of employees that have not been disclosed individually in the Authority's Senior Officer Remuneration note on the previous page.

The number of exit packages with total cost per band and total cost of the compulsory and other redundancies are set out in the table below. The totals include pension strain and compromise agreement fees.

Exit Package Cost Band (including Special Payments)	Number of Compulsory Redundancies		Number of Other Departures Agreed		Total Number of Exit Packages by Band		Total Cost of Exit Packages in Each Band	
	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20
£0 - £20,000	-	-	1	-	1	-	3,810	-
£20,001 - £40,000	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	24,100
£40,001 - £60,000	-	-	1	-	1	-	47,010	-
£60,001 - £80,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£80,001 - £100,000	-	-	1	-	1	-	84,894	-
£100,001 - £150,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£150,001 - £200,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£200,001 - £250,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	3	1	3	1	135,714	24,100

31. External Audit Costs

The Authority has incurred the following costs in relation to the audit of the Statement of Accounts, certification of grant claims and statutory inspections and for non-audit services provided by the Authority's external auditors:

	2019/20	2018/19
	£000	£000
Fees payable to Grant Thornton UK LLP with regard to external audit services carried out by the appointed auditor for the year	33	25
Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Refund	(3)	-
Total	30	25

32. Grant Income

The Authority credited the following grants, contributions and donations to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in 2019/20:

	2019/20	2018/19
	£000	£000
Credited to Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income and Expenditure		
Council tax income/Local share non domestic rates	(33,489)	(32,320)
Non domestic rates	(15,585)	(15,273)
Non-ring fenced Government grants:		
Revenue Support Grant	(11,000)	(12,050)
Capital Grants and Contributions:		
National Resilience Grant	(700)	(2,100)
Other		(11)
Total	(60,774)	(61,754)
Credited to Services		
Pensions Grant (Home Office)	(3,025)	-
National Resilience / International Search and Rescue Grant	(9,732)	(9,640)
New Dimensions Grant (Home Office)	(877)	(877)
Fire Control Implementation Grant (Home Office)	(270)	(263)
PFI Credits (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)	(2,097)	(2,097)
COVID-19 Grant (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)	(355)	-
Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme Grant	(97)	(342)
Other Grants (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government / Home Office)	(1,512)	(1,339)
Total	(17,965)	(14,558)

The Authority currently has no assets in the Donated Assets Account or Capital Grants Receipts in Advance.

33. Related Parties

The Authority is required to disclose material transactions with related parties – bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Authority or to be controlled or influenced by the Authority. Disclosure of these transactions allows readers to assess the extent to which the Authority might have been constrained in its ability to operate independently or might have secured the ability to limit another party's ability to bargain freely with the Authority. Any amounts owed to or by the Authority to other public bodies has been identified in notes 16 and 19.

2018/19		Related Party Transactions	2019/20	
Receipts	Payments		Receipts	Payments
Central Government				
15,273	-	Redistributed National Non-Domestic Rates	15,585	-
12,050	-	Revenue Support Grant	11,000	-
2,288	-	Capital Grants	700	-
-	3,568	Employers National Insurance Contributions	-	3,679
Local Authority Precept (Council Tax & Business Rates)				
3,136	-	Knowsley	3,372	-
9,967	-	Liverpool	10,267	-
4,371	-	St Helens	4,570	-
7,059	-	Sefton	7,206	-
7,787	-	Wirral	8,074	-
Pensions				
-	1,384	Merseyside Superannuation Fund Employers Contributions	-	1,415
-	-	Merseyside Superannuation Fund Deficit Employers Contributions	-	-
29,567	37,928	Pension Fund (Home Office)	32,845	38,425

Central Government

Central Government has significant influence over the general operations of the Authority. It is responsible for providing the statutory framework, within which the Authority operates, provides the majority of its funding in the form of grants and prescribes the terms of many of the transactions that the Authority has with other parties (e.g. council tax bills). Grants received from Government departments are set out in the subjective analysis in Note 32 grant income.

Members

Members of the Authority have direct control over the Authority's financial and operating policies. The total of members' allowances paid in 2019/20 is shown in Note 29. The Authority's membership comprises of councillors from each of the five Local Authorities in Merseyside. Members of the Authority are required to declare interests in related parties on an annual basis in respect of the Financial Statements and also in the Authority's Register of Interests throughout the year. From examining existing available sources of information for 2019/20, there were no reported material transactions with related parties.

Officers

Officers of the Authority are required to declare interests in related parties on an annual basis in respect of the Financial Statements and also in the Authority's Register of Interests throughout the year. There were no reported material related party transactions in respect of 2019/20.

Entities Controlled or Significantly Influenced by the Authority

Joint Control Centre

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority and Merseyside Police Authorities had entered into a contract to develop and build a joint Merseyside Command and Control Centre. The proposed design solution included a new two-storey building extension attached to the rear of the current Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters and a refurbishment of the existing area of the building. Work on the project started on the 8th April 2013 and the project was completed during 2014/15.

National Resilience / International Search and Rescue

The Authority currently represents the National Fire & Rescue Service in providing support to a number of Government Departments. This involved taking the lead and managing national projects on their behalf. The list below identifies the Government Department and the area of business where the Authority provided support in 2019/20. The Government provides funding and the actual expenditure has been included within the accounts of the Authority.

Home Office

The provision and support of National Resilience Capabilities. Revenue £10.9m, Capital £0.7m.

Department for Food & Rural Affairs

The management of National Flood Response Assets. Revenue £0.1m.

Department for International Development

Emergency Deployment Teams Programme. Revenue £0.54m.

34. Capital Expenditure and Capital Financing

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

	2019/20 £000	2018/19 £000
Opening Capital Financing Requirement	(58,341)	(64,280)
<i>Capital investment</i>		
Property, plant and equipment	(7,702)	(8,670)
Investment properties	-	-
Intangible assets	(221)	(197)
Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute	(992)	(830)
<i>Sources of finance</i>		
Capital receipts	2,313	1,665
Government grants and other contributions	1,966	2,298
Sums set aside from revenue:		
• Direct revenue contributions	3,737	3,439
• [MRP/loans fund principal]	8,545	8,234
Closing Capital Financing Requirement	(50,695)	(58,341)
<i>Explanation of movements in year</i>		
Increase/(Decrease) in underlying need to borrowing (supported by government financial assistance)	-	-
Increase/(Decrease) in underlying need to borrowing (unsupported by government financial assistance)	(7,646)	(5,939)
Assets acquired under finance leases	-	-
Assets acquired under PFI contracts	-	-
Increase/(decrease) in Capital Financing Requirement	(7,646)	(5,639)

35. Leases

Authority as Lessee

Finance Leases

In the past, the Authority had acquired a number of fire engines and breathing apparatus under finance leases, but as at 31st March 2020 the Authority has no outstanding finance leases.

The Authority built a fire station for £1.7m on land currently owned by Liverpool City Council. Although a lease is in place between the Authority and Liverpool City Council, no further cash flows are envisaged. See below current values.

	31 March 2020 £000	31 March 2019 £000
Other Land and Buildings (excluding depreciation)	1,960	1,564
Revaluation 31.3.20	182	436
Additions	8	-
Total	2,150	2,000

Operating Leases

The Authority has a policy on vehicle provision and as part of that, a number of vehicles have been acquired through operating leases; these vehicles have typical lives of between 3 and 5 years.

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

	31 March 2020 £000	31 March 2019 £000
Not later than one year	81	36
Later than one year and not later than five years	122	51
Later than five years	-	-
Total	203	87

Authority as Lessor

Finance Leases

The Authority, in conjunction with Merseyside Police, has built a Joint Command and Control Centre and a Joint Fire and Police Station at Prescott. The leases for both schemes are for a period of 40 years. The Police have invested all capital monies up front to the value of their share of the assets and no residual value is anticipated for the properties when the leases come to an end. There is therefore no long-term debtor for the leases as all the liabilities have been paid up front.

36. Private Finance Initiatives and Similar Contracts

The Authority lead on a North West PFI project to replace 16 fire stations in Merseyside, Lancashire and Cumbria. Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service built 7 new fire stations. The total value of the PFI scheme is £47.886m of which £19.787m relates to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. The contract for building the new stations is with Balfour Beatty Fire and Rescue NW Limited and the building programme for Merseyside started in April 2011. The first station for Merseyside was completed in April 2012 and the last station was completed in July 2013.

The contract runs for 25 years from completion and hand over of the last station and includes both the service and maintenance of the stations. The stations will be recognised on the Authority's Balance Sheet from the initial handover date. The stations and any plant or equipment installed on them will be transferred to the Authority for nil consideration at the end of the contract.

