

Argyll and Bute Council



Comhairle Earra Ghàidheal agus Bhòid



Audited Annual Accounts
For the year ended 31 March 2024

If you would like this document in another language or format, or if you require the services of an interpreter, please contact us.

Ma tha sibh ag iarraidh an sgrìobhainn seo ann an cànan no riochd eile, no ma tha sibh a' feumachdainn seirbheis eadar, feuch gun leig sibh fios thugainn.

本文件可以翻譯為另一語文版本，或製作成另一格式，如有此需要，或需要傳譯員的協助，請與我們聯絡。

यह दस्तावेज़ यदि आपको किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये, या आपको आनुवाद-सेवाओं की आवश्यकता हो तो हमसे संपर्क करें

本文件可以翻译为另一语文版本，或制作成另一格式，如有此需要，或需要传译员的协助，请与我们联系。

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਾਂ ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਸਮਝਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰੈਟਰ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

یہ دستاویز اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہو، یا اگر آپ کو ترجمان کی خدمات چاہئیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کیجئے۔

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać ten dokument w innym języku lub w innym formacie albo jeżeli potrzebna jest pomoc tłumacza, to prosimy o kontakt z nami.

**Financial Services
Argyll and Bute Council
Kilmory
Lochgilphead
Argyll
PA31 8RT**

Tel: 01546 605522

	Page
Management Commentary	4-26
Statement of Responsibilities for the Annual Accounts	27
Annual Governance Statement	28-41
The Remuneration Report	42-50
Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	51-52
Balance Sheet	53-54
Statement of Movement in Reserves – Movement in 2023-24	55-56
Statement of Movement in Reserves – Comparative Movement in 2022-23	57-58
Cash Flow Statement	59
Notes to the Financial Statements (See Page 2-3)	60-124
Council Tax Income Account	125
Notes to the Council Tax Income Account	126
Non Domestic Rate Income Account	127
Notes to the Non Domestic Rate Income Account	128
Group Accounts - Introduction	129
Group Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	130
Group Balance Sheet	131-132
Group Statement of Movement in Reserves – Movement in 2023-24	133
Group Statement of Movement in Reserves – Comparative Movement 2022-23	134
Group Cash Flow Statement	135
Notes to the Group Financial Statements	136-140
Independent Auditors Report	141-144
Glossary of Terms	145-146
Appendix A: Trade Union Facility Time Statement 2023-24	147-148

Note No		Page
1	Summary of Significant Accounting Policies	60-73
2	Accounting Standards Issued But Not Yet Adopted	73
3	Critical Judgements in Applying Accounting Policies	73-74
4	Assumptions Made About the Future and Other Major Sources of Estimation Uncertainty	74-76
5	Expenditure and Funding Analysis	77-80
6	General Fund Reserves	81-82
7	Supplementary Notes to the Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	83-84
8	Other Operating Income and Expenditure	84
9	Agency Services	84
10	Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002	85
11	Fees Payable to External Auditors	85
12	Waste Management Public Private Partnership	86
13	Grant Income	86
14	Related Parties	87-88
15	Property, Plant and Equipment	89-94
16	Heritage Assets	94
17	Intangible Assets	95
18	Investment Property	96
19	Schools Built under Public Private Partnership Contracts (PPP)	96-99
20	Operating Leases	100
21	Finance Leases	100-101
22	Long Term Debtors	102
23	Debtors	102
24	Assets Held for Sale	103
25	Cash and Cash Equivalents	103
26	Creditors	104
27	Financial Instruments Disclosures	104-107
28	Other Liabilities	108

Note No		Page
29	Provisions	108-109
30	Capital Grants Received in Advance	109
31	Defined Benefit Pension Schemes	110-117
32	Unusable Reserves	117-118
33	Usable Reserves	118-119
34	Contingent Liabilities	119-120
35	Termination Benefits	120
36	Trust Funds and Other Third Party Funds	121
37	Common Good Funds	121-122
38	Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) Projects	122
39	Cash Flow Statement – Operating Activities	123
40	Cash Flow Statement – Investing Activities	123
41	Cash Flow Statement – Financing Activities	124

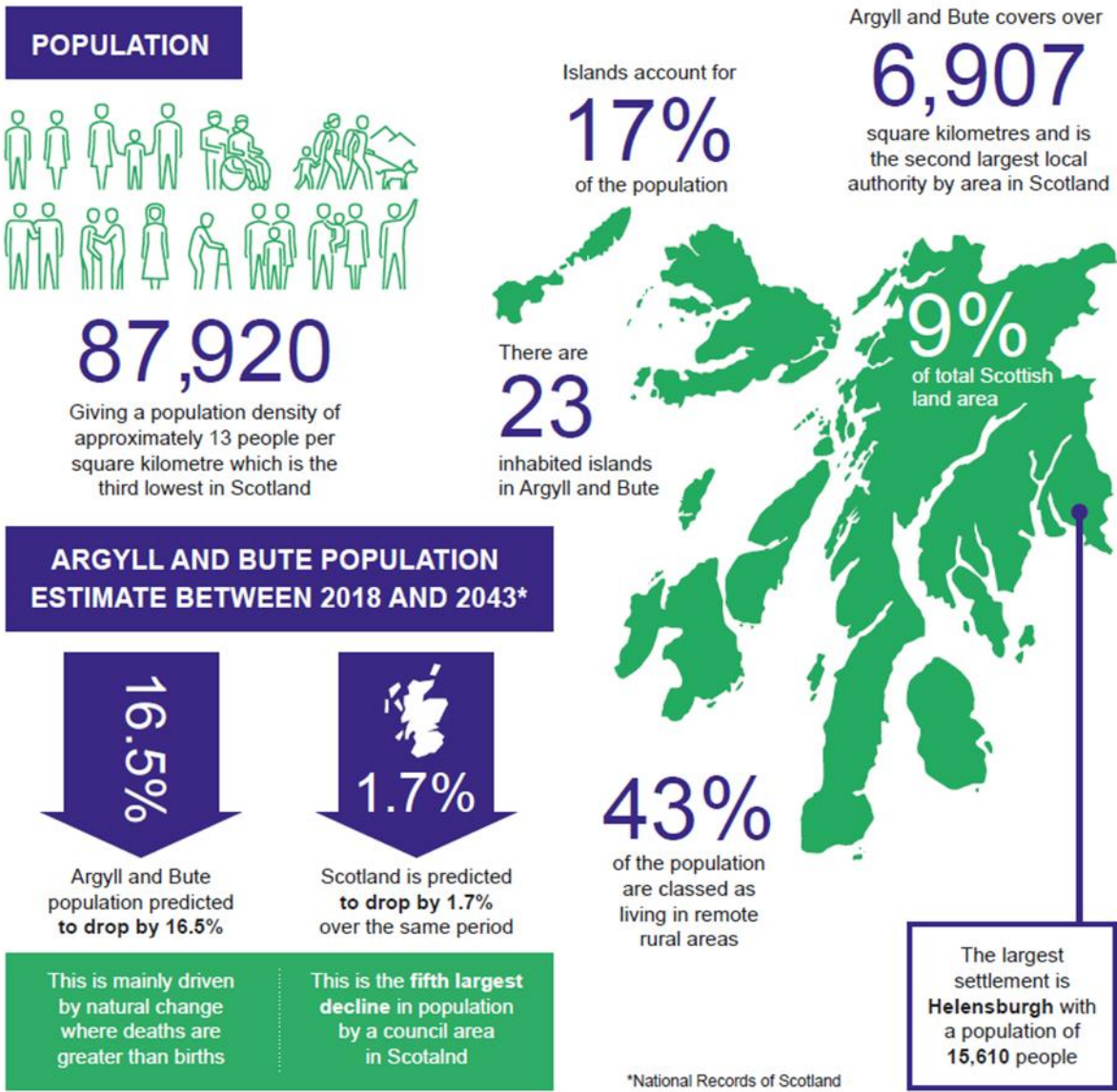
1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the financial statements for Argyll and Bute Council and its group for the year ended 31 March 2024. The statements have been compiled in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code). This commentary outlines the key messages regarding the performance of the Council over the 2023-24 financial year as well as providing an indication of risks and issues which may impact upon the Council in the future.

2. PROFILE OF ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

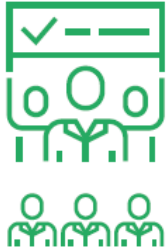
The report starts with outlining some key facts about Argyll and Bute.

Argyll and Bute Facts – Place



Argyll and Bute Facts – Our Council

ELECTED MEMBERS



36 in total across Argyll and Bute

For every ward there are at least 3 councillors that represent the area you live in.

Argyll and Bute is split into 11 multi-councillor areas or wards

ELECTORAL WARDS

- Cowal
- Dunoon
- Helensburgh Central
- Helensburgh and Lomond South
- Isle of Bute
- Kintyre and the Islands
- Lomond North
- Mid Argyll
- Oban North and Lorn
- Oban South and the Isles
- South Kintyre

THE COUNCIL IS A MAJOR EMPLOYER IN ARGYLL AND BUTE

4,679

Employed across Argyll and Bute Area (per staffing watch FQ4 2023-24)



There are

3,911

full time equivalent employees

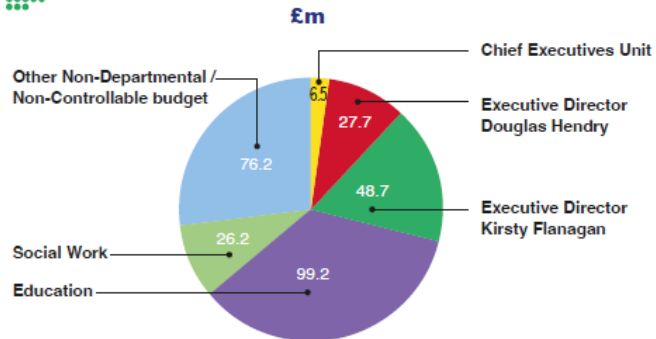


The Council has set the revenue budget for 2023-24 on 23rd February 2023

The total revenue budget is

284.5M

Financed by Scottish Government Grant of £223.7m and Council tax of £59.3m and reserves of 1.5m



3. VISION AND PRIORITIES

The Council has a new 5 year Corporate Plan for the period 2023-2027 and also an Annual Business Plan. This new document replaces the former annual Service Plans to bring more focus and scrutiny on the delivery and performance of the organisation against its priorities. This delivers on the recommendation in our Best Value Audit to make the link between priorities and performance clearer.

The Council's vision is:

We have a vision for a successful, vibrant Argyll and Bute with a growing population and a thriving economy. A place where people want to come to live, to work and to do business as a result of action to combat and reverse decline. We see the potential for thriving local economies that support our rich mix of remote, rural and island communities. Communities which also benefit from services that work –

where we make the best use of all of our resources so that our core business as a council is as effective as possible.

We want Argyll and Bute's communities to be on a level playing field with others around the country – that is why we will campaign for equity for our communities on issues like fair funding, coping with challenges like the cost of living, and securing digital access and physical access to other opportunities. We will do our utmost to ensure that local voices and needs are taken into account in national decision-making.

We recognise that the cost of living crisis will affect countless households in Argyll and Bute. We want to play a part in responding to that and mitigating the impact on our communities' overall wellbeing and future success.

We see our council and our communities working together in playing our part and making our contributions to wider priorities like climate change, economic growth, strong local governance and more – using our strong track record in partnership working, at all levels, to secure the best possible outcomes.

Our Priorities for the Council Term 2022 to 2027 are shaped around delivering this vision for Argyll and Bute, our people, our success and our future.

At the Council meeting on 25 April 2024 there was a change in political management arrangements and therefore a new Corporate Plan for the period 2024-2028 will be prepared and presented to Council with updated priorities during 2024-25. Details on activity, for each financial year, against the Council priorities will be set out in a new Council Annual Business Plan which will also be presented to Council at the same time.

The Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership (CPP) brings together local public services with communities they service, and provides a focus for partnership working that targets specific local circumstances. Partners work together to improve local services and to ensure that they meet the needs of local people, especially those who need the services most. The Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan has been in place for the last 10 years and had six key outcomes:

- Our economy is diverse and thriving
- We have an infrastructure that supports sustainable growth,
- Education skills and training maximise opportunities for all,
- Children and young people have the best possible start,
- People live active, healthier and independent lives,
- People will live in safe and stronger communities.

The Argyll and Bute CPP has completed its community engagement on identifying the priorities for the next 10 years (2024 – 2034) and these are:

1. Transport Infrastructure,
2. Housing,
3. Community Wellbeing.

Argyll and Bute Council will continue to be a leading partner in the partnership and ensure that the priorities of the CPP and the Council are aligned.

Management Commentary

Some of our achievements, and the challenges we faced, in relation to the Council's agreed Corporate Outcomes are highlighted below.

Our economy is diverse and thriving

Ardrishaig North Public Realm Project

It was a long term aspiration of local residents and community organisations in Ardrishaig to see spaces be made more attractive including provision of better space for community events, improvements to the car parks and upgrading of the paths and landscaping.

As part of an ambitious capital regeneration programme to help stimulate further public and private sector investment, works within Ardrishaig began in August 2022 and were certified as complete during 2023-24. These works included:

- A new lochside viewing area with additional seating and art work;
- Alterations to the north car park including an expansion of disabled parking;
- New artwork on the canal embankment;
- Reconfiguration of the memorial garden to include new seating areas, picnic benches and a path;
- Improved accessibility for the Argyll Sea Kayak Trail making it easier for kayakers to go between Loch Fyne and the Crinan Canal;



We have an infrastructure that supports sustainable growth

Developing Infrastructure for Drones

In 2023, the Council won the COSLA Excellence Award for innovation due to its work developing infrastructure and service change by using drones. The Council worked with Skyports (an international drone company) to develop a deliverable school meal delivery system using drone technology. This culminated in a successful pilot flight, which delivered school meals from Oban Airport to Lochnell Primary School, enabling proof of concept to be delivered. Argyll and Bute's island and remote schools can often struggle to recruit catering staff and travel times to supply perishable goods can be long using roads and ferries. Drones potentially offer a low carbon and quicker alternative to traditional transport.

Planning permission has now been granted to establish a permanent Oban Drone Facility to enable commercial deliveries in the area, with schools meals continuing to be a pilot test subject.



Funding has now been secured to establish this and the project is a component part of development of a new business park at Oban Airport. This will be the first permanent Drone Facility in the UK. This ensures that it is a sustainable delivery mechanism for the school meals and other service in the future. The Council has also been awarded £250K from the Regulator's Pioneer Fund for the development of the UAV logistics hub, based at Oban Airport, to serve the islands, building on the pilot approach.

Weather Incident

During October 2023 Argyll and Bute suffered extensive storm damage and a major incident was declared within the Council area. The flooding resulted in substantial damage to bridges and a number of landslides which disrupted the roads network and cut off some areas altogether. Transport connections in and out of Argyll and Bute were severely compromised and for a period of time all of the trunk roads and many of the local roads were impassible. A number of helicopter evacuations took place and reception centres were set up in the immediate aftermath.

This incident was unprecedented and every effort was made to re-open roads when safe to do so however some routes required more considerable remedial action. Works carried out were extensive with dozens of locations requiring attention from simple cleansing of a small drain to significant landslides requiring temporary roads to be created and full bridge replacements. Furthermore, to ensure all children in the impacted areas were able to attend school transport via boat was arranged.



Road Safety Improvements

During 2023-24 the Councils Network and Standards team secured £0.270m of funding from the National Road Safety Improvement Fund. This has allowed a number of safety improvements to our roads and footways including:

- Village gateways at Clynder, Kilcreggan, Rosneath and Garelochhead including coloured surfacing at access points and speed roundels.

- Two new sections of footway at School Street, Bowmore with improved drainage, road markings and street lighting.
- Carriageway widening and footway construction at Millpark Road, Oban including improvements to drainage, road markings and street lighting.
- Provision of new footway in Taynuilt resulting in a safe route for school children to utilise.



Education skills and training maximise opportunities for all

Inclusion and Equality

Argyll and Bute Council is investing more than £1.7 million over the next few years to establish four new Learning Centres in its schools so that children and young people with more complex Additional Support Needs (ASN) can benefit from enhanced and specialist support. This decision means that the Council will create dedicated primary Learning Centre provision in south Kintyre, cross-sector provision on Mull and Islay, as well as an additional Learning Centre targeted at secondary learners in Helensburgh and Lomond. The new Learning Centres at Castlehill Primary and Islay High School are scheduled to open in August 2024.

The new facilities will include:

- Breakout quiet rooms
- Low stimulus and high stimulus sensory rooms
- Changing facilities with specialist equipment to meet specific physical needs
- Accessible teaching and outdoor spaces

This development offers an exciting new opportunity for staffing as well. The teachers will work as part of a team to support children with severe and complex learning needs and/or complex medical/health needs. An important part of their role will involve planning and delivering individualised/elaborated curricula for children with a wide range of needs. Working with colleagues in other establishments and partner agencies will form an important part of their role too. ASN Assistants will also be recruited in the coming months to support teaching staff based in the new Learning Centre to deliver individualised/elaborated curricula and help the children and young people to develop vital life-skills.

The new Learning Centres will support all learners to achieve their potential right here in Argyll and Bute.

Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP)

The Care Experienced Education Team (CEET) team were part of the Developing the Young Workforce Conference and attended alongside our care experienced Vice Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board along with some of our Oban based care experienced young people. We delivered a Raising Awareness session to approximately 120 delegates to discuss how to support a care experienced young person in the workplace. Feedback collated to date has been positive with some employers indicating a commitment to action.

Following a successful application, the Virtual School for CECYP has received a £1000 Award from the Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) 10th Anniversary Legacy School Awards Scheme. This will be used to support a new initiative for care experienced young people moving schools. Each CECYP person who moves school, within the authority or joins from out with the authority, will receive an 'Always Belong' box of resources. This project will begin in the 2024 – 25 academic year by listening to our current CECYP suggestions of what should be in the box.

To date, we remain at zero care experienced children and young people excluded in this academic year. This can be attributed to a robust exclusion policy, an ongoing commitment from staff across our settings and a clear vision of inclusion from senior leaders across our Education Service.

The Care Experience Education Team and Argyll and Bute Councils Chief Officers Group both achieved the We Promise Award being the first team in Scotland and first senior Council team in Scotland respectively to achieve this award.



MCR Pathways

In session 2023/24, the MCR Pathways Programme was established in three Argyll and Bute secondary schools: Hermitage Academy, Dunoon Grammar School and Oban High School. This programme addresses the gap in life-chances and educational outcomes, between care experienced young people and their peers through a school- based mentoring programme.

An MCR Pathways Co-ordinator was appointed in each school. Each school contributed £12,000 to the overall cost of Co-ordinator recruitment (£35,309 per school, including on-costs), with the remainder being sourced internally by the Education Service.

All other central costs for the running of the programme (around £28,000 per school) were covered by Scottish Government funding. Such government funding is secure until the end of the 2025/26 session for the three above schools which commenced the MCR Pathways programme in August 2023.

In year 1, the MCR Pathways programme in all three schools has been highly successful, with all targets met or exceeded, and positive feedback provided by young people, mentors, Co-ordinators and MCR Pathways.

Discussion with MCR Pathways has confirmed the possibility of expanding the MCR Pathways Programme to a further three schools in 2024/25: Rothesay Joint Campus, Lochgilphead Joint Campus and Campbeltown Grammar School.

Children and young people have the best possible start

Childcare provision

Our delivery trial of purchase-able childcare for working parents in some remote and rural communities, continues to support new parents return to work. On Bute, where an acute lack of childcare affected a growing number of parents return to work after childbirth, this provision is now being permanently delivered, as a result of building renovations to the Joint Campus. In its early stages, this provision will support increasing numbers of the islands parents engage in work or training opportunities, supporting the economic sustainability of young families

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)

The second annual DYW Argyll & Bute Conference took place in May, in the Corran Halls, Oban. The purpose of the conference was to promote and celebrate the range of agencies and partnerships participating in preparing young people for the world of work, and the scope of activities and initiatives involved in doing so. This year's conference had a particular focus on meeting the needs of and providing opportunities for the young people who need them most. The day itself involved around 100 delegates made up of Education colleagues, Community Learning and Development, Skills Development Scotland, employers, Third Sector partners and other agencies and organisations contributing to the DYW agenda across Argyll & Bute.

Key elements of the conference included presentations from Who Cares? Scotland, Inspiralba, and a series of interactive workshops for delegates to take part in. The highlight of the day for many was the contributions from young people who were able to address first-hand how delegates could improve further their offering for young people across the region. The day culminated in a keynote speech from the Minister for Higher and Further Education, Graeme Dey MSP. Feedback from the event has been overwhelmingly positive with plans already being made for next year.



People Live Active Healthier and Independent Lives

Active Travel App

In 2023/24, through funding from Smarter Choices Smarter Places, Argyll and Bute Council worked with the Heart of Argyll Wildlife Organisation and Aerial Digital to create a walking and cycling app for Mid Argyll. The app 'Discover Dalriada Mid Argyll' has been downloaded more than 250 times since its launch in April 2024.

The app is designed to encourage people to get out and explore the Mid Argyll area through a series of self-guided walking, wheeling and cycling trails with each trail highlighting and providing additional information on a range of points of interest that can be seen along the trail.

The app also includes an 'Eye Spy' fun family challenge game.

The Discover Dalriada Mid Argyll app is the latest in a series of active travel apps that have been developed over recent years and there are now active travel apps for:

- Campbeltown
- Dunoon
- Helensburgh
- Mid-Argyll
- Oban
- Rothesay



Food for Thought

Two schools were successful in Food for Thought grants. Gigha pupils planted and harvested their own produce and also used the grant to set up poultry farming (hens). Their produce is being used within school and community. Additional workshops for families were provided by a nutritionist to develop community knowledge of healthy recipes with locally available, affordable produce. A further session was provided for the community with the Gigha Foodies Group which allowed everyone on the island to access the knowledge of a professional nutritionist to help plan and make simple yet nutritious meals with ingredients which can be grown locally/purchased affordably.

Funds in Ardrishaig have supported the purchase and use of gardening resources and materials to develop growth of food on school grounds. This is being used to learn about healthy eating and supports the sale of school-produce within the local community.

People will live in safer and stronger communities

Mentors In Violence Prevention (MVP)

The Mentors In Violence Prevention (MVP) programme has continued to be developed across our secondary schools. The Programme is a mentor based programme that addresses gender based violence. This work continues to be an important part of the Violence Against Women and Girls Project. In November 23, a further 17 staff were trained, including partner agencies. This has increased engaged schools from 3 to 7. This exceeds our target for school engagement within our development plan. The work continues to bring together engagement from partners such as Police Scotland and Argyll & Bute Rape Crisis. Our aim for the next academic session would be to ensure engagement across all secondary schools and build capacity within our training team.

4. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2023-24



The Council has a robust financial reporting framework in place and a comprehensive monitoring pack is prepared and presented to every Policy and Resources Committee. This includes reports on the revenue budget, capital plan, financial risks, treasury monitoring, reserves and balances and delivery of any previously agreed savings. The financial framework is shown on the left.

Revenue: Outturn against Budget

The performance against budget for financial year 2023-24, after adjusting for automatic and proposed earmarked reserve proposals, was an overall underspend of £1.728m, 0.55% as summarised in the table below. (The corresponding position for 2022-23 was an underspend of £3.273m, 1.06%.)

2023-24 Final Revenue Budget Outturn

	Actuals	Budget	Variance	Percentage
		Adjusted for Automatic Earmarkings	(Overspend) Underspend	
	£000	£000	£000	%
Chief Executive's Unit	1,155	1,161	6	0.53%
Executive Director (Douglas Hendry)	139,308	139,999	691	0.49%
Executive Director (Kirsty Flanagan)	58,610	57,258	(1,352)	(2.36%)
Weather related incident costs (not covered by Bellwin Scheme)	839	0	(839)	0.0%
Joint Boards	1,319	1,396	77	5.56%
Other	11,584	11,584	0	0.0%
Service Concessions	(40,869)	(40,489)	380	(0.94%)
Social Work	77,605	77,605	0	0.0%
Net Expenditure	249,551	248,514	(1,037)	(0.42%)
Total Funding	314,827	314,794	33	0.01%
OVERSPEND PRIOR TO LOANS FUND			(1,004)	(0.32%)
Loans Fund	8,615	14,547	5,932	40.78%
UNDERSPEND BEFORE EARMARKINGS			4,928	1.57%
Proposed Unspent Budget Earmarking Proposals			(3,200)	
UNDERSPEND AFTER PROPOSED EARMARKINGS			1,728	0.55%

Within the Chief Executive's Unit (Community Planning) there was a small underspend resulting within travel codes due to staff travel costs coming in under budget due to increased digital working and less face to face meetings.

Within the remit of Executive Director Douglas Hendry (Education, Legal and Regulatory Services and Commercial Services), there was an overall underspend due to:

- Receipt of one-off historic water rate refunds.
- Staffing underspends due to delays in recruitment and staffing underspends within Cleaning, Early Learning and Childcare and Legal and Regulatory Support.
- Underspends within the Scheme of Devolved School Management where previous carry forwards were not fully utilised.

Within the remit of Executive Director Kirsty Flanagan (Roads and Infrastructure, Development and Economic Growth, Customer Support Services and Financial Services) there was an overall overspend due to:

- Reduction in income within Piers and Harbours
- Additional fleet costs across the service
- Increased staff costs for Pupil Transport
- An unrealised Depot saving
- Increased electricity costs for street lighting
- Additional Car Parking maintenance costs
- Reduction in TRO income in Roads.

There were also costs relating to a significant weather incident that occurred during 2023-24 that could not be claimed through the Scottish Government's Bellwin scheme which resulted in an overspend.

Social Work, managed by the Health and Social Care Partnership, reported an overspend of £0.165m as a result of ongoing demand for older people care services, both residential and non-residential. Per CIPFA/LASAAC Guidance in prior years an earmarking relating to the HSCP was recognised as a creditor on the Council's balance sheet making the funds available to Social Work to spend in future years, therefore this over spend has been drawn down from the creditor balance.

There is a favourable year-end position in relation to Council Tax of which was due to Council Tax debt recovery after court summons being higher than anticipated.

There was an underspend within the Loans Fund due to a number of reasons but largely as a result of effective Treasury Management which saw increased levels of interest received on investments combined with reduced borrowing costs which resulted in an improved position in excess of £3m compared to previous year. Significant slippage in the capital programme in 2022-23 resulted in lower principal repayments in 2023-24 than anticipated and there was also a one-off gain of £0.870m as a result of a discount received on the early repayment of loans.

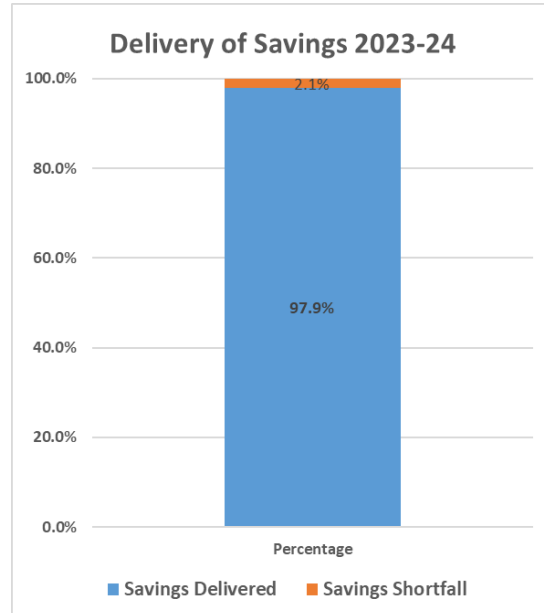
In 2023-24 the Council adopted the financial flexibility introduced by the Scottish Government relating to two service concession contracts for NPDO and DBFM schools which allowed the associated borrowing to be accounted for over the life of the asset as opposed to the life of the contract (see note 6.2 for further detail). This resulted in a one-off retrospective gain of £36.038m and gain in 2023-24 of £4.831m. As part of the 2024-25 budget setting process Council agreed to transfer £0.380m from the Service Concessions gain to the General Fund hence there is an underspend in 2023-24 relating to this that will increase the General Fund.

The overall favourable position for Departmental and Central Expenditure Budgets due to the underspend within the Loans Fund has provided the opportunity to earmark unspent budget for specific purposes aligned to the objectives, priorities and targets of the Council.

Delivery of 2023-24 Agreed Savings

The Council has been required to make significant budget savings for a number of years in order to ensure it responds to continued funding reductions, rising cost pressures and complies with its statutory requirement to set a balanced budget whilst meeting the needs of local residents.

Budget savings of £9.348m (20 saving options) were agreed for 2023-24. These, and savings agreed in previous years which had to be delivered in 2023-24 totalling £0.031m (3 saving options), were monitored throughout the year. The chart on the right shows the overall delivery of savings and any shortfall was absorbed within departmental resources as is evidenced from the overall departmental underspends. Some of these saving options were non- recurring in nature (£2.581m).



Capital: Outturn against Budget

The net 2023-24 capital expenditure was £37.860m compared to an annual budget of £33.166m, (adjusted during the year for previously agreed slippages, accelerations and virements) giving rise to a year end overspend of £4.694m (14.15%). There are a number of under and (overspends) within the outturn position, the most significant are noted below:

Project	(Over)/Under Spend (£m)	Explanation
Roads Reconstruction	0.507	Funding received late in 2023-24 so carried forward into 2024-25 when spend will be incurred.
Oban High School Replacement	0.406	Ongoing negotiations with contractor have delayed final payments and retention invoices which are outstanding.
Shared Offices	0.372	Delays in expenditure as only minor works have been carried out to offices during 2023-24 due to office rationalisation project.
Town Centre Funds	(0.350)	External funding will not be received until works are complete. Overall the project is within budget.
Harbour Investment Programme	(0.408)	Reversal of previous slippage - consultancy work at Fionnphort and Port Askaig concluded earlier than previously anticipated. Overall the project is within budget.
Kilmory Business Park	(0.432)	Delays in invoicing due to legal requirements resulting in delays in receiving external funding. Overall the project is within budget.
Environmental Projects Income	(0.500)	External funding will not be received until works are complete which creates an in year variance. Overall the project is within budget.
CHORD – Rothesay Income	(1.435)	External funding will not be received until works are complete which creates an in year variance. Overall the project is within budget.
Dunoon STEM Hub Income	(2.050)	Project has been delayed due ongoing discussions regarding the location of the STEM Hub and budgeted income will not be received until the project is complete. Overall the project is within budget.
Helensburgh Waterfront Income	(2.369)	Timing of receipt of funding causing 2023-24 variance which will be received in 2024-25. Overall the project is within budget.

After accounting for previously agreed slippages, the total slippage in the capital programme in 2023-24 was £23.143m. In 2023-24 capital expenditure across Scotland's councils continues to be impacted by increased inflation rates and shortages in construction materials, affecting both cost and delivery plans. There are also elements of slippage that can be attributed to incorrect profiling of spend at the start of the financial year as opposed to delays in the programme.

There are 169 projects within the Capital Plan: 143 of the projects are complete or on track and 26 are off track but recoverable as a result of the slippage mentioned previously within the capital programme. There are no projects off track that are not recoverable.

Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP)

The Argyll and Bute Integration Joint Board (IJB) with responsibility for Social Work and a range of health services was established and came into effect on 1 April 2016. The Council approved the 2023-24 budget on 23 February 2023 and the amount approved for Social Work services transferring to the Integration Joint Board for 2023-24 was £76.253m. The budget figures quoted in the previous outturn table include in-year adjustments.

In terms of the outturn position, the HSCP has reported an underspend for 2023-24 of £2.889m and there is no debt outstanding to the Council. The Council has a creditor totalling £3.389m on its balance sheet in relation to earmarked reserves which the Council holds on behalf of the HSCP. The earmarked balance comprises £0.791m of Scottish Government funding for a range of specific Scottish Government Initiatives, £0.630m of general reserves and £1.968m for service transformation and infrastructure investment.

5. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES)

The CIES shows the accounting cost of providing services rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Councils raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The Council is required to make various statutory accounting adjustments to the net cost of services as reported in the budgetary outturn in order to comply with the Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023-24. These accounting adjustments include depreciation, loans fund principal repayment and accrued holiday leave not taken by 31 March 2024. Internal income also requires to be removed between segments within the CIES.

Reconciliation of CIES to Revenue Budget Outturn

A reconciliation of the Surplus on the Provision of Services of £9.765m as noted in the CIES to the revenue budget outturn of £1.728m underspend is shown below.

Reconciliation of CIES to Revenue Budget Outturn

	£000	£000
Surplus/(Deficit) on Provision of Services		9,765
<i>Remove statutory adjustments that don't feature in budget outturn:</i>		
Depreciation	25,732	
Impairment of Assets charged to services	(2,576)	
Capital Funding	(23,550)	
CFCR	(1,616)	
Pension Adjustment	(6,322)	
Statutory Repayment of Debt	(7,696)	
Repayment of Finance Leases	(5,280)	
Transfers to/from Other Statutory Reserves	(77)	
Service Concessions	40,869	
Other Adjustments	136	
		19,620
Movement In General Fund Balance		29,385
<i>Adjust for earmarkings:</i>		
Released sums earmarked to service budgets 2023-24	27,286	
Supplementary estimates agreed during 2023-24	9	
Revenue Budget 23-24 – transferred to General Fund	(19)	
Contributions to earmarked reserves 2023-24	(54,933)	
		(27,657)
Revenue Budget Underspend/(Overspend)		1,728

Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet summarises the Council's assets and liabilities as at 31 March 2024 and explanatory notes are provided. The net worth of the Council has increased by £143.744m from £667.070m as at 31 March 2023 to £810.814m as at 31 March 2024. The major changes are set out in the table below.

Main Balance Sheet Changes

	31/03/2023 £000	31/03/2024 £000	Change £000	Main Reason
Long Term Assets	886,601	769,486	(117,115)	Largely due to the decrease in the value of the pension debtor partially offset by increase in the value of revalued assets.
Current Assets	90,693	68,530	(22,163)	Reduction in short term investments due to the early repayment of long-term loans, and deferral of new external long-term borrowing to finance capital plans, in favour of internal borrowing; offset by an increase in short term debtors.
Current Liabilities	(68,592)	(82,844)	(14,252)	Increase in short term borrowing and decrease in short term deposits and bank balances, in line with treasury management strategy.
Long Term Liabilities	(241,632)	(233,152)	8,480	Reduction in long-term borrowing due to the early repayment of loans during the year and increase in the value of unfunded pension liabilities.
Total	667,070	522,020	(145,050)	

Provisions

The Council has provisions totalling £4.520m on the Balance Sheet as detailed in Note 29 to the Accounts. The larger provisions, those £0.250m or over, are summarised below.

- £2.740m for landfill sites. A provision for landfill sites was created in 2014-15 reflecting the Council's liability for restoration and ongoing maintenance in respect of landfill sites operated by the Council at Glengorm, Gartbreck and Gott Bay. These have been provided for based on the net present value of estimated future costs.
- £1.025m for NPDO and Hub DBFM Payments. This provision is held in relation to disputed performance deductions and unbilled utility costs.

Pension Asset

The Council is required to account for its share of the Strathclyde Pension Fund assets and liabilities. The information included in the Accounts is provided by the Pension Fund actuaries following the annual valuation of the Fund.

The Council's share of the assets of the Strathclyde Pension Fund have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on the assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels etc. The asset relates to benefits earned by existing or previous employees up to 31 March 2024.

There has been a decrease in the pension valuation asset from £139.014m in 2022-23 to £0m in 2023-24. This is as a result of the application of an asset ceiling applied in accordance with the requirements of IAS19.

The pension liability or asset can fluctuate significantly year on year. The table below shows the pension liability or asset over the last three years. Further detail on the pension estimates are included within Note 31.

Pension (Liability)/Asset at the end of the financial year

	2021-22 £000	2022-23 £000	2023-24 £000
Pension Asset	4,634	139,014	0

Borrowing

During 2022-23 the Council's external borrowing reduced by £23.037m from £143.973m as at 31 March 2023 to £120.936m as at 31 March 2024. The reduction was due to the early repayment of long term loans during the year in order to receive a discount and achieve an overall treasury gain.

The Council was under borrowed by £68m at 31 March 2024. This was due to the early repayment of loans, minimal new long term borrowing taken out and slippage within the capital programme.

The Council's 2023-24 'Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy' was approved at the full Council meeting on 23 February 2023 and outlines the Council's capital prudential and treasury indicators.

Statement of Movement in Reserves

This Statement shows the movement on the different reserves held by the Council, analysed into usable reserves (resource backed reserves which can be used to fund expenditure) and unusable reserves (required purely for accounting purposes and are not backed by resources).

The balance of unusable reserves has decreased by £172.976m from £573.295m as at 31 March 2023 to £400.319m as at 31 March 2024. The main reason for this movement is the decrease in the pensions reserve noted earlier in this commentary plus smaller accounting adjustments required through the Capital adjustment account and revaluation reserve.

The balance of usable reserves has increased by £27.926m from £93.775m as at 31 March 2023 to £121.701m as at 31 March 2024. This is due to an increase in the General Fund of £29.385m offset by smaller reductions in the Capital Fund outlined in Note 34.1 and the Repairs and Renewals Fund outlined in Note 34.2.

In respect of the General Fund Balance movement, there has been an increase of £29.385m from a balance of £86.356m to £115.741m and the detail on the movement in the balance is summarised within the table below.

Movement on General Fund Balance

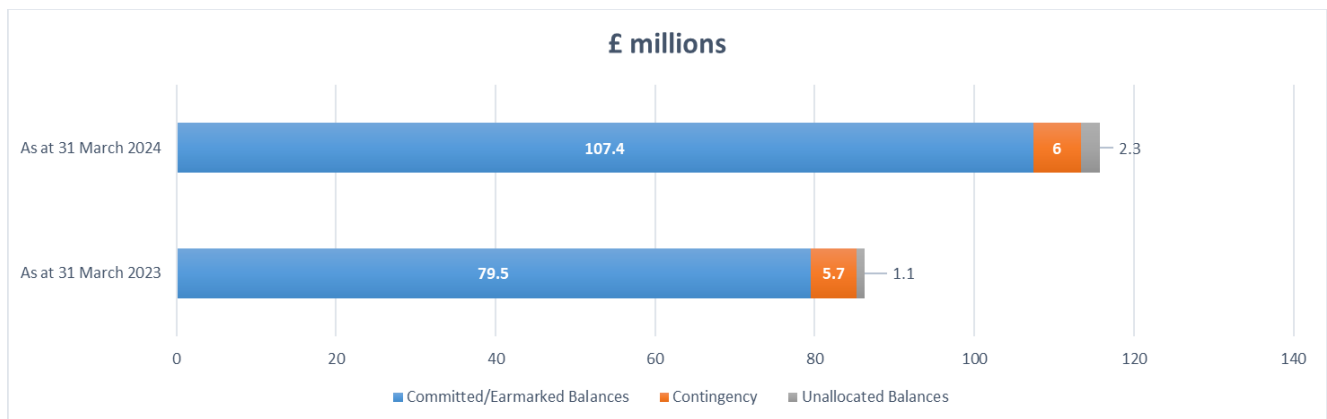
	£000
Balance on General Fund 31 March 2023	86,356
Revenue Budget 2023-24 – transfer to General Fund	19
Released sums earmarked to service budgets 2023-24	(27,286)
Contributions to earmarked reserves 2023-24 – Service Concessions	35,658
Contributions to earmarked reserves 2023-24 - Other	19,275
Supplementary Estimate	(8)
Overall budget underspend as noted above	1,728

Rounding	(1)
Balance on General Fund 31 March 2024	115,741

General Fund Balance

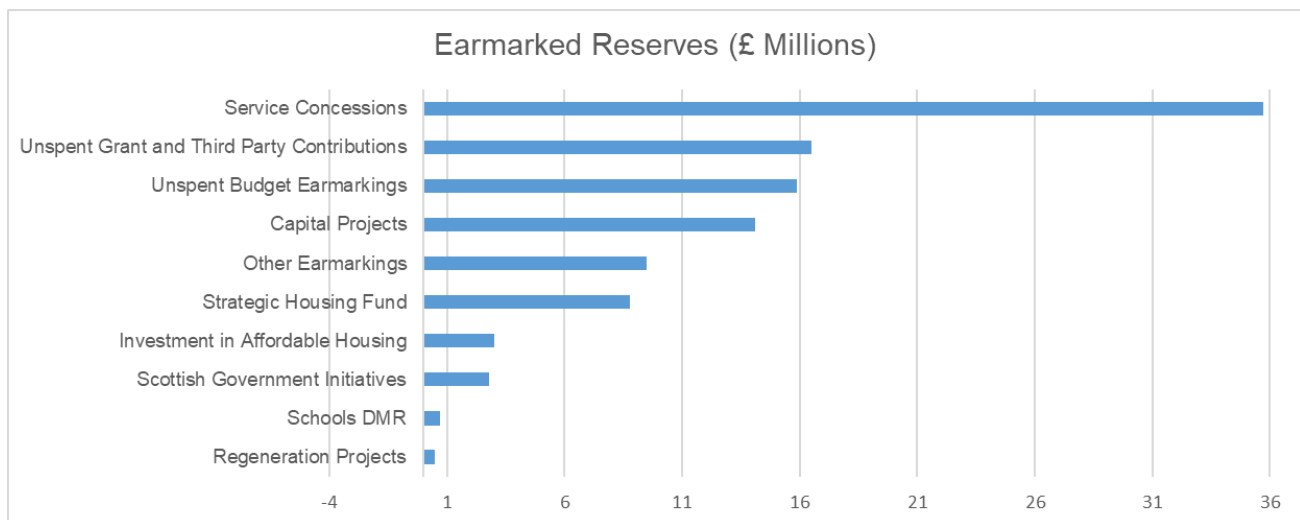
The chart below shows what is included within the General Balance as at 31 March 2024 with a comparison to the position as at 31 March 2023.

General Fund Balances as at 31 March 2023 and 31 March 2024



An analysis of the earmarked balances are shown in the chart below.

Earmarked Balances held in the General Fund as at 31 March 2024



Group Accounts

The Group accounts include Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board as an Associate, as the Council have “significant influence” over their financial and operating policies. Live Argyll is a wholly owned subsidiary of Argyll and Bute Council and is consolidated within the group accounts on a line by line basis.

In addition, the Council's Common Good Funds have been fully consolidated into the Group Accounts and Note 37 gives further details on the Council's Common Good Funds.

The effect of inclusion of the Associates, Subsidiary and Common Good Funds on the Group Balance Sheet is to increase both reserves and net worth by £21.472m. This gives an overall net asset position for the Group of £543.492m, a decrease of £143.800m from the previous year. The most significant decrease is in the pension position of £158.592m partially offset by an increase in non-current assets as a result of revaluations.

The Argyll and Bute Integration Joint Board has responsibility for all health and social care functions relating to adults and children and will oversee the strategic planning and budgeting of these, together with corresponding service delivery for the residents of Argyll and Bute. Argyll and Bute Council contributed £77.605m towards the Argyll and Bute Integration Joint Board in the 2023-24 financial year. All transactions are accounted for and shown within the single entity statements and the IJB are treated as a Joint Venture within the Group Accounts therefore a share of their overall surplus and net assets have been recognised in the Group Statements.

6. KEY FINANCIAL INDICATORS

The financial indicators outlined below have been developed to assist the reader in assessing the performance by the Council over the last financial year and the affordability of its ongoing commitments.

Key Financial Indicators

Financial Indicator	2022-23	2023-24	Comment
Unallocated General Fund Balance as a proportion of next year's Annual Budgeted Net Expenditure	2.44%	2.75%	Reflects the level of funding available to manage financial risk/unplanned expenditure. This includes the 2% contingency. The 2023-24 position is slightly more than 2022-23 which confirms there are sufficient reserves to meet any unplanned expenditure.
Movement in the Unallocated General Fund Balance	(£0.6m)	£1.06m	Reflects the extent to which the Council is using its Unallocated General Fund Balance (excluding contingency). An increase in the 2023-24 balance to offset the reduction in the previous year and provide a degree of stability in the Council's financial position.
In-year Council Tax collection rate	96.82%	96.34%	Reflects the Council's effectiveness in collecting Council Tax debt compared to a target of 96%. The target continues to be exceeded.
Ratio of Council Tax Income to Overall Level of Funding	17.76%	19.9%	Reflects the capacity of the Council to vary expenditure by raising Council Tax income.
Actual Outturn compared to budgeted expenditure	£3.273m 1.06%	£1.728m 0.55%	A measure of how the final outturn compares to the budgeted position. The surplus is a reflection of the effectiveness of the Council's financial management particularly the Loans Fund.
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) for the current year	£291.782m	£332.394m	Measurement of requirement to borrow for capital purposes. The increase in 2023-24 reflects writing back the overpayment of the debt element of Service Concession arrangements in prior years.
External Debt Levels for the current year	£142.536m	£119.407m	Actual borrowing for capital investment levels. Reduction in 2023-24 due to the early repayment of

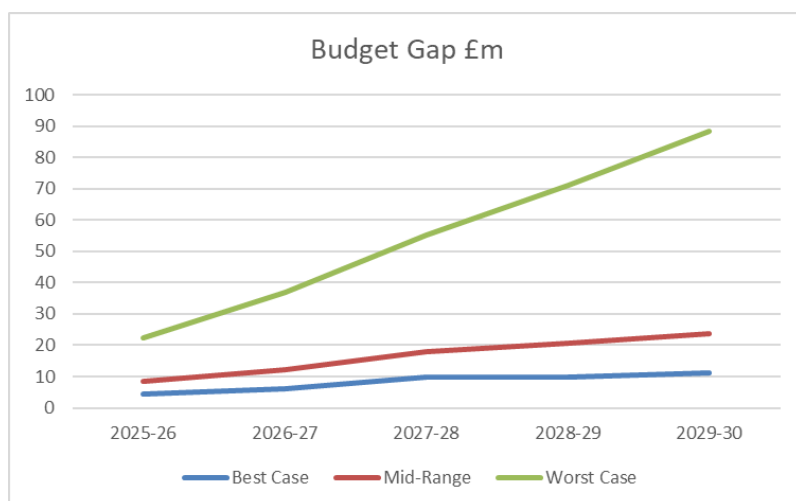
Financial Indicator	2022-23	2023-24	Comment
			long term loans at a discounted rate to achieve a treasury gain and minimal need to borrow due to slippage in the capital programme and cash balances.
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream	6.26%	2.74%	Measures the percentage of income that has been committed towards meeting the costs of borrowing. The more income needed to fund financing costs the less that is available to meet other revenue expenditure. The ratio has dropped in 2023-24 as we have repaid long term borrowing during the year, used cash balances to fund the capital programme and delayed taking any new borrowing where possible while interest rates were high. There will be a need to increase borrowing again in the future and this ratio will rise again.

7. OUTLOOK

A five year financial outlook informing Council of the estimated budget gap covering the period 2024-25 to 2028-29 using best case, worse case and mid-range scenarios was kept up to date during 2023-24 and presented to the Policy and Resources Committee in May, August, October and December 2023.

Preparing any forward looking financial outlook is challenging due to the levels of uncertainty, for example the level of Scottish Government Grant, the impact of rising inflation and the uncertainty of pay awards being agreed before the budget setting process. The assumptions used to inform the outlook are reviewed, updated and reported regularly. The Council has a strong track record in financial management as recognised by previous years annual external audit reports and the Council’s Best Value report issued in May 2020. The chart below shows the cumulative budget gap over the next five years as reported to the Policy and Resources Committee on 9 May 2024.

Cumulative Budget Gap 2025-26 to 2029-30 as reported on 9 May 2024



Budget Strategy

A Budget Approach report was presented to Policy and Resources Committee on 11 May 2023 where it was agreed that a cross party Budget Working Group (BWG) be established comprising six elected members from the administration, three elected members from the opposition and two Trade Union representatives. The BWG’s role was to engage with officers and provide a sounding board to assist in

the development and identification of savings options.

During 2023-24 the Council sought the views of the Community on high level priorities for the budget via a budget simulator. A report outlining the feedback from this consultation was presented to Policy and Resources Committee on 12 October 2023. This exercise allowed Elected Members to take into account the views of the Community when considering and preparing the budget for 2024-25.

A further budget update report was presented to Policy and Resources Committee on 7 December 2023 which set out the latest financial position, initial savings options and other pressures that may have to be considered as part of the budget setting process.

The BWG met on 18 September 2023, 9 November 2023 and 18 January 2024. During these meetings Members were presented with the findings from the consultation, updates on the financial position and savings options identified by officers.

The Council continues to be committed to developing multi-year savings proposals with a focus on longer term planning. As part of the 2023-24 budget setting process savings that required more detailed work that could be considered in future years were also identified and these are already being explored as part of a pipeline of savings for future years. These include detailed reviews of the Roads and Infrastructure and Education Services.

Preparation is already well underway for the 2025-26 budget setting process and a report on the proposed approach will be presented to Council on 27 June 2024. This includes a proposal to once again create a cross party BWG. There is no doubt that bridging the budget gap both in 2025-26 and future years will be extremely challenging. The budget gap is calculated using a number of assumptions and there are three areas where a change to the assumptions could have the biggest impact on the estimates:

1. Scottish Government Grant – within the mid-range scenario, a 0.5% decrease has been assumed which is similar to the reduction in 2024-25. Every 1% change is circa £1.4m.
2. Council Tax – within the mid-range scenario, a 5% increase has been assumed on the basis that the majority of Councils increased their Council Tax by at least 5% in 2023-24 prior to the freeze in 2024-25. This is an officer assumption, as this is a matter for Council to agree. Every 1% change is circa £600k.
3. Pay Award – within the mid-range scenario, a 2% increase has been assumed. Every 1% change is circa £1.7m.

As previously noted, the budget outlook is extremely challenging and this is made more so by the ring-fenced and directed spend by Scottish Government resulting in the budget where the Council is able to exercise any control being a lot smaller. It is hoped that the Verity House agreement may bring opportunities for the un-ring-fencing of some areas of budget.

Furthermore, in April 2024 a new Provost and Leader of the Council were appointed which was followed by changes in Members of the administration. The new administration are currently considering their priorities which could have an impact on decisions made as part of the budget setting process.

Cost of Living Crisis

The 'cost of living crisis' refers to the fall in 'real' disposable incomes (that is, adjusted for inflation and after taxes and benefits) that the UK has experienced since late 2021. It is being caused predominantly by high inflation outstripping wage and benefit increases.

Despite some stabilisation efforts, the persistent economic pressures are affecting both individuals and Council services significantly. The Council continues to see significant increases in all areas of supplies, but specifically in utilities, food and fuel costs and it will be extremely challenging to contain spending

within current resources. The Council remains committed to addressing these challenges through strategic planning and support initiatives for individuals.

Rural Growth Deal

Our £70m Rural Growth Deal is about turning economic potential into a successful future for Argyll and Bute. It is about investing in initiatives that will turn the area's fantastic natural resources and business innovation into a thriving local economy. The Council signed the Heads of Terms in February 2021 and is working on producing the full deal documentation, which includes a business case for each of the themes within the deal. The deal was due to be signed on 7 June 2024 by the Council and both the Scottish and UK Governments but due to the calling of the UK General Election this has had to be postponed.

The project themes in the deal are as follows:

Marine Tourism/Place Programme including the Rothesay Pavilion at Full Business Case
Low Carbon Economy - Islay
Rural Skills Accelerator
Housing – Isle of Mull and Isle of Islay
Clyde Engineering & Innovation Centre
West Coast UAV
Marine Aquaculture Programme.

Regular updates on progress are posted on the website, see link: [Rural Growth Deal \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk).

UK Government Levelling Up Agenda

Levelling Up Fund

The Levelling Up Partnership funding was announced by the UK Government in the 2023 Autumn Statement and Argyll and Bute has been allocated up to £20m of Levelling Up Partnership funding. The process to choose the final projects is different to previous Levelling Up funding rounds and is very much driven by the UK Government. It was originally envisaged that a long list of projects would be identified by May 2024 with a short list by mid-July 2024. Business cases would then be developed by the UK Government with a final decision made in September 2024. There will be a degree of public consultation led by the UK Government and the final decision on the successful projects will lie with the Secretary of State (not the Council). It is unclear how the General Election will impact on these timescales. In terms of the kind of projects, it very much follows the Levelling Up Agenda, that is business, transport connectivity, community safety, skills and education and housing.

Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

The UKSPF is a successor to the previous EU structural funds, it is viewed as a central pillar of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda. The overarching aim of the UKSPF is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK.

The project / programme activities outlined in the Argyll and Bute UKSPF Investment Plan are all aligned to three key investment priorities: communities and place; supporting local business; and people and skills, where each priority has predefined interventions, outputs and outcomes. In addition to core UKSPF monies, the investment plan includes a focus on ring-fenced 'Multiply' funding to support the delivery of an area-based adult numeracy programme.

Argyll and Bute Council received an allocation from the UKSPF of just under £4.5m to support delivery over three financial year, specifically the final three months of 2022-23 and the next two financial years, 2023-24 and 2024-25, until the end of March 2025.

There are 21 projects funded under the Core UKSPF and another three projects support by the Multiply www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

programme (also part of the UKSPF £4.5m allocation).

Aligned to UK Government guidance, any underspend for 2023/24 has been carried over and reprofiled for 2024/25. It is anticipated that the full allocation will be spent by the end of March 2025.

Learning Estate Investment Programme

The Councils bid to the Scottish Governments Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP) for funding for a new school campus on Mull was successful. While this is good news and will provide welcome investment in the school estate it does come with a financial pressure that is required to be funded if the project is to proceed.

The Scottish Government will fund up to 50% of eligible costs therefore the Council will be required to fund circa £20m prior to any associated borrowing costs. A Members seminar was held on the 12 April 2024 and a report subsequently presented to Council on 25 April 2024 outlining the financial, economic, community and educational implications of the proposed campus. Members agreed that up to £5m from the previously agreed earmarked LEIP funding could be used to commence the Business Case, undertake engagement exercises, commence the site selection process and establish governance arrangements. To progress with the project beyond this point Members will consider the capital and revenue budget provision required as part of the budget setting process.

Risks

The Council's Strategic Management Team (SMT) actively manage strategic risks via a six monthly review of the Strategic Risk Register (SRR) which adopts established risk management arrangements including reviewing current mitigating measures and identifying key actions to further mitigate them. These actions are designed to be consistent with the work required to deliver services which are aligned to the Council's objectives through the Council's strategic and service plans. Furthermore departmental management teams review their operational risk registers (ORR) on a quarterly basis with all red risks identified in ORRs being reported to the SMT to ensure they are sighted on all emerging high priority risks.

The SRR currently has 13 strategic risks which are categorised using a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) Status based on the residual impact and likelihood of crystallisation after accounting for mitigation measures. There are currently four risks classified as red as set out in the diagram below which also summarises the current mitigating actions. These are issues that the Council continues to manage through programmes of work such as the Rural Growth Deal, and the Levelling Up Fund, also the progression of a new Waste Strategy with a particular focus on the 2025 ban on Biodegradable Municipal Waste, reviewing contingency plans and disaster recovery plans in relation to Cyber Security and addressing the Housing Emergency through a Housing Strategy and Investment Plan.

Population, Infrastructure and Economic Decline

- Maximise external funding
- Rural Growth Deal
- Levelling Up Fund
- UK Shared Prosperity Funding Investment Plan

Waste Management

- Developing options for new Waste Strategy
- Planning for impact of Bio-degradable Municipal Waste Ban 2025
- Planning for impact of Scottish Deposit Return Scheme

Cyber Security

- Contingency Planning
- Raising Cyber Security awareness
- Disaster Recovery Plan
- Work with Scottish Government Cyber Resilience Team

Housing Availability

- Housing Strategy and Investment Plan
- Housing Delivery Group
- Islands Programme Award of Funding for worker accomodation

8. CONCLUSION

The Council has continued to have good financial planning arrangements in place in 2023-24. We have managed the continued inflationary pressures and taken the opportunity to repay borrowing at a discount which helped ensure that we operated within budget in 2023-24. The utilisation of the Service Concession flexibility has allowed us to earmark funds to address Council priorities and therefore not put further pressure on the budget position. It is recognised that ongoing real term reductions in Scottish Government core revenue grant continues to present significant financial challenges for all local authorities, however, our council is in a strong position to manage the financially challenging times.

The Council are committed to deliver the best services to the people of Argyll and Bute within the available resources.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would take this opportunity to acknowledge the significant effort in producing the Annual Accounts and to record our thanks to both Elected Members and staff for their continued hard work and support.

Councillor Jim Lynch
Leader
20 December 2024

Pippa Milne
Chief Executive
20 December 2024

Kirsty Flanagan
Section 95 Officer
20 December 2024

THE AUTHORITY'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The Council is required:

- to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to ensure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs (Section 95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973). In this Authority, that officer is the Executive Director;
- to manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets;
- to ensure the Annual Accounts are prepared in accordance with legislation (The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014), and so far as is compatible with that legislation, in accordance with proper accounting practices (section 12 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003);
- to approve the Annual Accounts for signature.

SECTION 95 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Section 95 Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Council's Annual Accounts in accordance with proper practices as required by legislation and as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom* (The Code).

In preparing the Annual Accounts, the Section 95 Officer has:

- selected suitable accounting policies and applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- complied with legislation;
- complied with the Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice 2023-24 (in so far as it is compatible with legislation).

The Section 95 Officer has also:

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

I certify that the Annual Accounts give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council and its group at the reporting date and the transactions of the Council and its group for the year ended 31 March 2024.



**Councillor Jim Lynch
Leader
20 December 2024**



**Kirsty Flanagan
Section 95 Officer
20 December 2024**

1. BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Argyll and Bute Council's (the Council) governance framework includes the systems, processes and culture by which the Council is controlled, engages with communities and monitors the achievement of strategic objectives. The Council conducts its business in accordance with the law and proper standards. The Council has a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to the economic, efficient and effective use of public money.

The system of internal control is a key part of the framework and is designed to manage risk to an acceptable level.

In discharging these responsibilities, the Council has put in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and the stewardship of the resources at its disposal. The Council has approved and adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance (the Code) which is consistent with the principles and requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE revised Framework for 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. This Statement explains how the Council has complied with the Code and meets the requirements of current good practice.

2. THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The Code details how the Council will demonstrate compliance with the fundamental principles of corporate governance for public sector bodies. The seven key principles of our governance arrangements in 2023/24 are described in the Code, along with our supporting principles and key aspects of our arrangements to ensure compliance.

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

We have four values, which underpin all that we do and provide a sound basis to achieve transformation to ensure we meet the challenges of the future and deliver quality services. These values are that we have a workforce which is:

Caring

Committed

Collaborative

Creative

The Council has developed a change programme 'Connect for Success' with the seven principles – One Council One Place Approach, Purpose and Mission Focus, Employee Empowerment, Data and Evidence Driven Decision Making, Learning Council, Agile and Maximise Opportunities that Technology Offers - [Connect for Success](#)

We have developed and communicated an [Ethical Framework](#) within the Council's Constitution, which defines standards of behaviour for Members and staff. Protocols for Member/Officer relations are also detailed within the Constitution.

The Councillors' Code of Conduct is set out at a national level, applying to all members in Scottish local authorities and is incorporated into the Council's Constitution as part of the ethical framework which also includes a protocol for the Monitoring Officer. A [Register of Members Interests](#) is publicly available for inspection. In addition, the Constitution has a section on conduct at meetings and meeting agendas require declarations of interest to be made where appropriate. Standing orders for meetings are included within the Council's constitution and training and support is provided to members on their role in Council committees.

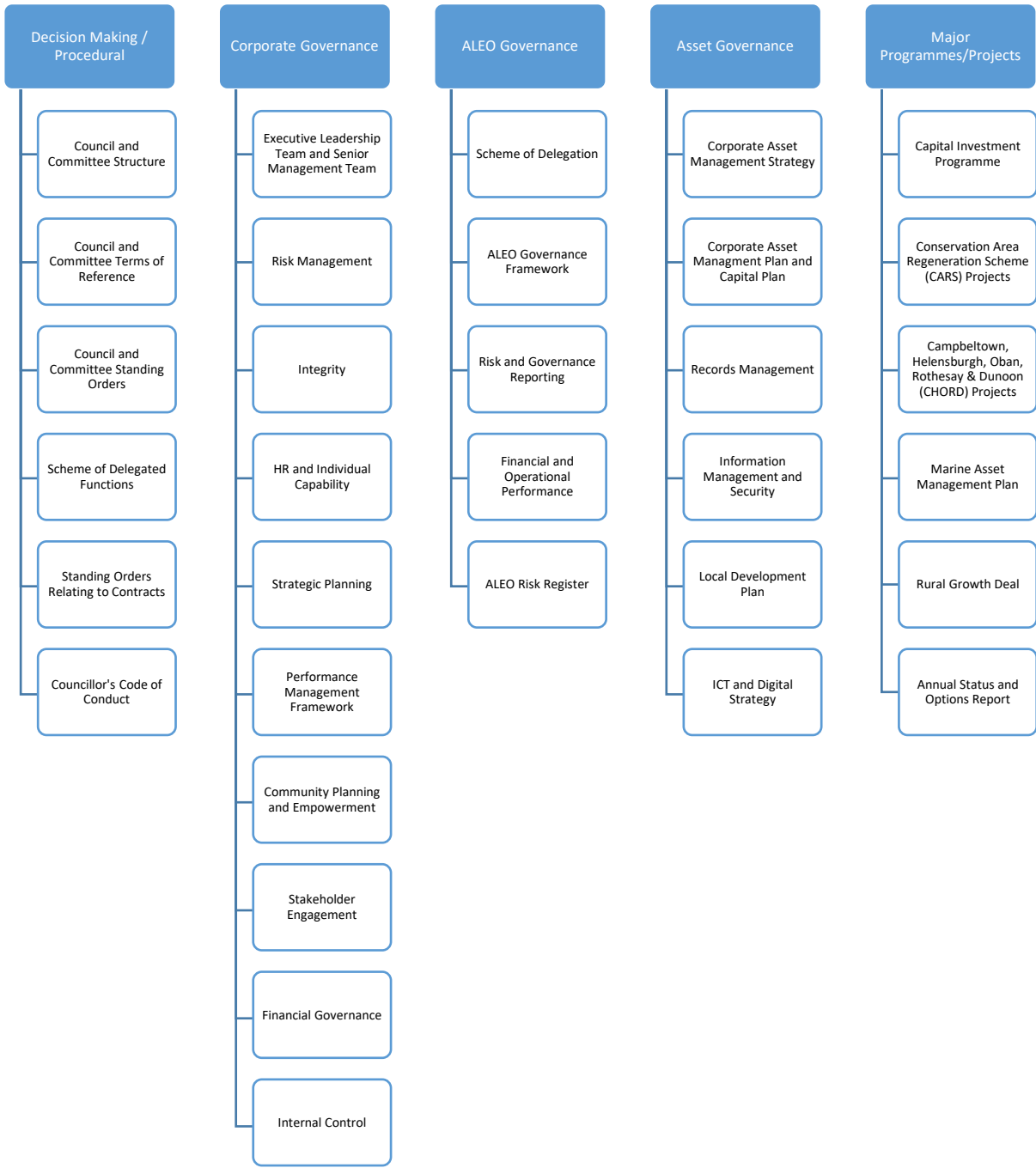
[Anti-fraud and whistleblowing](#) policies are in place and the Council has adopted the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO's) Model [Complaints Handling Procedure](#).

