



Subject:	Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 2023/24
Date:	20 September 2024
Reporting Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
Contact Officer:	Helen Lyons, Corporate Finance Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to present to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the Statement of Accounts of the Council, including the Annual Governance Statement, for the period ending 31 March 2024.
1.2	The Statement of Accounts are an important element of the council's overall corporate governance framework as they provide assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the council's finances and its financial position.
1.3	The Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024, as attached, have been prepared in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United

	Kingdom 2023/24 based on International Financial Reporting Standards and the Department for Communities Accounts Direction, Circular LG 05/24 dated 16 January 2024.
1.4	The Chief Executive in his role as Chief Financial Officer can confirm that the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 has been prepared in the form directed by the Department for Communities and in his opinion the Statement of Accounts give a true and fair view of the income and expenditure and cash flows for the financial year and the financial position as at the end of the financial year.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. approve the Council's Statement of Accounts and incorporated Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2024, and ii. agree that this paper should not be subject to call-in (as indicated above) because it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests given that the statement of accounts must be published by 30 September 2024.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
	Normal Approval Process
3.1	The Committee will be aware that the normal approval process allows for the Statement of Accounts to be presented to the Audit and Risk Panel to allow them to review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council prior to this report going to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
3.2	The Audit and Risk Panel was presented with the Statement of Accounts at the meeting on 16th September and a verbal update on the status of the audit and the draft Report to those charged with Governance (RTTCWG) for 2023/24 was provided at this meeting by Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO). The draft RTTCWG will be circulated to the Audit and Risk panel members for consideration when issued by NIAO. NIAO have indicated that there are currently seven audit recommendations, however the audit is still ongoing.

The Panel reviewed the annual Statement of Accounts and, subject to receipt of the draft RTTCWG, did not identify any concerns arising from the Statement of Accounts that needed to be brought to the attention of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Audit Opinion

3.3 It is the Local government Auditors' opinion that:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with relevant legal and statutory requirements and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023-24, of the financial position of Belfast City Council as at 31 March 2024 and its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- the statement of accounts have been properly prepared in accordance with the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and the Department for Communities directions issued thereunder; and
- the part of the Remuneration Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with the Department for Communities directions made under the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015; and
- the information given in the Narrative Report for the financial year ended 31 March 2024 is consistent with the financial statements.

Reserves

3.4 **General Fund**

The credit balance on the General Fund has increased to £59.3m (of which £46.1m relates to specified reserves). The movement on the reserves balance is summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Summary of Reserves Position

Opening Balance	£58.8m
In year movement in reserves	<u>£0.5 m</u>
Closing Balance	£59.3m
Specified Reserves at year end	<u>£46.1m</u>
Balance Available	<u>£13.2 m</u>

3.5	<p>Capital Fund £14,409,960</p> <p>The Capital Fund is made up of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast Investment Fund (£4,807,700) -created to support key partnership projects to regenerate Belfast and help lever substantial funds from other sources • Local Investment Fund (£348,433) to fund smaller local regeneration projects • City Centre Investment Fund (£8,246,713) to support the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Plans • Social Outcomes Fund (£1,007,114) to support City Centre projects which might not generate a direct financial return but would enhance the overall City Centre offer and support the attraction of investment.
3.6	<p>Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund £10,052,018</p> <p>This fund is to support neighbourhood regeneration and tourism projects in local neighbourhoods.</p>
3.7	<p>Leisure Mobilisation Fund £534,521</p> <p>This fund is to support the Leisure Transformation Programme and will cover programme level costs including communications, engagement and procurement costs.</p>
3.8	<p>Capital Receipts Reserve £729,008</p> <p>These are capital receipts which have originated primarily from the sale of assets and which have not yet been used to finance capital expenditure.</p>
3.9	<p>Other Fund Balances and Reserves £2,935,552</p> <p>This relates to the Election Reserve (£62,745) which has been set up to smooth the cost of running council elections, the BWUH Subvention Fund (£1,078,513) to support national and international organisations in bringing their conferences to Belfast and the BWUH Sinking Fund (£1,794,294) to support planned maintenance and future capital works at the new exhibition centre.</p>

3.10	<p>Debt</p> <p>The overall level of trade debtors had increased this year from £4.3m at 31 March 2023 to £5m at 31 March 2024. An analysis of trade debtors, inclusive of VAT, for the last two years is shown below:</p> <p>Table 2: Analysis of Trade Debtors</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="276 443 1206 645"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>31 March 2024</th> <th>31 March 2023</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Less than three months</td> <td>£2,962,988</td> <td>£3,129,548</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Three to one year</td> <td>£1,158,399</td> <td>£482,337</td> </tr> <tr> <td>More than one year</td> <td>£918,640</td> <td>£720,939</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>£5,040,027</td> <td>£4,332,824</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		31 March 2024	31 March 2023	Less than three months	£2,962,988	£3,129,548	Three to one year	£1,158,399	£482,337	More than one year	£918,640	£720,939	Total	£5,040,027	£4,332,824
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3.11	<p>Creditors</p> <p>The Department for Communities has set councils a target of paying invoices within 30 days. During the year the council paid 75,629 invoices totalling £192,418,313.</p>															
	<p>The average time taken to pay creditor invoices was 17 days for the year ended 31 March 2024. The Council paid 58,774 invoices within 10 days, 70,456 invoices within 30 days, and 5,173 invoices outside of 30 days. The council endeavours to process invoices as quickly as possible and has an improvement plan to support this process.</p>															
3.12	<p>Annual Governance Statement (AGS)</p> <p>The Statement of Accounts include the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the year 2023/24, which has been prepared in line with the Accounts Directive provided by the Department for Communities, NIAO guidance and is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government’.</p> <p>Specifically the AGS sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scope of responsibility • the purpose of the governance framework • the governance framework in place • review of effectiveness • update on the significant governance issues declared last year • significant governance issues for current year 															
3.13	<p>The AGS is approved by the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources committee and the Chief Executive. It is subject to review by the LGA (NIAO) as part of their annual audit.</p>															
3.14	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None</p>															

3.15	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Detailed Statement of Accounts titled “Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 2024”