Property, Plant and Equipment

The following table shows the value of assets recognised under PFI arrangements and analyses the movement in the value of assets during the year:

Movement in Value of Assets (7 Fire Stations)	Land £000	Buildings £000	Total £000
Value at 31st March 2019	1,830	20,355	22,185
Additions	-	14	14
Depreciation/Impairment	-	(543)	(543)
Revaluation 31.3.20	-	1,229	1,229
Value at 31st March 2020	1,830	21,055	22,885

Payments

The Authority makes an agreed payment each year, which is increased annually by inflation and can be reduced if the contractor fails to meet availability and performance standards in any year but is otherwise fixed. Payments to be made under the PFI contract started in 2012/13 after the Authority's first station of the project was completed and handed over to the Authority. Payments to the contractor for 2019/20 and future payments will be made as follows:

	Payment for Services £000	Reimbursement of Capital Expenditure £000	Interest £000	Total £000
Payable in 2020/21	737	429	1,658	2,824
Payable within 2 to 5 years	3,174	2,118	6,295	11,587
Payable within 6 to 10 years	4,521	3,874	6,797	15,192
Payable within 11 to 15 years	5,237	5,922	4,917	16,076
Payable within 16 to 20 years	3,984	5,410	1,621	11,015
Payable within 21 to 25 years	-	-	-	-
Total	17,653	17,753	21,288	56,694
Paid in 2019/20	717	394	1,685	2,796
Grand Total	18,370	18,147	22,973	59,490

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

	31 March 2020 £000	31 March 2019 £000
Balance outstanding at start of year	(18,147)	(18,510)
Payments during the year	394	363
Capital expenditure incurred in the year	-	-
Other movements	-	-
Total	(17,753)	(18,147)

The PFI liability represents the outstanding long-term liability to the contractor for capital expenditure.

37. Impairment Losses

The Authority incurred expenditure of £0 in 2019/20 and £475,000 in 2018/19, which did not add value to the buildings, but maintained the upkeep of such assets (e.g. replacement boilers, yard repairs, tower repairs etc). These costs are written off in the year to the surplus or deficit on the provision of services.

38. Capitalisation of Borrowing Costs

The Authority has not capitalised any borrowing costs in 2019/20.

39. Termination Benefits

The Authority terminated the contract of 1 employee in 2019/20, incurring liabilities of £24,100 (£135,714 in 2018/19) – see note 30 for the number of exit packages and the total cost per band.

40. Defined Benefit Pension Schemes

Participation in pension schemes

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers, the Authority makes contributions towards the cost of post-employment 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 post-employment schemes:

- The Local Government Pension Scheme, administered locally by Merseyside Pension Fund - this 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 liabilities with investment assets.
- The Firefighters Pension Scheme - this is an unfunded defined benefit arrangement, under which liabilities are recognised when awards are made. However, there are no investment assets built up to meet these pension liabilities, and cash has to be generated to meet actual pension's payments as they eventually fall due. The Government changed the funding mechanism for this scheme in 2006/07. This alleviated concerns about the possibility of large year on year fluctuations on local taxpayers by creating a pension fund account. The primary objective is to allow the separation of the cost of providing pensions from the cost of running a fire and rescue service.

Transactions Relating to Post-employment Benefits

The cost of retirement benefits in the reported cost of services is recognised when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge we are required to make against council tax is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of post-employment/retirement benefits is reversed out of the General Fund via the Movement in Reserves Statement. The following transactions have been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the General Fund Balance via the Movement in Reserves Statement during the year:

Local Government Pension Scheme

2018/19				2019/20		
Funded Benefits £000	Unfunded Benefits £000	Total £000		Funded Benefits £000	Unfunded Benefits £000	Total £000
			Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement			
			<i>Cost of Services</i>			
2,828	-	2,828	• current service cost	3,117	-	3,117
1,771	-	1,771	• past service costs	669	-	669
-	-	-	• settlements and curtailments	-	-	-
45	-	45	▪ administration expenses	46	-	46
			<i>Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure</i>			
721	22	743	• Net interest expense	842	21	863
5,365	22	5,387	Total Post-employment Benefits Charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	4,674	21	4,695
			<i>Other Post-employment Benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement</i>			
			<i>Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability comprising:</i>			
(2,847)	-	(2,847)	• Return on scheme assets (excluding the amount included in the net interest expense)	3,166	-	3,166
-	-	-	• Actuarial gains and losses arising on changes in demographic assumptions	(1,691)	(79)	(1,770)
6,235	29	6,264	• Actuarial gains and losses arising on changes in financial assumptions	(2,577)	(9)	(2,586)
-	-	-	• Other experiences (gain)/loss on liabilities	(7,112)	(38)	(7,150)
8,753	51	8,804	Total Post-employment Benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(3,540)	(105)	(3,645)
			<i>Movement in Reserves Statement</i>			
(5,365)	(22)	(5,387)	• Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or Deficit for the Provision of Services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the Code	(4,674)	(21)	(4,695)
			<i>Actual amount charged against the General Fund Balance for pensions in the year:</i>			
1,374	-	1,374	• Employers' contributions payable to scheme	1,409	-	1,409
-	52	52	• Retirement benefits payable to pensioners	-	54	54

Firefighters Pension Scheme

2018/19						2019/20				
FPS 1992 £000	Injury Awards £000	FPS 2006 £000	FPS 2015 £000	Total £000		FPS 1992 £000	Injury Awards £000	FPS 2006 £000	FPS 2015 £000	Total £000
					Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement					
					<i>Cost of Services</i>					
4,940	140	-	4,230	9,310	• current service cost	3,760	300	-	11,530	15,590
44,030	-	240	-	44,270	• past service costs	4,500	-	(3,200)	-	1,300
-	-	-	-	-	• settlements and curtailments	-	-	-	-	-
					<i>Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure</i>					
25,740	920	110	410	27,180	• Net interest expense	26,270	920	120	680	27,990
74,710	1,060	350	4,640	80,760	Total Post-employment Benefits Charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	34,530	1,220	(3,080)	12,210	44,880
					<i>Other Post-employment Benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement</i>					
					<i>Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability</i>					
					<i>Comprising:</i>					
-	-	-	-	-	• Return on scheme assets (excluding the amount included in the net interest expense)	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	• Actuarial gains and losses arising on changes in demographic assumptions	(32,610)	(1,360)	(160)	(970)	(35,100)
25,400	660	180	980	27,220	• Actuarial gains and losses arising on changes in financial assumptions	(48,780)	(670)	(290)	(1,130)	(50,870)
(1,760)	1,590	(30)	700	500	• Other experiences (gain)/loss on liabilities	(11,020)	(90)	(370)	160	(11,320)
98,350	3,310	500	6,320	108,480	Total Post-employment Benefits charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(57,880)	(900)	(3,900)	10,270	(52,410)
					<i>Movement in Reserves Statement</i>					
(74,710)	(1,060)	(350)	(4,640)	(80,760)	• Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or Deficit for the provision of Services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the Code	(34,530)	(1,220)	3,080	(12,210)	(44,880)
					<i>Actual amount charged against the General Fund Balance for pensions in the year:</i>					
36,670	-	20	(1,540)	35,150	• Employers' contributions payable to scheme	37,500	-	-	(2,060)	35,440
-	1,750	-	-	1,750	• Retirement benefits payable to pensioners	-	1,780	-	-	1,780

- The cumulative amount of actuarial gains and losses recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the 31st March 2020 is a surplus of £105.630m and to the 31st March 2019 is a deficit of £31.137m.
- Past service, costs and curtailment costs are the result of increased benefits being paid in the event of members retiring during the year. Those costs, which result from redundancy/efficiency retirements, are classified as curtailment costs, with any other amounts being regarded as past service costs.

Pension Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

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

Local Government Pension Scheme

2018/19				2019/20		
Funded Benefits £000	Unfunded Benefits £000	Total £000		Funded Benefits £000	Unfunded Benefits £000	Total £000
(117,716)	(881)	(118,597)	Present value of the defined benefit obligation	(110,909)	(722)	(111,631)
81,895	-	81,895	Fair value of plan assets	80,037	-	80,037
(35,821)	(881)	(36,702)	Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation	(30,872)	(722)	(31,594)

Firefighters Pension Scheme

2018/19						2019/20				
FPS 1992 £000	Injury Awards £000	FPS 2006 £000	FPS 2015 £000	Total £000		FPS 1992 £000	Injury Awards £000	FPS 2006 £000	FPS 2015 £000	Total £000
(1,086,950)	(38,380)	(4,800)	(20,930)	(1,151,060)	Present value of the defined benefit obligation	(991,570)	(35,700)	(900)	(33,260)	(1,061,430)
-	-	-	-	-	Fair value of plan assets	-	-	-	-	-
(1,086,950)	(38,380)	(4,800)	(20,930)	(1,151,060)	Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation	(991,570)	(35,700)	(900)	(33,260)	(1,061,430)

Reconciliation of the Movements in the Fair Value of Scheme Assets Local Government Pension Scheme

2018/19				2019/20		
Funded Benefits £000	Unfunded Benefits £000	Total £000		Funded Benefits £000	Unfunded Benefits £000	Total £000
77,905	-	77,905	Opening fair value of scheme assets	81,895	-	81,895
2,015	-	2,015	Interest income	1,958	-	1,958
			<i>Re-measurement gain/(loss):</i>			
2,847	-	2,847	▪ Return on scheme assets (excluding the amount included in the net interest expense)	(3,166)	-	(3,166)
(45)	-	(45)	▪ Administration expenses	(46)	-	(46)
1,374	52	1,426	Contributions from employer	1,409	54	1,463
600	-	600	Contributions from employees into the scheme	618	-	618
(2,801)	(52)	(2,853)	Benefits paid	(2,631)	(54)	(2,685)
81,895	-	81,895	Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation	80,037	-	80,037

Firefighters Pension Scheme

2018/19						2019/20				
FPS 1992 £000	Injury Awards £000	FPS 2006 £000	FPS 2015 £000	Total £000		FPS 1992 £000	Injury Awards £000	FPS 2006 £000	FPS 2015 £000	Total £000
-	-	-	-	-	Opening fair value of scheme assets	-	-	-	-	-
					<i>Re-measurement gain/(loss):</i>					
34,624	-	19	(3,344)	31,299	Employers contribution from Government (top-up grant)	35,260	-	(3)	(6,586)	28,671
2,046	1,750	1	1,804	5,601	Contributions from employer	2,240	1,780	3	4,526	8,549
1,090	-	-	1,560	2,650	Contributions from employees into the scheme	880	-	-	2,100	2,980
(37,760)	(1,750)	(20)	(20)	(39,550)	Benefits paid	(38,380)	(1,780)	-	(40)	(40,200)
-	-	-	-	-	Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation	-	-	-	-	-

Return on scheme assets is effectively a balancing figure because we know that there is no opening or closing assets in the Firefighters Pension Scheme. Although this statement is not provided by the actuary, it is required in order to show the funds required by government to balance the fund. This is known as the top-up grant and effectively is the employers' contribution.