The Council complies with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government.

In addition, Professional advice on the discharge of statutory social work duties is provided to the Council by the Chief Social Work (CSWO).

A structure of governance and framework across our day to day activities and which supports accountability, control, risk management and appropriate overview of the Council are outlined in the diagram below:

Constitution, Governance, Risk Management and Accountability



External and Internal Audit and other regulatory inspections

2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

We have established clear channels of communication with the community and other stakeholders through our Communication Strategy. Key mechanisms include:

[Consultation Diary](#)

The Council has developed a consultation section on its website which hosts all consultations run by the Council and includes a section which publicises the results and/or outcome of the consultation and the resultant decisions that have been taken, showing how they were informed by the consultation process. This is part of our commitment to You Said, We Did information sharing for the public. Consultations provide communities with an opportunity to get involved with wide ranging aspects of the council's work and life in Argyll and Bute.

These include for example, play park funding, active travel routes, primary school consultations, and the council's customer service strategy.

[Keep in the Loop Service](#)

Over 10,870 customers currently subscribe to receive notifications across the range of services.

'[Myaccount](#)' is a secure sign-in service for accessing online public services in Scotland. It provides the ability to set up an online account and use it to access a growing range of online public services, Scotland-wide, including Argyll and Bute Council. Currently 16,744 customers up from 15,399 last year have signed up to this service and it allows customers to access and personalise their interaction with the Council on a range of services.

[Public Performance Reporting](#)

The Council's website makes all performance information available to the public. This includes information on performance scorecards, budgets and other service related information. This promotes open accountability to the public for its performance against agreed policies and standards. As part of phase two of the performance excellence project a review of the council's approach to public performance reporting is being undertaken.

[Accessibility](#)

In 2023/24 75% of 593,362 customer interactions through the council's Customer Engagement Team were made using digital self-service. This very high proportion is because of the scope and quality of the digital services provided. In order to ensure maximum accessibility for everyone and meet our equalities responsibilities, the Council's website was upgraded to the latest software version Drupal 10 and its content refreshed to meet the new international WCAG2.2 standard.

In March 2024 it scored 98% in the UK [Independent Silktime accessibility score](#), rating it the 37th highest ranking Council in the UK. In addition the Reachdeck supported access tool was added to the website to give read aloud and translation help to users seeking such additional assistance and our 24/7 automated telephone service was used 46,942 times by those customers who struggle with online digital services.

[Community Engagement](#)

To support strengthening communities, community empowerment and engagement the council has in place:

- An officer Community Engagement Strategy Group to oversee the development and implementation of the council's internal Engagement Strategy; advising on best practice in engagement tools and techniques, supporting skills development and capacity within the council to effectively engage with communities. On this group sit those officers with expertise in engagement including those from Corporate Communications and the Communities & Partnership Team. The Council's Communications Team has developed an engagement app for services to use, and the council's Communities & Partnership Team has resources and expertise to support hard to reach groups,

community organisations and remote communities to have a voice in decision making.

- A Community Development service, with a focus on improving active citizenship and capacity building through best practice in community development through a responsive and effectively targeted programme of Community Development support internally to the council and externally within communities across Argyll and Bute.
- A range of [training and resources](#) to help build the knowledge, skills and confidence of community groups
- Funding support to help empower community organisations to take forward priority projects and activities in their area: [Monthly funding alert | Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)
- Resourcing community council liaison activities, including training and support activity, which helps to build the capacity of community councils.

The Council also has a statutory lead role to ensuring Community Learning and Development provision in Argyll and Bute is set out in an Argyll and Bute Community Learning and Development Strategic Plan, and this is delivered through its collaboration with its Arms-length External Organisation (ALEO) partner Live Argyll.

The Council continues to promote the [Community-led action plan toolkit](#) (developed in partnership with Scottish Community Development Centre) to help support communities interested in developing a local Community-led Action Plan. The Council also provides support for communities interested in development a Place Plan: [Local Place Plans | Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

The Council directly resources the management of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) to bring partners together, including community, to deliver on the Outcome Improvement Plan. It actively seeks to ensure that young people are engaged in Community Planning and has implemented the following:

- The 3 local Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP's) attend the Community Planning Partnership Management Committee meetings on a rotational basis.
- The Area Community Planning Groups (ACPG) invite members of local Youth Forums to attend meetings when they are held in their local areas & information is passed on to young people by Youth Workers who are kept updated on any developments.
- The revised Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils outlines the requirement to encourage young people to attend and participate in community council meetings” and the age to become a Community Councillor was lowered to be 16 to encourage more young people to become involved.

Council/Committee Meetings

Meetings are always held in public, unless one of the statutory exemptions in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, schedule 7A applies to the content of the report. Agendas for and minutes of meetings are detailed on the Council's website. When schedule 7A applies papers are adjusted to ensure that the maximum amount of content is in the public domain.

The Council's [Constitution](#) defines the roles and responsibilities of the administration, committees, scrutiny and officer functions, with clear delegation arrangements and protocols for effective communication.

The Standards Commission Advice Note for Councillors on Distinguishing between their Strategic Role and any Operational Work has previously been included in an Elected Member Seminar and is hosted on the Members Resource page on the Hub for ease of reference.

3. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Our [Corporate plan](#) sets out our, and our community planning partner's, vision for Argyll and Bute's economic success to be built on a growing population. It also defines our mission "*To make Argyll and Bute a place people choose to live, learn, work and do business*" and establishes our outcomes, priorities and approach to delivering on our shared ambition with our community partners.

We have a [Performance Improvement Framework \(PIF\)](#) that ensures performance is integral to the work of the Council. The PIF is focused not just on measuring what we do but on measuring the difference we make in terms of our outcomes.

Asset management planning and capital investment is structured to consider and balance the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision. The Council has put arrangements in place to comply with key elements of the Community Empowerment Act.

In determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered the Council is increasingly engaging with internal and external stakeholders. Community benefit is an important consideration in the procurement of goods and services.

The Council has acknowledges the effects of the 'Cost of Living' within Argyll and Bute and during 2023/2024 client gain achieved by the Flexible food and Fuel fund project reached £3.8 million. This project, supporting the most vulnerable low income households and those using foodbanks in our area to access short-term grants to cover the cost of food and fuel in the short term. In the longer term support through the provision benefit maximisation, money advice and energy advice services is provided by third sector partner agencies.

In addition, this year the Council has issued 1,300 Scotland Loves Local Gift Cards to low income households in the year ensuring the £110,000 loaded onto the gift cards is spent in Island based local businesses in Argyll and Bute. The Council and the Third Sector Interface is supporting the Poverty Alliance on a project entitled "Taking Action on Rural Poverty" which is looking at new ways of addressing rural poverty in Argyll and Bute by reducing the rural poverty premium.

The Council has also provided a one-stop-shop webpage where individuals and families can access energy advice, money advice and links to the services the Council provides in this area and those provided by third sector partner organisations.

In 2022/23 Argyll & Bute Council recorded its lowest level of operational carbon emissions since reporting commenced in 2015/16 via the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties. This represents a reduction of 12,952 tCO₂e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent), approximately 33% against baseline figures. Work continues across Council services to reduce our emissions and support our journey to net zero including the transition to energy efficient LED streetlighting, moving to electric or hybrid fleet vehicles, and increasing diversion of waste from landfill.

Integrated impact assessments as well as environmental, sustainability and island implications are considered during the decision making process to promote fair access to services.

4. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

Decision makers receive detailed information indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved together with the implications associated with the proposals covering financial, risks and mitigations, integrated impact assessment, acting sustainably, carbon management, island proofing, and changes to schemes, by way of the compulsory sections of the Committee report.

The Council's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) meet regularly with the administration to discuss their key priorities and requirements for decision making in addition there is regular survey and feedback on their needs and a regular review of governance arrangements to ensure that decision making is fully supported.

In determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered the Council is increasingly engaging with internal and external stakeholders. Community benefit is an important consideration in the procurement of goods and services.

The Council fosters effective relationships, collaborative working and contractual arrangements with other public, private, and voluntary organisations in delivering services that meet the needs of the local community as stated in the Council's Corporate Plan

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

Elected Member Development

The Council has signed up to the Improvement Service's Continuing Professional Development Framework for Elected Members. All Elected Members are provided with opportunities to progress personal development plans so that individual training needs and aspirations are identified and support provided as appropriate. This is complemented by a comprehensive seminar and workshop programme which addresses a wide range of topics and strategic issues. Additional training was undertaken by Elected Members in relation to the technology, knowledge and skills necessary to support the transition to a virtual environment including webcasting of strategic Committee meetings and the operation of meetings on a hybrid basis, enabling a mixed attendance of members being physically or virtually present.

Officer Development

The Council supports officer development through a structured approach, driven by the values set out in the Corporate Plan and a behavioural competency framework.

The Council has Argyll and Bute Manager and Leadership Programmes, which ensure that all employees who have management responsibilities are knowledgeable and effective in delivering services within the priority management policies and procedures of the Council, including finance, performance and people management. The Leadership Programme ensures that senior and aspiring leaders in the organisation have support to develop their leadership behaviours and to improve their overall impact and performance across the organisation.

6. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.

Internal Financial Control

Our standing orders, financial instructions, scheme of delegation and supporting procedure notes/manuals clearly define how decisions are taken and the processes and controls in place to manage risks. These are reviewed and updated on an annual basis. We ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures, and that expenditure is lawful. The Council's Monitoring Officer advises on compliance with our policy framework, ensuring that decision making is lawful and fair. Furthermore the Council has a designated Data Protection Officer and all services have Information Asset Registers along with appropriate guidance on how data should be managed.

Our financial management arrangements conform to the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer and we ensure that our independent Audit and Scrutiny Committee undertakes the core functions identified in CIPFA's Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities.

The Council has a proactive, holistic approach to tackling fraud, theft, corruption and crime, as an integral part of protecting public finances, safeguarding assets, and delivering services effectively. It is based upon the national counter fraud standard CIPFA's Code of Practice on 'Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption'.

The Council has a system of internal financial control designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It is based on a framework of regular management information, financial regulations, administrative

procedures (including segregation of duties), management supervision, and a system of delegation and accountability.

Development and maintenance of the system is undertaken by officers within the Council and the named bodies mentioned below.

<u>Internal Financial Controls and Prevention</u>	<u>Are these in Place?</u>
Comprehensive budget systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Financial and budget monitoring systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Financial and Performance reporting systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Clearly defined Capital Expenditure guidelines	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Project Management processes and disciplines	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
An effective Internal Audit Section	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
An effective Counter Fraud Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Internal controls cannot eliminate risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

This annual review also covers the other bodies whose activities are incorporated into our Group Accounts and reliance is placed on the formal audit opinion contained in the financial statements of each individual body.

- Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Valuation Board
- Live Argyll
- Argyll and Bute Integration Joint Board

The Council's risk management processes are well developed. In particular the:

- Strategic Risk Register is updated twice a year and approved by the SMT
- Chief Executive presents the Strategic Risk Register to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis
- Operational Risk Registers are updated quarterly by departmental management teams.
- Internal Audit will perform an audit of compliance with risk management arrangements every three years.
- The CIA performs an annual strategic risk assurance mapping exercise.

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

Internal Audit

The Council and its Group bodies have internal audit functions, which operate to Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The work of internal audit is informed by an analysis of the risk to which the Council and its Group bodies are exposed, with annual internal audit plans prepared based on that analysis. The Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee endorses the preparation methodology and annual internal audit plan and monitors the performance of Internal Audit in completing the plan. In addition, the Council has developed a hybrid meeting facility enabling physical and virtual attendance at meetings with a public broadcast function so that members of the public can see and hear meetings of the Council's strategic committees' live increasing openness and transparency.

The Chief Internal Auditor (CIA) provides the Audit and Scrutiny Committee with an annual report on internal audit activity in the Council and an opinion of the assurance can be taken regarding the systems of governance and internal control and whether they are operating effectively. This is an independent and objective opinion of the CIA based on work carried out in conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards to fulfil statutory Internal Audit provision.

Internal audit provides members and management of the Council with independent assurance on risk management, internal control and corporate governance processes. External audit has, and continues to, use the work of internal audit.

The Annual Accounts and Report sets out the financial position in accordance with relevant accounting regulations.

Review of the Adequacy of Effectiveness of the Council's Governance Framework

Work to deliver Argyll and Bute's Covid Recovery Strategy and Action plan continued in 2023/24 with the same governance arrangements. Full details of the action plan is detailed in the document "Recovery, Renew and Restart", which was approved by Councils Economic, Development and Infrastructure Committee.

The Council has appropriate management and reporting arrangements to enable it to satisfy itself that its approach to corporate governance is adequate and effective in practice. The legislative framework of local government defines a number of posts which are primary to the Council's governance arrangements. These include the Chief Executive, Pippa Milne fulfilling the role of Head of Paid Service. As Monitoring Officer, the Executive Director Douglas Hendry:

- oversees the implementation of the Code and monitoring its operation
- reports annually to the Council on compliance with the Code and any changes required to maintain it and ensure its effectiveness.

Specific responsibilities are assigned to the Executive Director Kirsty Flanagan as the Council's Chief Financial Officer (S95 Officer), to ensure that public funds are properly accounted for. In recognition of the significant role that the Chief Financial Officer has in relation to financial performance and the financial control environment, CIPFA has set out key principles that define the core activities and behaviours that belong to the role. These include, being a key member of the Leadership Team, being actively involved in and influencing decision making, and leading the delivery of good financial management across the whole organisation. The Council have appointed a Data Protection Officer in line with the requirements of the UK-General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Covid Recovery Progress Report 2023/24

The Argyll and Bute Overarching Recovery Group (formed to lead this process with specific thematic groups focused on Council recovery, building back stronger communities, economic and social recovery, infrastructure and transportation, financial management and public health) continues to have an overview of the Councils Covid Recovery Strategy and critical themes, although the majority of the actions have either been completed or been mainstreamed into other strategic or operational plans. Key updates are as follows:

- a) Economic and Social Recovery: Issues and actions are incorporated within the Councils Economic Strategy
- b) Building Back Stronger Communities. Issues and actions are incorporated within the Corporate Community Planning priorities
- c) Our Modern Workspaces program. The Council have established hybrid working across its activities and Our Modern Workspace project aims to look at how we use offices on a town by town basis and take into account the needs of employees and members of the public, as well as any opportunities for working more closely with partners. Good progress is being made to develop Hub buildings and reducing heating and maintenance costs and our huge portfolio of buildings.

- d) The Joint Health Protection Plan, agreed by Argyll and Bute Council, Highland Council and NHS Highland, sets out the public health arrangements for the management and control of public health incidents and outbreaks, together with detailing our collective public health priorities for 2023-25.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

It is anticipated the Scottish public sector will continue to face a very challenging short and medium term financial outlook with uncertainty over the level of Scottish Government funding. The one year financial settlements do not provide any degree of medium term certainty and ring-fencing of monies and additional policy commitments which are not always fully funded limit financial flexibility and create additional financial pressures.

In June 2023 the Verity House agreement was signed by representatives from Scottish Local Government and Scottish Government which signified a shared vision for a more collaborative approach to delivering our Services. This agreement included a commitment to improve engagement on budgetary matters and provide more flexibility to Local Authorities by baselining specific grants to allow them to be utilised on local priorities. It has been disappointing to note that very little has changed in light of this agreement with no engagement with Local Authorities prior to the Council Tax freeze announcement for 2024-25.

The financial outlook continues to be impacted by higher levels of inflation than pre-COVID which results in significant price increases as well as ongoing disruptions to the supply chain and longer lead in times. Tender prices are substantially higher than in previous years meaning a reduced level of Service can be provided for the same amount of money.

The Council continues to provide financial estimates for future years with their medium term financial outlook covering a five year window to provide a longer term view of the Council's estimated budget gap. Preparing any forward looking financial outlook is challenging due to the levels of uncertainty however the assumptions are reviewed regularly and updated with the outlook prepared to reflect a best case, worst case and mid-range scenario.

The Council has a strong track record in financial management as recognised by previous year's annual external audit reports and the Council's Best Value report issued in May 2020. The Best Value report also recognises that the Council's medium to long term financial strategy helps support financial planning arrangements. In addition to providing revenue and capital projections the Strategy also sets out the position in relation to the Council's general fund reserve, the approach to managing the financial impact of inflationary pressures, approach to Treasury Management and the strategy to address budget gaps.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE INTEGRATION

The Argyll and Bute IJB has been established as a separate legal entity from Argyll and Bute Council and NHS Highland, with its own board of governance. The IJB comprises eight voting members with four Elected Members nominated by Argyll and Bute Council and four Board members from NHS Highland. In addition there are a number of non-voting appointees representing other sectors and stakeholder groups, such as the Third Sector, Independent Sector, Patients and Service Users, Carers and Staff.

The arrangements for the operation, remit and governance of the IJB are set out in the Argyll and Bute Integration Scheme which has been prepared and approved by Argyll and Bute Council and NHS Highland. It has also been approved by the Scottish Government. The IJB, via a process of delegation from the Health Board and Local Authority as outlined in the Scheme of Integration has responsibility for the planning, resourcing and operational delivery of all health and social care services within Argyll and Bute.

The Council places reliance on the IJB's framework of internal controls and similarly the IJB places reliance on the procedures, policies and operational systems of the Council and the Health Board. The IJB operates within an established procedural framework. The roles and responsibilities of board members and officers are defined within Standing Orders, the Integration Scheme, Financial Regulations and Standing Financial Instructions.

The IJB has proportionate internal audit arrangements in place to provide independent assurance on risk management, corporate governance and the system of internal control. A risk based internal audit plan developed and commissioned for 2023/24 and the IJB's internal auditor has issued a formal annual report providing their independent opinion on the effectiveness of the IJB's risk management, internal control and governance processes. The overall conclusion of the Internal Auditor is to provide a satisfactory level of assurance on the adequacy of internal controls and governance arrangements within the IJB.

During 2023-24 the IJB has progressed a number of initiatives to develop its governance arrangements including improving the use of Directions and the implementation of the integrated performance management system. It has also focused upon re-mobilising services following the pandemic, refreshing its service transformation program and progressing strategic development projects. It has focused on taking action to manage strategic risks during the year. However, it is acknowledged that budgetary challenges have resulted in some key capital projects and business case development work being paused.

The financial position of the HSCP has also remained stable. It repaid all of the debt it owed to the Council in 2021/22 and reported an underspend against its approved budget in 2023/24. The operating environment going forward is very challenging as funding allocations have not kept pace with cost and demand increases. The impact of an increasing older population with on-going recruitment constraints and workforce shortages is adding to the challenge. The HSCP is working to address its workforce gaps throughout the area and across many professions in a variety of ways. For example, it is seeking to address key worker accommodation shortages in partnership with the Council, Shelter and the Social Housing Sector and is constantly trying new approaches to attract workers from outside Argyll & Bute. The new Health and Care Staffing act will also be progressively implemented throughout 2024/25 which places additional duties upon the IJB to monitor, manage and report upon its staffing levels and risks. These risks and challenges are particularly acute in many of our rural and island communities which are experiencing increasing costs along with very small scale, lifeline services which are become ever more difficult to sustain or operate in a financially efficient way.

The IJB approved a budget for 2024/25 which indicates that additional funding from NHS Highland may be required, although it is likely that any actual gap can be funded by the allocation of HSCP reserves. The budget is also dependent upon the allocation of non-recurring pension fund savings held by Argyll & Bute Council. The management of longer-term financial sustainability is a priority and service change and transformation plans aimed at addressing this require to be developed, consulted upon and implemented during the course of 2024/25 and 2025/26. The delivery of the short term savings plan is a priority for the HSCP particularly as it seeks to manage down spend on expensive agency and locum staff whilst maintaining the safety of services.

UPDATE ON AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT IDENTIFIED IN PREVIOUS ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENTS

The 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement identified a number of areas for further development. A summary update for each area is provided in the table below.

Area	2023/24 Update
<p>Continue to engage with the Scottish Government, other local authorities and our Waste PPP contractor to determine the most efficient and effective way of ensuring the Council can provide a waste solution which complies with the 2025 Bio-degradable Municipal Waste Ban</p>	<p>We continue to pursue Scottish Government for either a derogation or financial contribution of circa £1.5M to enable the Waste PPP contract to be accommodated alongside the 2025 BMW ban. At the time of writing (30 April 2024) we are still awaiting final confirmation from Scottish Government although given the passage of time we are now working on the basis that a derogation will not be approved and are progressing discussions with Renewi for MBT plants to be converted to Waste Transfer Stations for use from January 2026 onwards, earlier if practical.</p>
<p>Further enhance reporting of workforce planning to the Strategic Management Team</p>	<p>Workforce planning conversations took place with Managers during January - March and operational workforce plans are now being finalised for reporting to SMT. Absence data is being included in the workforce planning risk matrix to improve reporting to SMT. Progress against actions outlined within operational workforce plans will now be reported through regular Health of the Organisation reporting to Department Management Teams and SMT. The council approved its revised People Strategy and updated strategic workforce planning priorities in February. All strategic workforce planning actions will be included in the annual People Strategy delivery plan.</p>
<p>Continue to Improve quality and accuracy of asset information which will benefit asset valuations, calculations for utilities costs and asset management</p>	<p>A further 57 condition surveys (7 within the school estate and 50 within the non-school estate) and in accordance with the Scottish Government's Core Fact of Condition were commissioned in 2023/24 and output will be delivered in 2024/25. Additionally records were updated through inspections and measurements undertaken as part of the ongoing rolling programme of asset valuations.</p>
<p>Develop data/analytics business intelligence tool</p>	<p>The council is taking a two-pronged approach to building its capacity for business intelligence, within the framework of its new data strategy and action plan (2024-28) approved by SMT in October 2023:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Microsoft PowerBI – PowerBI is one of the products in the Microsoft 365 (M365) productivity suite and includes some familiar aspects of Microsoft Excel but with much greater capacity to combine and visualise data from multiple sources. Since the council has a long-term plan for the adoption and utilisation of M365 it is the logical tool for data visualisation and analysis. b) The data platform – The “minimum viable product” (MVP) version of this was launched on 26/3/24 and is now available for staff to use. The Data Platform will be essential to allowing “democratised” access to data for use in PowerBI report building by services themselves. The Data Platform will also allow for access to datasets to be controlled and managed by a robust permissions framework; ensure consistent application of data quality, ethics and standards; and enable the FAIR Principles of making data Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable.

<p>Complete review of performance management</p>	<p>Phase one of the Performance Excellence Project is now complete with the following deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced set of Corporate Outcome Indicators to review and report on long term trends and progress against targets - Decommissioning of Pyramid and development of new Area Scorecards using MS365. - Development of a new Corporate Plan and Business Plan setting out elected members overall priorities and the activities and projects that will deliver on these. - Design and Pilot of a new approach to Self-Assessment which has been piloted at team level and thematic level. <p>Phase Two of the project has been scoped and is now underway. Phase two of the project will involve redesign the council Performance Improvement Framework with workstreams covering planning, design of performance dashboards and the council's approach to public performance reporting.</p>
<p>Complete the External Quality Assessment Framework</p>	<p>The External Quality Assessment was undertaken and reported to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The findings were that the Internal Audit service are fully compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards in all 14 areas of assessment. Two minor recommendations were made and have been fully actioned.</p>

ISSUES FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The review of governance and internal control has identified the following areas for consideration during 2024/25, particularly in the context of continuous improvement within the Council:

- Preparation for the implementation of the Visitor Levy in 2026 - Work with the Digital Office, improvement Service, City of Edinburgh and Highland Council on the development of a new digital platform for the billing and collection of the new levy. (Head of Financial Services/Head of Development and Economic Growth – March 2025).
- Preparation for new processes being implemented including the practice around Initial Referral Discussions relating to child protection, there will be a need to audit and develop practice further and the development of an action plan based on the findings will help improvement and the need to consider the staffing structures which support this vital area of work. (Head of Children, Families and Justice – March 2025)
- Housing Emergency declared by the Council in June 2023 - Utilise outputs from the Housing Summit held, to develop a multi-stakeholder Action Plan, and synthesise the relative elements of this into a revised Local Housing Strategy Action Programme. (Head of Development and Economic Growth – March 2025)
- The revaluation of properties for building insurances purposes - Estates will undertake a revaluation programme for the general portfolio, together with a programme of recorded inspections of vacant properties. (Head of Commercial services March 2025)
- Publication of the Annual Procurement Report for the Council – This will promote our obligations set out in the Procurement Regulations. (Head of Legal and Regulatory Support – March 2025)
- The Licensing Board will undertake a review of its Licensing Policy statement as required in terms of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005. (Head of Legal and Regulatory Support – March 2025)
- The use of Cloud Storage – Following results of the Internal Audit, put in place actions to ensure optimum, appropriate and secure use of cloud storage is applied across all applications. (Head of Customer Support Services – March 2025)
- Further enhance school engagement with national programmes and community partnership

approaches supporting young people to build their confidence, increase mental health awareness and promote diversity. (Head of Education, Performance & Improvement – March 2025).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion from the review activity outlined above and our opinion is that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of Argyll and Bute Council's systems of internal control and governance. Although areas for further improvement have been identified, the annual review demonstrates sufficient evidence that the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance is operating effectively and that the Council complies with that Local Code in all significant respects. Systems are in place to regularly review and improve governance and systems of internal control.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Jim Lynch'.

Councillor Jim Lynch
Leader
20 December 2024

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Pippa Milne'.

Pippa Milne
Chief Executive
20 December 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Kirsty Flanagan'.

Kirsty Flanagan
Section 95 Officer
20 December 2024

BACKGROUND

The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 (SSI No.2014/200) require local authorities in Scotland to prepare a Remuneration Report as part of the annual statutory accounts. All information disclosed in the tables in this Remuneration Report were audited by Forvis Mazars LLP. All other sections within the Remuneration Report were reviewed by Forvis Mazars LLP to ensure it is consistent with the Financial Statements.

REMUNERATION POLICY AND ARRANGEMENTS

Councillors

The remuneration of councillors is regulated by the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Regulations 2007 (SSI No 2020/26). The Regulations provide for the grading of councillors for the purposes of remuneration arrangements. There are 4 grades of councillor in each local authority for the purposes of payment of remuneration, the Leader of the Council; the Civic Head (Provost); senior councillors; and councillors. The Leader of the Council and the Provost cannot be the same person for the purposes of payment of remuneration. A senior councillor is a councillor who holds a significant position of responsibility in the Council's political management structure.

The Regulations also provide for the banding of local authorities. Argyll and Bute is in Band B and the Council has determined the level of remuneration for councillors within that banding. The salary that is to be paid to the Leader of the Council is set out in the Regulations. For 2023-24 the salary for the Leader of Argyll and Bute Council is £40,205. The Regulations permit the Council to remunerate one civic head. The Regulations set out the maximum salary that may be paid to that civic head. The Council's civic head is the Provost and their remuneration is set at £30,154 which is the maximum allowed for local authorities in Band B.

The Regulations also set out the remuneration that may be paid to senior councillors in addition to the Leader and Civic Head and the total number of senior councillors the Council may have. The maximum yearly amount that may be paid to a senior councillor is 75% of the total yearly amount payable to the Leader of the Council. The total yearly amount payable by the Council for remuneration of all its senior councillors shall not exceed £0.352m. The Council is able to exercise local flexibility in the determination of the precise number of senior councillors up to a maximum of 14 and their salary within these maximum limits. The Council's policy is to pay a salary of £30,154 to each appointed policy lead. Chairs of Area Committees without a policy lead remit are paid a salary of £24,081.

In 2023-24, Argyll and Bute Council had 11 senior councillors in the administration (excluding the Provost and the Leader). The total salary remuneration for senior councillors (excluding the Provost and the Leader) during 2023-24 was £0.313m. The Regulations also permit the Council to pay contributions or other payments as required to the Local Government Pension Scheme in respect of those councillors who elect to become councillor members of the pension scheme.

Senior Employees

The salary of senior employees is set by reference to national arrangements as well as local decisions on management structures and their associated remuneration levels. The Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee (SJNC) for Local Authority Services (Chief Officials) sets the salary levels for the Chief Executives of Scottish Local Authorities and also sets out the spinal column salary points for Chief Officers which local authorities can utilise in setting the salary levels for posts within their authority. Circular 2023 IR 11.23b sets the amount of salary for the Chief Executive of Argyll and Bute Council for 2023-24. The salaries of Executive Directors are paid at SCP 43 with Heads of Service being paid at SCP 29.

COUNCILLORS' REMUNERATION

Councillors' payments are made in accordance with the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Regulations 2007 and The Local Government (Allowances and Expenses) (Scotland) Regulations 2007.

The total amount of councillors' remuneration paid by the Council during the year was:

2022-23 Actual £'000	Members Allowances	2023-24 Actual £'000
476	Basic Councillor Salaries	464
66	Leader and Provost's Salary	70
258	Senior Councillor Salaries	313
29	Other Expenses and Allowances paid to Members	25
829	Total Allowances	872

The annual return of councillors' salaries and expenses for 2023-24 is available for any member of the public to view at all Council libraries and public offices during normal working hours. It is also available on the Council's website at <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-and-government/councillors-and-community-councillors>.

SENIOR COUNCILLORS' REMUNERATION

Additional disclosures are required for senior councillors' remuneration. Senior councillors' remuneration is in accordance with the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Regulations 2007 which for the purpose of remuneration, grades Councillors as either the Leader of the Council, The Civic Head (Provost), senior Councillors or Councillors. Details of senior Councillors' remuneration are as follows:

2022-23 Total Remuneration £	Senior Members	Responsibility	2023-24		
			Salary, Fees and Allowances £	Taxable Expenses £	Total Remuneration £
18,059	Councillor Garret Corner	Chair of Mid Argyll, Kintyre & the Islands Area Committee from 24-11-22	24,054	-	24,054
24,932	Councillor Maurice Corry	Provost from 19-05-22	30,120	-	30,120
38,254	Councillor Robin Currie	Leader from 24-10-20 and Policy Lead for Strategic Development from 24-11-22	40,160	-	40,160
28,648	Councillor Kieron Green	Policy Lead for Planning & Regulatory Services from 19-05-22	30,120	-	30,120
24,932	Councillor Amanda Hampsey	Policy Lead for Care Services from 19-05-22	30,120	-	30,120
24,932	Councillor Andrew Kain	Policy Lead for Roads and Transport and Chair of Oban, Lorn & the Isles Area Committee from 19-05-22	30,120	-	30,120
22,675	Councillor James Lynch	Leader of the Largest Opposition Group from 19-05-22	24,054	-	24,054
27,554	Councillor Liz McCabe	Policy Lead for Islands and Business Development and Chair of Bute & Cowal Area Committee from 19-05-22	30,120	-	30,120
28,648	Councillor Yvonne McNeilly	Policy Lead for Education	30,120	-	30,120
24,932	Councillor Ross Moreland	Policy Lead for Climate Change and Environment Services from 19-05-22	30,120	-	30,120
28,648	Councillor Gary Mulvaney	Depute Leader from 26-09-19 and Policy Lead for Finance and Commercial Services from 19-05-22	30,120	-	30,120
22,675	Councillor Gemma Penfold	Chair of Helensburgh & Lomond Area Committee from 19-05-22	24,054	-	24,054
14,692	Councillor Alastair Redman	Policy Lead for Economic Growth and Corporate Services from 24-11-22	30,120	-	30,120

Senior Councillors' remuneration in the tables above does not include non-taxable expenses.

The values in the table above relate to the actual payments made during 2023-24 which differ slightly from those stated on page 42 due to timing differences in regards to payroll. There is no compensation/loss of office payments within the period and there were no benefits or bonuses paid during the year.

EMPLOYEES' REMUNERATION

The Regulations require that local authorities provide an analysis of the number of employees whose remuneration in the year was £50,000 or more, including those classified as senior employees who are subject to separate disclosure requirements. The definition of remuneration includes all sums paid to or receivable by an employee, expense allowances chargeable to tax and the monetary value of benefits received other than in cash. This definition therefore includes all payments made to the employee in respect of agreed employment terminations or retirements. However, employer pension contributions are excluded from the definition.

Readers should be aware when making comparisons between years that, due to contractual incremental pay increases, the number of employees covered by this disclosure will increase each year. In addition, payments made in respect of agreed employment terminations or retirements can also distort the number and/or banding of employees.

The number of employees whose remuneration, excluding employer pension contributions and including redundancy/retirement payments, was £50,000 or more in bands of £5,000 was:

2022-23 Number of Officers	Range £	2023-24 Number of Officers
136	£50,000 - £54,999	303
83	£55,000 - £59,999	107
64	£60,000 - £64,999	78
19	£65,000 - £69,999	76
9	£70,000 - £74,999	43
3	£75,000 - £79,999	17
9	£80,000 - £84,999	7
1	£85,000 - £89,999	13
1	£90,000 - £94,999	2
1	£95,000 - £99,999	-
1	£100,000 - £104,999	1
-	£105,000 - £109,999	1
2	£110,000 - £114,999	-
-	£115,000 - £119,999	3
-	£120,000 - £124,999	-
-	£125,000 - £129,999	-
-	£130,000 - £135,000	-
1	£135,000 - £139,999	-
-	£140,000 - £144,999	1
330	Total	652

SENIOR EMPLOYEES' REMUNERATION

The table below provides details of the remuneration paid to the Council's senior employees. This is defined by the regulations as;

- someone who has responsibility for the management of the organisation,
- occupy a position which is politically restricted, or
- any additional employee whose annual remuneration is £150,000 or more (remuneration includes salary, non-cash benefits and any lump sum payment for loss of employment)

The following table sets out the remuneration disclosures for 2023-24 for senior officers:

Total Remuneration 2022-23 £	Post Holder	Salary (Including Fees and Allowances) £	Taxable Expenses £	Total Remuneration 2023-24 £
138,877	Chief Executive - Pippa Milne	143,625	510	144,135
112,406	Executive Director - Douglas Hendry	118,208	443	118,651
112,160	Executive Director, Section 95 Financial Officer - Kirsty Flanagan	118,064	573	118,637
84,180	Head of Children and Families and Criminal Justice (Section 3 Social Work Officer) - David Gibson	89,237		89,237

The following table sets out the remuneration disclosures for 2023-24 for Live Argyll:

Total Remuneration 2022-23 £	Post Holder	Salary (Including Fees and Allowances) £	Taxable Expenses £	Total Remuneration 2023-24 £
84,180	Live Argyll General Manager (Subsidiary of Argyll & Bute Council) - Kevin Anderson	89,237	-	89,237

PENSION BENEFITS

Pension benefits for councillors and local government employees are provided through the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

Councillors' pension benefits are based on career average pay. A Councillor's pay for pension purposes for each year or part year ending 31 March (other than the pay in the final year commencing 1 April) is increased by the increase in the cost of living, as measured by the appropriate index (or indices) between the end of that year and the last day of the month in which their membership of the scheme ends. The total of the revalued pay is then divided by the period of membership to calculate the career average pay. This is the value used to calculate the pension benefits.

Local government employees had a final salary pension scheme prior to 1 April 2015. This means that pension benefits are based on the final year's pay and the number of years that person has been a member of the scheme. As of 1 April 2015, local government employees are now part of a defined benefit pension scheme worked out on a career average basis. Benefits accumulated are calculated using pensionable pay each scheme year, rather than final salary. All benefits accumulated prior to 1 April 2015 are protected.

A five-tier contribution system is in place with contributions from scheme members based on how much pay falls into each tier. This is designed to give more equality between the costs and benefits of scheme membership.

The tiers and members contribution rates for 2023-24 are as follows:

Whole time pay	Contribution Rate 2023-24
On earnings up to and including £25,300	5.50%
On earnings above £25,301 and up to £31,000	7.25%
On earnings above £31,001 and up to £42,500	8.50%
On earnings above £42,501 and up to £56,600	9.50%
On earnings of £56,601 and above	12.00%

From 1 April 2015, if a person works part-time their contribution is worked out on their part-time pay rate for the job. Prior to this, if a person worked part-time, their contribution rate was worked out on the whole-time pay rate for the job with actual contributions paid on actual pay earned.

There is no automatic entitlement to a lump sum. Members may opt to give up (commute) pension for a lump sum up to the limit set by the Finance Act 2004.

From 1 April 2015, benefits are calculated on the basis of a revalued annual pension built up of 1/49th of pensionable pay each year, plus inflation to keep up with the cost of living. Prior to this date, the accrual rate guaranteed a pension based on 1/60th of final pensionable salary and years of pensionable service. Prior to 2009 the accrual rate guaranteed a pension based on 1/80th and a lump sum based on 3/80th of final pensionable salary and years of pensionable service.

The value of the accrued benefits has been calculated on the basis of the age at which the person will first become entitled to receive a full pension on retirement without reduction on account of its payment at that age; without exercising any option to commute pension entitlement into a lump sum; and without any adjustment for the effects of future inflation.

SENIOR COUNCILLORS' PENSION BENEFITS

The pension entitlements for senior councillors for the year to 31 March 2024 are shown in the table below, together with the contribution made by the Council to each senior Councillor's pension during the year.

The pension benefits shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their relevant local government service and not just their current appointment.

For the year to 31 March 2023		Senior Members		For the year to 31 March 2024	
In-year pension contributions £	Accrued pension benefits £'000			In-year pension contributions £	Accrued pension benefits £'000
3,485	-	Councillor Garret Corner	Pension	4,642	1
	-		<i>Lump Sum</i>		-
4,812	1	Councillor Maurice Corry	Pension	5,813	1
	-		<i>Lump Sum</i>		-
7,383	8	Councillor Robin Currie	Pension	7,751	10
	1		<i>Lump Sum</i>		1
5,529	4	Councillor Kieron Green	Pension	5,813	5
			<i>Lump Sum</i>		-
4,812	1	Councillor Amanda Hampsey	Pension	5,813	1
	-		<i>Lump Sum</i>		-
4,812	1	Councillor Andrew Kain	Pension	5,813	1
	-		<i>Lump Sum</i>		-
4,376	2	Councillor James Lynch	Pension	4,642	3
	-		<i>Lump Sum</i>		-
5,318	1	Councillor Liz McCabe	Pension	5,813	2
	-		<i>Lump Sum</i>		-
5,529	3	Councillor Yvonne McNeilly	Pension	5,813	4
			<i>Lump Sum</i>		-
4,812	-	Councillor Ross Moreland	Pension	5,813	1
	-		<i>Lump Sum</i>		-
5,529	8	Councillor Gary Mulvaney	Pension	5,813	9
	2		<i>Lump Sum</i>		2
4,376	1	Councillor Gemma Penfold	Pension	4,642	1
	-		<i>Lump Sum</i>		-
2,836	2	Councillor Alastair Redman	Pension	5,813	1
			<i>Lump Sum</i>		-

SENIOR EMPLOYEES' PENSION BENEFITS

The pension entitlements for senior employees for the year to 31 March 2024 are shown in the table below, together with the contribution made by the Council to each senior employee's pension during the year.

The pension benefits shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their relevant local government service and not just their current appointment.

For the year to 31 March 2023		Senior Officers		For the year to 31 March 2024	
In-year pension contributions £	Accrued pension benefits £'000			In-year pension contributions £	Accrued pension benefits £'000
26,709	70 111	Chief Executive - Pippa Milne	Pension	27,699	75
			<i>Lump Sum</i>		111
21,495	66 112	Executive Director - Douglas Hendry	Pension	22,786	70
			<i>Lump Sum</i>		112
21,495	37 32	Executive Director, Section 95 Financial Officer - Kirsty Flanagan	Pension	22,786	41
			<i>Lump Sum</i>		32
16,247	8	Head of Children and Families and Criminal Justice (Section 3 Social Work Officer) - David Gibson	Pension	17,223	40
			<i>Lump Sum</i>		-

Live Argyll Senior Employees' Pension Benefits

For the year to 31 March 2023		Senior Officers		For the year to 31 March 2024	
In-year pension contributions £	Accrued pension benefits £'000			In-year pension contributions £	Accrued pension benefits £'000
16,247	33 38	Live Argyll General Manager (Subsidiary of Argyll & Bute Council) - Kevin Anderson	Pension	17,223	37
			<i>Lump Sum</i>		40

EMPLOYEE EXIT PACKAGES

The numbers of exit packages with cost per band for compulsory and other redundancies are set out in the table below:

2022-23						Exit Package Cost Band	2023-24					
Compulsory Redundancies		Other Departures		Total			Compulsory Redundancies		Other Departures		Total	
No	£	No	£	No	£		No	£	No	£	No	£
1	4,038	2	30,305	3	34,343	£0 - £20,000	2	13,896	-	-	2	13,896
1	38,924	2	55,403	3	94,327	£20,001 - £40,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
					-	£40,001 - £60,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
		1	88,038	1	88,038	£60,001 - £80,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
					-	£80,001 - £100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
1	137,037	1	106,165	2	243,202	£100,001 - £150,000	1	134,437	1	127,350	2	261,787
1	161,869			1	161,869	£150,001 - £200,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	341,868	6	279,911	10	621,779		3	148,333	1	127,350	4	275,683

For the purposes of this note, Exit Packages include:

- Redundancy payment;
- Strain on the fund cost (the amount which the Council is required to pay to the pension fund because the employee has retired before the assumed retirement age);
- Added Years Lump Sum (the amount which the Council pays to the individual in a one-off lump sum, according to the compensatory added years awarded – maximum three years); and
- A capitalised value of the recurring Compensatory Added Years payment. This represents the amount which the Council has to pay to the pension fund because the employee has retired with enhanced service (maximum three years). This amount is paid on an annual basis once a person has left employment with the Council and is therefore a notional cost at 31 March 2024.

Termination costs for all Council employees who have accepted redundancy by 31 March 2024 are recognised in the Exit Packages note in 2023-24, or in previous financial years. The total cost recognised in the Exit Packages note in 2023-24 is £0.276m for 4 employees and in 2022-23 was £0.622m for 10 employees.

The supplementary Termination Benefits Note 35 provides more information.

FACILITY TIME STATEMENT

Under the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017, the Council is required to collect and publish data in relation to its usage and spend of trade union facility time in respect of employees who are trade union representatives. Full details for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 are attached at Appendix A.

Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure

2022-23			Service	Note	2023-24		
Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000			Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000
26,810	18,209	8,601	Chief Executive and Financial Services		1,281	95	1,186
			Executive Director Douglas Hendry				
436	-	436	Executive Director		427	-	427
33,399	4,250	29,149	Commercial Services		23,010	3,857	19,153
106,026	13,620	92,406	Education		114,124	13,202	100,922
15,942	4,371	11,571	Legal and Regulatory Support		17,520	4,241	13,279
			Executive Director Kirsty Flanagan				
418	-	418	Executive Director		242	-	242
			Financial Services		25,613	18,639	6,974
11,859	674	11,185	Customer Support Services		12,165	534	11,631
25,256	14,380	10,876	Development and Economic Growth		23,138	13,849	9,289
71,971	24,491	47,480	Roads and Infrastructure		75,990	29,300	46,690
174,434	94,948	79,486	Social Work		181,285	103,209	78,076
9,897	2,303	7,594	Other Non-Departmental Costs		10,075	678	9,397
476,448	177,246	299,202	Net Cost of Services		484,870	187,604	297,266

Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure

		Other Operating Income and Expenditure:	
	(437)	Net (Gain)/loss on Disposal of Long Term Assets	(262)
	1,643	Other Operating Income and Expenditure 8	1,670
	1,206	Total Other Operating Income and Expenditure	1,408
		Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure:	
	10,514	Interest Payable and Similar charges	14,037
	(2,966)	Interest and Investment Income	(4,779)
	141	Net Pension Interest Expense	(6,596)
	7,689	Total Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	2,662
		Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income:	
	(191,775)	General Government Grants	(187,193)
	(22,549)	Government Capital Grants and Other Capital Contributions 13	(23,550)
	(33,179)	Non-domestic Rates Redistribution	(37,645)
	(647)	Non-domestic Rates TIF	(804)
	(53,900)	Council Tax Income	(61,909)
	(302,050)	Total Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income	(311,101)
	6,047	(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services 7.1	(9,765)
	(21,104)	(Surplus)/Deficit on revaluation of Long Term Assets	(10,097)
	(154,350)	Other Post Employment Benefits (Pensions) 31.2	164,914
	(175,454)	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	154,817
	(169,407)	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	145,052

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

Balance Sheet

31 March 2023			31 March 2024	
£'000	£'000	Note	£'000	£'000
		Long Term Assets		
		Property Plant & Equipment	15	
451,018		- Other Land and Buildings		457,369
10,872		- Vehicles, Plant, Furniture and Equipment		11,012
235,076		- Infrastructure Assets		239,372
8,892		- Community Assets		9,110
3,286		- Surplus Assets		4,620
21,440		- Assets Under Construction		35,724
	730,584	Total Property Plant & Equipment		757,207
	2,345	Heritage Assets	16	2,569
	733	Intangible Assets	17	888
	2,553	Investment Property	18	2,514
	5,492	Long Term Investments	27	492
	5,880	Long-Term Debtors	22	5,816
	139,014	Other Long Term Debtors (Pensions)	31	-
	886,601	Total Long Term Assets		769,486
		Current Assets		
1,130		Inventories		1,043
27,186		Short Term Debtors (Net of Impairment)	23	38,368
1,554		Assets Held for Sale	24	1,619
60,000		Short Term Investments		27,500
823		Cash and Cash Equivalents	25	-
	90,693	Total Current Assets		68,530
		Current Liabilities		
(11,818)		Short-term Borrowing	27	(13,478)
(50,044)		Short-term Creditors	26	(52,374)
(1,450)		Provisions	29	(1,665)
(5,280)		Other Short Term Liabilities	28	(5,336)
-		Cash and Cash Equivalents	25	(9,991)
	(68,592)	Total Current Liabilities		(82,844)
		Long-term Liabilities		
(132,155)		Borrowing Repayable within a Period in Excess of 12 Months	27	(107,458)
(107,033)		Other Long-term liabilities	28	(101,697)
-		Other Long-term liabilities (Pensions)	31	(19,578)
(2,444)		Provisions	29	(2,855)
-		Capital Grant Receipts in Advance	30	(1,564)
	(241,632)	Total Long-term Liabilities		(233,152)
	667,070	Total Assets less Liabilities		522,020

Balance Sheet



31 March 2023			31 March 2024	
£'000	£'000	Note	£'000	£'000
		Unusable Reserves		
174,952		- Revaluation Reserve	180,661	
268,788		- Capital Adjustment Account	249,093	
(1,871)		- Financial Instruments Adjustment Account	(1,585)	
139,014		- Pensions Reserve	(19,578)	
(7,588)		- Accumulated Absences Account	(8,272)	
	573,295			400,319
		Usable Reserves		
4,503		- Capital Funds	3,197	
2,916		- Repairs and Renewals Funds	2,763	
86,356		- General Fund Balance	115,741	
	93,775			121,701
	667,070	Total Reserves		522,020

The Balance Sheet is a snapshot of the value as at the 31 March 2024 of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Council. The net assets of the Council (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Council. Reserves are reported as follows:

- **Unusable Reserves:** are reserves that the Council 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".
- **Usable Reserves:** are reserves that the Council may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and statutory limitations on their use (for example the capital receipts reserve that may only be used to fund capital expenditure or repay debt).

The Unaudited Annual Accounts were issued on 27 June 2024 and the Audited Annual Accounts were authorised for issue on 20 December 2024.

Kirsty Flanagan

**Kirsty Flanagan
Section 95 Officer
20 December 2024**

Statement of Movement in Reserves

Movements in 2023-24	Usable Reserves (Note 33)				Unusable Reserves (Note 32)						Total Reserves £'000
	General Fund Balance £'000	Repairs and Renewals Fund £'000	Capital Funds £'000	Total Usable Reserves £'000	Revaluation Reserve £'000	Capital Adjustment Account £'000	Pensions Reserve £'000	Financial Instrument Adjustment Account £'000	Accumulated Absences Account £'000	Total Unusable Reserves £'000	
Balance at 31 March 2023	(86,356)	(2,916)	(4,503)	(93,775)	(174,952)	(268,788)	(139,014)	1,871	7,588	(573,295)	(667,070)
(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services	(9,765)			(9,765)						-	(9,765)
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure				-	(10,097)		164,914			154,817	154,817
Retrospective adjustment to the statutory repayment of debt for service concession arrangements - permitted flexibility	(36,038)			(36,038)		36,038				36,038	-
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(45,803)	-	-	(45,803)	(10,097)	36,038	164,914	-	-	190,855	145,052
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations:											
Disposal of Assets					99	(99)					
Amortisation of Intangible Assets				-		-				-	-
Depreciation of Non-current Assets	(21,443)			(21,443)		21,443				21,443	-
Impairment of Non-current Assets	2,576			2,576		(2,576)				(2,576)	-
Capital Grants and Contributions credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	23,550			23,550		(23,550)				(23,550)	-
Capital Expenditure Charged to the General Fund	1,616			1,616		(1,616)				(1,616)	-
Net Gain or Loss on Sale of Non-current Assets	262		(671)	(409)		409				409	-
Amount by which finance costs calculated in accordance with the Code are different from the amount of finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements	286			286				(286)		(286)	-
Employee Benefits	(684)			(684)					684	684	-
Amount by which pension costs calculated in accordance with the Code are different from the contributions due under pension scheme regulations	6,322			6,322			(6,322)			(6,322)	-

Statement of Movement in Reserves

Movements in 2023-24	Usable Reserves (Note 33)				Unusable Reserves (Note 32)						Total Reserves	
	General Fund Balance	Repairs and Renewals Fund		Capital Funds	Total Usable Reserves	Revaluation Reserve	Capital Adjustment Account	Pensions Reserve	Financial Instrument Adjustment Account	Accumulated Absences Account		Total Unusable Reserves
		£'000	£'000									
Statutory Repayment of Debt - Loans Fund Advances	7,696			7,696		(7,696)					(7,696)	-
Statutory Repayment of Debt - Finance Leases	48			48		(48)					(48)	-
Statutory Repayment of Debt - NPDO Finance	5,232			5,232		(5,232)					(5,232)	-
In year adjustment to the statutory repayment of debt for service concession arrangements - permitted flexibility	(4,831)			(4,831)		4,831					4,831	-
Total Statutory Adjustments	20,630	-	(671)	19,959	99	(14,134)	(6,322)	(286)	684	(19,959)	-	
Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Other Statutory Reserves	(25,173)	-	(671)	(25,844)	(9,998)	21,904	158,592	(286)	684	170,896	145,052	
Other Transfers required by Statute												
Transfer to/from Other Statutory Reserves	77	153	1,977	2,207		(2,207)					(2,207)	-
Other Transfers												
Adjustments permitted by Accounting Standards for depreciation that is related to the revaluation balance rather than historic cost	(4,289)			(4,289)	4,289						4,289	-
(Increase)/Decrease in Year	(29,385)	153	1,306	(27,926)	(5,709)	19,697	158,592	(286)	684	172,976	145,052	
Balance at 31 March 2024 Carried Forward	(115,741)	(2,763)	(3,197)	(121,701)	(180,661)	(249,093)	19,578	1,585	8,272	(400,319)	(522,020)	

This Statement shows the movement in the 2023-24 financial year on the different reserves held by the Council, analysed into 'Usable Reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and "Unusable Reserves". The '(Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Services' line shows the true economic cost of providing the Council's services, more details of which are shown in Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. These are different from the statutory amounts required to be charged to the General Fund Balance for Council Tax setting purposes. The 'Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Other Statutory Reserves' line shows the Statutory General Fund Balance before any discretionary transfers to or from earmarked reserves undertaken by the Council.

Statement of Movement in Reserves

Comparative Movements in 2022-23	Usable Reserves (Note 33)				Unusable Reserves (Note 32)							Total Reserves
	General Fund Balance	Repairs and Renewals Fund	Capital Funds	Total Usable Reserves	Revaluation Reserve	Capital Adjustment Account	Pensions Reserve	Financial Instrument Adjustment Account	Accumulated Absences Account	Total Unusable Reserves		
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Balance at 31 March 2022	(96,081)	(2,682)	(4,414)	(103,177)	(157,644)	(241,331)	(4,634)	2,198	6,928	(394,483)	(497,660)	
(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services	6,047			6,047						-	6,047	
Other Comprehensive Expenditure and Income					(21,104)		(154,350)			(175,454)	(175,454)	
Total Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	6,047	-	-	6,047	(21,104)	-	(154,350)	-	-	(175,454)	(169,407)	
<i>Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations:</i>												
Disposal of Assets					173	(173)						
Amortisation of Intangible Assets				-						-	-	
Depreciation and of Non-current Assets	(20,947)			(20,947)		20,947				20,947	-	
Impairment of Non-current Assets	(3,128)			(3,128)		3,128				3,128	-	
Capital Grants and Contributions credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	22,549			22,549		(22,549)				(22,549)	-	
Capital Expenditure Charged to the General Fund	2,938			2,938		(2,938)				(2,938)	-	
Net Gain or Loss on Sale of Non-current Assets	437		(568)	(131)		131				131	-	
Amount by which finance costs calculated in accordance with the Code are different from the amount of finance costs calculated in accordance with statutory requirements	327			327				(327)		(327)	-	
Employee Benefits	(660)			(660)					660	660	-	
Amount by which pension costs calculated in accordance with the Code are different from the contributions due under pension scheme regulations	(19,970)			(19,970)			19,970			19,970	-	

Statement of Movement in Reserves

Comparative Movements in 2022-23	Usable Reserves (Note 33)				Unusable Reserves (Note 32)						Total Reserves
	General Fund Balance	Repairs and Renewals Fund	Capital Funds	Total Usable Reserves	Revaluation Reserve	Capital Adjustment Account	Pensions Reserve	Financial Instrument Adjustment Account	Accumulated Absences Account	Total Unusable Reserves	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Statutory Repayment of Debt - Loans Fund Advances	20,317			20,317		(20,317)				(20,317)	-
Statutory Repayment of Debt - Finance Leases	46			46		(46)				(46)	-
Statutory Repayment of Debt - NPDO Finance	5,070			5,070		(5,070)				(5,070)	-
Total Statutory Adjustments	6,979	-	(568)	6,411	173	(26,887)	19,970	(327)	660	(6,411)	-
Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Other Statutory Reserves	13,026	-	(568)	12,458	(20,931)	(26,887)	(134,380)	(327)	660	(181,865)	(169,407)
<i>Other Transfers required by Statute</i>											
Transfer to/from Other Statutory Reserves	322	(234)	480	568		(568)				(568)	-
<i>Other Transfers</i>											-
Adjustments permitted by Accounting Standards for depreciation that is related to the revaluation balance rather than historic cost	(3,623)			(3,623)	3,623					3,623	
(Increase)/Decrease in Year	9,725	(234)	(88)	9,403	(17,308)	(27,455)	(134,380)	(327)	660	(178,810)	(169,407)
Balance at 31 March 2023 Carried Forward	(86,356)	(2,916)	(4,503)	(93,775)	(174,952)	(268,788)	(139,014)	1,871	7,588	(573,295)	(667,070)

This Statement shows the movement in the 2022-23 financial year on the different reserves held by the Council, analysed into 'Usable Reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and "Unusable Reserves". The '(Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Services' line shows the true economic cost of providing the Council's services, more details of which are shown in Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. These are different from the statutory amounts required to be charged to the General Fund Balance for Council Tax setting purposes. The 'Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Other Statutory Reserves' line shows the Statutory General Fund Balance before any discretionary transfers to or from earmarked reserves undertaken by the Council.

Cash Flow Statement

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Council during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Council generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amounts of net cash flow arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Council are funded by way of taxation and grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the Council. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Council'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 Council.

2022-23 £'000		Note	2023-24 £'000
6,047	Net (Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Services		(9,765)
(21,310)	Adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements		21,585
5,955	Adjustments for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities		10,294
(9,308)	Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities	39	22,114
(14,323)	Net Cash Flows from Investing Activities	40	(38,637)
42,536	Net Cash Flows from Financing Activities	41	27,337
18,905	Net (Increase)/Decrease in Cash and Cash Equivalents		10,814
(19,728)	Cash and Cash Equivalents at the beginning of the Reporting Period		(823)
(823)	Cash and Cash Equivalents at the end of the Reporting Period	25	9,991

1. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.1 General Principles

The Annual Accounts summarise the Council's transactions for the 2023-24 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31 March 2024. The Council must ensure that its Annual Accounts are prepared in accordance with The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, which section 12 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 require to be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023-24, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and statutory guidance issued under section 12 of the 2003 Act.

The accounts have been prepared under the historic cost convention, other than changes resulting from the revaluation of certain categories of non-current assets and financial instruments, and on a going concern basis.

The accounting policies adopted are set out below and have been applied consistently throughout the year in dealing with any items that are considered material to the accounts.

1.2 Accruals of Income and Expenditure

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

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

1.3 Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty of notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are investments that mature in three months or less from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

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

1.4 Prior Period Adjustments, Changes in Accounting Policies, 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 Council's financial position or financial performance. Where a change is made, it is applied retrospectively 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.

1.5 Charges to Revenue for Non-Current Assets

Services, support services and trading accounts are debited with the following amounts to record the cost of holding 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 council is not required to raise Council Tax to fund depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisation. However, it is required to make an annual contribution from revenue towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement equal to an amount calculated on a prudent basis determined by the Council in accordance with the Statutory Repayment of Loans Fund Advances.

Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses and amortisation are therefore replaced by Loans Fund principal repayments in the General Fund Balance by way of an adjusting transaction within the Capital Adjustment Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement for the difference between the two.

1.6 Employee Benefits

1.6.1 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. These benefits are recognised as an expense for services in the year in which employees render service to the Council. An accrual is made for the cost of holiday entitlements 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 the 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.

1.6.2 Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Council to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy. They are charged on an accruals basis to the appropriate service segment in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement at the earlier of when the Council can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Council recognised costs for a restructuring.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the General Fund Balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Council 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.

1.6.3 Post-Employment Benefits

The Council participates in two separate pension schemes:

- The Scottish Teachers' Pension Scheme administered by the Scottish Government.
- The Local Government (Scotland) Pensions Scheme administered by the Strathclyde Pension Fund.

Both schemes provide defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), earned while employees work for the Council.

However, the arrangements for the teachers' scheme mean that liabilities for these benefits cannot ordinarily be identified specifically to the Council. The scheme is therefore accounted for as if it were a defined contribution scheme. No liability for future payments of benefits is recognised in the Balance Sheet and the Education Services line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is charged with the employer's contributions payable to the Teachers' Pension Scheme in the year.

Local Government Pension Scheme

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

- The liabilities of the Strathclyde Pension Fund attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method – i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates and projected earnings for current employees.
- Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate of 4.8% (based on the indicative rate of return on a "high quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liability" (as measured by the yield on iBoxx Sterling Corporates Index, AA over 15 years)).
- The assets of the Strathclyde Pension Fund attributable to the Council are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:
 - quoted securities – current bid price
 - unquoted securities – professional estimate
 - unitised securities – current bid price
 - property – market value

The change in the net 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.
 - Net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset), i.e. net interest expense for the Council – the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability (asset) that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line 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 liability (asset) during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments.

- Re-measurements comprising:
 - The return on plan assets – excluding amounts included in the net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset), charged to the Pension 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.
 - Contributions paid to the Strathclyde 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 Council 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 to the fund 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 earned by employees.

1.6.4 Post Employment Discretionary Benefits

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

1.7 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 Annual Accounts are 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 Annual Accounts are adjusted to reflect such events.
- Those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period – the Annual Accounts are not adjusted to reflect such events, but where a category of events would have a material impact, 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 Annual Accounts.

1.8 Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Council becomes party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and initially measured at fair value and 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 value 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 Council has, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable (plus accrued interest) and interest charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount payable for the year according to the loan agreement.

Gains and losses on the repurchase or early settlement of borrowing are credited and debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year of repurchase/settlement. However, where repurchase has taken place as part of the restructuring of the loan portfolio that involves the modification or exchange of existing instruments, the premium or discount is respectively deducted from or added to the amortised cost of the new or modified loan and the write-down to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is spread over the life of the loan by an adjustment to the effective interest rate.

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 Council has a policy of spreading the gain/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.

1.9 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 cashflow characteristics. There are three main classes of financial assets measured at:

- Amortised cost
- Fair value through profit or loss, and
- Fair value through other comprehensive income

The Council'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 Council becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured at fair value. They are subsequently measured at their amortised cost. Annual credits to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement for interest receivable are based on the carrying amount of the asset multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument. For most of the financial assets held by the Council, this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal receivable (plus accrued interest) and interest credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is the amount receivable for the year in the loan agreement.

Financial Assets Measured at Fair Value through Profit or Loss

Financial assets that are measured at fair value through profit or loss are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Council 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 arrive in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services.

The fair value measurements of the 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 the identical assets that the Council 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.

Expected Credit Loss Model

The Council 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 receivables and contract assets. Only lifetime losses are recognised for trade receivables (debtors) held by the Council.

1.10 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 Council when there is reasonable assurance that:

- The Council will comply with the conditions attached to the payments; and
- The grants or contributions will be received.

Amounts recognised as due to the Council are not credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement until conditions attached to the grant or contribution have been satisfied. Conditions are stipulations that specify that the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset 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 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 and Expenditure (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 Account. Where it has been applied, it is posted to the Capital Adjustment Account. Amounts in the Capital Grants Unapplied Account are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account once they have been applied to fund capital expenditure.

1.11 Heritage Assets

The main heritage assets held by the Council are two art collections, an archaeology collection and a historic jail and courthouse which is operated as a “living” museum. The “Argyll Collection” is an art collection which was set up to provide the young people of Argyll and Bute with direct access to a wide range of quality art recognising that they had limited access to museums and galleries. In addition, the Council holds other works of art which are held at various libraries and the Campbeltown Museum. Heritage Assets are recognised and measured (including the treatment of revaluation gains and losses) in accordance with the Council’s accounting policies on property, plant and equipment. However, some of the measurement rules are relaxed in relation to heritage assets as detailed below.

The Council’s main heritage assets are accounted for as follows:

The Art Collections

The collections cover a range of media including acrylic, charcoal, embroidery, engraving, etching, gouache, lithography, oil, pastel, pencil, procion dye, screenprint, monoprint, watercolour, woodcut, ceramic, bronze and woodcarving. These items are reported in the Balance Sheet at insurance valuation which is based on market values. These valuations are updated periodically. The assets within the art collections are deemed to have indeterminate lives and a high residual value; hence the Council does not consider it appropriate to charge depreciation.

Acquisitions are made by purchase or donation. Acquisitions are initially recognised at cost and donations are recognised at valuation with valuations provided by external valuers and with reference to appropriate commercial markets using the most relevant and recent information from sales at auctions.

Inveraray Jail and Courthouse and “Other” Historic Buildings

The building is owned by Argyll and Bute Council and leased out to an organisation which runs it as a “living museum”. The building is valued in accordance with the Council’s property, plant and equipment policy. Other buildings included in this category are McCaig’s Folly in Oban, the Argyll Mausoleum and Castle Lodge in Dunoon.