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

Local Government Pension Scheme

2018/19				2019/20		
Funded Benefits £000	Unfunded Benefits £000	Total £000		Funded Benefits £000	Unfunded Benefits £000	Total £000
(106,347)	(882)	(107,229)	Opening balance at 1 April	(117,716)	(881)	(118,597)
(2,828)	-	(2,828)	Current service cost	(3,117)	-	(3,117)
(2,736)	(22)	(2,758)	Interest cost	(2,800)	(21)	(2,821)
(600)	-	(600)	Contributions by scheme participants	(618)	-	(618)
-	-	-	Re-measurement (gains) and losses:			
-	-	-	• Actuarial gains/losses arising from changes in demographic assumptions	7,112	38	7,150
(6,235)	(29)	(6,264)	• Actuarial gains/losses arising from changes in financial assumptions	2,577	9	2,586
-	-	-	• Other experience gains and losses	1,691	79	1,770
(1,771)	-	(1,771)	Past service cost	(669)	-	(669)
-	-	-	Settlements and curtailments	-	-	-
2,801	52	2,853	Benefits paid	2,631	54	2,685
(117,716)	(881)	(118,597)	Closing balance at 31 March	(110,909)	(722)	(111,631)

Firefighters Pension Scheme

2018/19						2019/20				
FPS 1992 £000	Injury Awards £000	FPS 2006 £000	FPS 2015 £000	Total £000		FPS 1992 £000	Injury Awards £000	FPS 2006 £000	FPS 2015 £000	Total £000
(1,025,270)	(36,820)	(4,320)	(13,070)	(1,079,480)	Opening balance at 1 April	(1,086,950)	(38,380)	(4,800)	(20,930)	(1,151,060)
(4,940)	(140)	-	(4,230)	(9,310)	Current service cost	(3,760)	(300)	-	(11,530)	(15,590)
(25,740)	(920)	(110)	(410)	(27,180)	Interest cost	(26,270)	(920)	(120)	(680)	(27,990)
(1,090)	-	-	(1,560)	(2,650)	Contributions by scheme participants	(880)	-	-	(2,100)	(2,980)
-	-	-	-	-	Re-measurement (gains) and losses:					
-	-	-	-	-	• Actuarial gains/losses arising from changes in demographic assumptions	32,610	1,360	160	970	35,100
(25,400)	(660)	(180)	(980)	(27,220)	• Actuarial gains/losses arising from changes in financial assumptions	48,780	670	290	1,130	50,870
1,760	(1,590)	30	(700)	(500)	• Other experience gains and losses	11,020	90	370	(160)	11,320
(44,030)	-	(240)	-	(44,270)	Past service cost	(4,500)	-	3,200	-	(1,300)
-	-	-	-	-	Settlements and curtailments	-	-	-	-	-
37,760	1,750	20	20	39,550	Benefits paid	38,380	1,780	-	40	40,200
(1,086,950)	(38,380)	(4,800)	(20,930)	(1,151,060)	Closing balance at 31 March	(991,570)	(35,700)	(900)	(33,260)	(1,061,430)

Local Government Pension Scheme assets comprised:

2018/19				2019/20		
Quoted Prices in Active Markets	Quoted Prices not in Active Markets	Total		Quoted Prices in Active Markets	Quoted Prices not in Active Markets	Total
£000	£000	£000		£000	£000	£000
2,386	-	2,386	Cash & Cash Equivalents	1,233	-	1,233
			Equity Instruments:			
12,573	2,163	14,736	• UK	10,985	1,639	12,624
17,103	8,379	25,482	• Overseas	18,175	7,984	26,159
29,676	10,542	40,218	Sub-total equity instruments	29,160	9,623	38,783
			Bonds:			
2,969	-	2,969	• UK Corporate	1,410	-	1,410
3,529	-	3,529	• UK Government	3,555	-	3,555
6,491	-	6,491	• UK Index Linked	6,186	-	6,186
12,989	-	12,989	Sub-total bonds	11,151	-	11,151
			Property:			
-	4,999	4,999	• UK Direct Property	-	4,749	4,749
162	1,492	1,654	• UK Property Managed	211	1,399	1,610
-	1,165	1,165	• Overseas Property Managed	-	2,127	2,127
162	7,656	7,818	Sub-total property	211	8,275	8,486
			Private Equity:			
-	2,601	2,601	• UK	10	1,026	1,036
-	2,904	2,904	• Overseas	-	5,287	5,287
-	5,505	5,505	Sub-total private equity	10	6,313	6,323
			Other Investment Funds:			
71	335	406	• Hedge Funds UK	198	1,292	1,490
-	2,071	2,071	• Hedge Funds Overseas	-	2,180	2,180
142	3,020	3,162	• Infrastructure UK	149	3,095	3,244
-	1,997	1,997	• Infrastructure Overseas	327	2,639	2,966
754	2,512	3,266	• Opportunities UK	219	1,947	2,166
712	1,365	2,077	• Opportunities Overseas	76	1,939	2,015
1,679	11,300	12,979	Sub-total other investment funds	969	13,092	14,061
46,892	35,003	81,895	Total assets	42,734	37,303	80,037

Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels, etc. The Firefighters Pension Fund liabilities have been assessed by the Governments Actuary Department (GAD). The Local Government Pension Scheme has been assessed by the William M Mercer fund actuaries on behalf of the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, based on the latest full valuation of the scheme as at 31st March 2019.

The significant assumptions used by the actuary have been:

	Local Government Pension Scheme		Firefighters Pension Scheme	
	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20	2018/19
Interest on Plan	1.3%	2.5%	-	-
Mortality assumptions:				
Longevity at 65 current pensioners:				
Men	20.9	22.2	21.3	22.0
Women	24.0	25.0	21.3	22.0
Longevity at 65 for future pensioners:				
Men	22.5	25.2	23.0	23.9
Women	25.9	27.9	23.0	23.9
Rate of CPI inflation	2.1%	2.2%	2.0%	2.4%
Rate of increase in salaries	3.6%	3.7%	4.0%	4.3%
Rate of increase in pensions	2.2%	2.3%	2.0%	2.3%
Rate for discounting scheme liabilities	2.4%	2.4%	2.3%	2.5%
Take-up of option to convert annual pension into retirement lump sum	-	-	25%	25%

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. The sensitivity analysis overleaf has been determined based on reasonable possible changes of the assumptions occurring at the end of the reporting period and assumes for each change that the assumption analysed changes while all the other assumptions remain constant. The assumptions in longevity, for example, assume that life expectancy increases or decreases for men and women. In practice, this is unlikely to occur, and changes in some of the assumptions may be interrelated. The estimations in the sensitivity analysis have followed the accounting policies of the scheme, i.e. on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method. The methods and types of assumptions used in preparing the sensitivity analysis below did not change from those used in the previous period.

Impact on the Defined Benefit Obligation in the Local Government Pension Scheme

	Increase in Assumption £000	Decrease in Assumption £000
Longevity (increase or decrease in 1 year)	3,058	(3,058)
Rate of inflation (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	1,901	(1,901)
Rate of increase in salaries (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	303	(303)
Rate for discounting scheme liabilities (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	(1,869)	1,869
Investment returns (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	(80)	80

Impact on the Authority's Cash Flows

The scheme will need to take account of the national changes to the scheme under the Public Pension Services Act 2013. Under the Act, the Local Government Pension Scheme in England and Wales and other main existing public service schemes may not provide benefits in relation to service after 31st March 2014 (or service after 31st March 2015 for other main existing public service pension schemes in England and Wales). The Act provides for scheme regulations to be made within a common framework, to establish new career average revalued earnings schemes to pay pensions and other benefits.

The Authority anticipates paying £1.719m contributions to the scheme in 2020/21. The latest triennial valuation as at 31st March 2019 shows the Authority has a funding surplus of 103.3% and therefore no more deficit payments are envisaged over the next 3 years.

Impact on the Defined Benefit Obligation in the Firefighters Pension Scheme

	Increase in Assumption £000	Decrease in Assumption £000
Longevity (increase or decrease in 1 year)	34,000	(34,000)
Rate of increase in salaries (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	1,200	(1,200)
Rate of increase in pensions (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	14,800	(14,800)
Rate for discounting scheme liabilities (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	(17,600)	17,600

In addition, the past service cost in respect to the McCloud judgement is expected to be highly sensitive to the gap between CPI inflation and the assumed rate of salary growth. Under the approach and remedy adopted, if the long-term salary growth assumptions were 1% pa lower, then the impact on past service costs is expected to be a change of around 10% on the provision. Alternative forms of remedy may have different levels of sensitivity to these assumptions.