Archaeology and “Other” Museum Exhibits

The Council has obtained specialist valuations for the archaeology collection held within Campbeltown Museum which covers a range of objects including swords, bones, pottery, stone and leather remains. Similar to the Art Collections, these items are reported in the Balance Sheet at insurance valuation which is based on market values. These valuations will be updated periodically. The assets within the collection are deemed to have indeterminate lives and a high residual value; hence the Council does not consider it appropriate to charge depreciation.

Heritage Assets – General

The carrying amounts of heritage assets are reviewed where there is evidence of impairment for heritage assets, e.g. where an item has suffered physical deterioration or breakage or where doubts arise as to its authenticity. Any impairment is recognised and measured in accordance with the Council’s general policies on impairment (see note 1.19.3 in this summary of significant accounting policies). The proceeds of any disposals are accounted for in accordance with the Council’s general provisions relating to the disposal of property, plant and equipment. Disposal proceeds are disclosed separately in the notes to the financial statements and are accounted for in accordance with statutory accounting requirements relating to capital expenditure and receipts (see note 1.19.4 in this summary of significant accounting policies).

1.12 Intangible Assets

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

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

Intangible assets are measured initially at cost. Amounts are not revalued, as the fair value of the assets held by the Council cannot be determined by reference to an active market. The depreciable amount of an intangible asset is amortised over its useful life to the relevant service lines in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. An asset is tested for impairment whenever there is an indication that the asset might be impaired – any losses recognised are posted to the relevant service lines 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.

1.13 Interests in Companies and Other Entities

The Council has material interests in companies and other entities that have the nature of subsidiaries, associates or joint ventures and requires to prepare Group Accounts. In the Council's own single entity accounts, the interests in companies and other entities are recorded as financial assets at cost, less any provision for losses.

1.14 Inventories

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.

1.15 Investment Properties

Investment properties are those that are used solely to earn rentals and/or for capital appreciation. The definition is not met if the property is used in any way to facilitate the delivery of services or production of goods or is held for sale.

Investment properties are measured initially at cost and subsequently at fair value, being the price that would be received to sell such an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. As a non-financial asset, investment properties are measured at highest and best use. Properties are not depreciated but are revalued annually according to market conditions at the year-end. Gains and losses on revaluation are posted to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The same treatment is applied to gains and losses on disposal.

Rentals received in relation to investment properties are credited to the Financing and Investment Income line and result in a gain for the General Fund Balance. However, revaluation and disposal gains and losses are not permitted by statutory arrangements to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account.

1.16 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.

1.16.1 The Council as Lessee

a) Finance Leases

Property, plant and equipment held under finance leases is recognised on the Balance Sheet at the commencement of the lease at its fair value measured at the lease's inception (or the present value of the minimum lease payments, if lower). The asset recognised is matched by a liability for the obligation to pay the lessor. Initial direct costs of the Council are added to the carrying amount of the asset. Premiums paid on entry into a lease are applied to writing down the lease liability.

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.

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

b) Operating Leases

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as an expense of the services benefiting 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).

1.16.2 The Council as Lessor

a) Finance Leases

Where the Council grants a finance lease over a property or an item of plant and 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 Council'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. When the future rentals are received, the element for the capital receipt on disposal of the asset is used to write down the 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 fixed assets is fully provided for under separate arrangements for capital financing. Amounts are appropriated to the Capital Adjustment Account from the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

b) Operating Leases

Where the Council grants an operating lease over a property or an item of plant or equipment, the asset is retained in the Balance Sheet. Rental income is credited to the relevant Service lines in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, with the exception of rental income from investment property which is credited to Interest and Investment Income. 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.

1.17 Overheads and Support Services

The costs of overheads and support services are not charged to service segments in accordance with the Council's arrangements for accountability and financial performance.

1.18 Assets Held for Sale

Property, plant and equipment are classified as *Assets Held for Sale* when the following criteria are met:

- The property is available for immediate sale in its present condition.
- The sale must be highly probable; and an active programme to locate a buyer and complete the plan must have been initiated.
- The asset must be actively marketed for sale at a price that is reasonable in relation to its current fair value.
- The sale should be expected to qualify for recognition as a completed sale within one year (although events or circumstances may extend the period to complete the sale beyond one year).

When these criteria are met, assets within the category of *Property, Plant and Equipment* will be reclassified as *Assets Held for Sale*.

1.19 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 that are expected to be used during more than one financial year are classified as *Property, Plant and Equipment*.

1.19.1 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 Council and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

1.19.2 Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

- The purchase price.
- Any costs attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.
- The initial estimate of the costs of dismantling and removing the item and restoring the site on which it is located.

The Council does not capitalise borrowing costs incurred while assets are under construction.

The cost of assets acquired other than by purchase is deemed to be its fair value, unless the acquisition will not increase the cash flows of the Council. In the latter case, the cost of the acquisition is the carrying amount of the asset given up by the Council.

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 Accounts. 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:

- Infrastructure, community assets and assets under construction – depreciated historical cost.
- Council offices – current value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use (existing use value – EUV).
- School buildings – current value, but because of their specialist nature, are measured at depreciated replacement cost which is used as an estimate of current value.
- Surplus assets – the current value measurement base is fair value, estimated at highest and best use from a market participant’s perspective.
- All other assets – current value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use (existing use value – EUV).

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

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at current value are revalued sufficiently regularly to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their current value at the year-end, but as a minimum every five years. Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains. Exceptionally, gains might be credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services where they arise from the reversal of an impairment loss previously charged to a service.

Where decreases in value are identified, they are accounted for by:

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

The Revaluation Reserve contains revaluation gains recognised since 1 April 2007, the date of its formal implementation. Gains arising before that date have been consolidated into the Capital Adjustment Account.

1.19.3 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 lines in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

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

1.19.4 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 re-valued 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 the Provision of Services. Depreciation is not charged on Assets Held for Sale.

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.

Disposal receipts are categorised as capital receipts. All capital receipts are credited to the Capital Receipts Reserve, and can then only be used for new capital investment. 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.

1.19.5 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. land and certain community assets) and assets that are not yet available for use (i.e. assets under construction).

Where an asset has major components whose cost is significant in relation to the total cost of the item, the components are depreciated separately.

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

1.20 Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and Similar Contracts

PFI contracts are agreements to receive services, where the responsibility for making available the property, plant and equipment needed to provide the services passes to the PFI contractor. As the Council is deemed to control the services that are provided under its PFI schemes and as ownership of

the property, plant and equipment will pass to the Council at the end of the contracts for no additional charge, the Council carries the assets used under the contracts on the Balance Sheet.

The original recognition of these assets at fair value was balanced by the recognition of a liability for amounts due to the scheme operator to pay for the capital investment.

Non-current assets recognised on the Balance Sheet are revalued and depreciated in the same way as Property, Plant and Equipment owned by the Council.

The amounts payable to the PFI operators 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 – this is calculated by applying the implicit interest rate in the lease to the opening lease liability for the period, this is 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.

1.21 Provisions and Contingent Liabilities

1.21.1 Provisions

Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the Council 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 Council may be involved in a court case that could eventually result in a settlement or the payment of compensation.

Provisions are charged as an expense to the appropriate service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year that the Council becomes aware of the obligation, and 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 set up in the Balance Sheet. Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year and where it becomes more likely than not that a transfer of economic benefits will not 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 obligation is settled.

1.21.2 Contingent Liabilities

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

1.22 Reserves

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/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 and retirement benefits and do not represent usable resources for the Council – these reserves are explained in the relevant policies above and Note 32 to the accounts.

1.23 VAT

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

2. ACCOUNTING STANDARDS ISSUED BUT NOT YET ADOPTED

The standards introduced by the 2024-25 Code where disclosures are required in the 2023-24 financial statements in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 3.3.4.3 of the code are:

- IFRS 16 Leases which is applicable from 1st April 2024. This also includes amendments in respect of Lease Liability in a Sale and Leaseback transaction.
- IAS 1 – Classification of Liabilities as Current or Non-current and Non-current Liabilities with Covenants.
- IAS 12 – International Tax Reform
- IAS 7 and IFRS 7 – Supplier Finance Arrangements

It is anticipated that only IFRS16 will have a material impact in future years on the Financial Statements as the standard will require the Council to recognise the majority of its current operational leases on the balance sheet, eliminating the distinction between operating and finance leases. This will lead to the capitalisation of right-of-use assets and corresponding lease liabilities increasing the value of assets and liabilities on the balance sheet. On the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, operational lease expenses will be replaced by depreciation charges for the right-of-use assets and interest on the lease liability. This change will enhance transparency and comparability of financial statements, providing a clearer picture of the Council's obligations and resources. To implement the IFRS16, the Council will review and evaluate the operational leases it has in place, update its accounting policies to accommodate the requirements of IFRS16 and will redesign its internal processes and procedures for starting and ending leases.

There will be no material impact in future years from the adoption of these amendments in relation to IAS 1, IAS 12 and IAS 7.

CIPFA/LASAAC has agreed to defer the implementation of IFRS 16 Leases until 1 April 2024.

3. CRITICAL JUDGEMENTS IN APPLYING ACCOUNTING POLICIES

In applying the accounting policies set out in Note 1, the Council has had to make certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events. Where a critical judgement has been made this is referred to in the relevant note to the core financial statements; however a summary of those with the most significant effect is detailed below:

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

- The Council currently operates three Private Finance Initiative (PFI), or similar, contracts which are accounted for as Service Concession arrangements under IFRIC12 – *Service Concession Arrangements*. The Council has determined that in the case of the Schools NPDO contract and the new Schools DBFM contract, the Council has control over the services provided through use of the schools and that a qualifying asset has been created. The appropriate accounting treatment is to bring the assets “on Balance Sheet” along with a finance lease liability.
- The Council also operates a Waste Management Public Private Partnership (PPP) contract. In this case the Council determined that a “qualifying asset” had not been created and that the Council did not have significant control over the services being provided. The appropriate accounting treatment was therefore determined to be “off Balance Sheet” and that payments to the contractor are charged to the appropriate service line within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account.
- The Council has considered its exposure to possible losses and made adequate provision where it is probable that an outflow of resources will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Where it has not been possible to measure the obligation, material contingent liabilities have been disclosed in Note 34.
- Unused holiday entitlement earned at 31 March 2024 but not taken at that date has been quantified on the basis of a 5% sample of all non-term time Council employees. The calculation in respect of unused holidays for term time staff in schools is based on actual leave entitlement as at 31 March and no estimation is required for these staff. The liability shown in the 2023-24 financial statements in respect of the holiday pay accrual is £8.272m.

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

The financial statements contain estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Council about which there is a degree of uncertainty. 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 Council’s Balance Sheet at 31 March 2024 for which there is a significant risk of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year are outlined in the table that follows:

Item	Uncertainties	Effect if Actual Results Differ from Assumptions
Property, Plant and Equipment	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 Council will be able to sustain its current spending on repairs and maintenance, bringing into doubt the useful lives.	<p>If the useful life of assets is reduced, depreciation increases and the carrying amount of the assets falls.</p> <p>It is estimated that the annual depreciation charge for buildings would increase by £1.142m for every year that useful lives had to be reduced.</p>
Rolling Programme Valuation	The Council employs professional valuers who are registered with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. These valuers carry out regular reviews of the assets reported in the Balance Sheet and any significant changes in value are processed as an asset revaluation or impairment. These valuations are based on their professional opinion using available market information at the time of assessment. Due to the high number of assets, a rolling programme of asset valuations has been established for many years, with the aim of revaluing one fifth of the portfolio each financial year which is made up of various asset types. This is in addition to those assets which are valued annually; Surplus Assets, Investment Properties, Held for Sale assets and those where capital spend has exceeded £0.1m in the current year.	<p>This carries inherent risk that assets not revalued in-year have been subject to material changes in value particularly if affected by external factors such as inflation.</p> <p>The highest risk in this respect relates to assets valued using the depreciated Replacement Cost (DRC) method, which for Argyll & Bute Council includes schools. To mitigate this risk, a desktop assessment was undertaken for 2023-24 to estimate the potential increase in value of our assets valued using depreciated replacement cost using BCIS indices. As the BCIS indices have not increased materially, the impact on these assets was not deemed to be material so no adjustment was made.</p> <p>Consideration will be given on an annual basis to those assets which may have material impairment.</p>

Pensions Asset	<p>Estimation of the net asset 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 Council with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied.</p>	<p>The effects on the net pension's liability of changes in individual assumptions can be measured. The sensitivities regarding the principal assumptions used to measure the scheme liabilities are set out as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1205 355 2089 818"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1205 355 1621 499">Sensitivities at 31 March 2024</th> <th data-bbox="1621 355 1845 499">Approximate % Increase to Employer Liability</th> <th data-bbox="1845 355 2089 499">Approximate monetary amount £'000</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1205 499 1621 584">0.1% decrease in real discount rate</td> <td data-bbox="1621 499 1845 584">2%</td> <td data-bbox="1845 499 2089 584">10,827</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1205 584 1621 668">1 Year increase in the member life expectancy</td> <td data-bbox="1621 584 1845 668">4%</td> <td data-bbox="1845 584 2089 668">26,766</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1205 668 1621 753">0.1% increase in salary increase rate</td> <td data-bbox="1621 668 1845 753">0%</td> <td data-bbox="1845 668 2089 753">1,409</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1205 753 1621 818">0.1% increase in pension increase rate</td> <td data-bbox="1621 753 1845 818">2%</td> <td data-bbox="1845 753 2089 818">9,594</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Sensitivities at 31 March 2024	Approximate % Increase to Employer Liability	Approximate monetary amount £'000	0.1% decrease in real discount rate	2%	10,827	1 Year increase in the member life expectancy	4%	26,766	0.1% increase in salary increase rate	0%	1,409	0.1% increase in pension increase rate	2%	9,594
Sensitivities at 31 March 2024	Approximate % Increase to Employer Liability	Approximate monetary amount £'000															
0.1% decrease in real discount rate	2%	10,827															
1 Year increase in the member life expectancy	4%	26,766															
0.1% increase in salary increase rate	0%	1,409															
0.1% increase in pension increase rate	2%	9,594															

5.1 EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

2022-23			Service	2023-24		
Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund £'000	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis (Note 5.2) £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000		Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund £'000	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis (Note 5.2) £'000	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000
7,538	1,063	8,601	Chief Executive and Financial Services	1,161	25	1,186
			Executive Director Douglas Hendry			
366	70	436	Executive Director	421	6	427
10,616	18,533	29,149	Commercial Services	12,232	6,921	19,153
95,943	(3,537)	92,406	Education	104,697	(3,775)	100,922
9,860	1,711	11,571	Legal and Regulatory Support	12,259	1,020	13,279
			Executive Director Kirsty Flanagan			
369	49	418	Executive Director	237	5	242
-	-	-	Financial Services	6,885	89	6,974
8,139	3,046	11,185	Customer Support	9,403	2,228	11,631
9,070	1,806	10,876	Development and Economic Growth	8,904	385	9,289
31,855	15,628	47,480	Roads and Infrastructure	33,981	12,709	46,690
73,976	5,510	79,486	Social Work	77,137	939	78,076
8,226	(632)	7,594	Other Non-Departmental Costs	11,109	(1,712)	9,397
255,958	43,247	299,202	Net Cost of Services	278,426	18,840	297,266

(246,231)	(46,924)	(293,155)	Other Income and Expenditure	(307,811)	780	(307,031)
9,727	(3,677)	6,047	(Surplus) / Deficit	(29,385)	19,620	(9,765)
(96,081)			Opening General fund Balance	(86,356)		
9,727			Plus (Surplus) or Deficit on General Fund Balance	(29,385)		
(86,356)			Closing General Fund Balance	(115,741)		

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

5.2 EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS RECONCILIATION

This note provides a reconciliation of the main adjustments to Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund to arrive at the amounts in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis 2023-24				
	Adjustments for Capital Purposes Note (i) £'000	Net change for Pension Adjustments Note (ii) £'000	Capital element of Schools NPDO payment Note (iii) £'000	Other Adjustments Note (iv) £'000	Total Adjustments £'000
Chief Executive and Financial Services	-	16	-	9	25
Executive Director (Douglas Hendry)					
Executive Director (Douglas Hendry)	-	7	-	(1)	6
Commercial Services	1,960	163	-	4,798	6,921
Education	3,888	443	-	(8,106)	(3,775)
Legal and Regulatory Support	3,387	74	(5,232)	2,791	1,020
Executive Director (Kirsty Flanagan)					
Executive Director (Kirsty Flanagan)	-	5	-	-	5
Financial Services		89			89
Head of Customer Support	1,752	129	-	347	2,228
Head of Development and Economic Growth	344	149	-	(108)	385
Roads and Infrastructure	10,977	341	-	1,391	12,709
Social Work	806	545	-	(412)	939
Other Non-Departmental Costs	-	(1,687)	-	(25)	(1,712)
Net Cost of Services	23,114	274	(5,232)	684	18,840
Other Income and Expenditure	2,956	(6,596)	4,831	(411)	780
Difference between General Fund Surplus and Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (Surplus)/Deficit	26,070	(6,322)	(401)	273	19,620

(i) 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.
- 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.
- Financing and investment income and expenditure – the statutory charges for capital financing (loans fund advances) and other revenue contributions are deducted from other income and expenditure as these are not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices.

(ii) Net change for the Pensions Adjustments

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

- For services this represents the removal of the employer pension contributions made by the Council 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 Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

(iii) Capital element of schools NPDO payment

- This is the capital cost of the annual payment to the schools NPDO operator and represents repayment of the Balance Sheet liability rather than a charge to Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

(iv) Other 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.
- For services an adjustment is made for the accrual of holiday pay and other similar entitlements, this is required under generally accepted accounting principles but the impact on the General Fund is mitigated by statute which allows the impact to be reversed out through the Movement in Reserves Statement.

6.1 GENERAL FUND RESERVES

The Council has ring-fenced £107.443m of the balance on the General Fund.

Ring-fenced Balances	Balance 1 April 2023 £'000	Funds Used £'000	Contributions to/from Funds £'000	New Earmarking agreed 2023-24 £'000	New Earmarking at end of 2023-24 £'000	Balance 31 March 2024 £'000
Strategic Housing Fund (Revenue from Additional Council Tax on Second Homes)	7,247	(1,057)			2,575	8,765
Investment in Affordable Housing	3,163		(139)			3,024
Capital Projects	16,059	(12,379)	2,327	2,509	29,442	37,958
Lochgilphead and Tarbert Regeneration	1,460	(410)				1,050
Support for Rural Growth Deal	756	(215)				541
Asset Management	2,098	(28)	(2,070)			-
Piers and Harbours Investment Fund	2,789				1,336	4,125
Scottish Government Initiatives	2,834	(1,274)			1,219	2,779
CHORD	378	(89)			120	409
Devolved School Management Scheme (DSM)	1,394	(1,300)			645	739
Energy Efficiency Fund	218				20	238
Unspent Budget Required for Existing Legal Commitments	476		(476)			-
Unspent Third Party Contributions	13,179	(5,937)	5,016		3,528	15,786
Contributions Carried Forward	265	(44)			233	454
Other Previous Council Decisions	3,808	(513)			845	4,140
Redundancy Reserve	1,578	(115)			1,500	2,963
Connect for Success Fund	1,426	(745)				681
One Council Property	566		(566)			-
Fleet - Timing Delay	658	(174)				484
Hermitage Park	19				37	56
Electric Vehicle Chargers	17	(17)				-
Priorities Investment Fund	-				4,742	4,742
COVID-19	5,512	-	(5,512)			-
Unspent Budget Carried Forward	13,566	(2,989)	(931)	173	8,690	18,509
Total Ring-fenced	79,466	(27,286)	(2,351)	2,682	54,932	107,443
Contingency	5,691	-	348	-	-	6,039
Unallocated	1,199	-	1,530	(470)	-	2,259
Total General Fund Balance	86,356	(27,286)	(473)	2,212	54,932	115,741

The contingency balance of £6.039m is 2% of the Council's budgeted net expenditure for 2023-24.

6.2 Service Concessions

During 2022/23 the Scottish Government announced revised regulations in relation to the treatment of service concessions: Local government finance circular 10/2022 - finance leases and service concession arrangements. The council currently operates two service concessions in relation to its Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and Design, Build, Finance, Maintain (DBFM) arrangements both within Education.

The revised regulations allow for the debt costs associated with these schemes to be written off over the expected lives of the respective assets rather than over the contract period of each arrangement. This ensures repayments are aligned to the period over which benefit flows from the asset and provides scope to realign debt costs to reflect the asset lives.

The cumulative value of the liability charged to the General Fund prior to applying the permitted flexibility was £43.376m up to and including the financial year 2023-24. After applying the permitted flexibility, there is a one-off historical debt cost saving of £36.038m and in year savings of £4.831m resulting in an overall benefit in 2023-24 of £40.869m.

This saving has been earmarked for specific council priorities and has been included in Note 6.1 with balances allocated as detailed below:

Reserve Description	Amount Allocated £'000
Capital Projects	24,666
Priorities Investment Fund	4,742
Unspent Budget Carried Forward	6,630
Total Allocation	36,038

7 SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

7.1 Expenditure and Income Analysed by Nature

Council's expenditure and income is analysed as follows:

2022-23 £'000	Expenditure/Income	2023-24 £'000
	Expenditure	
196,213	Employee benefits expenses	195,129
178,016	Other services expenses	189,024
74,391	Contribution to Argyll and Bute Integration Joint Board	77,604
27,828	Depreciation, amortisation, impairment	23,113
10,655	Interest payments	7,441
1,253	Precepts and levies	1,254
390	Other operating expenditure	416
(437)	Net Loss/(Gain) on the disposal of assets	(262)
488,309	Total Expenditure	493,719
	Income	
(102,855)	Fees, charges and other service income	(110,000)
(74,391)	Income to fund social care services (Argyll and Bute Integration Joint Board)	(77,604)
(2,966)	Interest and investment income	(4,779)
(87,726)	Income from council tax and non-domestic rates	(100,358)
(214,324)	Government grants and contributions	(210,743)
(482,262)	Total Income	(503,484)
6,047	(Surplus)Deficit on the Provision of Services	(9,765)

Notes to the Financial Statements

7.2 Revenue from Contracts with Service Recipients

2022-23 Actual £'000		2023-24 Actual £'000
32,900	Revenue from contracts with service recipients	34,201
32,900	Total Included in Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	34,201

8 OTHER OPERATING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

The expenditure of £1.670m shown in the Other Operating Income and Expenditure line on the Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure can be analysed as follows:

2022-23 Actual £'000	Other Operating Income and Expenditure	2023-24 Actual £'000
1,253	Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board Requisition	1,254
(20)	Equal Pay Settlements and Legal Costs	-
410	Other Operating Income and Expenditure not attributable to Services	416
1,643	Total	1,670

9 AGENCY SERVICES

The Council bills and collects non-domestic rates on behalf of the Scottish Government from ratepayers situated within Argyll and Bute. The Council also bills and collects, along with its own council tax, domestic water and sewerage charges on behalf of Scottish Water. In addition, the Council received funding from the UK Government to help people who met the Government's eligibility criteria to pay their home energy bills. The Council had no discretion over the terms of the funding and could not use it for service delivery. This means the Council acted as agent only and the grant funding received and paid out are not included in the Council's reserves, CIES or Balance Sheet. In some cases, an administration grant was awarded to the Council to facilitate these payments. This is accounted for as operational income and expenditure and not disclosed here.

2022-23 Actual £'000	Agency Income	2023-24 Actual £'000
33,179	Scottish Government - Contributions (to)/from the non-domestic rates pool	37,645
15,106	Domestic water and sewerage charges collected	15,830
(15,106)	Domestic water and sewerage charges paid over to Scottish Water	(15,830)
265	Service income from Scottish Water for collection of domestic water and sewerage	367
7	Service income BID levy - Dunoon	8
7	Service income BID levy - Oban	7
7	Service income BID levy - Bute	7
(714)	Scottish Child Payment - amount paid out	-
714	Scottish Child Payment - amount received from the Scottish Government	-
(73)	BIES Energy Grant - amount paid out	(373)
73	BIES Energy Grant - amount received from the Scottish Government	373
(167)	COVID - Financial Hardship and Self-Isolation grants paid out	-
167	COVID - Financial Hardship and Self-Isolation funding received from Scottish Government	-
33,465	Total	38,034

Notes to the Financial Statements

10 COMMUNITY CARE AND HEALTH (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002

From 1 April 2016 health and social care services were fully integrated as part of the new Health and Social Care Partnership.

During 2023-24 the Partnership included provision of services to older people, supporting people with a learning disability and provision of support to adults who have a mental health difficulty.

Budgets are currently aligned which means that each Partner organisation holds their own element of the budget and records the income and expenditure that relates to the part of the service for which they are responsible.

During 2023-24 income received by the Council from this source amounted to £7.811m and the related expenditure was £10.953m. This can be analysed as follows:

2022-23		Purpose of Services	2023-24	
Income £'000	Expenditure £'000		Income £'000	Expenditure £'000
3,300	5,402	Care of the Elderly	3,464	5,658
2,914	3,615	Provision of Services for People with Learning Disabilities	2,945	3,787
1,380	1,527	Provision of Services for People with Mental Health Needs	1,402	1,508
7,594	10,544		7,811	10,953
833	833	Additional Covid Response Funding received via NHS for 2022-23		
8,427	11,377	TOTAL	7,811	10,953

11 FEES PAYABLE TO EXTERNAL AUDITORS

In 2023-24 the following fees relating to external audit and inspection were incurred alongside comparative figures for 2022-23:

2022-23 £'000	Auditor's Remuneration	2023-24 £'000
310	Fees payable to External Auditors with regard to external audit services carried out by the appointed Auditor	325
310	Total Remuneration	325

The figure above excludes fees for the audit of the Council's charitable trusts.

Forvis Mazars LLP did not undertake any non-audit work in 2022-23 or 2023-24.

Notes to the Financial Statements

12 WASTE MANAGEMENT PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

The Council has entered into a Public Private Partnership for the provision of its waste disposal service. This agreement requires the provider to upgrade or replace three waste disposal sites, two transfer stations and five civic amenity sites. In addition, the provider will also provide composting facilities to meet waste diversion targets. When the agreement ends in September 2026, during financial year 2026-27, the provider will hand back to the Council the waste disposal facilities with a remaining life of 5 years.

The Council has paid a service charge of £7.268m which represents the value of the service provided from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 (£6.514m for 2022-23). Under the agreement the Council is committed to paying the following sums:

Future Repayment Periods	£'000
2024-2025	6,956
2025-2026	7,108
2026-2027	2,336
Total	16,400

The average service charge equates to £5.180m per annum over the life of the contract.

13 GRANT INCOME

The Council credited the following grants to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

2022-23 £'000	Grant Income	2023-24 £'000
	Credited to Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income	
191,265	Revenue Support Grant	187,193
33,179	Non Domestic Rates	37,645
344	Specific Capital Grant	96
19,187	General Capital Grant	22,347
44	Heritage Lottery Fund	-
728	Scottish Timber Transport Strategy	791
1,353	Scottish Government	-
90	Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)	90
55	Revenue Contribution to Capital Projects	100
748	Other Grants	126
246,993	Total	248,388
	Credited to Services	
12,869	Scottish Government Specific Grants	12,555
809	General Capital Grant - Private Sector Housing Improvement Grants	855
16,581	Housing Benefit Subsidy	16,443
14,787	Other Revenue Government Grants	21,243
45,046	Total	51,096

Notes to the Financial Statements

14 RELATED PARTIES

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

The aim of the Financial Reporting Standard dealing with Related Parties is to highlight instances where influence and control has been exercised over an external organisation by the Council, and where an elected member, their close family or someone in their household, has the ability to exercise the influence or control. Elected members and Senior Officers have completed a signed declaration on Related Party Interests and these have been used to compile this disclosure.

14.1 Scottish Government

The Scottish Government has effective control over the general operations of the Council – it is responsible for providing the statutory framework, within which the Council operates, provides the majority of its funding in the form of grants and prescribes the terms of many of the transactions that the Council has with other parties (e.g. council tax bills, housing benefits). Grants received from government departments are set out in Note 13 – Grant Income.

14.2 Members

Members of the council have direct control over the Council's financial and operating policies. The total of members' allowances paid in 2023-24 is shown in the Remuneration Report.

During the year there were two organisations in which members had a significant interest and where the total of transactions exceeded £10,000.

2022-23 Expenditure £'000	Transactions in which Members have a significant interest	2023-24 Expenditure £'000
21	Argyll and Bute Rape Crisis	0
81	S & C Crawford Building Contractors Ltd	337
69	Bookfan Ltd Trading as South Peak Services	81
171	Total	418

Notes to the Financial Statements

14.3 Other Related Bodies

This category relates to transactions with entities which are controlled or significantly influenced by the Council.

During the year transactions with other related bodies were as follows:

2022-23 Expenditure £'000	Related Bodies	2023-24 Expenditure £'000
4,197	Transactions with related bodies during the year totalled	4,418
	<i>Of these, transactions with the following exceeded £10,000:</i>	
210	ACHA	48
579	Dunbritton Housing Association Limited	590
34	LINK Group Ltd	30
96	West Highland Housing Association Ltd	312
14	Fyne Homes	26
548	Oban and Lorn Community Enterprise - Atlantis Leisure	606
100	Islay and Jura Community Enterprise	141
70	Mid Argyll Community Enterprise	110
73	Scotland Excel	65
97	Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureaux	55
227	Bute Advice	182
	- Kintyre Recycling	10
92	SEEMIS	104
178	Argyll and the Isles Coast & Countryside Trust	200
411	Carr Gomm	429
127	Argyll & Bute Women's Aid	132
241	Argyll & Bute Care & Repair	252
161	HELP	168
97	COSLA	71
411	Strathclyde Passenger Transport	416
204	Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme	209
60	Glengorm Partnership	-
	- Group Recycling in Argyll & Bute (GRAB)	73
91	North West Mull Community Woodland Company	-
41	Mull & Iona Community Trust (MICT)	148
4,162	Total	4,377

Given the relationships the Council has with other organisations and partners it is possible that some related party transactions may exist. However, the purpose of the requirement to complete the disclosure is to provide additional information to the users of the Annual Accounts and, by declaring possible instances, there is no suggestion that any inappropriate transactions have taken place.

Please refer to Group Accounts on pages 128 to 139.