Impact on the Authority's Cash Flows

The Authority anticipates paying £7.256m contributions to the scheme in 2020/21.

41. Nature and Extent of Risks Arising from Financial Instruments

The Authority's activities expose it to a variety of financial risks, including:

- credit risk – the possibility that other parties might fail to pay amounts due to the Authority
- liquidity risk – the possibility that the Authority might not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments
- market risk – 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's overall risk management programme focuses on the unpredictability of financial markets and seeks to minimise potential adverse effects on the resources available to fund services. Risk management is carried out by a central treasury team, under policies approved by the Authority in the annual Treasury Management Strategy. The Authority provides written principles for overall risk management, as well as written policies covering specific areas, such as interest rate risk, credit risk and the investment of surplus cash.

Credit Risk

Credit risk arises from deposits with banks and financial institutions, as well as credit exposures to the Authority's customers.

This 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 one of the following rating services Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poors. 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:

The Authority's investment priorities are (a) the security of capital and (b) liquidity of its investments. The Authority aims to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity. All investments are in sterling and all cash balances are invested in accordance with the Code of Practice and with regard to the statutory guidance.

A counterparty list of institutions with which the Authority invests is maintained by reference to the criteria set out below for these different categories of institution and their credit rating. Regardless of these criteria, the money market is closely monitored and any institution is suspended from the counterparty-lending list should any doubts arise concerning its financial standing. Under the guidance, investments fall into two separate categories, either specified or non-specified investments.

Specified investments offer high security and high liquidity and satisfy the conditions set out below:-

- The investment is denominated in sterling and any payments or repayments in respect of the investment are payable in sterling only
- The investment is not a long-term investment (has a maturity of less than one year)
- The investment does not involve the acquisition of share capital or loan capital in any corporate body
- The investment is made with a body or in an investment scheme, which has been awarded a high credit rating by a credit rating agency, the UK government, a local authority, a parish or community authority.

Specified investments will comprise of the following institutions:-

- The UK Government (such as the Debt Management Account deposit facility, UK Treasury Bills or a gilt with less than one year to maturity)
- Supranational bonds of less than one year's duration.
- UK Local Authorities
- Money Market Funds

- Enhanced Money Market (Cash) Funds.
- UK Banks
- Foreign banks registered in the UK
- Building Societies

The Authority will invest in UK institutions or non-UK and domiciled in a country, which has a minimum Sovereign long term rating “AA”. The institutions must have a high credit rating assigned by any of the three credit ratings agencies (Fitch, Moody’s and Standard & Poors). To be deemed highly rated the institution must satisfy at least the minimum of the following Fitch (or equivalent) criteria:

- Long-term credit rating A-

If any of the agencies assigns a rating lower than the Fitch minimum (or equivalent) to an institution then the Authority will not invest with that institution.

In addition, the Authority will use institutions that are part nationalised UK banks.

Regardless of the credit rating assigned to an institution or whether it is covered by a guarantee, if any doubt over its financial standing exists then that institution is removed immediately from the counterparty lending list.

Investment Limits

The credit ratings and individual limits for each institution within the categories of investments used by the Authority in 2019/20 were as follows:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| • UK Government (including gilts and the DMADF) | Unlimited |
| • UK local authorities (each) | Unlimited |
| • Part Nationalised UK banks | £4 million |
| • Money Market Funds (AAA rated) | £3 million |
| • Enhanced Money Market (Cash) Funds (AAA rated) | £3 million |
| • UK Banks and Building Societies (A- or higher rated) | £2 million |
| • Foreign banks registered in the UK (A or higher rated) | £2 million |

No limits on investments with the UK Government and Local Authorities were set because they are considered to be of the highest credit quality and are essentially risk free. The limits placed on the other categories reflected some uncertainty and marginally higher risk profile of the institutions within those categories.

Non-Specified Investments

Non-specified investments do not, by definition, meet the requirements of a specified investment. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) guidance requires that greater detail is provided of the intended use of non-specified investments due to greater potential risk. However, circumstances may have dictated that the following types of non-specified investments may have been used:

- Deposits with the Authority’s own banker were unlimited for transactional purposes and to allow for unusual cash flow circumstances.
- Deposits with maturity of greater than one year (including forward deals in excess of one year from inception to repayment) with any bank or building society that meets the credit rating criteria above.
- Building Societies, which do not meet the normal credit criteria but are one of the top ten building societies, determined by asset size. Those societies that are within the top ten but do not have an agency determined credit rating shall have an individual limit of £1m. Building Society rankings are checked annually with the Building Societies Association.

Bank and Money Market Fund ratings were checked daily. The Authority is alerted by e-mail when there is an amendment by any of the agencies to the credit rating of an institution. If an amendment means an institution no longer meets the



Authority's minimum requirement or any doubt over its financial standing exists then that institution is removed immediately from the counterparty lending list. Conversely, an institution may be added to the list should it achieve the minimum rating.

Credit ratings are only the starting point when considering credit risk. The Code of Practice requires the Authority to supplement credit rating information with additional operational market information, which will be applied before making any specific investment decision from the agreed pool of counterparties. Credit Default Swaps and negative rating watches/outlooks are examined and the financial press, internet and financial information systems are monitored for market information regarding its counterparties. It also receives daily e-mails from various market participants that could identify potential problems. Any information that casts doubt on an institution's creditworthiness is acted on by suspending investment with that institution.

Customers for goods and services are assessed, taking into account their financial position, past experience and other factors, with individual credit limits being set in accordance with internal ratings and in accordance with parameters set by the Authority.

The Authority's maximum exposure to credit risk in relation to its investments in banks and building societies of £23m cannot be assessed generally, as the risk of any institution failing to make interest payments or repay the principal sum will be specific to each individual institution. Recent experience has shown that it is rare for such entities to be unable to meet their commitments. A risk of irrecoverability applies to all of the Authority's deposits, but there was no evidence at the 31st March 2020 that this was likely to crystallise.

The following analysis summarises the Authority's potential maximum exposure to credit risk on other financial assets, based on experience of default and uncollectability over the last five financial years, adjusted to reflect current market conditions.

Exposure to Credit Risk

	Average Lifetime				
	Amount at 31 March	Expected Loss Rate	Lifetime Expected	Lifetime Expected	Lifetime Expected
	2020	default	Loss 31 March 2020	Loss 31 March 2020	Loss 31 March 2019
	£000	%	%	£000	£000
	A	B	C	(A X C)	
Investments	23,119	-	-	-	-
Customers	443	5.98	16.27	72	74
				72	74

No credit limits were exceeded during the reporting period and the Authority does not expect any losses from non-performance by any of its counterparties in relation to deposits and investments.

The Authority uses a provision matrix to calculate its credit loss provision on trade receivables. This takes account of many factors including historical credit loss experience and expectations about the future, including the economy and market conditions.

Aged Debtor Analysis	31 March 2020	Lifetime Expected Loss	Lifetime Expected Loss
	£000	Rate (%)	31 March 2020
		31 March 2020	£000
Less than 30 days (normal terms)	354	5%	18
31-60 days	12	8%	1
61-90 days	1	20%	-
Over 90 days	76	70%	53
	443	16.27%	72

Liquidity Risk

The Authority has a comprehensive cash flow management system that seeks to ensure that cash is available as needed. The Authority seeks to maintain liquid short-term deposits of at least £1 million available daily. If unexpected movements happen, the Authority has ready access to borrowings from the money markets and the Public Works Loans Board. There is no significant risk that it will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments under financial instruments. Instead, the risk is that the Authority will be bound to replenish a significant proportion of its borrowings at a time of unfavourable interest rates. The Authority sets limits on the proportion of its fixed rate borrowing during specified periods. The strategy is to ensure that loans will mature at different intervals through a combination of careful planning of new loans taken out and *(where it is economically viable to do so)* making early repayments. The maturity analysis of financial liabilities is as follows:

Number of Years	Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)		Merseyside Residual Debt (MRD)	
	31 March	31 March	31 March	31 March
	2020	2019	2020	2019
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Less than one	450	265	41	41
Between one and two	3,000	450	41	41
Between two and five	165	3,165	120	123
Between five and ten	-	-	41	79
Between ten and fifteen	-	-	-	-
Between fifteen and twenty	2,000	2,000	-	-
Between twenty and twenty five	-	-	-	-
Between twenty five and thirty	5,500	4,500	-	-
Between thirty and thirty five	14,250	12,360	-	-
Between thirty five and forty	11,970	14,860	-	-
Between forty and forty five	-	-	-	-
More than forty five	-	-	-	-
Total	37,335	37,600	243	284

All trade and other payables are due to be paid in less than one year.

Market Risk

Interest Rate Risk

The Authority is exposed to risk in terms of its exposure to interest rate movements on its borrowings and investments. Movements in interest rates have a complex impact on the Authority. For instance, a rise in interest rates would have the following effects:

- borrowings at variable rates – the interest expense charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services will rise
- borrowings at fixed rates – the fair value of the liabilities borrowings will fall
- investments at variable rates – the interest income credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services will rise
- investments at fixed rates – the fair value of the assets will fall.