Notes to the Financial Statements

15 PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

15.1 Movement in Property, Plant and Equipment

Movements in 2023-24	Other Land & Buildings £'000	Vehicles Plant & Equipment £'000	Community Assets £'000	Surplus Assets £'000	Assets Under Construction £'000	Total 2023-24 £'000	Infrastructure Assets £'000
Cost or Valuation							
At 1 April 2023	453,644	46,440	8,901	3,283	21,440	533,708	
Additions	8,483	3,177	218	(18)	15,117	26,977	12,309
Additions financed under a new leasing arrangement						-	
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	5,217			653		5,870	
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	813			69		882	
Derecognition - Disposals		(1,552)				(1,552)	
Assets reclassified (to)/from Held for Sale	(539)			630		91	
Other movements in cost or valuation					(833)	(833)	833
At 31 March 2024	467,618	48,065	9,119	4,617	35,724	565,143	
Depreciation and Impairments							
At 1 April 2023	(2,626)	(35,568)	(9)	3	-	(38,200)	
Depreciation Charge for 2023-24	(13,802)	(3,037)	(9)	3	-	(16,839)	(8,846)
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	4,125			16		4,141	
Depreciation written out to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	2,037					2,037	
Impairment losses/(reversals) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve						-	
Impairment losses/(reversals) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services						-	
Derecognition - Disposals		1,552				1,552	
Derecognition - Other	17			(16)		1	
Other movements in depreciation and impairment						-	
At 31 March 2024	(10,249)	(37,053)	(9)	3	-	(47,308)	
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2024	457,369	11,012	9,110	4,620	35,724	517,835	239,372
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2023	451,018	10,872	8,892	3,286	21,440	495,508	235,076

Notes to the Financial Statements

Comparative Movements in 2022-23	Other Land & Buildings £'000	Vehicles Plant & Equipment £'000	Community Assets £'000	Surplus Assets £'000	Assets Under Construction £'000	Total 2022-23 £'000	Infrastructure Assets £'000
Cost or Valuation							
At 1 April 2022	428,437	44,428	7,463	1,405	35,344	517,077	
Additions	8,671	2,024	1,438	283	10,212	22,628	13,110
Additions financed under a new leasing agreement	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	2,499			1,237		3,736	
Revaluation increases/(decreases) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	(8,252)			(18)	-	(8,270)	
Derecognition - Disposals	(1,451)	(12)		-		(1,463)	
Assets reclassified (to)/from Held for Sale	(376)			376		-	
Other movements in cost or valuation	24,116	-		-	(24,116)	-	
At 31 March 2023	453,644	46,440	8,901	3,283	21,440	533,708	
Depreciation and Impairments							
At 1 April 2022	(13,585)	(32,630)	(9)	3	-	(46,221)	
Depreciation Charge for 2022-23	(13,068)	(2,944)				(16,012)	(8,512)
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	17,284					17,284	
Impairment losses/(reversals) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	5,300					5,300	
Derecognition - Disposals	1,443	6				1,449	
Other movements in depreciation and impairment	-					-	
At 31 March 2023	(2,626)	(35,568)	(9)	3	-	(38,200)	
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2023	451,018	10,872	8,892	3,286	21,440	495,508	235,076
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2022	414,852	11,798	7,454	1,408	35,344	470,856	230,478

Notes to the Financial Statements

As permitted by Finance Circular 09-2022 the council has adopted both Statutory Override 1 & 2 relating to infrastructure assets which allow for the following;

Statutory Override 1: For accounting periods commencing from 1 April 2021 until 31 March 2024 a local authority is not required to report the gross cost and accumulated depreciation for infrastructure assets.

Statutory Override 2: For accounting periods commencing 1 April 2010 until 31 March 2024 the carrying amount to be derecognised in respect of a replaced part of an infrastructure asset is to be taken and accounted for as a nil amount. No subsequent adjustment shall be made to the carrying amount of the asset with respect to that part.

15.2 Valuation of Property, Plant and Equipment

IAS 16 – Property, Plant and Equipment has been adapted for the public sector by IPSAS 17 – Property, Plant and Equipment. Under IPSAS 17 each category of Property, Plant and Equipment is valued as follows:

- Infrastructure, community assets and assets under construction are valued at historical cost.
- Vehicles, plant and equipment are valued at depreciated historical cost as a proxy for current value.
- All other classes of assets are valued at current value. Where there is no market based evidence of current value because of the specialist nature of the asset and the asset is rarely sold then an estimate of current value is made using a depreciated replacement cost approach.

The Council carries out a rolling programme that ensures that all Property, Plant and Equipment required to be measured is re-valued at least every five years.

Assets identified as Corporate Surplus Assets are valued in accordance with IFRS 13 - Fair Value Measurement. The Balance Sheet value of Corporate Surplus assets at 31 March 2024 was £4.620m. Corporate Surplus assets are valued at their fair value on 31 March each year. Level 2 or 3 inputs were used for most Corporate Surplus asset valuations.

Revaluations of Council owned land and property were carried out at 31 March 2024 in accordance with the Council's rolling programme of revaluations. The revaluations have been carried out in house by the Council's Estates Service. Valuations of land and buildings were carried out in accordance with the methodologies and basis for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. For assets not valued in-year a desktop assessment was undertaken for 2023-24 to estimate the potential increase in value of those assets valued using depreciated replacement cost using BCIS indices. As the BCIS indices have not increased materially, the impact on these assets was not deemed to be material so no adjustment was made.

The following table shows the progress of the Council's rolling programme for the revaluation of Other Land and Buildings:

Valued at Current Value as at:	Other Land & Buildings		
	Estates Valuation £'000	Desktop Valuation £'000	Current Valuation £'000
31 March 2024	135,773		135,773
31 March 2023	179,234	5,007	184,241
31 March 2022	38,954	3,335	42,289
31 March 2021	50,140	3,164	53,304
31 March 2020	39,207	2,555	41,762
Total Cost or Valuation	443,308	14,061	457,369

Notes to the Financial Statements

15.3 Depreciation

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

- Buildings – straight-line allocation over the useful life of the property as estimated by the valuer (20 to 60 years)
- Infrastructure – straight-line allocation over 40 – 60 years
- Vessels – straight line allocation over 25 years
- Vehicles, Plant and Equipment - straight-line allocation over the useful life of the asset as determined by a suitably qualified officer (5 to 20 years)

15.4 Summary of Capital Expenditure and Financing

Capital expenditure involves the creation of assets, the benefit of which will be available to future rates and Council taxpayers. It is financed from borrowing, capital receipts and capital grants. The cost of the asset is effectively borne over a period of years. In 2023-24 total spending on capital projects was £40.094m.

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
307,100	Opening Capital Financing Requirement	291,782
	Capital Investment:	
8,543	Property Plant and Equipment: Other Land and Buildings	8,483
2,024	Vehicles, Plant, Furniture and Equipment	3,177
13,110	Infrastructure Assets	12,309
1,438	Community Assets	218
283	Surplus Assets	(18)
10,212	Assets Under Construction	15,117
128	Property Plant and Equipment acquired under Finance Leases: Other Land and Buildings - DBFM Schools	-
246	Heritage Assets	224
174	Intangible Assets	202
12	Investment Assets	382
	Assets Held for Sale	
36,170	Total Capital Investment	40,094
	Sources of Finance:	
-	Capital Receipts	-
(22,549)	Government Grants	(23,550)
(2,938)	Capital Financed from Current Revenue	(1,616)
(4,276)	Net Borrowing	(6,111)
(16,041)	Earmarked Reserves	(1,532)
(5,116)	Assets Aquired under Finance Leases/Schools NPDO	(5,280)
(568)	Capital Receipts transferred to/(from) Capital Fund	(2,207)
-	Service Concessions	40,869
-	Other	(55)
(51,488)	Total Funding	518
291,782	Closing Capital Financing Requirement	332,394

Notes to the Financial Statements

15.5 Commitments under Capital Contracts

At 31 March 2024, the Council had commitments on capital contracts of £6.236m. This expenditure will be funded from a combination of Government Grants, borrowing and income from selling assets and contributions from Revenue Accounts. Similar commitments at 31 March 2023 were £13.745m. The major commitments are:

Commitments Under Capital Contracts	2023-24 £'000
Tigh-A-Rudha Care Home - Internal Upgrade	1,859
Kilmory Business Park	979
Lochgilphead Community Education Centre	513
The Moat Centre - Electrical Upgrade	473
St Andrews Primary School - Window Upgrade	358
Port Charlotte Primary School - Electrical Works	306
Riverside Leisure Centre - Health Suite Upgrade	280
Helensburgh and Lomond Civic Centre - Occupation Certificate Wo	267
Dalmally Primary School - Internal Upgrade	193
North Bute Primary School - Staff Toilet Alterations	150
Other projects each less than £0.150m in value	858
Total Capital Commitments	6,236

16 HERITAGE ASSETS

The main heritage assets held by the Council are two art collections, an archaeology collection and Inveraray Jail and Courthouse. The Council holds other heritage assets which are not valued and shown on the Balance Sheet. Further details on the council's heritage assets policy can be found in note 1.11.

Reconciliation of the carrying value of heritage assets held by the Council:

Movements in 2023-24	Art Collections £'000	Heritage Property £'000	Total £'000
Cost or Valuation			
Net Book Value at 1 April 2023	1,600	745	2,345
Additions	-	224	224
Disposals	-	-	-
Revaluations	-	-	-
Impairment Losses/(Reversals) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-
Transfer from Assets Under Construction	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	1,600	969	2,569

17 INTANGIBLE ASSETS

Intangible assets comprise software licences and carbon reduction commitment allowances purchased in advance. Purchased software licences are shown at cost and this cost is charged to the relevant service lines within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement over the economic life of the licences, assessed as five years.

The movement in intangible assets during the year was:

Movements in 2023-24	Purchased Software Licences £'000	Total Intangible Assets £'000
Cost or Valuation		
At 1 April 2023	2,449	2,449
Additions	202	202
Disposals	-	-
Revaluations	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-
At 31 March 2024	2,651	2,651
Amortisation and Impairments		
At 1 April 2023	(1,716)	(1,716)
Charge for 2023-24	(47)	(47)
Disposals	-	-
At 31 March 2024	(1,763)	(1,763)
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2024	888	888
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2023	733	733

Comparative Movements in 2022-23	Purchased Software Licences £'000	Total Intangible Assets £'000
Cost or Valuation		
At 1 April 2022	2,275	2,275
Additions	174	174
Disposals	-	-
Revaluations	-	-
Reclassifications	-	-
At 31 March 2023	2,449	2,449
Amortisation and Impairments		
At 1 April 2022	(1,671)	(1,671)
Charge for 2022-23	(45)	(45)
Disposals	-	-
At 31 March 2023	(1,716)	(1,716)
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2023	733	733
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2022	604	604

18 INVESTMENT PROPERTY

Investment property has been accounted for in accordance with IAS 4 - Investment Property, except where interpretations or adaptations to fit the public sector are detailed in the Code. The definition of an investment property in the context of the public sector is one that is used solely to earn rentals or for capital appreciation or both.

The value of investment property is initially measured at cost and thereafter measured at fair value. The fair value of investment property reflects market conditions at 31 March 2024. Revaluations of investment properties were carried out at 31 March 2024 in house by the Estates Service.

18.1 Movement in Investment Property

The movement in investment property during 2023-24 was:

Movements in 2023-24	Investment Properties £'000
Cost or Valuation	
At 1 April 2023	2,553
Acquisitions	382
Disposals	-
Net Gains/Losses from fair value adjustments	(42)
Transfers	(379)
At 31 March 2024	2,514

18.2 Investment Property Income and Expenditure

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

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
141	Rental income from investment property	144
(4)	Direct operating expenses arising from investment property	-
137		144

19 SCHOOLS BUILT UNDER PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP CONTRACTS (PPP)

Argyll and Bute Council have two schemes:

Schools Non-Profit Distributing Organisation (NPDO)

During 2007-08 two secondary schools, two joint campuses and one primary campus, developed as part of the Non-Profit Distributing Organisation (NPDO) variant of a Public Private Partnership (PPP), became operational. When the agreement ends in 2035 the provider will hand the five school complexes back to the Council.

Schools Hub Design, Build, Finance and Maintain Contract (DBFM)

Campbeltown and Oban High Schools have been built under this type of arrangement which reached Financial Close in March 2016.

Notes to the Financial Statements

Campbeltown Grammar School Construction Phase 1 was completed on 19 February 2018 and provided a new secondary school for pupils aged between 12 and 18. The new school has capacity for 500 pupils and replaces the existing Campbeltown Grammar School on the current school site at Hutcheon Road, Campbeltown. Phase 2 which included the demolition of the existing school buildings, provision of a car park, landscaping and 3G artificial turf pitch was completed during 2018-19.

Oban High School Construction Phase 1 was completed on 5 April 2018 and provided a new secondary school for pupils between 12 and 18. The new school has capacity for 1300 pupils and replaces the existing Oban High School, on the current school site at Soroba Road, Oban. Phase 2 included the demolition of the existing school buildings, provision of a car park, landscaping and a pedestrian footway with lighting from the new school facilities to the grass pitches owned by the Council at Glencruitten, Oban was completed during 2018-19.

19.1 Assets Held under Schools NPDO and DBFM Contracts

Five schools were constructed under the Schools NPDO Contract; Hermitage Academy, Dunoon Grammar, Lochgilphead Joint Campus, Rothesay Joint Campus and Oban Primary Campus. The construction costs of the buildings, adjusted for revaluations on 31 March 2024 and depreciation to date are included as part of Operational Land and Buildings.

As noted above, two schools were completed under the Schools DBFM Contract. Oban High School and Campbeltown Grammar have been included within Operational Land & Buildings.

Movements in 2023-24	Schools DBFM - Other Land & Buildings £'000	Schools NPDO - Other Land & Buildings £'000	Total Schools Built under PFI Contracts £'000
Cost or Valuation			
At 1 April 2023	71,539	134,178	205,717
Additions at Cost	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	-
Revaluations	5,066	-	5,066
At 31 March 2024	76,605	134,178	210,783
Depreciation and Impairments			
At 1 April 2023	-	-	-
Charge for 2023-24	(2,457)	(3,355)	(5,812)
Transfers	-	-	-
Revaluations	2,457	-	2,457
At 31 March 2024	-	(3,355)	(3,355)
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2024	76,605	130,823	207,428
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2023	71,539	134,178	205,717

Comparative Movements in 2022-23	Schools DBFM - Other Land & Buildings £'000	Schools NPDO - Other Land & Buildings £'000	Total Schools Built under PFI Contracts £'000
Cost or Valuation			
At 1 April 2022	66,018	136,962	202,980
Additions at Cost	128	-	128
Transfers	-	-	-
Revaluations	5,393	(2,784)	2,609
At 31 March 2023	71,539	134,178	205,717
Depreciation and Impairments			
At 1 April 2022	-	-	-
Charge for 2022-23	(2,186)	(3,162)	(5,348)
Transfers	-	-	-
Revaluations	2,186	3,162	5,348
At 31 March 2023	-	-	-
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2023	71,539	134,178	205,717
Balance Sheet amount at 31 March 2022	66,018	136,962	202,980

19.2 Schools NPDO and DBFM Finance Lease Liability

The finance lease liability arising from the Schools NPDO and DBFM contracts are as follows:

Movements in 2023-24	Schools DBFM £'000	Schools NPDO £'000	Total Schools Finance Lease Liability £'000
Balance at 1 April 2023	(51,876)	(59,338)	(111,214)
Additions	-	-	-
Repayments	1,970	3,262	5,232
Prior year repayment adjustment	-	-	-
Schools Finance Lease Liability at 31 March 2024	(49,906)	(56,076)	(105,982)
Split:			
Obligations payable within 1 year	(1,990)	(3,298)	(5,288)
Obligations payable after 1 year	(47,916)	(52,778)	(100,694)
Schools Finance Lease Liability at 31 March 2024	(49,906)	(56,076)	(105,982)

Comparative Movements in 2022-23	Schools DBFM £'000	Schools NPDO £'000	Total Schools Finance Lease Liability £'000
Balance at 1 April 2022	(53,876)	(62,408)	(116,284)
Additions	-	-	-
Repayments	2,000	3,070	5,070
Prior year repayment adjustment	-	-	-
Schools Finance Lease Liability at 31 March 2023	(51,876)	(59,338)	(111,214)
Split:			
Obligations payable within 1 year	(1,970)	(3,262)	(5,232)
Obligations payable after 1 year	(49,906)	(56,076)	(105,982)
Schools Finance Lease Liability at 31 March 2023	(51,876)	(59,338)	(111,214)

19.3 Payments due to Operator under Schools NPDO Contract

The Council is committed to paying the following sums under the Schools NPDO contract:

Future Repayment Periods	Repayment of Liability £'000	Lifecycle Costs £'000	Payment of Interest £'000	Service Charges £'000	Total Payments £'000
2024 - 2025	3,298	631	5,796	7,032	16,757
2025 - 2029	16,876	2,593	20,035	29,716	69,220
2029 - 2034	31,660	4,072	13,592	42,567	91,891
2034 - 2035	4,241	318	717	4,301	9,577
Total	56,075	7,614	40,140	83,616	187,445

19.4 Payments due to Operator under Schools DBFM Contract

The Council is committed to paying the following sums under the Schools DBFM contract:

Future Repayment Periods	Repayment of Liability £'000	Payment of Interest £'000	Service Charges £'000	Total Payments £'000
2024 - 2025	1,990	2,168	1,211	5,369
2025 - 2029	8,418	7,888	4,641	20,947
2029 - 2034	11,056	8,066	7,789	26,911
2034 - 2039	13,573	2,471	11,773	27,817
2039 - 2043	14,869	1,716	5,601	22,186
Total	49,906	22,309	31,015	103,230

Notes to the Financial Statements

20 OPERATING LEASES

20.1 Operating Leases – Amounts Paid to Lessors

The Council uses land, buildings, vehicles, plant and equipment financed under the terms of an operating lease. The amounts paid under these arrangements were as follows:

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
552	Land and Buildings	1,223
1,407	Vehicles	1,577
180	Plant and Equipment	181
2,139	Total	2,981

20.2 Assets Held Under Operating Leases

The Council was committed at 31 March 2024 to making payments of £2.061m under operating leases comprising the following elements:

31st March 2023			31st March 2024	
Other Land and Buildings £'000	Vehicles, Plant and Equipment £'000		Other Land and Buildings £'000	Vehicles, Plant and Equipment £'000
213	184	Due within 1 year	485	222
691	162	Due between 1 and 5 years	481	114
1,479	5	Due after 5 years	759	-
2,383	351	Value at 31 March	1,725	336

21 FINANCE LEASES

21.1 Finance Leases – Amounts Paid to Lessors

During 2017-18 the Council purchased a new cremator for Cardross Crematorium under a finance lease arrangement. The amount paid under this arrangement in 2023-24 was as follows:

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
63	Plant and Equipment	63
63	Total	63

21.2 Assets Held Under Finance Leases

Assets purchased under a finance lease are included within the assets of the Council and depreciated over the life of the asset as follows:

2022-23 £'000	Vehicles, Plant and Equipment	2023-24 £'000
376	Value at 1 April	325
-	Additions	-
(51)	Depreciation	(51)
325	Value at 31 March	274

Notes to the Financial Statements

21.3 Finance Lease Liability

The Council was committed at 31 March 2024 to making payments of £0.301m under finance leases comprising the following elements:

Movements in 2023-24	£'000
Balance at 1 April 2023	(349)
Additions	-
Repayments	48
Finance Lease Liability at 31 March 2024	(301)
Split:	
Obligations payable within 1 year	(63)
Obligations payable between 1 and 5 years	(251)
Obligations payable after 5 years	(29)
Finance Lease Obligations at 31 March 2024	(343)
Less Interest element of lease	42
Finance Lease Liability at 31 March 2024	(301)

Comparative Movements in 2022-23	£'000
Balance at 1 April 2022	(396)
Additions	-
Repayments	47
Finance Lease Liability at 31 March 2023	(349)
Split:	
Obligations payable within 1 year	(63)
Obligations payable between 1 and 5 years	(251)
Obligations payable after 5 years	(92)
Finance Lease Obligations at 31 March 2023	(406)
Less Interest element of lease	57
Finance Lease Liability at 31 March 2023	(349)

22 LONG TERM DEBTORS

31st March 2023 £'000		31st March 2024 £'000
12	House Loans	11
750	Waste PPP Historic Contamination Fund	750
1,801	Charging Orders - Care Home Fees	2,099
3,024	Strategic Housing Fund Loans to Registered Social Landlords	2,879
293	Other Long Term Debtors	77
5,880	Total Long Term Debtors	5,816

23 DEBTORS

31 March 2023			31 March 2024	
£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
18,990		Arrears of Local Taxation	20,310	
(16,844)		Less: Impairment of Bad Debts	(17,776)	
	2,146			2,534
435		Housing Benefits Overpayments	375	
(299)		Less: Impairment of Bad Debts	(277)	
	136			98
3,382		Debtor Accounts	4,586	
(1,172)		Less: Expected Credit Loss	(1,121)	
	2,210			3,465
	2,742	Net Debtor to Scottish Government for Non Domestic Rates		1,670
	4,316	VAT Recoverable from HMRC		2,807
	139	Strategic Housing Fund Loans due within 1 Year		145
	7,456	Accrued Income		14,576
	8,041	Other Debtors		13,073
	27,186	Total Debtors		38,368

24 ASSETS HELD FOR SALE

The movement in assets held for sale was:

2022-23 £'000	Movements	2023-24 £'000
1,509	Balance Sheet amount at 1st April 2023	1,554
17	Assets newly classified as "Held for Sale" (Property, Plant and Equipment)	286
-	Additions	-
84	Revaluation losses	-
60	Revaluation gains	189
-	Impairment losses	-
-	Assets declassified as "Held for Sale" (Property, Plant and Equipment)	-
(116)	Assets Sold	(410)
1,554	Balance Sheet amount at 31st March 2024	1,619

25 CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

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

31 March 2023 £'000		31 March 2024 £'000
4	Cash held by the Authority	3
(218)	Cash in transit	794
1,976	Short term deposits with banks	633
6,850	Short term deposits in Money Market Funds	1,400
(7,789)	Bank Current Accounts	(12,821)
823	Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	(9,991)

26 CREDITORS

31 March 2023 £'000		31 March 2024 £'000
11,707	Accrued Payrolls and Superannuation	9,174
3,092	Accrued Employer's National Insurance Contributions and PAYE	3,495
7,588	Accrual for Short Term Accumulating Absences	8,272
96	Creditors System Liability	(19)
9,095	Accrued Expenditure	10,774
5,006	Health and Social Care Partnership Creditor	3,389
1,022	RCGF Grant Income	2,060
854	Trust Funds	901
-	Net Creditor to Scottish Government for Non Domestic Rates	1,408
11,584	Other Creditors	12,920
50,044	Total Creditors	52,374

27 FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS DISCLOSURES

27.1 Types of Financial Instruments

Accounting regulations require the “Financial Instruments” (investment, lending and borrowing of the Council) shown on the balance sheet to be further analysed into various defined categories. The investments, lending and borrowing disclosed in the Balance Sheet are made up of the following categories of “Financial Instruments”:

31 March 2023			31 March 2024	
Long Term £'000	Current £'000		Long Term £'000	Current £'000
Investments and Lending				
11,372	78,669	Financial Assets at Amortised Cost	6,308	48,810
Borrowing				
239,187	58,190	Financial Liabilities at amortised cost	209,151	63,406

27.2 Fair Value of Assets and Liabilities Carried at Amortised Cost

Financial assets (represented by lending and receivables) and financial liabilities (represented by borrowings) 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 period of the instrument, using the following assumptions:

- Estimated interest rates at 31 March 2024 for loans from the PWLB were taken from the appropriate interest rate notice and for other loans receivable and payable from market rates obtained by our treasury advisors.
- No early repayment or impairment is recognised.
- Where an instrument will mature in the next 12 months, the 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 are calculated as follows:

Notes to the Financial Statements

31 March 2023			31 March 2024	
Carrying Amount £'000	Fair Value £'000		Carrying Amount £'000	Fair Value £'000
90,041	90,041	Lending Financial Assets at Amortised Cost	55,118	55,118
297,377	315,566	Borrowing Financial Liabilities	272,557	272,797

The fair value is greater than the carrying amount because the Council's lending figure includes a number of loans where the interest rate receivable is higher than the rates available for similar loans at the Balance Sheet date. The commitment to receive interest above the current market rates increases the amount the Council would receive if it agreed the early repayment of loans.

27.3 Gains and Losses on Financial Instruments

There are no gains and losses recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in relation to Financial Instruments.

27.4 Nature and Extent of Risks arising from Financial Instruments

The Council's management of treasury risks actively works to minimise the Council's exposure to the unpredictability of financial markets and to protect the financial resources available to fund services. The Council has fully adopted CIPFA's Code of Treasury Management Practices and has written principles for overall risk management as well as written policies and procedures covering specific areas such as credit risk, liquidity risk and market risk.

27.5 Credit Risk

Credit risk arises from the short-term lending of surplus funds to banks, money market funds, building societies and other local authorities as well as credit exposures to the Council's customers. It is the policy of the Council to place deposits only with a limited number of high quality banks and money market funds whose credit rating is independently assessed as sufficiently secure by the Council's treasury advisers and to restrict lending to a prudent maximum amount for each institution.

The following analysis summarises the Council's potential maximum exposure to credit risk, based on past experience and current market conditions. No credit limits were exceeded during the financial year and the Council expects full repayment on the due date of deposits placed with its counterparties.

	Amount at 31 March 2024 £'000	Historical Experience of Non-payment adjusted for Market Conditions at 31 March 2024 %	Estimated Maximum Exposure to Default and Uncollectability £'000
Deposits with Banks and Money Market Funds	2,033	-	-

The information in respect of the Council's debtors can be found in Notes 22 and 23. The Debtor Accounts represents the amounts owed by the Council's customers; Other Debtors include prepaid expenditure, accrued income and money owed to the Council in respect of projects being carried out under partnerships where the Council is the lead partner. The bad debt provision shown in Note 23 represents the Council's assessment of the likely recoverability of the debt outstanding.

The credit risk around unprovided for debt is considered to be low. Debtors relate to the normal business

Notes to the Financial Statements

of the Council and credit is issued on the Council's standard credit terms. There are no significant amounts past due but not impaired where recoverability is considered to be an issue.

27.6 Liquidity Risk

The Council's main source of borrowing is the Treasury's Public Works Loans Board (PWLB). There is no significant risk that the Council will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments under Financial Instruments. The Council has safeguards in place to ensure that a significant proportion of its borrowings does not mature for repayment at any one time in the future to reduce the financial impact of re-borrowing at a time of unfavourable interest rates. The Council's policy is to ensure that not more than 30% of the loans are due to mature within any financial year through a combination of prudent planning of new loans taken out and, where it is economic to do so, making early repayments.

The maturity analysis of financial liabilities is as follows:

31 March 2023 £'000	Maturity analysis of financial liabilities	31 March 2024 £'000
63,958	Less than one year	63,404
5,357	Between one and two years	7,219
19,048	Between two and five years	25,773
209,014	More than five years	176,161
297,377		272,557

All other amounts due to the Council for council tax, non-domestic rates and other income are due to be paid in less than one year.

27.7 Market Risk

Changes in market interest rates influence the interest payable on borrowings and on interest receivable on surplus funds invested. For example, a rise in interest rates would mean an increase in the interest charged on borrowing at variable rates and an increased cost to the taxpayer. An increase in interest rates would also mean an increase in the income received on lending at variable rates and a reduction in cost for the taxpayer.

Changes in market rates also affect the notional "fair value" of lending and borrowing. For example, a rise in interest rates would reduce the "fair value" of both lending and borrowing at fixed rates. Changes in "fair value" of lending and borrowing do not impact upon the taxpayer and are confined to prescribed presentational aspects in the Accounts.

The Council has a variety of strategies for managing the uncertainty of future interest rates and the financial impact on the Council.

It is the policy of the Council to limit its exposure to variable rate borrowing to a maximum of 30% of what it borrows.

During periods of falling rates and where it is economically advantageous to do so, the Council will consider the repayment and restructuring of fixed interest rate debt.

The Council takes daily advice from its specialist treasury advisers and actively monitors changes in interest rates to inform decisions on the lending of surplus funds, new borrowings and restructuring of existing borrowings.

Any potential for a financial impact on the Council is also significantly limited by the Scottish Government's grant distribution mechanism that automatically adjusts for changes in interest rates in the Government Grant support the Council receives for "loan charges".

To illustrate the impact of changes in interest rates upon the Council, the following table shows the financial effect if rates had been 1% higher at 31 March 2024, with all other variables held constant:

Notes to the Financial Statements

	31 March 2024 £'000
Impact on tax-payer	
Increase on interest payable on variable rate borrowings	53
Increase in interest receivable on variable rate lending	-
Increases in government grant receivable for "loan charges"	-
Net effect on Statement of Comprehensive Income & Expenditure	53

	31 March 2024 £'000
Other accounting presentational changes	
A decrease in the "fair value" of fixed rate borrowing (disclosure confined to the notes to the financial statements)	13,965

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

27.8 Price Risk

The Council has no investment classified as "available-for-sale".

27.9 Foreign Exchange Risk

The Council does not lend or borrow in foreign currencies and has no exposure to gains or losses arising from movements in exchange rates.

27.10 Short-Term Deposits

The short-term deposits arise as a result of the timing of expenditure and associated income and movements in fund and revenue balances. The Council adopts a proactive but prudent approach to its Treasury Management operations, which are governed by the fully revised edition of CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

31 March 2023 £'000		31 March 2024 £'000
8,826	Banks and Money Market Funds	2,033

27.11 Soft Loans

The Council has no material soft loans at 31 March 2024, on which no interest was being charged.

27.12 Short-Term Borrowing

The Common Good and the various Trust Funds administered by the Council had monies temporarily invested with the Council's loans fund during the year. The amounts at 31 March 2024 are shown in the table below. Further details of the nature and amounts of the funds of the Common Good and Trust Funds are shown in Notes 36 and 37.

31 March 2023 £'000		31 March 2024 £'000
144	Common Good	157
854	Trust Funds	901

Notes to the Financial Statements

28 OTHER LIABILITIES

Other liabilities consist of liabilities which by arrangement are payable at some point in the future or paid off by an annual sum over a period of time. Other liabilities total £107.033m as at 31 March 2024 and comprise the following:

Movements in 2023-24	Opening Balance 1 April 2024 £'000	Movement in Year £'000	Closing Balance 31 March 2024 £'000
Finance Lease Liability (See note 21.3)	(349)	48	(301)
Schools Finance Lease Liability (See note 19.2)	(111,214)	5,232	(105,982)
Land Contamination	(750)	-	(750)
Total Other Liabilities	(112,313)	5,280	(107,033)
Split:			
Short Term Liabilities (due within 1 year)			(5,336)
Long Term Liabilities (due after 1 year)			(101,697)
Total Other Liabilities			(107,033)

29 PROVISIONS

	Opening Balance 1 April 2023 £'000	Additional Provision £'000	Amounts Used £'000	Unused Amounts Reversed £'000	Closing Balance at 31 March 2024 £'000
Equal Pay Claims	(13)				(13)
Employee Settlement Provision	(51)		51		-
SRC Intromissions	(19)		19		-
SW - Mull Homecare Backdated Pay		(13)			(13)
Income due to Registered Social Landlords	(108)	(7)			(115)
Commercial Rent Balances	(53)			16	(37)
Service Choices Redundancy Costs	(16)	(137)	14	2	(137)
Landfill Sites - Restoration and Aftercare Costs	(2,336)	(404)			(2,740)
Utilities Provision	(237)	(44)		37	(244)
Litigation Claims	(196)				(196)
Insurance Excess Provision	-				-
NPDO and Hub DBFM Payments	(865)	(487)	195	132	(1,025)
Total Provisions	(3,894)	(1,092)	279	187	(4,520)
Split:					
Short Term Provisions (due within 1 year)					(1,665)
Long Term Provisions (due after 1 year)					(2,855)
Total Other Liabilities					(4,520)

A provision was created at the end of 2005-06 in relation to employees in catering, cleaning and home care services who had not accepted the Council's equal pay settlement. There may be further outstanding claims where the settlement amount cannot be estimated reliably enough to provide for the costs.

Notes to the Financial Statements

The Council reduced the discount on Council Tax from second homes to 10% during 2005-06. The additional Council Tax income invoiced during 2023-24 amounted to £2.575m; this amount is to be paid to registered social landlords to invest in social housing. A provision for cash not yet collected has been created amounting to £0.115m.

There is a provision for Commercial Rents where arrangements have been put in place for repayment over a number of years. The provision reflects the uncertainty of collection of the debt.

Liabilities have arisen in respect of employees who will be made redundant as a result of savings options agreed. The cost for any employee, whose contract has been terminated on or before 31 March 2024 has been incurred in year. For the employees who have confirmed acceptance of redundancy but have left or are leaving after 31 March 2024, a provision of £0.137m has been created.