Borrowings are not carried at fair value, so nominal gains and losses on fixed rate borrowings would not impact on the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services or Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure. However, changes in interest payable and receivable on variable rate borrowings and investments will be posted to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services and affect the General Fund Balance. Movements in the fair value of fixed rate investments that have a quoted market price will be reflected in Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.

The Authority has a number of strategies for managing interest rate risk. The policy is to aim to keep a maximum of 50% of its borrowings in variable rate loans. During periods of falling interest rates, and where economic circumstances make it favourable, fixed rate loans will be repaid early to limit exposure to losses. The risk of loss is ameliorated by the fact that a proportion of government grant payable on financing costs will normally move with prevailing interest rates or the Authority's cost of borrowing and provide compensation for a proportion of any higher costs. (The Authority currently has no variable rate loans with PWLB).

The Treasury Management Team has an active strategy for assessing interest rate exposure that feeds into the setting of the annual budget and which is used to update the budget quarterly during the year. This allows any adverse changes to be accommodated. The analysis will also advise whether new borrowing taken out is fixed or variable.

According to this assessment strategy, at 31st March 2020, if interest rates had been 1% higher with all other variables held constant, the financial effect would be:

	£000
Increase in interest payable on variable rate borrowings	2
Increase in interest receivable on variable rate investments	(345)
Increase in Government grant receivable for financing costs	-
Impact on Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(343)
Decrease in fair value of fixed rate investment assets	-
Impact on Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(343)
Decrease in fair value of fixed rate borrowings liabilities (no impact on the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services or Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure) (See Note 14)	(1,603)

The impact of a 1% fall in interest rates would be as above but with the movements being reversed.

Price Risk

The Authority does not invest in equity shares or have shareholdings in joint ventures or local industry. The Authority is consequently not exposed to losses arising from movements in the prices of the shares.

Foreign Exchange Risk

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

42. Contingent Liabilities

Municipal Mutual Insurance Limited

Municipal Mutual Insurance Limited issued a levy notice on 1st January 2014 by the Scheme Administrator at a rate of 15% on Established Scheme Liabilities, which exceeded £50,000 in aggregate. This equated to £250,000, which was paid in January 2014 with Municipal Mutual Insurance Limited covering the balance. In March 2016, we were informed by Municipal Mutual Insurance Limited the 15% will need to be increased to 25%. This payment of £180,000 was paid in May 2016. The Authority maintains an insurance reserve to cover any further fluctuations in the levy. As at 31st March 2020, the latest statement shows the levy remaining at 25%.

Firefighters Pension Fund Accounts

Fund Account

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
	Contributions receivable:	
	Fire Authority:	
(3,537)	• Contributions in relation to pensionable pay	(6,615)
(314)	• Early retirements	(154)
-	• Pension Holiday grant	-
(2,773)	Firefighters contributions	(2,800)
(6,624)		(9,569)
(118)	Transfers in from other authorities	(128)
	Benefits payable:	
30,117	• Pensions	31,426
7,811	• Commutation and lump sum retirement benefits	6,822
-	• Lump sum death benefits	125
37,928		38,373
	Payments to and on account of leavers:	
-	• Transfers out to other authorities	52
-	• Refunds of contributions	-
-		52
31,186	Net amount payable for the year	28,728
(31,186)	Top – up grant payable by the Government	(28,728)
-		-

Net Assets Statement

2018/19		2019/20
£000		£000
	Current assets	
10,944	Debtors (Pension Fund Home Office)	9,630
	Current liabilities	
(318)	Creditors (HMRC)	(306)
(10,626)	Creditors (Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service)	(9,324)
-		-

Notes to Pension Fund Account

Contribution Rates

Under the firefighters pension regulations the contribution rates for employers were as follows:

Pensionable Pay Deductions	1992 Scheme	2006 Scheme	Pensionable Pay Deductions	2015 Scheme
Employer's Contributions	37.3%	27.4%	Employer's Contributions	28.8%
Employee Contributions:			Employee Contributions:	
£0 - £15,609	11.0%	8.5%	£0 - £27,818	11.0%
£15,610 - £21,852	12.2%	9.4%	£27,819 - £51,515	12.9%
£21,853 - £31,218	14.2%	10.4%	£51,516 - £142,500	13.5%
£31,219 - £41,624	14.7%	10.9%	£142,501 >	14.5%
£41,625 - £52,030	15.2%	11.2%		
£52,031 - £62,436	15.5%	11.3%		
£62,437 - £104,060	16.0%	11.7%		
£104,061 - £124,872	16.5%	12.1%		
£124,873 >	17.0%	12.5%		

Ill Health Contributions

Ill health contributions for firefighters who retire early due to ill health are also paid into the fund. This is based on their average pensionable pay at the time of retirement and the severity of illness classed into two tiers. (Upper Tier and Lower Tier - Upper Tier being the more severe). The payments by the Authority are based as follows:

- Upper Tier – 4*Pensionable Pay
- Lower Tier – 2*Pensionable Pay

Benefits Paid

Pensions are paid to retired officers, their survivors and others who are eligible for benefits under new and existing pension schemes.

Home Office Grant

There are no investment assets and the fund is balanced to zero each year by receipt of a top up grant from the Home Office, if contributions are insufficient to meet the cost of pension payments, or by paying over any surplus grant.

Accruals

The fund has been prepared on an accruals basis in accordance with the rest of the accounts.

Future Liabilities

The fund statement does not take account of liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits after year-end. However, note 40 in the main set of Accounts does take account of this and its long term pension obligation under IAS19.

Debtors

	31 March 2020	31 March 2019
	£000	£000
Central Government bodies	9,630	10,944
Total	9,630	10,944

Creditors

	31 March 2020	31 March 2019
	£000	£000
Central Government bodies (HMRC)	(306)	(318)
Other local authorities	(9,324)	(10,626)
Total	(9,630)	(10,944)

Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts

The Director of Finance's responsibilities

The Director of Finance 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 Director of Finance has:

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

The Director of Finance has also:

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

This Statement of Accounts gives a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at the 31st March 2020 and of its expenditure and income for the year ended 31st March 2020.

Ian Cummins
Director of Finance
XXXX 2020

The Authority's responsibilities

The Authority is required to:

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

Statement of Approval for the Statement of Accounts

The statement of accounts for the year 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020, were approved for issue XXXX 2020 by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Policy and Resources Committee.

Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting Approving the Accounts
XXXX 2020

AUDIT REPORT TO FOLLOW

Glossary of terms used in the Statement of Accounts

This Glossary of Terms is designed to aid interpretation of the Authority's Statement of Accounts.

ACCOUNTING POLICIES

These specify policies and procedures used by the Authority to prepare its Financial Statements. These include any methods, measurement systems and procedures for presenting disclosures.

ACCRUALS

Accruals are amounts that are recognised in the accounts as they are earned or incurred not as money is received or paid. The accruals basis of accounting requires the non-cash effects of transactions to be reflected in the financial statements for the accounting period in which those effects are experienced and not in the period in which any cash is received or paid.

BALANCE SHEET

The Balance Sheet is fundamental to the understanding of the Authority's financial position at the year-end. The Balance Sheet shows the values 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.

BUDGET

A statement of the Authority's spending plans for revenue and capital expenditure over a specified period of time.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Capital expenditure is expenditure on the acquisition, construction or enhancement of fixed assets such as land, buildings, vehicles and equipment or expenditure which adds to and not merely maintains the value of the existing asset.

CAPITAL RECEIPTS

Income received from the sales of land or other capital assets, a proportion of which may be used to finance new capital expenditure, subject to the provisions contained within the Local Government Act 2003.

CARRYING AMOUNT

The balance sheet value recorded of either an asset or a liability.

COLLECTION FUND ADJUSTMENT ACCOUNT

The collection fund adjustment account provides a mechanism for recognising the Authority's share of the Collection Fund surplus/deficits at year-end.

CORPORATE AND DEMOCRATIC CORE

The corporate and democratic core comprises all activities that the Authority engages in specifically because it is an elected multi-purpose Authority. The cost of these activities are thus over and above those which would be incurred by a series of independent, single-purpose, nominated bodies managing the same services. There is therefore no logical basis for apportioning these costs to services.

CREDITORS

Creditors are amounts owed by the Authority for work done, goods received or services rendered but for which payment has not been made by the balance sheet date.

CURRENT ASSETS

Current assets are assets, which can be reasonably expected to be consumed or realised within the next 12 months e.g. stocks, debtors, cash.

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Current liabilities are amounts owed by the Authority and due for payment during the next 12 months e.g. short term borrowing, short-term creditors and cash overdrawn.

DEBTORS

Debtors are entities who owe amounts to the Authority for work done, goods sold or services rendered for which income has not been received by the balance sheet date.

DEFINED BENEFIT 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. The scheme may be funded or unfunded.

DEPRECIATION

Depreciation is a measure of the wearing out, consumption or other reduction in the useful economic life of a fixed asset, whether arising from use, passage of time or obsolescence through either changes in technology or demand for the goods and services produced by the asset.

EARMARKED RESERVES

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

FAIR VALUE

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

FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

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.

FIXED ASSETS

Assets that yield benefits to the Authority and the services it provides for a period of more than one year. Examples include land, buildings and vehicles.

GENERAL FUND

This is the main revenue fund of the Authority and includes the net cost of all services financed by local taxpayers and government grants.

IMPAIRMENT

Impairment is a reduction in the value of a fixed asset, below its carrying amount on the balance sheet.

INTANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

These are fixed assets that do not have physical substance but are identifiable and controlled by the Authority. Examples include software, licenses and patents.

INVENTORIES

Inventories are the amount of unused or unconsumed goods held in expectation for future use. When use will not arise until a later period, it is appropriate to carry forward the amount to be matched to the use or consumption when it arises.

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.

LONG TERM ASSETS

Long-term assets are assets that yield benefits to the Authority and the services it provides for a period of more than 12 months.

LONG TERM LIABILITIES

Long-term liabilities are amounts owed by the Authority and due for payment at a time greater than 12 months e.g. Long Term Borrowing.

MHCLG

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is the Government Department responsible for the national policy on local government.

MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION

The minimum revenue provision is the minimum amount that must be set aside from revenue towards the repayment of loan debt.

NET BOOK VALUE (NBV)

The net book value is 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 REALISABLE VALUE (NRV)

Net realisable value is the open market value of the asset in its existing use (or open market value in the case of non-operational assets) less the expenses to be incurred in realising the asset.

POST BALANCE SHEET EVENTS

Post balance sheet events are those events, which occur between the balance sheet date and the date on which the Statement of Accounts is signed by the responsible financial officer.

PRIOR PERIOD ADJUSTMENTS

Prior period adjustments are 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.

PROVISION

A provision is an amount set aside to meet potential future liability but the exact amount and date on which the liability is due is uncertain.

REMUNERATION

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

RESERVES

Reserves are amounts set aside to meet future contingencies but whose use does not affect the Authority's net expenditure in a given year. Appropriations to and from reserves may not be made directly from the revenue account. This is a crucial distinction between provisions and reserves.

RETIREMENT BENEFITS

Retirement benefits are all forms of consideration given by the Authority in exchange for services rendered by employees that are payable after the completion of employment. Retirement benefits do not include termination benefits payable as a result of either 1) the Authority's decision to terminate an employee's employment before the normal retirement date or 2) an employee's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits, because these are not given in exchange for services rendered by employees.

REVENUE EXPENDITURE

Revenue expenditure is money spent on the day-to-day running costs of providing services. It is usually of a constantly recurring nature and produces no permanent asset.

REVENUE EXPENDITURE FUNDED FROM CAPITAL UNDER STATUTE (REFCUS)

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

2019-2020 MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

1.0 SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

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

1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, delivering its functions, and arrangements for the management of risk.

1.3 Corporate Governance is a phrase used to describe how organisations direct and control what they do. For Fire and Rescue Authorities, this also includes how an Authority relates to the communities that it serves. 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*" (2016). A copy of the code is available on our website at www.merseyfire.gov.uk. The key principles of the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance are outlined below;

1. Three high level principles underpin Corporate Governance:-
 - Openness and inclusivity
 - Accountability
 - Integrity

2. These high level principles are supported by seven detailed principles of good governance which are:
 - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
 - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
 - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits
 - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
 - Developing MFRA capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
 - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
 - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

1.4 This statement fulfils the Authority's statutory requirement to prepare a statement of internal control in accordance with proper practices, and to present an annual review of the effectiveness of the current system.

2.0 THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values, for the direction and control of the Authority and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads 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 and cost-effective services.

- 2.2** 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 ongoing 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.
- 2.3** The governance framework has been in place at the Authority for a number of years and in particular for the year ended 31st March 2020.

3.0 THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

3.1 Summarised below are some of the key elements of the systems and processes that underpin the Authority's governance arrangements:

3.2 Identifying and Communicating the Authority's Mission and outcomes for citizens and service users:

3.2.1 After consulting with the citizens of Merseyside and service users, assessing current risks and service priorities, the Authority prepares an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) that sets out the mission, aims and service objectives for the organisation. The Authority approved a new IRMP, 2017/20, on 23rd February 2017. The IRMP established the service priorities for 2017/20. The Authority published a supplement to the 2017/20 IRMP (following public consultation) on 3rd July 2019. The alternative proposals contained within the supplement have extended the current plan to 2021, aligning it to our medium term financial plans.

3.2.2 The Authority's Mission reflects a clear focus on the core duties and functions in relation to Operational Preparedness, Operational Response and Prevention and Protection. The Authority's mission is to *achieve; Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters*. To deliver this the Authority has established four key corporate aims:

- **Excellent Operational Preparedness**
We will provide our firefighters with the training, information, procedures and equipment to ensure they can safely and effectively resolve all emergency incidents.
- **Excellent Operational Response**
To maintain an excellent emergency response to meet risk across Merseyside with safety and effectiveness at its core.
- **Excellent Prevention and Protection**
We will work with partners and our community to protect the most vulnerable.
- **Excellent People**
We will develop and value all our employees, respecting diversity, promoting opportunity and equality for all.

3.2.3 The Mission statement is focused upon outcomes around operational preparedness, response and prevention and protection. It is very important that the organisation's priorities are unambiguous and easily understood by members, staff, communities and other stakeholders. In particular, it is essential that the safety and effectiveness of firefighters is seen as a fundamental factor in the achievement of safer, stronger communities.

3.3 Monitoring the achievement of the Authority's objectives through a comprehensive performance management framework:



3.3.1 IRMP and other service projects are incorporated into one document – the Service Delivery Plan. There is an ongoing system of monitoring and reporting on the achievement of projects in the Service Delivery Plan via regular reports to the Community Safety and Protection Committee (or any other committee if applicable) and the Strategic Leadership Team. Station Community Safety Plans have also been developed to give details of the activities taking place throughout Merseyside. The reporting process applies traffic light status for each performance indicator in the Service Delivery Plan and attention is drawn to progress achieved and matters to be addressed. Copies of the Service Delivery Plan can be found on the Authority's website.

3.4 The Internal Control Environment:

3.4.1 The Authority's internal control mechanism comprise many systems, policies, procedures and operations, however the system cannot eliminate all risks of failure to achieve the Authority's aims and objectives. Once a risk has been identified the Authority where possible eliminates the risk. If this is not possible then procedures are established to manage the risk effectively, efficiently and economically. Some of the significant control processes are outlined below:

3.4.2 Policy and decision making process

The Authority has meaningful democratic control over its activities via an **approved committee structure** with agreed Terms of Reference that are reviewed once a year by the Authority at its Annual General Meeting. The Authority has a **written Constitution** that was reviewed in 2019/20 and approved by the Authority at its meeting on 13th June 2019 (CFO/034/19), which is published and 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 citizens. The Constitution is reviewed every year by the Authority at its AGM.

The Authority meet with Strategic Managers and other stakeholders as required to consider the strategic vision and instigate future plans/targets for the Authority.

The Authority also runs member away-days and "learning lunches" to help Members discuss issues in more detail and in an informal environment.

3.4.3 Management Structure

Management Structure - The Authority has a **clear management structure** with defined roles and responsibilities. A Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), meet on a fortnightly basis to review and agree on issues that arise during the year. SLT have established five strategic boards to feed into SLT, the role of each board is to consider any issues associated with that board's remit and if necessary make a recommendation on the matter for SLT to consider. The Authority has an **approved scheme of delegation within its Constitution** that is reviewed by members on an annual basis.

3.4.4 Established Policies, Procedures & Regulations

The Authority ensures compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations. Information regarding policies and procedures is held on the intranet, and these are continually enhanced and developed through the introduction of new policies and procedures as and when required. The Authority has established policies on anti-fraud, fraud response and confidential reporting. The Authority carries out an annual review of standing orders, financial instructions and the scheme of delegation, which clearly define how decisions are taken, and the processes and controls required to manage risks. The list below outlines some of the **key policies and process in place to enhance the internal control system** that are reviewed as and when required:

- Treasury Management Strategy
- Procurement Strategy
- Financial Regulations, Procedural & Contract Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegation
- Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy & Strategy
- Fraud Response Plan

- Confidential Reporting Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Code of Corporate Governance
- Constitution
- Code of Conduct
- Full range of Equality and Diversity Policies and Procedures
- Staffing Model
- Full range of robust policies and procedures to underpin the conduct of staff from operational procedure, discipline process, through to performance development reviews
- Information Governance and Security – Policies and Service Instructions to Protect the Authority’s information, data, and assets

3.4.5 SLT carries out a continuous assessment of the implementation of policies and procedures throughout the organisation, including following up on progress against the action plans

3.4.6 Internal Audit Function

The Authority has a strong Internal Audit function arrangement with Liverpool City Council, and has well-established protocols for working with External Audit.

3.4.7 Risk Management Strategy

The Authority has a well-established and embedded risk management strategy. The Audit Sub-Committee has corporate ownership of the risk register and receive regular updates on any new risks or changes to risks. As all Authority and service reports to SLT have a standing section on risk this allows SLT an opportunity to regularly consider new and updated risks facing the Service at their fortnightly meetings.

3.4.8 Financial Management

The Authority produces a five-year financial plan that takes into account Revenue, Capital, Reserves and Prudential Borrowing forecasts. The Authority has a history of strong and effective financial management, as confirmed in the Grant Thornton 2018/19 Annual Audit Letter and Audit Findings Report;

“We were satisfied that the Authority put in place proper arrangements to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources”

Financial management in the Authority and the reporting of financial standing is undertaken through a comprehensive Finance system including a general ledger, accountancy and budgeting. Monthly budget statements are sent out to all cost centre managers and the Authority receives regular comprehensive financial review reports to update members on the current and anticipated year-end financial performance.