A provision for landfill sites was created in 2014-15 reflecting the Council's liability for restoration and ongoing maintenance in respect of landfill sites operated by the Council, at Glengorm, Gartbreck and Gott Bay. The landfills sites were revalued at 31 March 2024 and the provision for restoration and aftercare increased to £2.740m. These have been provided for based on the net present value of estimated future costs.

The utilities provision was created during 2011-12 to cover a potential liability in relation to discrepancies in charges for utility costs, £0.044m has been reversed during 2023-24 and a further £0.037m additional provision has been added resulting in a total provision of £0.244m.

A legal litigation provision was created in 2020-21 as the Council is currently involved in several ongoing cases that will incur costs into future years. The provision is based on sums invoiced and anticipated future costs.

The NPDO provision for withheld sums from the Unitary Charge paid to ABC Schools relates to unbilled utility costs, Authority related damage and contract variations. The HUB DBFM provision for withheld sums from the Monthly Service Payment paid to Hub North Scotland (O&C) Ltd relates to unbilled Authority related damage and contract variations.

30 CAPITAL GRANTS RECEIVED IN ADVANCE

A Capital Grant of £1.564m was received in advance for 2023-24 in respect of the Cuan Sound/Jura Ferry Programme.

	Opening Balance 1 April 2023 £'000	Capital Grants Received £'000	Amounts Used £'000	Closing Balance 31 March 2024 £'000
HITRANS	-	1,564		1,564
	-	-		-
Total Other Liabilities	-	1,564	-	1,564
Split:				
Capital Grant Receipts in Advance (due within 1 year)				-
Capital Grant Receipts in Advance (due after 1 year)				1,564
Total Other Liabilities				1,564

31 DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES

Participation in Pension Schemes

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers, the Council makes contributions towards the cost of post-employment benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until employees retire, the Council has a commitment to make the payments (for those benefits) and to disclose them at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.

The Council participates in two separate pension schemes which meet the needs of employees in particular services. Both schemes provide members with defined benefits related to pay and service. The schemes are as follows:

Teachers

The Scottish Teachers' Superannuation Scheme is an unfunded scheme administered by the Scottish Government. This means that liabilities for the benefits provided cannot be identified by the Council. The scheme is therefore accounted for as if it were a defined contribution scheme where no liability for future payments of benefits is recognised in the balance sheet and revenue accounts are charged with the employer's contributions payable to the Scottish Government in the year.

Local Government Pension Scheme

This is administered by Strathclyde Pension Fund – this is a funded defined benefit final salary scheme, meaning that the Council and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension's liabilities with investment assets. The contributions are based on rates determined by the Fund's professionally qualified actuary and based on triennial valuations of the Fund.

The principal risks to the Council of the scheme are the longevity assumptions, statutory changes to the scheme, changes to inflation, bond yields and the performance of the equity investments held by the scheme. These are mitigated to a certain extent by the statutory requirements to charge to the General Fund the amounts due by statute as described in the accounting policies note.

Legal and Regulatory Uncertainty – Virgin Media vs NTL Pension Trustees II Limited

In June 2023, the High Court (Virgin Media Limited v NTL Pension Trustees II Limited) ruled that amendments to certain defined benefit pension schemes were void if they were not accompanied by section 37 actuarial certificates. The Court of Appeal rejected an appeal of this decision in July 2024. The Local Government Pension Scheme is affected by this ruling.

The Government Actuary's Department is the actuary for the Local Government Pension Scheme and has so far failed to evidence that section 37 certificates are in place for all amendments. Work is ongoing to discover whether the evidence exists. Until this work is complete, it is not possible to conclude whether there is any impact on the value of retirement benefits under IAS26 or if it can be reliably estimated.

Although this is the current position in law, the Government is being lobbied to make a change to the regulations which would retrospectively validate amendments which would otherwise be void because of a failure to have obtained section 37 certificates. The Government has an existing power to make the necessary regulations but not yet said whether it will do anything. There is also the possibility that Virgin Media could seek permission to appeal to the Supreme Court. Developments are being monitored. In the current circumstances, it is not considered necessary to make any allowance for the potential impact of the Virgin Media case in the disclosure of the value of retirement benefits in the financial statements.

31.1 Accrued Pensions Contribution

Due to the timing of salary processing, not all employee and employer contributions have been paid to the pension schemes by the 31 March 2024. These payments have been accrued and are included within the creditors figure on the Balance Sheet. These have been paid during April 2024. The amounts are as follows:

- Local Government Pension Scheme – £2.040m

Notes to the Financial Statements

- Teachers' Scheme – £1.304m

31.2 Transactions in Respect of the Local Government Pensions Scheme

The latest formal valuation of the Strathclyde Pension Fund for funding purposes was at 31 March 2020. The independent actuaries appointed by the Council are Hymans Robertson and they have assumed that employees have continued to earn new benefits on the same basis as the latest formal valuation and that the employer's pensionable payroll over the year to 31 March 2024 remains substantially stable with new entrants replacing any leavers.

We recognise the cost of retirement benefits in the Net Cost of Services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge we are required to make against Council Tax is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of retirement benefits 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 via the Movement in Reserves Statement during the year:

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
	Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:	
	Cost of Services:	
	<i>Service cost comprising:</i>	
36,689	Current Service Cost	19,119
637	Past Service Cost (Including Curtailments)	-
37,326	Net Cost of Services	19,119
141	Net Interest Expense	(11,307)
-	Interest on the Effect of IAS 19 Asset Ceiling	4,711
37,467	Total Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	12,523
	Other Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	
37,377	Return on Assets (excluding amounts included in net interest)	(43,972)
46,257	Other Experience (see note (i) below)	56,060
(337,163)	Change in Financial and Demographic Assumptions	(32,078)
-	Reversal of 2022-23 IAS 19 Asset Ceiling and Interest Adjustment	(103,890)
99,179	IAS 19 Asset Ceiling Adjustment	288,794
(116,883)	Total Post Employment Benefits Charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	177,437
	Statement of Movement in Reserves:	
(19,970)	Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or Deficit for the Provision of Services for post employment benefits in accordance with the Code	6,322
	Actual Amount charged against the General Fund Balance for pensions in the year:	
17,497	Employer's Contributions Payable to the Scheme	18,845

Notes to the Financial Statements

- (i) A measure of the difference between actual experience and that expected based upon a set of actuarial assumptions, during the period between two actuarial valuation dates, as determined in accordance with a particular cost method. (ASOP No. 4)

31.3 Assets and Liabilities in Relation to Post-Employment Benefits

Reconciliation of present value of the scheme liabilities (defined benefit obligation):

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
871,242	Defined Benefit Obligation at 1 April 23	622,872
36,689	Current Service Cost	19,119
637	Past Service Costs including Curtailments	-
23,775	Interest Cost	29,453
4,833	Contributions by Scheme Participants	5,280
(311,081)	Re-measurement (Gains) and Losses	2,949
(23,398)	Estimated Benefits Paid	(30,102)
602,697	Defined Benefit Obligation at 31 March 24	649,571
20,175	Present Value of Unfunded Liabilities	19,578
622,872	Defined Benefit Obligation at 31 March 24	669,149

Reconciliation of fair value of the scheme (plan) assets:

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
875,876	Fair Value of Employer Assets at 1 April 23	861,065
	Re-measurement (Gains) and Losses:	
(37,377)	Expected Rate of Return on Pension Fund Assets	43,972
-	Actuarial (Gains) and Losses	(1,455)
23,634	Interest Income on Plan Assets	40,760
17,497	Employers Contributions	18,845
4,833	Contributions by Scheme Participants	5,280
(23,398)	Estimated Benefits Paid	(30,102)
861,065	Fair Value of Employer Assets at 31 March 24	938,365

The expected return on scheme assets is determined by considering the expected returns available on the assets underlying the current investment policy. Expected yields on fixed interest investments are based on gross redemption yields as at the Balance Sheet date. Expected returns on equity investments reflect long-term real rates of return experienced in the respective markets. An asset ceiling adjustment was included in 2022-23 and 2023-24 to ensure compliance with IAS 19 which limits the measurement of a net defined benefit asset to the lower of the surplus in the defined benefit plan and the asset ceiling. The asset ceiling is defined as the present value of any economic benefits available in the form of refunds from the plan or reductions in future contributions to the plan.

31.4 Pensions Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

2022-23 £'000	Local Government Pension Scheme	2023-24 £'000
(602,697)	Present Value of Funded Liabilities	(649,571)
861,065	Fair Value of Employer Assets	938,365
(99,179)	IAS19 Asset Ceiling Adjustment	(288,794)
159,189	Surplus/(Deficit) in the Scheme	-
(20,175)	Present Value of Unfunded Liabilities	(19,578)
139,014	Net Surplus/(Deficit) in the Scheme	(19,578)

The liabilities show the underlying commitments that the Council has in the long run to pay post-employment (retirement) benefits.

31.5 Analysis of Pension Fund's Assets

Argyll and Bute Council's share of the Pension Fund's assets at 31 March 2024 comprised:

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
16,312	Cash and Cash Equivalents	17,395
	Equity Instruments (by industry type)	
38,629	Consumer	43,350
48,013	Manufacturing	54,078
4,310	Energy and Utilities	8,511
18,331	Financial Institutions	26,936
30,629	Health and Care	25,047
29,776	Information Technology	31,804
-	Other	-
169,688	Sub-total Equity Instruments	189,726
	Bonds (by sector)	
-	Corporate	-
-	Government	-
-	Sub-total Bonds	-
	Real Estate	
70,994	UK Property	73,783
-	Overseas Property	-
70,994	Sub-total Real Estate	73,783
211,640	Private Equity (All)	224,026
	Investment Funds and Unit Trusts	
285,352	Equities	323,600
99,304	Bonds	109,461
336	Commodities	374
5,529	Infrastructure	-
1,911	Other	-
392,432	Sub-total Investment Funds and Unit Trusts	433,435
	Derivatives	
(1)	Forward Foreign Exchange Contracts	-
-	Other	-
(1)	Sub-total Derivatives	-
861,065	Total Assets	938,365

2022-23 £'000	Fair Value of Pension Fund Assets	2023-24 £'000
	Equity Securities	
168,144	Quoted in an Active Market	189,520
1,544	Not Quoted in an Active Market	206
169,688	Sub-total Equity Securities	189,726

31.6 Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

The Council's share of the liabilities of Strathclyde Pension Fund have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on the assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels, etc.

The principal assumptions used by the actuary have been:

2022-23 Years	Mortality assumptions	2023-24 Years
19.3	Longevity at 65 for current pensioners: Men	20.0
22.2	Women	22.7
20.5	Longevity at 65 for future pensioners: Men	20.9
24.2	Women	24.7
2022-23 %	Financial Assumptions	2023-24 %
3.0%	Rate of Inflation (CPI)	2.8%
3.7%	Rate of Increase in Salaries	3.5%
3.0%	Rate of Increase in Pensions (CPI)	2.8%
4.8%	Rate for discounting scheme liabilities	4.8%
2022-23 %	Long-term Expected Rate of Return on Assets in the Fund	2023-24 %
4.8%	Equity Investments	4.8%
4.8%	Bonds	4.8%
4.8%	Property	4.8%
4.8%	Cash	4.8%

An allowance is included for future retirements to elect to take 50% of the maximum additional tax-free cash up to HMRC limits for pre-April 2009 service and 75% of the maximum tax-free cash for post-April 2009 service.

For sensitivity analysis on the net pension asset please see Note 4 on page 76.

31.7 Asset and Liability Matching (ALM) Strategy

The main fund (Fund 1) of Strathclyde Pension fund does not have an asset and liability matching strategy (ALM) as this is used mainly by mature funds. The Fund does match, to the extent possible, the types of assets invested to the liabilities in the defined benefit obligation. As is required by the pensions and investment regulations, the suitability of various types of investment has been considered, as has the need to diversify investments to reduce the risk of being invested into too narrow a range.

31.8 Impact on the Council's Cash Flow

The objectives of the Fund are to keep employers' contributions at as constant a rate as possible. The Fund has agreed a strategy to achieve a funding rate of 100% in the longer term. The Scheme is a multi-employer defined benefit plan and employers' contributions have been determined so that employee and employer rates are standard across all participating Local Authorities. Employer's contributions have been set at 6.5% for 2024-2025.

The total contributions expected to be made to the Local Government Pension Scheme by the Council in the year to 31 March 2025 is £5.780m. This is based on an assumed pensionable payroll of £88.926m.

The assumed weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation for the Council falls into the "Medium" duration category which is between 17 and 23 years (this is different from the mortality assumptions quoted in the table above in "Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities").

31.9 Teachers Pensions – Administered By Scottish Public Pensions Agency

Teachers employed by the Council are members of the Scottish Teachers' Superannuation Scheme, administered by the Scottish Public Pensions Agency. The Scheme is an unfunded statutory public service pension scheme with benefits underwritten by the UK Government. The Scheme is financed by payments from employers and from those current employees who are members of the Scheme and paying contributions at progressively higher marginal rates based on pensionable pay, as specified by the regulations.

Employers currently pay a contribution rate of 23% - about two thirds of the cost of an individual's pension. This took effect from 1 September 2019.

The Council has no liability for other employers' obligations to the multi-employer scheme. As the scheme is unfunded there can be no deficit or surplus to distribute on the wind-up of the Scheme or withdrawal from the Scheme.

The scheme is an unfunded multi-employer defined benefit scheme. It is accepted that the scheme can be treated for accounting purposes as a defined contribution scheme in circumstances where the Authority is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities of the scheme.

At the last valuation a shortfall of £1.3 billion was identified in the notional fund which will be repaid by a supplementary rate of 4.5% of employers' pension contributions for fifteen years from 1 April 2015. This contribution is included in the 23% employers' contribution rate.

As a proportion of the total contributions into the Teachers' Pension Scheme during the year ended 31 March 2024, the council's own contributions equate to 1.53%.

2022-23		2023-24
9,853	Amount Paid Over (£'000)	10,779
23.00%	Rate of Contribution (%)	23.00%
508	Amount of Added Years Awarded by the Council (£'000)	507

The contributions due to be paid to the Teacher's Scheme by the Council in the next financial year are estimated to be £12.707m.

32 UNUSABLE RESERVES

Movements in the Council's unusable reserves are detailed in the Statement of Movement in Reserves.

32.1 Revaluation Reserve

The Revaluation Reserve contains the gains made by the Council 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.

32.2 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 subsequent costs as depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations which are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (with reconciling postings from the Revaluation Reserve to convert current and fair value figures to a historical cost basis). The Account is credited with the amounts set aside by the Council as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction and subsequent costs.

The Account contains accumulated gains and losses on Investment Properties.

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

32.3 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 Council uses the Account to manage premiums paid on the early redemption of loans. Premiums are debited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when they are incurred, but reversed out of the General Fund Balance to the Account in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Over time, the expense is posted back to the General Fund Balance in accordance with statutory arrangements for spreading the burden on Council Tax.

32.4 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 Council 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 Council makes employer's contributions to pension funds. The Pensions Reserve shows a negative position at the end of 2023-24 due to the impact of the inclusion of the asset ceiling to meet the requirements of IAS 19.

32.5 Accumulated Absences Account

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

33 USABLE RESERVES

Movements in the Council's usable reserves are detailed in the Statement of Movement in Reserves.

33.1 Capital Funds

The Council holds two funds which make up the Capital Funds total in the Statement of Movement in Reserves, these are:

Usable Capital Receipts Reserve

During the 2006-07 financial year, and prior to the transfer of the Council's housing stock during November 2006, the receipts from the sale of council houses were transferred to the Usable Capital Receipts Reserve. The amounts held in this reserve can only be used for social housing capital expenditure.

Capital Fund

During the 2007-08 financial year the Council established a Capital Fund under Section 22 of Schedule 3 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975. All receipts from capital disposals are to be paid into this fund with effect from 14 February 2008.

The movement in the Usable Capital Receipts Reserve and Capital Fund are as follows:

Movements in 2023-24	Usable Capital Receipts Reserve £'000	Capital Fund £'000	Total Capital Funds £'000
Balance at 1 April 2023	2,935	1,568	4,503
Proceeds of Disposals	-	671	671
Transfer to Capital Adjustment Account	-	(2,207)	(2,207)
Contribution to Capital Fund From Revenue	-	-	-
Interest Earned	145	85	230
Balance at 31 March 2024	3,080	117	3,197

33.2 Repairs and Renewals Fund

The movement in the Education Repairs and Renewals Fund is as follows:

Movements in 2023-24	Balance at 1 April 2023 £'000	Contribution from Revenue £'000	Interest Earned £'000	Contribution to Revenue £'000	Balance at 31 March 2024 £'000
Education	2,916	(860)	135	572	2,763
Total	2,916	(860)	135	572	2,763

34 CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

34.1 Equal Pay Claims

The Council settled a number of equal pay claims during 2017-18, however there are a small number remaining where the outcome of the applications are unknown and there is insufficient information to allow the potential cost of these claims to be provided for. There is also the potential for other equal pay claims whose costs may be met by the Council.

34.2 Goodwin Judgement

The Social Security Act 1986 introduced changes to survivor pensions which resulted in most public service pension schemes providing survivor benefits to widowers (male survivors in opposite-sex marriages) based on the female spouse's service from 6 April 1988 onwards. Since the introduction of civil partnerships and same sex marriages, public service pension schemes have provided survivor benefits in respect of both which have been in line with those paid to widowers. An employment tribunal (the Goodwin case) concluded on 30 June 2020 that a female member in an opposite sex marriage is treated less favorably than a female in a same sex marriage or civil partnership, and that treatment amounts to direct discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. Where schemes contain provisions deemed discriminatory, those provisions must be dis-applied as being contrary to the non-discrimination rule set out in section 61 of the Equality Act 2010. In light of this ruling the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has confirmed that amendments would be made to the Teachers' Pension Scheme and other public service pension schemes so that "surviving male same-sex and female same-sex spouses and civil partners will, in certain cases, receive benefits equivalent to those received by widows of opposite sex marriages"

There is still uncertainty surrounding the potential remedy to the Goodwin judgement however the Council's actuaries have estimated the potential impact of implementing a solution to correct the past underpayment of spouses' benefits to be circa 0.1% of gross obligations. This would amount to £0.669m at 0.1% for the Council. As there is still uncertainty over the remedy and the potential impact no provision has been made in the accounts at the current time.

34.3 SRC Intromissions

The Local Government (Transitional Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Order 1996, 'the Order' provided for the appointment of Glasgow City Council (GCC), as the relevant Accounting Authority for residual matters relating to the former Strathclyde Regional Council (SRC), on behalf of the successor authorities. This places a duty on GCC to account to successor authorities in respect of all expenditure and income attributable to its duties as Accounting Authority, to be shared across successor authorities on a Council Tax Band D Equivalent basis.

Actual claims to date have already been accounted for within the financial statements however an

Notes to the Financial Statements

exercise has now been completed by GCC to collate known information in relation to any outstanding ex-SRC cases. This information and information already known to GCC was identified within the claims management system giving a total of 256 outstanding claims at this time. All outstanding claims has been assigned an estimated cost, however they have not yet been subject to any due diligence by the council's claim team and must therefore be considered notional. The actual settlement value remains uncertain until the legal/settlement process has been completed.

34.4 Other Legal Challenges

There may be other legal challenges on-going which could result in future liabilities.

35 TERMINATION BENEFITS

A number of savings options have been agreed at Council budget meetings to balance the Council budget. A number of these savings options were reliant on a reduction in the Councils staffing levels. The Council had forewarning of the level of savings required to balance the budget and had previously asked all Council employees to express an interest in voluntary redundancy. As a result of the budget savings options approved by the Council a number of employees have had their redundancy application accepted.

Redundancy costs have been incurred by the Council since the 2010-11 financial year in relation to the budget savings agreed. In each year, provision was made within the financial year for the costs of all employees who had accepted redundancy or where redundancy was probable as at 31 March ending that year, including accounting for costs for employees who confirmed redundancy by 31 March but left or were leaving after this date.

Termination costs for all Council employees who have accepted redundancy by 31 March 2024 are recognised in the Exit Packages note in 2023-24, or in previous financial years. The total cost recognised in the Exit Packages note in 2023-24 is £0.276m for 4 employees and in 2022-23 was £0.622m for 10 employees. These costs are detailed further in the Remuneration Report on page 50.

The reduction in the staffing establishment includes posts from all services across the Council and reductions were in line with the savings agreed by the Council. There will be further redundancy costs incurred as the Council is required to make further savings to balance the budget in future years and the council have earmarked monies from the loans fund one-off reprofiling gain.

36 TRUST FUNDS AND OTHER THIRD PARTY FUNDS

The Council acts as sole or custodian trustee for 57 trust funds. The funds do not represent assets of the Council, and as such have not been included in the Balance Sheet.

Funds for which the Council act as sole trustee:

	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Net Assets £'000	Reserves £'000
Argyll Education Trust	23	17	707	707
GM Duncan Trust	3	3	67	67
MacDougall Trust	35	-	1,208	1,208
Various Other Trust Funds	22	16	470	470
Total Trust Funds	83	36	2,452	2,452

Argyll Education Trust: this is made up of a number of small trusts to award prizes, bursaries, etc. to pupils and ex-pupils of schools within the former Argyll County Council area. GM Duncan Trust: for the provision of fuel, clothing and foodstuffs for the needy of Campbeltown. MacDougall Trust: for the provision of sheltered housing on the Ross of Mull.

Further information on the Trust Funds, administered by the Council, can be obtained from Financial Services within the Chief Executive's Unit.

A number of the trust funds administered by the Council are charitable trusts and as such are required to comply with current Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) financial reporting requirements. Arrangements have been put in place to ensure that all charities administered by the Council comply and will continue to comply with these requirements.

37 COMMON GOOD FUNDS

The Council administers the Common Good Accounts for the former Burghs of Oban, Campbeltown, Rothesay, Dunoon, Lochgilphead, Inveraray, Cove and Kilcreggan. The figures below summarise the aggregate income and expenditure for the year as well as providing a snapshot picture of the assets and liabilities at 31 March 2024. The Common Good Funds are for the benefit of the geographical areas of the former burghs. Further information on the Common Good Funds can be obtained from Financial Services.

37.1 Common Good Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 March 2024

2022-23				2023-24		
Oban Common Good £'000	Other Common Goods £'000	Total Common Good £'000		Oban Common Good £'000	Other Common Goods £'000	Total Common Good £'000
258	74	332	Expenditure	129	54	183
(57)	(42)	(99)	Income	(232)	(150)	(382)
201	32	233	(Surplus)/Deficit for the Year	(103)	(96)	(199)

37.2 Common Good Balance Sheet at 31 March 2024

2022-23				2023-24		
Oban Common Good £'000	Other Common Goods £'000	Total Common Good £'000		Oban Common Good £'000	Other Common Goods £'000	Total Common Good £'000
5,711	319	6,030	Tangible Fixed Assets	5,622	319	5,941
1,939	1,148	3,087	Investments	2,113	1,252	3,365
147	183	330	Current Assets	171	176	347
(15)	-	(15)	Current Liabilities	(21)	(1)	(22)
7,782	1,650	9,432	Total Assets less Liabilities	7,885	1,746	9,631
5,711	323	6,034	Revaluation Reserve	5,620	323	5,943
2,071	1,327	3,398	Common Good Fund	2,263	1,423	3,686
7,782	1,650	9,432	Total Net Worth	7,883	1,746	9,629

38 TAX INCREMENTAL FINANCING (TIF) PROJECTS

The Council entered into an agreement with the Scottish Government in May 2014 in respect of the Lorn Arc Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) scheme. This agreement essentially allows for the repayment of debt arising from infrastructure investment from incremental Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) revenue.

The assets to be funded by the TIF project largely comprise public realm and infrastructure improvements within the Lorn Arc area of Oban. The project is for 25 years, with the first material capital investment incurred during the financial year ended 31 March 2015.

During the TIF project period, the Council is entitled to retain the TIF revenue from its NDR revenue, a pro-rata amount of NDR equal to the amount (if any) by which the collected amount exceeds the collectable amount. The Council is required to apply 100% of the TIF revenue towards repayment of the TIF debt. If all projects are delivered and debt is fully paid, the Council can retain 50% of the TIF revenue for further infrastructure investment until the end of the TIF period.

Net capital expenditure incurred in the year to 31 March 2024, to be funded from borrowing, in respect of TIF assets totalled £0.016m (2022-23 £0.023m). This is reflected in the “Summary of Capital Expenditure and Financing” outlined within Note 15.4. The total TIF debt to be repaid over the project period, in respect of investment to 31 March 2024, has been calculated in accordance with finance circular No. 4/2014 at £1.027m (2022-23 £1.011m).

There is a retention of £0.804m of TIF income during 2023-24 (2022-23 £0.623m) to repay the notional borrowing for TIF. Principal sums accumulated by 2023-24 amount to £0.139m (2022-23 £0.137m) and cumulative interest £0.118m (2022-23 £0.117m) resulting in a net cumulative surplus of £2.551m (2022-23 £1.749m) which will be used to pay down TIF debt per the TIF agreement and the balance of £1.663m will be placed in earmarked reserves to be used in future years to repay debt costs.

Notes to the Financial Statements

39 CASH FLOW STATEMENT – OPERATING ACTIVITIES

The Net Cash Flows for Operating Activities can be reconciled to the Net (Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Services as follows:

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
6,047	Net (Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services	(9,765)
	Adjustments to Net (Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Service for Non Cash Movements:	
3,356	Statutory Adjustments through Statement of Movement in Reserves	16,341
322	Transfer to/from Other Statutory Reserves	77
288	Increase/(Decrease) in Inventories	(87)
6,355	Increase/(Decrease) in Debtors	12,763
(6,503)	(Increase)/Decrease in Creditors and Provisions	(3,246)
(16,041)	Earmarked Reserves	(1,532)
(2,938)	Capital Financed from Current Revenue	(1,616)
(4,277)	Loans Fund Repayments	(6,111)
(1,872)	Other Revenue Adjustments	4,996
(21,310)		21,585
	Adjustments for items included in the Net (Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Services that are Investing and Financing Activities:	
11,071	Non Cash Capital	10,743
(5,116)	Capital Element of Finance Lease Payments	(449)
5,955		10,294
(9,308)	Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities	22,114
	The cash flows for Operating Activities include the following items:	
6,742	Interest Paid on Borrowings	5,097
8,887	Interest Paid on Finance Leases	8,599
(748)	Interest Received on Bank Deposits	(3,469)
14,881	Net Cash Outflow from Servicing of Finance	10,227

40 CASH FLOW STATEMENT – INVESTING ACTIVITIES

The cash flows for Investing Activities include the following items:

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
25,659	Purchase of Property, Plant and Equipment, Investment Property and Intangible and Heritage Assets	25,221
(17,500)	Investments made/(disposed of) during year	(37,500)
(568)	Proceeds from the Sale of Property, Plant and Equipment and Investment Property	(671)
(21,914)	Other Receipts from Investing Activities	(25,687)
(14,323)	Net Cash Outflow from Investing Activities	(38,637)

41 CASH FLOW STATEMENT – FINANCING ACTIVITIES

The cash flows for Financing Activities include the following items:

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
(35,228)	Cash Receipts of Short and Long Term Borrowing	(31,128)
2,021	Other Receipts from Financing Activities	(1,072)
5,116	Cash Payments for the Reduction of the Outstanding Liabilities relating to Finance Leases and on Balance Sheet PFI Contracts	5,280
70,627	Repayments of Short and Long Term Borrowing	54,257
42,536	Net Cash (Inflow)/Outflow from Financing Activities	27,337

Council Tax Income Account



The Council Tax Income Account shows the gross income raised from council tax levied and deductions made under the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The resultant net income is transferred to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement of the Council.

2022-23 Actual £'000		2023-24 Actual £'000
72,340	Gross Council Tax Levied and Contributions in Lieu excluding RSL Second Home Additional Income	76,511
	Less:	
(13,269)	Other Discounts and Reductions	(14,008)
(4,300)	Cost of living contribution (grant funded)	-
(1,411)	Provision for Bad and Doubtful Debts	(1,490)
53,360	Total	61,013
540	Adjustment to Previous Years' Community Charge and Council Tax	896
53,900	Transfers to General Fund	61,909

Notes to the Council Tax Income Account

1. CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX

Dwellings are valued by the Assessor and placed within a valuation band ranging from the lowest “A” to the highest “H”. The Council Tax charge is calculated using the Council Tax Base, Band D equivalent as below. This value is then decreased or increased dependent upon the band of the dwelling. The charge for each band for 2023-24 was as follows:

Band	Valuation Band	Ratio Band D	£ per year
A	Up to £27,000	6/9	986.13
B	£27,001 - £35,000	7/9	1,150.49
C	£35,001 - £45,000	8/9	1,314.84
D	£45,001 - £58,000	9/9	1,479.20
E	£58,001 - £80,000	473/360	1,943.50
F	£80,001 - £106,000	585/360	2,403.70
G	£106,001 - £212,000	705/360	2,896.77
H	Over £212,000	882/360	3,624.04

2. CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE 2023-24

Council Tax Base	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total
Total Number of Properties	7,447	10,136	9,564	6,415	7,769	4,520	3,035	258	49,144
Less - Exemptions / Deductions	1,036	792	1,003	534	637	271	167	52	4,491
- Adjustment for Single Chargepayers	932	1,145	821	494	471	229	123	6	4,220
Effective Number of Properties	5,479	8,199	7,740	5,388	6,661	4,021	2,746	201	40,434
Band D Equivalent Factor (ratio)	67%	78%	89%	100%	131%	163%	196%	245%	
Band D Equivalent Number of Properties	3,653	6,377	6,880	5,388	8,752	6,533	5,378	491	43,452
Add Contribution in lieu in respect of Class 18 dwellings (Band D Equivalent)									518
Nominal Tax Yield									43,970
Less Provision for Council Tax Reduction Scheme					9.08%				3,994
Council Tax Base 2023-24 - Number of Band D equivalents									39,976

Non Domestic Rate Income Account

The Non-Domestic Rate Income Account is an agent's statement that reflects the statutory obligation for billing authorities to maintain a separate Non-Domestic Rate Account. The statement shows the gross income from the rates and deductions made under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975 as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 on non-domestic property. The net income is paid to the Scottish Government as a contribution to the national non-domestic rate pool.

2022-23 Actual £'000		2023-24 Actual £'000
56,489	Gross rates levied and Contributions in Lieu	68,224
	Less:	
(17,430)	Reliefs and other deductions	(21,766)
-	Payment of Interest	-
(391)	Write-off of Uncollectable Debts and Allowance for Impairment	(464)
38,668	Total Net Non-Domestic Rate Income	45,994
(3,487)	Adjustments for prior years	(858)
-	Business Rate Incentivisation Scheme (BRIS) NDR Income Retained	-
(647)	Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) Scheme NDR Income Retained	(804)
34,534	Contribution to National Non-Domestic Rate Pool	44,332
(1,355)	Difference between Distributable and Contributable NDR Income amounts	(6,687)
33,179	Distribution from Non-Domestic Rate Pool credited to Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	37,645

1. ANALYSIS OF RATEABLE VALUES

2022-23 £		2023-24 £
9,490,265	Industrial and freight transport subjects	11,125,355
74,472,465	Miscellaneous including Telecomms, Rail, Gas and Electricity Companies	87,231,569
	Commercial subjects:	
13,921,035	Shops	16,202,980
5,773,370	Offices	6,187,070
8,818,450	Hotels, Boarding Houses etc.	13,919,931
1,916,145	Others	2,395,685
114,391,730	Total Rateable Value	137,062,590

2. NON-DOMESTIC RATE CHARGE

2022-23 Pence		2023-24 Pence
49.8p	Rate Per Pound	49.8p
1.3p	Supplementary Rate Per Pound for Properties between £51,000 and £95,000	1.3p
2.6p	Supplementary Rate Per Pound for Properties over £95,000	2.6p

3. CALCULATION OF RATE CHARGE FOR EACH PROPERTY

The rates charge for each subject is determined by the rateable value placed upon it by the Assessor multiplied by the Rate per £ announced each year by the Government.

INTRODUCTION

The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023-24: Based on International Financial Reporting Standards, places a requirement on Councils to consider all their interests in external organisations including limited companies and other statutory bodies. Where the interest is considered to be material, the Council is required to prepare a full set of group accounts in addition to those prepared for Argyll and Bute Council. The Group Accounts are designed to show “a true and fair view” of the financial performance and position of the Council’s Group.

THE GROUP ACCOUNTS

The Group Accounts comprise the following financial statements:

- **Group Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure:** this statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing the Council’s services and its share of the results of its associates in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Local authorities raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations, and this is different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in the Statement of Movement in Reserves.
- **Group Balance Sheet:** The Balance Sheet is a snapshot of the value at the 31 March 2024 of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Council and its share of the net assets or liabilities of its associates and Common Good funds. The net assets of the Council (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Council. The net investment or liability in its associates is matched by its share of the reserves of the associates (i.e. its group reserves).
- **Group Statement of Movement in Reserves:** this statement shows the movement in the year on the reserves held by the Council plus its share of the reserves of its associates. The Common Good reserves are also fully consolidated into the Group Accounts. The Council’s reserves are analysed into those which are “Usable Reserves” (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and other reserves. The Council’s share of the reserves of Associates is an unusable reserve (i.e. it cannot be used to fund expenditure or reduce taxation). The Council’s Statement of Movement in Reserves gives a more detailed analysis of the movement in the Council’s usable and unusable reserves during 2023-24.
- **Group Cash Flow Statement:** The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Council and its associates Common Good Funds. The statement shows how the Group generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amounts of net cash flow arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Group are funded by way of taxation and grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the Group. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Group’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 Group.

Group Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure

2022-23			Service	2023-24		
Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000		Gross Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Net Expenditure £'000
26,810	18,209	8,601	Chief Executive and Financial Services	1,281	95	1,186
160,700	25,514	135,186	Executive Director - Douglas Hendry	159,449	25,620	133,829
109,504	39,545	69,959	Executive Director - Kirsty Flanagan	137,148	62,322	74,826
174,434	94,948	79,486	Health and Social Care Integration	181,285	103,209	78,076
10,228	2,303	7,925	Other Non-Departmental Costs	9,979	678	9,301
1,577	(837)	2,414	Associates and Joint Ventures Accounted for on an Equity Basis	1,364	2,716	(1,352)
483,253	179,682	303,571	Net Cost of Services	490,506	194,640	295,866
			Other Operating Income and Expenditure:			
		(437)	Net (Gain)/loss on Disposal of Fixed Assets			(262)
		1,643	Other Operating Income and Expenditure			1,670
		1,206	Total Other Operating Income and Expenditure			1,408
			Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure:			
		10,416	Interest Payable and Similar charges			14,037
		(2,966)	Interest and Investment Income			(4,881)
		141	Net Pension Interest Expense			(6,596)
		7,591	Total Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure			2,560
			Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income:			
		(191,775)	General Government Grants			(187,193)
		(22,549)	Government Capital Grants and Other Capital Contributions			(23,550)
		(33,826)	Non-domestic Rates Redistribution and Retained Non-domestic Rates (TIF & BRIS)			(38,449)
		(53,900)	Council Tax Income			(61,909)
		(302,050)	Total Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income			(311,101)
		10,318	(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services			(11,267)
		(21,104)	(Surplus)/Deficit on revaluation of Fixed Assets			(10,097)
		(159,031)	Other Post Employment Benefits (Pensions)			165,164
		0	Share of Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure of Associates and Common Good Funds			2
		(180,135)	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			155,069
		(169,817)	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			143,802

31 March 2023			31 March 2024	
£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
		Long Term Assets		
		Property Plant & Equipment		
451,018		- Other Land and Buildings	457,369	
10,872		- Vehicles, Plant, Furniture and Equipment	11,012	
235,076		- Infrastructure Assets	239,372	
14,922		- Community Assets	15,051	
3,286		- Surplus Assets	4,620	
21,440		- Assets Under Construction	35,724	
	736,614	Total Property Plant & Equipment		763,148
	2,345	Heritage Assets		2,569
	733	Intangible Assets		888
	2,553	Investment Property		2,514
	5,880	Long-Term Debtors		5,816
	8,579	Long-Term Investments		3,857
	139,014	Other Long-Term Debtors (Pensions)		-
	296	Investment in Associates and Joint Ventures		299
	896,014	Total Long Term Assets		779,091
		Current Assets		
1,145		Inventories	1,059	
27,256		Short Term Debtors (Net of Impairment)	38,544	
1,554		Assets Held for Sale	1,619	
60,000		Short Term Investments	27,500	
3,279		Cash and Cash Equivalents	-	
8,927		Investment in Associates and Joint Ventures	10,238	
	102,161	Total Current Assets		78,960
		Current Liabilities		
(11,676)		Short-term Borrowing	(13,323)	
(50,725)		Short-term Creditors	(53,076)	
(1,450)		Provisions	(1,665)	
(5,280)		Other Short Term Liabilities	(5,336)	
-		Cash and Cash Equivalents	(7,923)	
(45)		Liabilities in Associates and Joint Ventures	(6)	
	(69,176)	Total Current Liabilities		(81,329)
		Long-term Liabilities		
(132,155)		Borrowing Repayable within a Period in Excess of 12 Months	(107,458)	
(107,033)		Other Long-term liabilities	(101,697)	
(75)		Other Long-term liabilities (Pensions)	(19,578)	
(2,444)		Provisions	(2,855)	
-		Capital Grant Receipts in Advance	(1,564)	
-		Liabilities in Associates and Joint Ventures	(78)	
	(241,707)	Total Long-term Liabilities		(233,230)
	687,292	Total Assets less Liabilities		543,492

Group Balance Sheet



31 March 2023			31 March 2024	
£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
174,952		Unusable Reserves		
268,788		- Revaluation Reserve	180,661	
(1,871)		- Capital Adjustment Account	249,093	
139,014		- Financial Instruments Adjustment Account	(1,585)	
(7,588)		- Pensions Reserve	(19,578)	
		- Accumulated Absences Account	(8,272)	
	573,295			400,319
		Usable Reserves		
4,503		- Capital Funds	3,197	
2,916		- Repairs and Renewals Funds	2,763	
86,356		- General Fund Balance	115,741	
	93,775			121,701
	10,791	Group Reserves		11,846
	9,431	Common Good Reserves		9,626
	687,292	Total Reserves		543,492

The Unaudited Annual Accounts were issued on 27 June 2024 and the Audited Annual Accounts were authorised for issue on 20 December 2024.

Kirsty Flanagan

Kirsty Flanagan
Section 95 Officer
20 December 2024

Group Statement of Movement in Reserves



Movements in 2023-24	Argyll and Bute Council										
	Usable Reserves				Total Unusable Reserves	Total Reserves of the Council	Council's Share of Reserves of Associates	Total Live Argyll Reserves Usable	Total Live Argyll Reserves Unusable	Total Common Good Reserves	Total Reserves
	General Fund Balance	Repairs and Renewals Fund	Capital Funds	Total Usable Reserves							
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance at 31 March 2023	(86,356)	(2,916)	(4,503)	(93,775)	(573,295)	(667,070)	(9,103)	(1,689)	-	(9,431)	(687,293)
(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services	(9,765)	-	-	(9,765)	-	(9,765)	(1,352)	49	-	(198)	(11,266)
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(36,038)	-	-	(36,038)	190,855	154,817	2	250	-	-	155,069
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(45,803)	-	-	(45,803)	190,855	145,051	(1,350)	299	-	(198)	143,802
Total Statutory Adjustments (See Page 55 to 56)	20,630	-	(671)	19,959	(19,959)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Other Statutory Reserves	(25,173)	-	(671)	(25,844)	170,896	145,051	(1,350)	299	-	(198)	143,802
<i>Other Transfers required by Statute</i>											
Transfer to/from Other Statutory Reserves	77	153	1,977	2,207	(2,207)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adjustments permitted by Accounting Standards	(4,289)	-	-	(4,289)	4,289	-	-	-	-	-	-
(Increase)/Decrease in Year	(29,385)	153	1,306	(27,926)	172,976	145,051	(1,350)	299	-	(198)	143,802
Balance at 31 March 2024 Carried Forward	(115,741)	(2,763)	(3,198)	(121,702)	(400,319)	(522,020)	(10,453)	(1,390)	-	(9,629)	(543,492)

Group Statement of Movement in Reserves



Comparative Movements in 2022-23	Argyll and Bute Council						Council's Share of Reserves of Associates	Total Live Argyll Reserves Usable	Total Live Argyll Reserves Unusable	Total Common Good Reserves	Total Reserves
	Usable Reserves				Total Unusable Reserves	Total Reserves of the Council					
	General Fund Balance	Repairs and Renewals Fund	Capital Funds	Total Usable Reserves							
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000					
Balance at 31 March 2022	(96,081)	(2,682)	(4,414)	(103,177)	(394,483)	(497,660)	(11,647)	(2,055)	3,550	(9,664)	(517,476)
Surplus/(Deficit) on Provision of Services	6,047	-	-	6,047	-	6,047	2,416	1,625	-	233	10,321
Other Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	-	-	-	-	(175,454)	(175,454)	128	(4,809)	-	-	(180,136)
Total Comprehensive Expenditure and Income	6,047	-	-	6,047	(175,454)	(169,407)	2,544	(3,184)	-	233	(169,815)
Total Statutory Adjustments (See Page 57 to 58)	6,979	-	(568)	6,411	(6,411)	-	-	3,550	(3,550)	-	-
Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Other Statutory Reserves	13,026	-	(568)	12,458	(181,865)	(169,407)	2,544	366	(3,550)	233	(169,815)
<i>Other Transfers required by Statute</i>											
Transfer to/from Other Statutory Reserves	322	(234)	480	568	(568)	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Other Transfers</i>											
Adjustments permitted by Accounting Standards	(3,623)			(3,623)	3,623						
(Increase)/Decrease in Year	9,725	(234)	(88)	9,403	(178,810)	(169,407)	2,544	366	(3,550)	233	(169,815)
Balance at 31 March 2023 Carried Forward	(86,356)	(2,916)	(4,503)	(93,775)	(573,295)	(667,070)	(9,103)	(1,689)	0	(9,431)	(687,292)

Group Cash Flow Statement

2022-23 £'000		Group Note	2023-24 £'000
10,318	Net Deficit on the Provision of Services		(11,267)
(26,155)	Adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements		26,740
5,809	Adjustments for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities		5,741
(10,028)	Net Cash OutFlow from Operating Activities	8	21,214
(13,252)	Investing Activities	9	(37,362)
42,536	Financing Activities	10	27,350
19,256	Net (Increase)/Decrease in Cash and Cash Equivalents		11,202
(22,535)	Cash and Cash Equivalents at the beginning of the Reporting Period		(3,279)
(3,279)	Cash and Cash Equivalents at the end of the Reporting Period		7,923

Notes to the Group Financial Statements

1. GROUP ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The group accounts are prepared in accordance with the policies set out in Note 1 to the Financial Statements.

2. COMBINING ENTITIES

The Council has an interest in a number of Associate Entities. For the purposes of consolidation and incorporation within the Group Accounts recognition has been made of the Council's significant influence over Joint Boards and other entities.

The Associates which have been incorporated are:

- Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board

Under accounting standards, the Council is required to include the results of the above organisations as "associates" because it has "significant influence" over their financial and operating policies. The Council has no shares in or ownership of any of these organisations which are entirely independent of the Council under law and for taxation.

Live Argyll is a wholly owned subsidiary of Argyll and Bute Council and is consolidated within the group accounts on a line by line basis.

The accounting period for all entities is 31 March 2024.

3. NON MATERIAL INTEREST IN OTHER ENTITIES

The Council has an interest in Scotland Excel. Scotland Excel took up the activities of the Authorities Buying Consortium and similar bodies across the Scottish Local Authority sector on 1 April 2008. Renfrewshire Council prepare the financial statements for Scotland Excel in its role as lead authority. Scotland Excel is a not-for-profit organisation funded mainly by the 32 participating Scottish Local Authorities. The Council contributed £0.065m towards Scotland Excel in the 2023-24 financial year.

The Council also has an interest in the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS). The Partnership was established as one of the seven Scottish Regional Transport Partnerships. The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 requires these Partnerships to prepare Transport Strategies for their regions which will enhance economic well-being; promote safety; social inclusion and equal opportunity; plan for a sustainable transport system; and integrate across boundaries with other partnerships.

The Council has an interest in 57 Trust Funds where it acts as sole or custodian trustee. The funds do not represent assets of the Council.

These entities are part of the Council's group for the purposes of Group Accounts. As such it is recognised that the nature of the relationship with these bodies should be included within these notes. However, it has been decided that the Council's share of the net worth of these entities is not material to a fair understanding of the financial position of the Council, and so they have not been consolidated into the Group Accounts.

The Council inherited its interest in these entities following the reorganisation of local government in 1996.

4. ARGYLL AND BUTE INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD

The Argyll and Bute Integration Joint Board was established as a body corporate by order of Scottish Ministers on 27 June 2015. The partnership between the Council and NHS Highland has been established in accordance with the provisions of the Public Bodies (Joint Working)(Scotland) Act 2014 and associated Regulations. The Integration Joint Board has responsibility for all health and social care functions relating to adults and children and will oversee the Strategic Planning and budgeting of these, together with corresponding service delivery for the residents of Argyll and Bute. The Council contributed

Notes to the Group Financial Statements

£77.604m towards the Argyll and Bute Integration Joint Board in the 2023-24 financial year.

The Council and NHS Highland are required to treat the IJB as a Joint Venture in their annual accounts and recognise a share of the overall surplus or deficit of the IJB for the year.

5. FINANCIAL IMPACT OF CONSOLIDATION

The effect of inclusion of the Associates, Joint Ventures, Subsidiaries and Common Good Funds on the Group Balance Sheet is to increase both reserves and net worth by £21.472m. This gives an overall net asset position for the Group of £543.492m.

All associates and subsidiaries have prepared their accounts on a 'going concern' basis. For the Joint Valuation Board funding arrangements between the Scottish Government and constituent authorities remains assured. In common with these public bodies, the Council's Group Accounts have been prepared on a 'going concern' basis as there is no reason to suggest that future funding will not continue.

6. FURTHER DETAILS ON CONSOLIDATION

Live Argyll

Live Argyll was established by Argyll and Bute Council and is limited by guarantee and was fully incorporated and commenced trading on 2 October 2017. The Trust is a charitable company registered in Scotland and provides a wide range of services within the Argyll and Bute area including libraries, leisure facilities, halls, sports development and community centres the assets of which are owned by the Council. During 2023-24 Argyll and Bute Council paid £3.835m in the form of a Management Fee to Live Argyll and increased the overall net worth of the Group Balance Sheet by £1.389m.

The board is made up of 3 independent board members, 3 Councillors and a Trade Union representative.

Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Valuation Joint Board

This body was formed in October 1995 at Local Government reorganisation by a Statutory Instrument and is responsible for the maintenance of the electoral, council tax and non-domestic rates registers for Argyll and Bute, West Dunbartonshire and East Dunbartonshire Councils. The Board's running costs are met by the three Councils. During 2023-24 Argyll and Bute Council contributed £1.254m towards estimated running costs and accounted for £0.084m of Balance Sheet Liabilities within the Group Balance Sheet. The accounts of the Board are subject to independent audit and will be available from the Valuation Joint Board's website www.saa.gov.uk/dab-vjb/ and West Dunbartonshire Council's website <https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/performance-and-spending/service-performance/financial-performance/> from 1 July 2023.

The following disclosures are also required for Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Valuation Joint Board because the Council's interest exceeds the 25% threshold for accounting purposes:-

2022-23 £'m		2023-24 £'m
	Argyll and Bute Council has a 44.41% share of:	
2.851	Gross Income	2.861
0.453	Net (Surplus)/Deficit	0.209
0.668	Long Term Assets	0.675
0.972	Current Assets	0.670
(0.101)	Liabilities due within one year	(0.014)
	Liabilities due over one year	
(0.170)	Pension Asset/(Liability)	(0.175)
1.369	Capital and Revenue Reserves	1.156

7. REPORTING AUTHORITY ADJUSTMENTS

A number of adjustments are required to the Council's Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure (pages 51 to 52) for group accounting purposes. These can be summarised as follows:

- All intra-group transactions have been removed from the Group Accounts as part of the subsidiary consolidation process.
- The Common Good Funds described in Note 37 of the Notes to the Financial Statements on pages 120 to 121 have been fully consolidated into the Group Accounts. This adjustment increases the net assets and reserves of Argyll and Bute Council's Group by £9.629m.

8. PRIOR PERIOD ADJUSTMENTS

Prior period errors are omissions from, and misstatements in, the authorities financial statements for one or more prior periods arising from a failure to use, or misuse of, reliable information that

- a) Was available when the financial statements for those periods were authorized for issue; and
- b) Could reasonably be expected to have been obtained and taken into account in the preparation and presentation of those financial statements.

In the 2022-23 Group Financial Statements the final audited accounts were not available for either the Valuation Joint Board or Live Argyll at the time of publishing the Councils Annual Accounts. These are now available therefore the 2022-23 Group Accounts have been restated to reflect any changes. The amendments mainly relate to changes in the Pension Asset/Liability.

9. GROUP CASH FLOW STATEMENT – OPERATING ACTIVITIES

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
10,318	Net (Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services	(11,267)
	Adjustments to Net (Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Service for Non Cash Movements:	
11,819	Statutory Adjustments through Statement of Movement in Reserves	16,341
322	Transfer to/from Other Statutory Reserves	77
(13,230)	Transfer Group Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	
282	Increase/(Decrease) in Inventories	(86)
6,306	Increase/(Decrease) in Debtors	12,869
(6,433)	(Increase)/Decrease in Creditors and Provisions	(916)
(16,041)	Earmarked Reserves	(1,532)
(2,938)	Capital Financed from Current Revenue	(1,616)
(2,477)	Loans Fund Repayments	(6,111)
(3,765)	Other Revenue Adjustments	7,714
(26,155)		26,740
	Adjustments for items included in the Net (Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Services that are Investing and Financing Activities:	
10,925	Non Cash Capital	11,021
(5,116)	Capital Element of Finance Lease Payments	(5,280)
5,809		5,741
(10,028)	Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities	21,214
	The cash flows for Operating Activities include the following items:	
6,742	Interest Paid on Borrowings	5,097
8,887	Interest Paid on Finance Leases	8,599
(748)	Interest Received on Bank Deposits	(3,469)
14,881	Net Cash Outflow from Servicing of Finance	10,227

10. GROUP CASH FLOW STATEMENT – INVESTING ACTIVITIES

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
25,637	Purchase of Property, Plant and Equipment, Investment Property and Intangible and Heritage Assets	25,221
(17,500)	Investments made/(disposed of) during year	(37,500)
(568)	Proceeds from the Sale of Property, Plant and Equipment and Investment Property	(671)
1,093	Net Receipts from Investment in Associates and Joint Ventures	1,275
(21,914)	Other Receipts from Investing Activities	(25,687)
(13,252)	Net Cash Outflow from Investing Activities	(37,362)

11. GROUP CASH FLOW STATEMENT – FINANCING ACTIVITIES

2022-23 £'000		2023-24 £'000
(35,228)	Cash Receipts of Short and Long Term Borrowing	(31,128)
2,021	Other Receipts from Financing Activities	(1,072)
5,116	Cash Payments for the Reduction of the Outstanding Liabilities relating to Finance Leases and on Balance Sheet PFI Contracts	5,280
70,627	Repayments of Short and Long Term Borrowing	54,257
-	Other Payments from Financing Activities	13
42,536	Net Cash (Inflow)/Outflow from Financing Activities	27,350

Independent auditor's report to the members of Argyll and Bute Council and the Accounts Commission

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion on the financial statements

We certify that we have audited the financial statements in the annual accounts of Argyll and Bute Council and its group (the Council) for the year ended 31 March 2024 under Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The financial statements comprise the Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Movement in Reserves, the Cash Flow Statement, and notes to the financial statements, including material accounting policy information, the Council Tax Income Account, the Non-domestic Rate Income Account, the Group Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure, the Group Balance Sheet, the Group Statement of Movement in Reserves, the Group Cash Flow Statement and notes to the group financial statements, including material accounting policy information. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24 (the 2023/24 Code).

In our opinion the accompanying financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Council and its group as at 31 March 2024 and of its income and expenditure of the Council and its group for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the 2023/24 Code; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)), as required by the Code of Audit Practice approved by the Accounts Commission for Scotland. 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 were appointed by the Accounts Commission on 18 May 2022. Our period of appointment is five years, covering 2022/23 to 2026/27. We are independent of the Council and its group in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. Non-audit services prohibited by the Ethical Standard were not provided to the Council and its group. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern basis of accounting

We have concluded that the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Council and its group's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

These conclusions are not intended to, nor do they, provide assurance on the Council and its group's current or future financial sustainability. However, we report on the Council's

Independent Auditors Report

arrangements for financial sustainability in a separate Annual Audit Report available from the [Audit Scotland website](#).

Risks of material misstatement

We report in our Annual Audit Report the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement that we identified and our judgements thereon.

Responsibilities of the Section 95 Officer and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities, the Section 95 Officer is responsible for the preparation of financial statements, that give a true and fair view in accordance with the financial reporting framework, and for such internal control as the Section 95 Officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Section 95 Officer is responsible for assessing each year the Council and its group'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 to discontinue the operations of the Council and its group.

The Audit and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for overseeing the 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 decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

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

- using our understanding of the local government sector to identify that the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 are significant in the context of the Council and its group;
- inquiring of the Section 95 Officer as to other laws or regulations that may be expected to have a fundamental effect on the Council and its group;
- inquiring of the Section 95 Officer concerning the Council's policies and procedures regarding compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework;
- discussions among our audit team on the susceptibility of the financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur; and
- considering whether the audit team collectively has the appropriate competence and capabilities to identify or recognise non-compliance with laws and regulations.

The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is affected by the inherent difficulty in detecting irregularities, the effectiveness of the Council and its group's controls, and the nature, timing and extent of the audit procedures performed.

Irregularities that result from fraud are inherently more difficult to detect than irregularities that result from error as fraud may involve collusion, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. The capability of the audit to detect

fraud and other irregularities depends on factors such as the skillfulness of the perpetrator, the frequency and extent of manipulation, the degree of collusion involved, the relative size of individual amounts manipulated, and the seniority of those individuals involved.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website

<http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Reporting on other requirements

Opinion prescribed by the Accounts Commission on the audited parts of the Remuneration Report

We have audited the parts of the Remuneration Report described as audited. In our opinion, the audited parts of the Remuneration Report have been properly prepared in accordance with The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014.

Other information

The Section 95 Officer is responsible for the other information in the annual accounts. The other information comprises the Management Commentary, Annual Governance Statement, Statement of Responsibilities and the unaudited part of the Remuneration Report.

Our responsibility is to read all the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon except on the Management Commentary and Annual Governance Statement to the extent explicitly stated in the following opinions prescribed by the Accounts Commission.

Opinions prescribed by the Accounts Commission on the Management Commentary and Annual Governance Statement

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Management Commentary for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with statutory guidance issued under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003; and
- the information given in the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016).

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We are required by the Accounts Commission to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the audited part of the Remuneration Report are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

We have nothing to report in respect of these matters.

Conclusions on wider scope responsibilities

In addition to our responsibilities for the annual accounts, our conclusions on the wider scope responsibilities specified in the Code of Audit Practice, including those in respect of Best Value, are set out in our Annual Audit Report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the parties to whom it is addressed in accordance with Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and for no other purpose. In accordance with paragraph 108 of the Code of Audit Practice, we do not undertake to have responsibilities to members or officers, in their individual capacities, or to third parties.

Mark Outterside, Director
For and on behalf of Forvis Mazars LLP

Bank Chambers
26 Mosley Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 1DF

20 December 2024

Glossary of Terms

Existing Use Value. The market value of a particular Council property, less the difference between the average rental income between public and private sector properties.

Expected Rate of Return on Pension Assets. The average rate of return, including both income and changes in fair value but net of scheme expenses, expected over the remaining life of the related obligation on the actual assets held by the Scheme.

Fair Value. This is the price at which an asset could be exchanged in an arm's length transaction less any grants receivable towards the purchase or use of the asset.

Financial Asset. A right to future economic benefits controlled by the Council that is represented by cash, an equity instrument of another entity, a contractual right to receive cash from another entity or a financial right to exchange financial instruments under conditions that are potentially favourable to the Council.

Financial Instrument. Any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and financial liability or equity instrument of another.

Financial Instruments Adjustment Account. This holds the accumulated difference between the financing costs included in the Income and Expenditure Account and the accumulated financing costs required in accordance with regulations to be charged to the General Fund Balance.

Financial Liability. An obligation to transfer economic benefits controlled by the Council that is represented by a contractual obligation to deliver cash or another financial asset to another entity or a contractual obligation to exchange financial instruments under conditions which are potentially unfavourable to the Council.

Financial Reporting Standard (FRS). Financial Reporting Standards are issued by the Accounting Standard Board and define proper accounting practice for a given transaction or event.

Fixed Assets. Tangible assets that yield benefits to the Council and the services it provides for a period of more than one year.

Gains/losses on settlements and curtailments. The result of actions to relieve the Council of liabilities or events that reduce the expected future service or accrual of benefits of employees. This is charged or credited to Non Distributed costs in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

General Fund Balance. This contains the net surplus on the provision of Council services combined with any balances from previous years and any contributions to other funds or reserves made during the year.

Group Accounts. The purpose of group accounts is to show the Council's interest in organisations and companies within the Financial Statements. The Council's shares of the assets and liabilities of these other entities are shown in the Group Movement in Reserves Statement, Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and Group Balance Sheet.

Government Grants. Assistance by government and inter-government agencies and similar bodies, whether local, national or international, in the form of cash or transfers of assets to an authority in return for past, or future, compliance with certain conditions relating to the activities of the Council.

Heritage Assets. Assets which are intended to be preserved in trust for future generations because of their cultural, environmental and historical associations and are held by the Council of the maintenance of heritage.

International Accounting Standards (IAS). International Accounting Standards are issued by the International Accounting Standards Board and define proper accounting practice for a given transaction or event. IAS's take precedence over other accounting standards in the hierarchy of technical accounting standards.

International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), a set of accounting standards issued by the IPSAS Board for use by public sector entities around the world in the preparation of financial statements.

Impairment. A reduction in the value of fixed or financial asset below the valuation held on the balance sheet.

Infrastructure Assets. Fixed assets that are inalienable, expenditure on which is recoverable only by continued use of the asset created. Examples of infrastructure assets are highways and footpaths.

Intangible Assets. Non-financial assets which do not have physical substance but are identifiable and are controlled by the Council.

Interest Cost (Pensions). The expected increase during the period in the present value of the scheme liabilities because the benefits are one period closer to settlement.

Inventories. Inventories may comprise the following: goods or other assets purchased for re-sale; consumable stores; raw materials and components purchased for incorporation into products for sale; products and services in intermediate stages of completion; long term contract balances; and finished goods.

Liquid Resources. Current asset investments that are readily disposable by the Council without disrupting its business and are either readily convertible to known amounts of cash at or close to the carrying amount, or traded on the active market.

Glossary of Terms

Materiality. Information is included where the information is of such significance as to justify its inclusion, and omission or misstatement could, individually or collectively, influence the decisions or assessments of users made on the basis of the financial statements.

National Non-Domestic Rates Pool. All non-domestic rates collected by Council's are remitted to the national pool and, thereafter, distributed to Councils by the Scottish Government.

Net Book Value. The amount at which fixed assets are included in the Balance Sheet, i.e. their historical cost or current value less cumulative amounts provided for depreciation.

Net Realisable Value. The open market value of the asset in its existing use, or open market value in the case of non-operational assets, less the expenses to be incurred in realising the asset.

Non-Current Assets. Non-current assets are not expected to be realised within 12 months and are held to provide future economic benefits to the Council.

Non-operational assets. Are assets held by the Council but not directly occupied, used or consumed in the delivery of services. Examples of non-operational assets are investment properties and assets that are surplus to requirements, pending sale or redevelopment.

Officers' Remuneration. All sums paid to or receivable by an employee and sums due by way of expenses allowances (as far as those sums are subject to UK Income Tax).

Operating Leases. A lease other than a finance lease, i.e. a lease which does not transfer the risks and rewards of ownership to the lessee.

Operating Assets. All items which derive from events or transactions that fall within the ordinary activities of the Council and which need to be disclosed separately by virtue of their size or incidence to give fair presentation of the accounts.

Past Service Costs (Pensions). The increase in the present value of the scheme liabilities related to employee service in prior periods arising in the current period as a result of the introduction of, or improvement to, retirement benefits.

Pensions Reserve. The Pensions Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions.

Prior Period Adjustments. Those material adjustments applicable to prior years arising from changes in accounting policies or from the correction of fundamental errors. They do not include normal recurring corrections or adjustments of accounting estimates made in prior years.

Public Private Partnerships (PPP). Those partnerships enable the Council to purchase services from the private sector and pay a fee based on pre-defined output criteria. The private sector uses this fee to repay loans taken out to finance the building or refurbishment of the assets.

Residual Value. The net realisable value of an asset at the end of its useful life.

Related Party Transactions. A related party transaction is the transfer of assets or liabilities, or the performance of services by, to or for a related party irrespective of whether a charge is made.

Renewal and Repairs fund. This contains funds credited at the Council's discretion from the General Fund and is available for use on capital or revenue expenditure on Council assets.

Revaluation Reserve. Records unrealised gains arising since 1 April 2007 from holding fixed assets not yet realised through sales.

Service Expenditure Analysis (SEA). An analysis which groups together expenditure on services within headings or divisions as defined in the Service Reporting Code of Practice (SeRCOP).

Specific Government Grants. These are grants received from Central Government in respect of a specific purpose or service.

Unusable Reserves. Those reserves which hold unrealised gains and losses where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold and reserves that hold timing differences.

Usable Reserve. Those reserves which the Council may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use.

Useful Life. The period over which the Council will derive benefits from the use of a fixed asset.

Appendix A

Trade Union Facility Time Statement 2023-24

This information is published under the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017

Schedule 2 (Regulation 8)

1. Relevant union officials

Total number of employees who were relevant union officials during the relevant period.

Number of employees who were relevant union officials during the relevant period		Full time equivalent employee number
Central Function	21	20.8
Education Function	7	7

Note: The headcount figure for relevant union officials includes all stewards and school-based reps who are elected by their peers to provide first line support for members.

2. Percentage of time spent on facility time

Number of employees who were relevant union officials employed during the relevant period spent who spent 0%, 1%-50%, 51% - 99% or 100% of their working hours on facility time.

Percentage of time	Number of employees	
	Central Function	Education Function
0%	0	3
1% - 50%	19	2
51% - 99%	2	2
100%	0	0

3. Percentage of pay bill spent on facility time

The percentage of the total pay bill spent on paying employees who were relevant union officials for facility time during the relevant period.

	Central Function	Education Function
The total cost of facility time	£171,701	£71,016
The total pay bill (Finance figures)	£123,318,713	£64,175,618
The percentage of the total pay bill spent on facility time	0.14%	0.11%

4. Paid Trade Union activities

Percentage of total paid facility time hours spent by employees who were relevant union officials during the relevant period on paid trade union activities.

	Central Function	Education Function
Time spent on paid trade union activities as percentage of total paid facility time hours calculated as: (total hours spent on paid trade union activities by relevant union officials during the relevant period ÷ total paid facility time hours) x 100	0%	0%