4.0 REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

4.1 The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the SLT and other senior managers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Internal Audit annual report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

4.2 Maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance framework throughout the financial year has been carried out by the following:

- The Authority and its Committees
- Management Review
- Internal audit
- External bodies

4.3 The Authority and Its Committees



4.3.1 The Authority

The Authority considered at its Annual General meeting on 13th June 2019 the format and structure of its democratic decision process by approving the powers and make-up of the approved committees. The full and detailed list of committee responsibilities can be found in the Constitution document on the Authority's web site, but are summarised as follows;

- The Authority – approves the Authority's budget and precept, considers variations to standing orders & financial regulations; the revenue budget and capital plan; issuing of a precept; adopting a members' allowance scheme; appointment to committees; scheme of delegation to officers; any matters which by law must be reserved to the Authority itself; maintain a Constitution.
- The Policy and Resources Committee – to determine new strategies, policies or changes in strategy relating to the development and delivery of services. Exercise financial control over expenditure within the approved revenue budgets and capital programme of the Authority. Establish and direct procedures for the implementation, monitoring and amendment of the revenue budget and capital programme and all other financial matters that impact on the Authority's financial position. Consider all matters related to the management of the Authority's assets including buildings, land, ICT and other assets.
- The Community Safety and Protection Committee – consider all matters related to the development and delivery of services appropriate to this Committee. This includes matters relating to: Operational Preparedness; Operational Response; and Prevention and Protection. Considers all matters related to the delivery of services to the diverse communities of Merseyside, and the development, promotion and delivery of a coordinated strategy for developing and maintaining safer communities.
- The Scrutiny Committee – to view and/or scrutinise the objectives of the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and performance against these objectives. To carry out joint member/officer pre and post-implementation scrutiny of any major project, scheme, or key decision taken by the Authority or its standing committees.
- The Joint Police & Fire Collaboration Committee – to act as a Strategic Board to oversee collaboration between Merseyside Police (MP) and the Authority. To consider any reports on proposals for collaboration and potential budget savings or working arrangements.
- The Audit Committee – to consider the internal audit's annual report and opinion, and a summary of internal audit activity and the level of assurance it can give the Authority's corporate governance arrangements. To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance. To monitor the risk register and effective development and operation of risk management. To determine allegations made under the Members Code of Conduct Procedure and refer sanctions proposed and any complaint allegation requiring further investigation to the full Authority. To act as Investigating and Disciplinary Committee where an allegation which could constitute misconduct or gross misconduct is made against the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Director of Finance or the Monitoring Officer.

Receive reports on the effectiveness of internal control processes, including probity and to receive Internal Audit reports in this respect. Liaise with the external audit function over the appointment of the external auditor. Comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and consider in detail the recommendations of the external auditor's annual audit's letter. Consider all matters relating to internal and external audit activity and all matters relating to the regulatory framework.

To appoint Task and finish Groups to undertake detailed work, involving relevant Scrutiny Members, key reference holders and relevant officers.

- The Appeals Committee – to consider whether to assent to applications for specific licences as may be referred to the Committee by the Health and Safety Executive or the Chief Fire Officer.

- The Appointments Committee – to consider and determine for appointment to the posts and offices of the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer, Monitoring Officer and any other posts referred to the committee for consideration.
- Member Development & Engagement Group – to promote the continuous development of Members of the Authority and consider proposals and options for arrangements in respect of Members’ training and development.
- Local Pension Board (Firefighters’ Pension Scheme(s)) – to assist the Authority in its role as ‘Scheme Manager’ for the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme(s), as required by the Pension Scheme (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2015 Regulation 4A.

4.4 Management Review

4.4.1 Included in the day-to-day management of the organisation are a number of key officers, systems and procedures designed to provide core elements of the internal control mechanism, with a nominated lead officer responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of these systems.

4.4.2 There is a comprehensive system of performance management and review embedded within the Authority management structure and processes. The 2019/20 Service Delivery Plan broke down the Authority’s key objectives for the year and identified a lead officer for each project. A “traffic light” system identified the actual progress against performance indicators throughout the year and any areas of concern with options to bring the project back on track were reported to management and the Community Safety and Protection Committee. SLT received regular updates from managers on the delivery of services against targets throughout the year and this allowed senior management an opportunity to scrutinise progress. Performance against Local Performance Indicators is considered in depth each month by the Performance Management Group.

4.4.3 The Risk Register was updated for new risks and the status of existing risks was re-assessed during the year. The Register considers the Authority’s tolerance for risk and any mitigating actions that can reduce the likelihood/severity of the perceived risk. Risk management continued to be an integral part of the project management process and was a fundamental aspect of the business of the Authority.

4.4.4 The Authority employed appropriate professional staff:

- A Statutory Monitoring Officer (Section 5 LGHA) responsible for ensuring the legality of Authority actions and supporting the Committee decision-making process. The Director of Legal Services fulfils this role and is a qualified and experienced lawyer. The Director of Legal Services is supported by a suitably robust and fit for purpose legal team. No actions of the Authority were deemed ultra vires in the year and all relevant laws and regulations have been complied with so far as is known by the Monitoring Officer.
- A Responsible Finance Officer (Section 73 LGA 1985) to ensure the proper and effective administration of the financial affairs of the Authority. The Director of Finance fulfils this role and is a qualified and experienced accountant. The Director of Finance is supported in this role by a Head of Finance and finance team that includes a number of professionally qualified and experienced finance staff. The Director of Finance ensures the Authority has an approved, realistic and affordable five-year financial plan for revenue and capital expenditure, which links to the IRMP and the Service Delivery Plan. The financial planning process is well embedded and understood across the Authority by staff and members. Details of the approved budget are available to all stakeholders in a simple and summarised statement on the Authority’s website.

The above statutory posts are key members of SLT.

4.4.5 Budget monitoring remained robust at strategic and service levels via the production of monthly financial statements for cost centre managers. The financial and management system prevents orders being raised against accounts with insufficient budget and provides an affective enhancement to the budget control process.

4.4.6 Grant Thornton approved an unqualified Statement of Accounts for 2018/19 and it is anticipated this will be repeated in 2019/20. A detailed year-end report is presented to the Authority in a clear and understandable format. A simplified summary statement of accounts is available on the Authority's Website to ensure the outturn position is communicated effectively to all stakeholders.

4.5 Internal Audit

4.5.1 The Authority procured its internal audit service under a service level agreement from Liverpool City Council and the arrangement and service was in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government 2006. The internal audit plan for 2019/20, prioritised by a combination of the key internal controls, assessment and review on the basis of risk, was approved by the Authority during the year. All internal audit reports included an assessment of the internal controls and prioritised action plans, if relevant, to address any areas needing improvement. These reports were submitted to the relevant managers as appropriate and the Director of Finance. An interim and year-end Internal Audit Plan reports are submitted to the Audit sub Committee that included summary findings of all completed audit reports and implementation of any agreed recommendations. The Annual Review of Internal Audit Report concluded that:

"Internal Audit works to a risk based audit plan. The plan is designed to give reasonable assurance that controls are in place and working effectively. From the Internal Audit work undertaken in compliance with the PSIAS in 2019/20, it is our opinion that we can provide Substantial Assurance that the system of internal control in place at Merseyside Fire & Rescue accords with proper practice. This opinion is based on the individual assurance levels we have provided for each of the audit reviews undertaken during the year, and includes consideration of the wider sources of assurance provided to the Authority. The 2019/20 fundamental systems audits completed to date have shown a substantial level of compliance and none of the audits have identified weaknesses that have required a corporate impact assessment of major or moderate. Based on the audit work carried out in 2019/20 we are not aware of any significant control weaknesses, which impact on the Annual Governance Statement"

The service has in place a system of policies, procedures and processes to enable it to support the seven core CIPFA/SOLACE Principles of good governance.

4.6 External Review

4.6.1 External audit services are carried out by Grant Thornton. The scope of the work undertaken by External Audit is;

- The audit of the financial statements
- To reach a conclusion on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources (the value for money (VFM) conclusion
- To work on the whole of government accounts return.

4.6.2 External Audit will comment upon the Authority's 2019/20 statutory financial statements and make a VFM conclusion during the 2020/21 financial year in the Annual Audit Findings report and Annual Audit and Inspection Letter. These documents reflect the Auditor's findings and conclusions from auditing the Statement of Accounts. During 2019/20 the Auditor's Annual Audit Findings Report and Audit Annual Letter covering 2018/19 confirmed the Authority's overall performance continues to be strong and the Authority received an unqualified opinion on the 2018/19 financial statements.

4.7 Year-end Review

- 4.7.1** The current governance and internal control arrangements continue to be reviewed and refined on an ongoing basis and that they continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework. This review provides an acceptable overall assurance of the effectiveness of the Authority's system of internal control.

SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 4.8** The CIPFA guidance suggests that the following criteria should be applied when judging what may constitute a significant control issue:

- The issue has seriously prejudiced or prevented achievement of a principal objective.
- The issue has resulted in a need to seek additional funding to allow it to be resolved, or has resulted in significant diversion of resources from another aspect of the business.
- The issue has led to a material impact on the accounts.
- The issue, or its impact, has attracted significant public interest or has seriously damaged the reputation of the organisation.
- The issue has resulted in formal action being taken by the Chief Financial Officer and/or the Monitoring Officer.

- 4.9** Following the announcement of the 2016/17 - 2019/20 Local Government Finance Settlement the Authority faced a significant reduction in the level of government grant support over this period. The reduction in Government support over this period has meant the Authority faced at least an £11m financial challenge, assuming all budget assumptions remain valid. The Authority approved a financial plan to meet this challenge at the 2016/17, Budget Authority meeting, and updated and ratified the plan at the 2017/18, 2018/19 & 2019/20 Budget Authority meetings.

- 4.10** In light of increased operational and protection risks (following a number of national and international incidents), and findings from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Authority approved a £1m investment back into frontline service in the 2019/20 five year medium term financial plan. As the £1m investment was made permanent as part of the 2020/21 budget plan.

- 4.11** Whilst no significant weaknesses have been identified in control systems at present, the following have been identified as critical internal control issues for the forthcoming year which the Authority will continue to monitor and action as appropriate:

- The assumptions made in the medium term financial plan, particularly around inflation, pay awards, and future government grants (whilst based on the best information available) are subject to potential change in such volatile times.
- The recruitment of sufficient firefighters to maintain the required response staffing levels in light of the fact the Authority may lose approximately half of its current firefighters through natural retirements over the next five years or so. The Authority has established a recruitment reserve so it can fund the required recruitment in advance of the expected retirements over the period.
- The impact of any permanent remedy to the McCloud pension case and the impact this may have on earlier than planned retirements for firefighters being reinstated in the 1992 FPS with a potential retirement age of 50 compared to 60 in the 2015 FPS.

Taken together these factors result in a significant potential risk to the Authority's medium term financial plan. Reliable monitoring and forecasting processes are in place and the Director of Finance will ensure any variation to assumptions made in the medium term financial plan are identified at the earliest possible time. The Financial Review reports will keep Members informed on the impact of any variation to the assumptions in the financial plan and recommended corrective action.

4.12 The 2017 Policing and Crime Act places a statutory duty on the three emergency services (Ambulance, Fire and Police) to keep collaboration opportunities under review and to collaborate where this would improve efficiency and effectiveness. The Authority continues to maintain ongoing discussions with Merseyside Police and North West Ambulance Service on developing opportunities for greater collaboration.

4.13 Under the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act (2016), in November 2015, the Government agreed to devolve a range of powers and responsibility to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. The model includes a directly elected City Region Mayor over the Combined Authority Area, who was elected in May 2017. The Mayor may seek to take over the future governance of the Merseyside OPCC and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority at some future point, subject to the relevant support from the Government. The Authority will work with the Merseyside Police, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Liverpool City Region Mayor, if asked, to establish the future governance arrangement for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.

4.14 COVID-19 Impact (2020/2021 onwards)

4.14.1 Authority governance / committee meetings: whilst the COVID-19 had no impact on the committee governance arrangements in 2019/2020, the Authority has made the decision to conduct committee meetings via “zoom” rather than hold physical meeting until the risk of the virus is reduced.

4.14.2 The impact of social distancing on the Service: Operational response has continued to operate as normal and the Service has procured the required PPE (based on NFCC guidance) to ensure firefighters attending operational incidents are protected. Staff who can work from home have been encouraged to do so until it is possible to return to their normal place of work. Unfortunately, some services have been deferred if social distancing can't be maintained, this has particularly impacted on Prevention and Youth Engagement work, however managers are looking to provide these services in the near future by reviewing ways of working.

4.14.3 Volunteering: the Service has looked to support other emergency services, councils, care homes and the vulnerable in the community by providing support in the form of face mask fitting tests; assisting the coroner's service; delivering food and medicines; and delivering COVID-19 test kits to the social care homes.


4.14.4 Additional Costs & Loss of Income: the Service has incurred additional expenditure to meet the challenges of COVID-19 in the form of additional PPE; increased cleaning regimes; additional ICT; and an increase in some planned projects costs (such as the new St Helens fire station as the construction phase has been slightly extended to reflect new work patterns). The Service has also lost expected income from commercial training; Prince's Trust; and the canteen. Up to May 2020, the Government awarded the authority £1.419m in grants to cover these costs, and more funding may be released in the near future. The current assumption is that the Government will cover the full cost of COVID-19, at least in 2020/2021.

4.14.5 Longer-term financial impact: The Government has announced it will defer the fair funding review and retained business rates funding adjustments for another year, so the earliest year these changes will impact is 2022/23. The impact of COVID-19 on the UK economy may result in future financial challenges for the Government, and at a local level, council tax and business rates income may be lower than that expected in the current MTFP if collection rates fall. The **2021/2022 MTFP** will consider any new financial challenges during January – February 2021.

CERTIFICATION

- 5.0 To the best of our knowledge, the governance arrangements, as defined above, have been operating during the year and up to the date of the approval of the Annual Accounts, providing an effective framework for identifying governance issues and taking mitigating action. Over the coming year the Authority will continue the operation of its governance framework and take steps to carry out the actions for managing any governance issues identified above or that materialise in the year.

Signed..........
J. GRACE
CHAIR of AUDIT COMMITTEE

Signed..........
P. GARRIGAN
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Signed..........
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26 November 2020

Dear Sirs

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority - Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020

This representation letter is provided in connection with the audit of the financial statements of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority for the year ended 31 March 2020 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements are presented fairly, in all material respects in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 and applicable law.

We confirm that to the best of our knowledge and belief having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

Financial Statements

- i We have fulfilled our responsibilities for the preparation of the Authority's financial statements in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 ("the Code"); in particular the financial statements are fairly presented in accordance therewith.
- ii We have complied with the requirements of all statutory directions affecting the Authority and these matters have been appropriately reflected and disclosed in the financial statements.
- iii The Authority has complied with all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance. There has been no non-compliance with requirements of any regulatory authorities that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance.
- iv We acknowledge our responsibility for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud.
- v Significant assumptions used by us in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable and we acknowledge the material uncertainty the valuer has noted in the Authority's valuation report. This is on the basis of uncertainties in markets caused by

Covid-19 and we are satisfied that there have been not impairment of asset values as assessed by the valuer. We are satisfied that the material judgements used in the preparation of the financial statements are soundly based, in accordance with the Code and adequately disclosed in the financial statements.

- vi We confirm that we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the valuation of pension scheme assets and liabilities for IAS19 Employee Benefits disclosures are consistent with our knowledge. We have considered the impact of HM Treasury consultation on a proposed remedy in the McCloud/Sergeant case and are satisfied that the assessed net liability is materially correct and based on the best available data and assumptions. We confirm that all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for. We also confirm that all significant post-employment benefits have been identified and properly accounted for.
- vii Except as disclosed in the financial statements:
 - a there are no unrecorded liabilities, actual or contingent
 - b none of the assets of the Authority has been assigned, pledged or mortgaged
 - c there are no material prior year charges or credits, nor exceptional or non-recurring items requiring separate disclosure.
- viii Related party relationships and transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards and the Code.
- ix All events subsequent to the date of the financial statements and for which International Financial Reporting Standards and the Code require adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.
- x We have considered the adjusted misstatements, and misclassification and disclosures changes schedules included in your Audit Findings Report. The Authority financial statements have been amended for these misstatements, misclassifications and disclosure changes and are free of material misstatements, including omissions.
- xi Actual or possible litigation and claims have been accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards.
- xii We have no plans or intentions that may materially alter the carrying value or classification of assets and liabilities reflected in the financial statements.
- xiii We have updated our going concern assessment and cashflow forecasts in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. We continue to believe that the Authority's financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis and have not identified any material uncertainties related to going concern on the grounds that current and future sources of funding or support will be more than adequate for the Authority's needs We believe that no further disclosures relating to the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern need to be made in the financial statements.

Information Provided

- xiv We have provided you with:
 - a. access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the Authority's financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
 - b. additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of your audit; and
 - c. access to persons within the Authority via remote arrangements, in compliance with the nationally specified social distancing requirements established by the

government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

- xv We have communicated to you all deficiencies in internal control of which management is aware.
- xvi All transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements.
- xvii We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
- xviii We have disclosed to you all information in relation to fraud or suspected fraud that we are aware of and that affects the Authority and involves:
 - a. management;
 - b. employees who have significant roles in internal control; or
 - c. others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.
- xix We have disclosed to you all information in relation to allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.
- xx We have disclosed to you all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing financial statements.
- xxi We have disclosed to you the identity of the Authority's related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware.
- xxii We have disclosed to you all known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements.

Annual Governance Statement

- xxv We are satisfied that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) fairly reflects the Authority's risk assurance and governance framework and we confirm that we are not aware of any significant risks that are not disclosed within the AGS. The final version of the AGS had been provided to you before publication.

Narrative Report

- xxvi The disclosures within the Narrative Report fairly reflect our understanding of the Authority's financial and operating performance over the period covered by the Authority's financial statements. The final version of the Narrative Report had been provided to you before publication.

Approval

The approval of this letter of representation was minuted by the Authority's Audit Committee at its meeting on 26 November 2020.

Yours faithfully

Name.....

Position – Director of Finance

Date 26th November 2020

Name.....

Position - Chair of Audit Committee

Date 26th November 2020

Signed on behalf of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority