



FINANCIAL REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 MARCH 2024**

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
FINANCIAL REPORT - YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

CHAIR OF THE AUTHORITY
David Bence

CHIEF EXECUTIVE Alison Barnes

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER Nigel Stone, CPFA FCCA

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NARRATIVE REPORT

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide a clear and understandable guide to the most significant matters reported in the financial statements.

Financial Statements

The financial statements and their purpose are summarised as follows:

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (pages 22-23)

This statement discloses the expenditure and income by service for the year ended 31 March 2024. The statement shows the true economic (accounting) cost of providing those services, prior to any statutory amounts required to be charged through the accounts (which are shown in the Expenditure and Funding Analysis and the Movement in Reserves Statement).

Expenditure and Funding Analysis (pages 24-25)

This is not a primary statement, but its analysis shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources by the Authority in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by Authorities in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. It also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision-making purposes between the Authority's services. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Balance Sheet (page 26)

The Balance Sheet discloses the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2024. The net assets of the Authority (its assets less liabilities) are matched by reserves held by the Authority.

Movement in Reserves Statement (pages 27-28)

This statement discloses the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Authority, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure) and 'unusable reserves'.

Cash Flow Statement (page 29)

The Cash Flow Statement discloses the inflows and outflows of cash arising from the activities of the Authority for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Notes to the Accounts (pages 31-65)

The Notes disclose more detailed information on the figures provided in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Balance Sheet, Movement in Reserves Statement and Cash Flow Statement. Note 1 discloses the accounting policies used by the Authority in compiling the financial statements.

Financial Context

Our core National Park Grant, received from Defra in 2023/24, was part of a single-year Spending Review and was frozen at £3.25m, the same core figure as we received in 2022/23. Not only does this not allow for inflationary pressures, but it is also still nowhere near equivalent to the £4.23m we received in 2010/11, prior to the most recent Spending Reviews and the austerity measures. Given these clear financial pressures, Defra paid a one-off additional grant of £440,000 in 2022/23; the offset income from which was set aside in a matching earmarked 'Financial Stability' reserve and planned to be used over the next ten years.

The 2024/25 grant has recently been confirmed as a single-year settlement totalling £3.75m – the original core £3.25m grant, with an uplift of £0.25m revenue and £0.25m capital funds; we have had strong indications of further years of the same amounts to follow.

Financial Performance and Year-End Position

The 2023/24 expenditure budget was £4.96m and income was estimated at £4.98m (both figures include £1.0m for externally-funded projects). The budget would be balanced by adding £22,000 to the Revenue Support Reserve.

The actual results for the year are shown in the table below and the variances are then explained further in the text below it:

Activity	Budgeted £000	Actual £000	Variance £000
Expenditure	4,960	4,691	(269)
Income	(4,982)	(4,800)	182
Net transfers to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	0	87	87
Amount added to Revenue Support Reserve	22	22	0
TOTAL	0	0	0

The budget could only estimate the externally-funded partnership projects known when it was set back in March 2023, actual expenditure was lower than budgeted overall on these projects in 2023/24. Income was also lower due to the same reason; however, a significant amount of project income was received in advance (in particular PedALL and the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative) and therefore required transfers to Earmarked Reserves at year-end.

Capital Funded Expenditure

During 2023/24 the Authority incurred revenue or capital expenditure of £304,000 funded by capital grants, developers' contributions and the General Fund. Expenditure was incurred as follows:

Activity	2022/23	2023/24
Expenditure:	£000	£000
Computer Hardware (Capital)	0	4
Computer Software (Capital)	48	0
Other Equipment (Capital)	125	0
Developer Contributions (Revenue)	36	80
Grants to External Body (Revenue)	211	220
Total	420	304
Financed by:		
Revenue Contributions to Capital	(114)	(4)
Developers' Contributions	(36)	(80)
Capital Grants and Contributions	(270)	(220)
Total	(420)	(304)

Key Services / Outcomes

The Authority's purposes, vision and intended outcomes for residents, visitors and other stakeholders are identified in a range of policy documents. The overarching vision for the management of the Forest is set out in the Partnership Plan 2022 - 2027. The plan was developed and approved in 2022 following extensive community engagement. This is the second such New Forest 'Partnership Plan' and has encouraged a wide range of important stakeholders to put down in writing what they will be doing for the Forest during this time, increasing governance and accountability for all.

The Authority's Business Plan, for the period up to 2027, was finalised this year. The programme will be aligned to the Authority's purposes and duty (Protect, Enjoy and Prosper) and use the same five core themes as the new Partnership Plan.

Of the thirty-six Actions/Outcomes in the 2023/24 Authority Work Programme, twenty-nine were shown as "green" (fully complete) at year-end, six "amber" (substantially complete) and one as "red" (not complete). Of those shown as amber and red, all have been considered further in the 2024/25 Work Programme. Further details of the work undertaken by the Authority this year can be found in our 'Annual Review' which will be published in Summer 2024 and made available on our website.

Use of Resources

The Authority has a very limited number of physical or operational assets (e.g. no car parks, visitor centres, major land holdings etc); so, its greatest asset is its staff. As at 31 March 2024, details of the staffing levels (both 'core' and 'project-specific') were:

Staffing	Headcount	FTE
Core	56 (76%)	50.8 (76%)
Project	18 (24%)	15.9 (24%)
Total	74	66.7

Of the 'core' staff, some resource is dedicated to delivering services for other organisations as part of shared service agreements – this equates to approximately 0.5 FTEs.

The staff sickness level for the year was 3.5 days per FTE, well within the national averages of around 5-8 days.

Risks, Borrowing and Contingencies

During 2018/19 the Authority reviewed and revised its risk register to better align it with our corporate priorities; as a result, the risks are now categorised under 'Protect, Enjoy, Prosper and Achieving Excellence'. There are currently seventeen key risks listed and these are scored by likelihood and impact up to a maximum of 25 points. As at March 2024, seven of the risks were in the low category, eight medium-risk and the remaining two in the high-risk category. The risk log is reviewed at every Executive Board meeting and bi-annually by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee.

The Authority does not currently have any borrowing and there are currently no plans to do so. It is not envisaged that any financial impacts from the pandemic will cause this position to change. No contingencies have been identified during the last year and no new provisions have been required.

Pension Scheme Assets and Liabilities

The pension liability is based on an actuarial valuation and represents the benefits that have been accrued by members of the local government pension scheme.

The Authority's Balance Sheet shows a net pension liability of zero, deriving from assets valued at £17.466m compared to a liability estimated at £17.305m, with an asset ceiling having been applied to the remaining balance. Whilst this has an impact on the net worth of the Authority as recorded in the Balance Sheet, statutory arrangements for funding the scheme mean that the financial position of the Authority remains healthy, and any deficit on the scheme will be made good by contributions over the working lives of employees.

The net pension liability has fallen by £886,000 from 31 March 2023 (compared to a fall of £7.814m the previous year).

Future Funding and Events after 31 March 2024

In the 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), funding for National Parks (through the Defra 'National Parks Grant') was "protected" and it was later confirmed this included an inflationary increase of 1.7% per year for the four years resulting in a rise up to £3,251,501 by 2019/20. Single year 'flat cash' settlements had been provided since 2020/21, with the exception of a one-off payment of £440,000 made to all English National Park Authorities in 2022/23 to aid their financial stability. The 2024/25 grant has recently been confirmed as a single-year settlement totalling £3.75m – the original core £3.25m grant, with an uplift of £0.25m revenue and £0.25m capital funds; we have had strong indications of further years of the same amounts to follow.

The Authority is fully aware of its responsibility to firstly continue to use this funding efficiently and effectively and secondly, to use this time of certainty to explore ways to reduce its overall reliance on the grant. In this regard, the Authority has recently been particularly successful in attracting external funding to boost that provided by Defra. It has also established National Parks Partnerships LLP and the National Parks Foundation, alongside the other National Parks, to explore funding partnerships at a national level which it is hoped will either generate income directly or help reduce costs (through negotiated deals) for the National Park's family – the most significant such partnership to date was with Columbia Sportswear, a US-based outdoor footwear and clothing company, announced in 2017.

The Authority will also continue to explore 'shared services' opportunities either locally or with the other National Parks / Protected Landscapes; the Authority already 'sells' some of its Rangers, Archaeology and Communications expertise to other local organisations and at the same time 'buys' in some HR, Finance and ICT support.

As the Authority moved into the 2024/25 financial year, it kept its financial position under constant review. Management are fully confident that it is a going concern for the foreseeable future and that we have adequate plans and reserves in place should the financial situation deteriorate again in the future.

There have been no other significant changes to the Authority or its position since 31 March 2024.

REDACTED

Nigel Stone, CPFA FCCA
Chief Finance Officer
8 February 2025

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Authority's Responsibilities

The Authority is required to:

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

2. The Chief Finance Officer's Responsibilities

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Authority's Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom ('the Code of Practice').

In preparing the Statement of Accounts, the Chief Finance Officer has:

- * Selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- * Made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent;
- * Complied with the Code of Practice;
- * Kept proper accounting records which were up to date;
- * Taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities;
- * Taken measures to ensure that risk is appropriately managed.

3. The Chief Finance Officer's Certificate

I certify that the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 has been prepared in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and that it gives a true and fair view of the financial position of the New Forest National Park Authority as at 31 March 2024 and its income and expenditure for that year ended.

REDACTED

Nigel Stone, CPFA FCCA

**Chief Finance Officer
8 February 2025**

4. Approval of the Accounts by the Authority

I confirm that these accounts were approved and authorised for issue by Members of the Authority at the meeting held on the 23 January 2025.

REDACTED

Victoria Mander

**Deputy Chair of the Authority
8 February 2025**

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023/24

Scope of responsibility

The New Forest National Park Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Authority is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of the Authority's functions which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

In March 2022, the Authority approved and adopted an updated Local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/Solace Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government. A review of compliance with the Code is carried out on an annual basis by the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer. A copy of the Code is published on the Authority's website and can be obtained from Corporate Services.

This statement explains how the Authority has complied with the Code and also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in relation to the publication of a statement of corporate governance.

The purpose of the governance framework

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

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives, and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risk to the achievement of the Authority's aims, objectives and policies, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The Governance Framework

The Local Code of Corporate Governance describes the Authority's governance framework in relation to the seven core principles below and demonstrates how it complies with these:

1. behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law
2. ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
3. defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
4. determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
5. developing the Authority's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and individuals within it
6. managing risks and performance through robust internal controls and strong public finance management
7. implementing good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

Our code was first adopted by the Authority in June 2012 and was most recently updated and approved by Members in March 2022.

Through carrying out its general statutory duties and responsibilities in connection with the two national park purposes, the Authority also seeks to work for and with the local communities to foster the social and economic wellbeing of communities within the National Park.

The Authority has noted the recent publication of the 'Best Value Standards and Intervention' guidance (issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) and is confident of its compliance with it.

Focusing on outcomes for the community and implementing a vision for the local area

The Authority's purposes, vision and intended outcomes for residents, visitors and other stakeholders are identified in a range of policy documents. The overarching vision for the management of the Forest was set out in the Partnership Plan 2015–2021 and has been revised into the subsequent 2022-2027 Plan published in March 2022. These Plans have been developed jointly by all the main organisations with interests and responsibilities in the National Park, including:

- Environment Agency
- Forestry England
- Hampshire County Council
- Natural England
- New Forest District Council
- New Forest National Park Authority
- Test Valley Borough Council
- Verderers of the New Forest
- Wiltshire County Council.

The Partnership Plan is a plan for the National Park as a place and not specifically for the National Park Authority or any other organisation and has been developed following extensive community and stakeholder engagement. It is vital to have a wide range of important stakeholders who put down in writing what they will be doing for the Forest during this time, increasing governance and accountability for all. The Partnership Plan was approved by the Authority at its meeting 24 March 2022.

A comprehensive governance framework, of both members and senior officers, was developed by the partners in 2023/24 to monitor, review and assess the stated actions and outcomes from the Plan over the next four years.

The Authority's own Business Plan and annual Work Programmes take their cues from the Partnership Plan, incorporating those actions for which the Authority has direct responsibility. The Authority adopted a Business Plan covering the period 2023-2027 at its Authority meeting on 13 July 2023 following extensive consultation of Members and Staff. This consultation was invaluable in identifying the priorities and objectives to be included in the Plan over the four-year term and responding proactively and flexibly to future challenges and opportunities affecting the New Forest National Park. A detailed Work Programme for 2023/24 was approved at the same meeting. The Business Plan presents an account and assessment of the Authority's activities, alongside the separate reports of its financial position and performance, and is aligned to the Authority's purposes and duty as well as the five core themes of 'Climate, Nature, People, Place and Partnership'. Progress is monitored regularly by the Executive Board and the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee.

In 2023/24, the Authority received a single-year core grant settlement at the same financial level as 2022/23 - £3.25m. The Authority is focusing resources towards developing medium-term strategic plans for key areas of work and to identify how the Authority and its partnerships can work together to achieve even more for the Forest – these themes provide important direction in the annual Work Programmes.

Recognising that people are our biggest asset, in 2019 we introduced a 'People Plan' to help focus our development as an organisation. This looks at how we work and sets out actions to further improve our working practices and develop/sustain a high-performing team. A biennial staff survey was undertaken in December 2023; the results of the survey were generally very positive, and these results / emerging trends are currently being considered by a staff group with a view to updating the People Plan later in 2024.

An annual Health and Safety report is compiled and considered by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee in July and a review of the Authority's Health and Safety Policy was conducted in 2023/24; the updated policy was approved by the Committee in June 2023.

Management information is produced to assist with the measurement of performance including a number of key performance indicators. A review of the indicators is currently being considered between the NPA family and Defra regarding a new suite of nationally-collected annual indicators; these are expected to be finalised for 2024/25. Budgetary Control Reports are reviewed monthly by the budget holders and on a regular basis by the Executive Board and Resources, Audit and Performance Committee. The Committee also considers the Authority's Medium-Term Financial Plan which aligns future resources to their priorities. Where performance slips, this is further examined and action taken where possible.

The Authority continues to be very highly successful in attracting external funding into the area, consistently leveraging around £18 for every £1 of funding we put towards partnership projects. The Authority is also keenly investigating corporate partnerships (sponsorships) through the wider National Park family, National Parks Partnerships Ltd and the more recent National Parks Foundation (charitable arm). Their remit is to create successful partnerships that generate vital income to make a significant, sustainable and discernible contribution to the improved quality of UK National Parks and the benefits they offer for generations to come.

The Chief Executive reports to the Authority on the development and performance of the Authority overall. A full Annual Review document, detailing the Authority's activities and achievements over each year, is published each Summer.

The Authority also deals with requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, and Subject Access Requests under Data Protection legislation. In March 2023 internal audit undertook an 'Information Governance – Records Management' audit which resulted in a finding of reasonable assurance. Officers are in the process of reviewing the Authority's records management policies and practices. SharePoint is now being used by all Teams for document management and storage. This is a cloud-based system which provides greater security and more flexibility for home and mobile working. Continued developments in records management processes will lead to improvements in the Authority's compliance with Data Protection legislation and will streamline requests for information and improve the overall efficiency, effectiveness and security of our records management and ICT processes.

The Authority has adopted and maintains a formal complaints process to enable complaints about the Authority's activities to be considered and responded to. Information on how to use the complaints process is available on the Authority's website. Information on complaints received is considered by the Authority's officers and lessons for service improvement are identified wherever practicable. The number of complaints received remains low - fourteen this year, of which two were referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman; both were subsequently closed after initial enquiries with no further action.

The Authority is subject to a full and independent external audit of the financial management arrangements in place for 2023/24. Audit reports are issued by the External Auditors and Internal Auditors to be considered by the Authority's Resources, Audit and Performance Committee.

In March 2017, the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee approved an Assurance Framework which specifies the sources of information on which the Authority relies to gain assurance that all key risks are identified and that controls are operating effectively. The Resources, Audit and Performance Committee on 6 March 2023 approved an Internal Audit Charter which clearly defined the purpose, authority and responsibility of the internal audit activity; at the same meeting the Committee also approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24.

Services are required to review policies and procedures to ensure those services are delivered, designed and continually monitored to meet the needs of the whole community. As part of its response to the original Landscapes Review, the Authority set up an officer group to review our approach to accessibility and diversity, both within the organisation and the geographic area, under the heading of 'New Forest Voices'. Meetings of the group continued throughout 2023/24, working around three key streams – understanding, experiences and ways of working.

Working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles

The Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegations, Financial Regulations, Contract Standing Orders and other procedures describe how the Authority operates and how decisions are made to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. All these key policies were kept under review during the year and amendments made as and when necessary. A full review of all the above documents took place during the autumn of 2019 and the amended drafts were submitted firstly to the Standards Committee in October 2019 and then to the Planning and Resources, Audit and Performance Committees in March 2020.

Meetings of the Authority are held in public and live streamed, save for individual items of a sensitive nature properly considered in confidential session in accordance with the legislation. Agendas and minutes of meetings are available for inspection on the Authority's website. Members of the public may ask questions and make representations in person / remotely on relevant matters at meetings. Each of the Committees has distinct terms of reference, with each having a periodic review. Member attendance for the Authority and Committee meetings during the year was 74%.

The roles and responsibilities of the members and officers are further defined in member / officer job descriptions and there is a Local Protocol for Member and Officer Relations. The roles of the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer are filled, with each officer fully understanding their respective responsibilities – none of the holders of these roles have changed during the year.

The effect of strong budgeting and regular financial monitoring procedures has also shown in the financial outturn; for example, in recent years the Authority's outturn has always been within the targeted 2% of the original budget and 1% of any revised budget.

In early 2023, Defra approved a further one-year core grant settlement for 2023/24, with an indication that this arrangement would likely continue for a further two years after that; this has equated to significant reductions each year in real terms. As a direct result of these pressures, Members and Senior Officers established a 'Resources and Business Planning' Task & Finish Group in 2022/23; this group assisted in producing an updated Medium-Term Financial Plan that was unanimously approved at the Authority meeting in March 2024.

There are agreed protocols for consultation with the Chief Finance Officer on key decisions and advice to the Authority and its Committees. The CFO attends meetings of the Authority's Executive Leadership Team, Strategic Leadership Team and Executive Board in order to ensure a sound understanding of the organisation's key priorities and risks.

The role of the Monitoring Officer is performed in-house by the Authority's Solicitor, with a service level agreement with Hampshire County Council for any additional legal support required (with any additional specialist external legal advice being obtained from time to time as required). All service level agreements are reviewed, and their performance monitored.

Promoting and demonstrating values through high standards of conduct and behaviour

There are Codes of Conduct for members and officers in place and performance appraisal processes for officers. Training is given to members on the Code of Conduct and there is a complete Register of Members' Interests. The Authority operates a standards regime for the conduct of members in compliance with the Localism Act 2011. There is currently a Standards Committee which monitors the ethical framework of the Authority. An internal audit review into the 'Corporate Governance Framework for Members' was undertaken in 2021/22 and received the second highest assurance level.

There is an adopted Whistleblowing Policy, with confidential reporting arrangements in place to enable internal and external whistleblowing. There is also an Anti-fraud & Corruption Policy in place and a supplementary Anti-Money Laundering Policy. In March 2023, the Authority approved a new draft Safeguarding Policy and this was officially launched in 2023/24 with an agreed communication and training plan. The Authority's core 'Values' were included in the 2023/24 staff annual appraisals to provide an opportunity for staff to consider how they have put the Authority's values

into practice; ideas to promote the values are covered on the Authority's intranet. The Authority is also currently consulting staff on an updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

The Monitoring Officer continuously reviews the Authority's Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegations and updates them as and when necessary. The Authority's Committee structure is also kept under review, as is the meetings timetable to facilitate long term planning and diarising of meetings.

Taking informed and transparent decisions and managing risk

There is a systematic strategy, framework and associated processes for managing risk. The Risk Management Strategy was updated and reviewed in December 2015. The risk register was reviewed in 2019 and focuses on those projects where the risk of not achieving them would have a significant impact on the Authority. These projects are grouped in the register under the purposes and duty of 'Protect, Enjoy and Prosper'. Significant operational risks potentially affecting the Authority have been grouped under 'Achieving Excellence'. Risks are scored by likelihood and impact to give a green, amber or red warning level and regular consideration is given to appropriate measures and strategies to mitigate the risks – the risk register details 17 key risks across the organisation and, as at the end of March 2024, 7 risks were green, 8 amber and 2 red. The register is monitored and reviewed by the Executive Board and half-yearly by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee.

The risks associated with our annual work programme are monitored through the quarterly reports to RAPC using the traffic light system to monitor progress. Members oversee the strategic direction and annual objectives. This enables relevant risks to be identified and evaluated, with consideration given to appropriate mitigation strategies.

The Authority complies with the Local Government Transparency Code and, as such, has a designated page on its website containing all the information required to be published; in a number of cases the Authority has gone beyond the minimum requirements of the Code and published further information to better aid understanding and transparency.

The Authority is fully compliant with all current procurement legislation including the Public Contract Regulations 2015. It uses an online e-procurement portal (In-Tend) and the governments 'Contracts Finder' website for all significant quote/tender/framework opportunities, ensuring openness and fairness to all potential suppliers.

Developing capacity to be effective

Senior Officers' learning and development needs are identified and met through induction programmes and the appraisal system, which includes learning and development target areas. All new members undergo a full internal induction programme and are actively encouraged to attend a general 'National Parks' induction.

There have been a number of informal training sessions for members and Members' Days on various aspects of member responsibilities and to aid the development of policy; these include training days for the Partnership Plan, Planning Committee members and meetings with representatives from Forestry England. Over 2023/24, a members' group worked closely with the Executive Leadership Team within a Task & Finish Group, established by RAPC, reviewing the Authority's 'Future Resources and Business Planning'.

The Authority continually seeks to train its managers and officers. Advocating mental health wellbeing in the workplace is an important part of the People Plan and we have arranged training and certification of a number of Mental Health First Aiders to assist them with crisis intervention and to act as advocates of mental health wellbeing in the workplace. We have also arranged mental health awareness courses for all staff and managers - this will be an ongoing programme designed to provide staff with an understanding of mental health enabling us to build resilience and apply self-care and has helped managers recognise the early warning signs of poor or declining mental health within their team to enable early intervention and signposting. This has been particularly important during the pandemic and lockdown periods which could have impacted employees' mental health and wellbeing.

Other important developments and training include Safeguarding, Emergency First Aid at Work, Fire Awareness, Discovery Days and many more specific personal development courses. Officers continue to be encouraged to complete relevant courses through the e-learning portal which offers a wide range of training and development opportunities for all staff.

Engaging with people to ensure accountability

The Authority has developed and maintained a range of relationships and arrangements with other agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors, to ensure that they are able to engage with and contribute to the work of the Authority.

Following the launch of the Accord between Forestry England and National Parks England in July 2018, members agreed that although there was a significant amount of engagement with Forestry England, there was good case for more formal mechanisms that would ensure more effective and collaborative working as well as early engagement and identification of opportunities and solutions. Officers from both Forestry England and the Authority accordingly held a number of workshops to finalise proposals for delivering local outcomes for the shared priorities and the Deputy Surveyor and NPA officers provide periodic updates to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee on joint working activities between Forestry England and the Authority in terms of the Accord.

Our Statement of Community Involvement on Planning Matters, setting out how the National Park Authority would involve local communities and others in its work, was revised in 2022/23 and, following significant formal consultation, was approved by Members in 2023.

Member representation has continued with a number of external bodies such as the Court of Verderers, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Government Association, New Forest Local Access Forum, New Forest Marque and Campaign for National Parks.

The Authority continues to work with local businesses to deliver Local Information Points to promote visitor information in the National Park. Our core ranger work is boosted by jointly funded projects with Forestry England and New Forest District Council, enabling us to engage with visitors and local residents throughout the National Park and in nearby communities. Other examples of joint working include taking forward the work of the Green Halo Partnership (supporting the local economy, improved health and wellbeing encouraging sustainable living and enhancing the natural environment) and Hampshire Greenprint.

The Authority continued to develop contacts during the 2023/24 year to promote understanding of the National Park. This included work with schools to highlight the things that make the New Forest special and how we can all care for it. We also renewed efforts to contact new and under-served communities.

Progress continued to be made on the Recreation Management Strategy review during 2023/24 within the overall new Partnership Plan framework. The [Recreation Management Strategy](#) sets out the strategic direction for the management of outdoor recreation in the New Forest National Park from 2010 – 2030. The strategy seeks to guide and influence recreation and spatial planning policy and implementation across the whole of the National Park and adjoining areas. Work to manage recreation in partnership with other organisations is ongoing through the Recreation Management Steering Group and Advisory Group. This includes both issue-specific activities and wider strategic work.

The Authority has continued to support and input into the New Forest Consultative Panel, which is an advisory forum comprising representatives from approximately eighty organisations with an interest in the New Forest National Park and adjacent areas. It meets quarterly to discuss topical issues and provide views to the National Park Authority and other statutory bodies. We also facilitate other Forums with wide representation from relevant organisations to help guide and communicate work programmes relating to dog walking, cycling, equine issues, animal accidents and recreation management.

The New Forest Land Advice Service has continued to provide wide-ranging support to land-owners, land managers and young commoners throughout the year. The future of commoning is an extremely important issue at present, and for the coming year, given the uncertainties around future funding provision.

The Authority routinely consults Parish Councils for their views on all planning applications by providing them with an initial planning officer assessment alongside details of the application. Communication has been aided further with the successful Parish Quadrant meetings which are held throughout the year and Member presence at Parish Council meeting.

The Authority published, or engaged with, the New Forest Essential Guide, Park Life, a Pocket Guide and an Annual Report to ensure regular communication on our work performance and issues and opportunities, together with events, press releases, regular email newsletters, website updates and social media posts.

Continuous Improvement

In December 2018, the Authority fed into the Landscapes Review – Call for Evidence (often referenced as the ‘Glover Review’), reflecting views expressed by members and staff to the questions raised. The final review document was published on 21 September 2019 and the Authority clearly set out its initial response to react positively to its thoughts and recommendations. In January 2022, the government published their response to the original report recommendations and undertook a 12-week open consultation to which the Authority responded in April 2022.

The Authority aims to be clearly accountable for the effective delivery of services, through setting targets and measuring performance. As reported earlier in the Statement, a review of the annual national indicators is currently being considered between the protected landscapes family and Defra.

Objectives and targets are developed for each service, and performance reviewed against these. Despite the effects of the pandemic and the uncertainty of our grant, the Authority used the period of financial stability in 2023/24 to review its efficiency and effectiveness and to plan more strategically. Senior officers from National Park Authorities are constantly exploring possible savings and efficiencies in sharing best practices and, in some cases, sharing services. The Authority’s financial position was further stabilised by a one-off further grant by Defra of £440,000 in March 2023 and a published commitment in November 2023 to provide regular additional funding to protected landscapes.

Service level agreements with New Forest District Council provided the services of strategic HR advice, Internal Audit, GIS and some financial services. The Authority also provides services to other local bodies through SLAs; this included archaeology, rangers and communications services during the last year.

Review of Effectiveness:

The Authority has a responsibility for conducting a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of Officers within the Authority who have the responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Internal Auditor’s report and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

Factors which influence the controls environment include: ethics, integrity, operating style and the way management and Members assign responsibility and authority.

The roles of the Authority, the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee and Internal Audit are explicit in maintaining the effectiveness of the governance framework.

Of the thirty-six Actions/Outcomes in the 2023/24 Work Programme, there were twenty-nine green, six amber and one red.

Major strategic plans and policies receive consideration by Members. A comprehensive scheme of delegation to Officers has been approved by Members and makes clear that the role of Officers is to implement and give effect to strategies and policies approved by the Authority.

The Authority has maintained arrangements to ensure that its dealings are lawful and comply with financial regulations. The Authority's Solicitor considers all reports considered by Members, which assists in ensuring that the Authority discharges its functions in accordance with the law.

Members have a key role in providing assurance that the Authority's funds are used economically, efficiently and effectively in accordance with agreed policies. The Medium-Term Financial Plan and Budget is agreed annually by the Authority and budget monitoring reports are considered quarterly at meetings of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee. The Authority's Accounts are subject to external audit on an annual basis and reported to the Authority at a public meeting.

All Member meetings of the Authority commence with an item regarding declaration of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, with signed records of interests declared kept with the minutes of the meeting. A Register of Members' Interests is maintained and Members' interests are publicly available on the Authority's website.

The Internal Auditor's report for 2023/24, considered at the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee meeting on 3 June 2024, states:

'I am satisfied that sufficient assurance work has been carried out to allow me to form a reasonable conclusion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control environment. In my opinion frameworks of governance, risk management and management control are reasonable and audit testing has demonstrated controls to be working in practice. Where weaknesses have been identified through internal audit review, we have worked with management to agree appropriate corrective actions and a timescale for improvement.'

Ernst & Young LLP act as the Authority's external auditors and are responsible for reviewing and reporting on the Financial Report (Statement of Accounts) and arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

The Authority's Business Continuity Plan was updated and reviewed during 2017/18 and audited by the internal auditors with a reasonable level of assurance and a limited number of management actions which have been agreed to by officers. This Plan was reviewed again by internal audit during 2021/22 to consider the impact of the pandemic arrangements and any lessons that were learnt from them for possible future scenarios. Staff have now settled in to using the offices more frequently again, with a suggested split of 50:50 between office/home working. Our planners, rangers and other staff continued their Re:New engagement and campaigns in the Forest with partners.

The wellbeing of our staff was monitored very closely during and after the pandemic, including the continuation of the Wellbeing Group, full staff surveys completed in 2021 and 2023, regular All-Staff Team meetings and an increased frequency of Health & Safety meetings.

Significant governance issues:

With the adoption of the National Park-wide Partnership Plan in 2022, the Authority completed and approved a set of priorities for its own Business Plan during 2023/24, to include an annual Work Programme and its monitoring framework.

The Authority's review of its Counter Fraud policies and procedures, in light of updated code of practices and self-assessment toolkit from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) and International Framework for Good Governance in the Public Sector, was not progressed as expected in 2023/24 due to other pressures and so this work will be prioritised in 2024/25 to ensure the Authority continues to follow best practice.

As reported elsewhere in the Statement, a full staff survey was conducted at the end of 2023. The very positive results are being analysed by the staff working group and will be used to inform a review of the People Plan.

As mentioned above, the Authority will look to complete its, broader than originally expected, work on establishing best practice in records management across the organisation, thus ensuring compliance with data protection legislation (including GDPR) and retention schedules.

CERTIFICATION

To the best of our knowledge, governance arrangements, as defined above have been in place within the Authority for the year ending 31 March 2024 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts.

We propose to take steps over the coming year to address those areas identified above to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified during the review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed:

REDACTED

Victoria Mander
Deputy Chair
Date: 8 February 2025

Signed:

REDACTED

Alison Barnes
Chief Executive
Date: 8 February 2025

**COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 MARCH 2024**

Activity	Gross Expenditure, £000	Income, £000	Net Expenditure, £000
Conservation of the Natural Environment	845	(758)	87
Conservation of Cultural Heritage	280	(40)	240
Recreation Management and Transport	644	(261)	383
Promoting Understanding	644	(103)	541
Rangers, Estates and Volunteers	235	(57)	178
Development Control	1,366	(350)	1,016
Forward Planning and Communities	446	(2)	444
Corporate and Democratic Core	491	(7)	484
Non-Service Items	4	(23)	(19)
Net Cost of Services	4,955	(1,601)	3,354
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure			
Interest and Investment Income			(132)
Net interest on the defined benefit liability / asset (Note 8)			27
Total Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure			(105)
Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income			
Capital Grants and Contributions (Note 15/17)			(133)
National Park Grant (Note 7)			(3,252)
(Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Services			(136)
Re-measurement of the defined benefit liability / asset (Note 8)			(943)
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			(1,079)

REDACTED

Nigel Stone, CPFA FCCA - Chief Finance Officer

8 February 2025

The table below sets out the same information for the year ended 31 March 2023 for comparison:

Activity	Gross Expenditure, £000	Income, £000	Net Expenditure, £000
Conservation of the Natural Environment	1,419	(903)	516
Conservation of Cultural Heritage	330	(14)	316
Recreation Management and Transport	623	(350)	273
Promoting Understanding	712	(41)	671
Rangers, Estates and Volunteers	217	(71)	146
Development Control	1,428	(354)	1,074
Forward Planning and Communities	517	0	517
Corporate and Democratic Core	548	(7)	541
Non-Service Items	10	(22)	(12)
Net Cost of Services	5,804	(1,762)	4,042
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure			
Interest and Investment Income			(39)
Net interest on the defined benefit liability / asset (Note 8)			229
Total Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure			190
Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income			
Capital Grants and Contributions (Note 15/17)			(140)
National Park Grant (Note 7)			(3,692)
(Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Services			400
Re-measurement of the defined benefit liability / asset (Note 8)			(8,636)
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			(8,236)

EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Supports the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Activity	Expenditure chargeable to General Fund Balance, £000	Adjustment between funding and accounting basis, £000	Net expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, £000
Conservation of the Natural Environment	84	3	87
Conservation of Cultural Heritage	236	4	240
Recreation Management and Transport	354	29	383
Promoting Understanding	534	7	541
Rangers, Estates and Volunteers	175	3	178
Development Control	993	23	1,016
Forward Planning and Communities	438	6	444
Corporate and Democratic Core	480	4	484
Non-Service Items	(19)	0	(19)
Net Cost of Services	3,275	79	3,354
Other Income and Expenditure	(3,384)	(106)	(3,490)
(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services	(109)	(27)	(136)
Transfer to/(from) Other Earmarked Reserves	87		
(Surplus)/Deficit in Year	(22)		
Opening Revenue Support Reserve Balance	(41)		
(Surplus)/Deficit in Year	(22)		
Closing Revenue Support Reserve Balance at 31 March	(63)		

Further information can be found in Note 6.

The table below sets out the same information for the year ended 31 March 2023 for comparison:

Activity	Expenditure chargeable to General Fund Balance, £000	Adjustment between funding and accounting basis, £000	Net expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, £000
Conservation of the Natural Environment	452	64	516
Conservation of Cultural Heritage	275	41	316
Recreation Management and Transport	296	(23)	273
Promoting Understanding	594	77	671
Rangers, Estates and Volunteers	117	29	146
Development Control	897	177	1,074
Forward Planning and Communities	459	58	517
Corporate and Democratic Core	488	53	541
Non-Service Items	(12)	0	(12)
Net Cost of Services	3,565	477	4,042
Other Income and Expenditure	(3,731)	89	(3,642)
(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services	(165)	565	400
Transfer to/(from) Other Earmarked Reserves	144		
(Surplus)/Deficit in Year	(21)		
Opening Revenue Support Reserve Balance	(19)		
(Surplus)/Deficit in Year	(21)		
Rounding	(1)		
Closing Revenue Support Reserve Balance at 31 March	(41)		

Further information can be found in Note 6.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2024

Balance Sheet	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Long-term Assets		
Property, Plant & Equipment		
Community Assets (Note 10)	436	432
Vehicles, Plant & Equipment (Note 10)	160	127
Intangible assets		
Equipment - Software (Note 11)	78	64
Total Long-term Assets	674	623
Current Assets		
Short-Term Investments (Note 19)	1,501	2,001
Short-Term Debtors (Note 12)	943	286
Cash and Cash Equivalents (Note 13)	1,239	1,777
Total Current Assets	3,683	4,064
Total Assets	4,357	4,687
Current liabilities		
Short-Term Creditors (Note 14)	(534)	(671)
Total Current Liabilities	(534)	(671)
Long Term Liabilities		
Liability relating to Defined Benefit Pension Scheme (Note 8)	(886)	0
Total Long-Term Liabilities	(886)	0
Net Assets	2,937	4,016
Usable Reserves:		
General Fund Balance	350	350
Earmarked Reserves	1,714	1,903
Developers' Contributions Unapplied	1,148	1,201
	3,212	3,454
Unusable Reserves:		
Capital Adjustment Account	674	622
Pensions Reserve	(886)	0
Accumulated Absences Account	(63)	(60)
	(275)	562
Total Reserves	2,937	4,016

REDACTED

Nigel Stone, CPFA FCCA - Chief Finance Officer

8 February 2025

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

All figures in £000's.

Activity	General Fund Balance	Earmarked Reserves	Developers' Contributions Unapplied	Total Usable Reserves	Capital Adjustment Account	Pension Reserve	Accumulated Absences Account	Total Unusable Reserves	Total Authority Reserves
Balance as at 31 March 2023	350	1,714	1,148	3,212	674	(886)	(63)	(275)	2,937
Movement in reserves during 2023/24									
Surplus or (deficit) on the provision of services	136	0	0	136	0	0	0	0	136
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0	943	0	943	943
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	136	0	0	136	0	943	0	943	1,079
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations (Note 5)	(27)	0	133	106	(52)	(57)	3	(106)	0
Net Increase/(Decrease) before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	109	0	133	242	(52)	886	3	837	1,079
Transfers to/(from) Reserves (Notes 16,17,18)	(109)	189	(80)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Increase/(Decrease) in 2023/24	0	189	53	242	(52)	886	3	837	1,079
Balance at 31 March 2024	350	1,903	1,201	3,454	622	0	(60)	562	4,016

The table below sets out the same information for the 2022/23 financial year for comparison (all figures in £000's):

Activity	General Fund Balance	Earmarked Reserves	Developers' Contributions Unapplied	Total Usable Reserves	Capital Adjustment Account	Pension Reserve	Accumulated Absences Account	Total Unusable Reserves	Total Authority Reserves
Balance as at 31 March 2022	300	1,599	1,044	2,943	559	(8,700)	(64)	(8,205)	(5,262)
Movement in reserves during 2022/23									
Surplus or (deficit) on the provision of services	(400)	0	0	(400)	0	0	0	0	(400)
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0	8,636	0	8,636	8,636
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	(400)	0	0	(400)	0	8,636	0	8,636	8,236
Adjustments between accounting basis & funding basis under regulations (Note 5)	565	0	140	705	115	(822)	1	(706)	0
Net Increase/(Decrease) before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	165	0	140	305	115	7,814	1	7,930	8,236
Transfers to/(from) Reserves (Notes 16,17,18)	(115)	115	(36)	(36)	0	0	0	0	(36)
Increase/(Decrease) in 2022/23	50	115	104	269	115	7,814	1	7,930	8,199
Balance at 31 March 2023	350	1,714	1,148	3,212	674	(886)	(63)	(275)	2,937

CASH FLOW STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Activity	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Net (Surplus)/Deficit on the Provision of Services	400	(136)
Adjust net (surplus)/deficit on the Provision of Services for non-cash movements		
Depreciation / Amortisation / Impairments (Note 10/11)	(57)	(55)
(Increase)/Decrease in Creditors & Provisions	108	(137)
Increase/(Decrease) in Debtors	678	(657)
Pensions – Reverse charges made for retirement benefits in profit and loss (Note 8)	(1,238)	(485)
Pensions – Employers Contribution (Note 8)	416	428
Adjustments for items which are Investing or Financing Activities		
Interest and Investment Income	39	132
Use of Developer Contributions (Note 15)	36	0
Net cash flows from Operating Activities	382	(910)
Investing Activities		
Interest and Investment Income	(39)	(132)
Acquisition of property, plant & equipment and intangible assets (Note 10/11)	172	4
Purchase of short-term and long-term investments	9,000	15,500
Proceeds from short-term and long-term investments	(9,000)	(15,000)
Net cash flows from Investing Activities	133	372
Net (Increase)/Decrease in Cash and Cash Equivalents	516	(538)
Cash and Cash Equivalents b/f (Note 13)	1,755	1,239
Cash and Cash Equivalents c/f (Note 13)	1,239	1,777
Movement in Cash and Cash Equivalents	(516)	538

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Note 1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

i) General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Authority's transactions for the 2023/24 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31 March 2024. The Authority is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (including any subsequent amendment regulations). The Regulations require the accounts to be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices. This primarily comprises of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24.

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

ii) Accruals of Income and Expenditure (Debtors and Creditors)

The accounts of the Authority are prepared on an accruals basis. This means that the sums due to or from the Authority during the year and included in the accounts, whether or not the cash has actually been received or paid in the year in question.

Accruals have been made for all known material revenue and capital debtors and creditors for goods and services supplied by and to the Authority during the year.

iii) Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are investments that mature or can be called within 24 hours and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

The Authority will treat the following as Cash and Cash Equivalents:

- Instant Access Call Accounts
- Instant Access Money Market Funds
- Deposits with one day to maturity

iv) Changes in Accounting Policies

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

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

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

v) Charges to Revenue for Non-Current Assets

Services and support services are debited with the following amounts to record the cost of holding long-term assets during the year:

- Depreciation/Amortisation attributable to the assets used by the relevant service;
- Revaluation and impairment losses on assets used by the service; where there are no accumulated gains in the Revaluation Reserve against which the losses can be written off;
- Amortisation of intangible assets attributable to the service.

The Authority is not required to raise income to fund depreciation/amortisation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisations. Charges are therefore mitigated by way of an adjusting transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account via the Movement in Reserves Statement.

vi) Employee Benefits

Benefits Payable During Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled within 12 months of the year-end. They include such benefits as wages and salaries, paid annual leave and paid sick leave, bonuses and non-monetary benefits for current employees and are recognised as an expense for services in the year in which employees render service to the Authority. An accrual is made for the cost of holiday entitlements (or any form of leave e.g. flexi-time) 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 current accounting year. The accrual is charged to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services, but then reversed out through the Movement in Reserves Statement so that holiday benefits are charged to revenue in the financial year in which the holiday absence occurs.

Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Authority to terminate an Officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy and are charged to services on an accruals basis in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement when the Authority is demonstrably committed to the termination of the employment of an Officer or group of Officers or making an offer to encourage voluntary redundancy.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Authority to the pension fund or pensioner in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, appropriations are required to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for pension enhancement termination benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

Post-Employment Benefits

Employees of the Authority are members of the Local Government Pensions Scheme, administered by Hampshire County Council.

The scheme provides defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), earned as employees worked for the Authority.

Detailed regulations govern rates of contribution and scales of benefits, the latter normally being in the form of a lump sum and annual pension.

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

- The liabilities of the Hampshire Pension Fund attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method – i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates etc, and projections of projected earnings for current employees.
- Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate of 2.7% (based on the indicative rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond).
- The assets of the Hampshire Pension Fund attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:
 - quoted securities – current bid price;
 - unquoted securities – professional estimate;
 - unitised securities – current bid price;
 - property – market value.
- The change in the net pensions' 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 arising from current year decisions whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years – debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non-Service Costs;
 - net interest on the defined benefit liability (asset) – the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability (asset) that arises from the passage of time - debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Re-measurements, comprising;

 - return on assets – excluding amounts included in the net interest on the defined benefit liability (asset) – debited to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure;
 - actuarial gains and losses – changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions – debited to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.

Contributions paid to the Hampshire Pension Fund – cash paid as employer’s contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

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

The pension scheme is detailed in note 8 to the Financial Statements.

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

vii) Exceptional Items

When items of income and expense are material, their nature and amount is disclosed separately, either on the face of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement or in the notes to the accounts, depending on how significant the items are to an understanding of the Authority’s financial performance.

viii) Financial Instruments

Financial Liabilities are measured at fair value and carried at their amortised cost in the Balance Sheet.

Financial Assets are divided into three classifications:

Amortised Cost – where cash flows are solely payments of principal and interest and the Authority business model is to collect these cash flows.

Fair value through Other Comprehensive Income – where cash flows are solely payments of principal and interest, and the Authority business model is to both collect these cash flows and sell the instrument and equity investments that the Authority has elected into this category.

Fair value through the Profit and Loss – all other financial assets.

ix) Government Grants and Contributions

Whether paid on account, by instalments or in arrears, government grants and third-party contributions and donations are recognised as due to the Authority when there is reasonable assurance that:

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

Amounts recognised as due to the Authority are not credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account until conditions attached to the grants or contributions have been satisfied. Conditions are stipulations that specify that the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset acquired using the grant or contribution are required to be consumed by the recipient as specified, or future economic benefits or service potential must be returned to the transferor.

Monies advanced as grants and contributions for which conditions have not been satisfied are carried in the Balance Sheet as creditors. When conditions are satisfied, the grant or contribution is credited to the relevant service line (attributable revenue grants and contributions) or Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income (non-ring-fenced revenue grants and all capital grants) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where capital grants are credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. Where the grant has yet to be used to finance capital expenditure, it is posted to the Capital Grants Unapplied reserve. Where it has been applied, it is posted to the Capital Adjustment Account. Amounts in the Capital Grants Unapplied reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account once they have been applied to fund capital expenditure.

x) Intangible Assets

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

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

Intangible assets are measured initially at cost. Amounts are only revalued where the fair value of the assets held by the Authority can be determined by reference to an active market. In practice, no intangible asset held by the Authority meets this criterion, and they are therefore carried at amortised cost. The depreciable amount of an intangible asset is amortised over its useful life to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. An asset is tested for impairment whenever there is an indication that the asset might be impaired – any losses recognised are posted to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Any gain or loss arising on the disposal or abandonment of an intangible asset is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

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

xi) Overheads and Support Services

The costs of overheads and support services are charged to those that benefit from the supply or service in accordance with the costing principles of the CIPFA Service Reporting Code of Practice 2023/24 (SeRCOP). The total absorption costing principle is used – the full cost of overheads and support services are shared between users in proportion to the benefits received, with the exception of:

- Corporate and Democratic Core – costs relating to the Authority’s status as a multi-functional, democratic organisation;
- Non – Distributed Costs – the cost of discretionary benefits awarded to employees retiring early and past service costs arising from current year decisions whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years.

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

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Basis of Allocation</u>
Central Department Salaries	Predominantly on estimated time spent by staff
Administrative Buildings	Employee Numbers
Computing Facilities	Employee Numbers

xii) Property, Plant and Equipment

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

Recognition

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the Authority and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an 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.

A de minimis level is set for Property, Plant and Equipment assets below which expenditure is not capitalised.

<u>Category of Asset</u>	<u>De minimis level</u>
Land and buildings	£10,000
Vehicles, plant and equipment	£1,500

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

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.

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

- Land and Buildings – fair value, determined as the amount that would be paid for the asset in its existing use (existing use value – EUV);
- Vehicles, Plant & Equipment – Depreciated Historical Cost.

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

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at fair value are revalued sufficiently regularly to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their fair 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 or exceptionally to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement where they arise from the reversal of a loss previously charged to a service.

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

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

The Revaluation Reserve contains revaluation gains recognised since 1 April 2007 only, the date of its formal implementation. There were no gains arising before that date.

Impairment

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

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

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

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

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided for on all Property, Plant and Equipment assets by the systematic allocation of their depreciable amounts over their useful lives.

Depreciation is calculated on the following basis:

- buildings – straight-line allocation over the useful life of the property, as estimated by the Valuer;
- vehicles, plant and equipment – a percentage of the value of each class of assets in the Balance Sheet, as advised by a suitably qualified officer.

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

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.

Depreciation is applied in the year in which the asset is acquired and is charged using the straight-line method.

The following table indicates the estimated remaining useful life of each type of asset owned by the Authority. Each category of asset consists of different assets with varying remaining lives and this table shows this range.

Type of Asset	Remaining Useful Asset Life at 31 March 2024
Property, Plant and Equipment	
Land	Indefinitely
Property	Up to 93 years
Equipment - ICT Hardware	Up to 5 years
- Other Equipment	Up to 19 years
Vehicles	Up to 4 years
Intangible Assets	
ICT Software	Up to 9 years

Disposals and Non-Current Assets Held for Sale

When it becomes probable that the carrying amount of an asset will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through its continuing use, it is reclassified as an Asset Held for Sale. The asset is revalued immediately before reclassification and then carried at the lower of this amount and fair value less costs to sell. Where there is a subsequent decrease to fair value less costs to sell, the loss is posted to the Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Gains in fair value are recognised only up to the amount of any previous losses recognised in the Surplus or Deficit on Provision of Services. Depreciation is not charged on Assets Held for Sale.

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.

The written-off value of disposals is not a charge against useable reserves, as the cost of long-term 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.

xiii) Reserves

The Authority sets aside specific amounts as reserves for future policy purposes or to cover contingencies. Reserves are created by appropriating amounts out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate service in that year to score against the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The reserve is then appropriated back into the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

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

The reserves held at 31 March 2024 are reported in notes 17 and 18.

xiv) Value Added Tax (VAT)

All VAT collected is payable to HM Revenue and Customs and VAT paid is recoverable. Income and expenditure in the Statement of Accounts excludes any amounts related to VAT other than any irrecoverable VAT which is charged to the service the supply related.

xv) Leases

Leases are classified as finance leases where the terms of the lease transfers 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. The Authority has one major lease, for its office accommodation, which has been classified as an operating lease.

Operating Leases

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as an expense of the service(s) benefitting from use of the leased property, plant or equipment. The impact of any lease incentives, such as rent-free periods, is spread across the whole term of the lease.

xvi) Revenue Expenditure Funded From Capital Under Statute

Expenditure incurred during the year that may be capitalised under statutory provisions but that does not result in the creation of a non-current asset has been charged to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement in the year. Where the Authority has determined to meet the cost of this expenditure from existing resources, a transfer in the Movement in Reserves from the General Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account then reverses out the amounts charged.

xvii) Provisions

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

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

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

xviii) Revenue Recognition

The accounts of the Authority are prepared on an accruals basis. This means that the sums due to the Authority during the year are included in the accounts, whether or not the cash has actually been received in the year in question. In particular:

- Income from fees and charges is recognised when the Authority provides the relevant goods or services;
- Interest receivable on investments is accounted on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instrument rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract;
- Where income has been recognised but cash has not been received, a debtor 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.

An exception to this policy is planning fee payments, when the period of charge does not coincide exactly with the end of the financial year. In this instance, income is accounted for as at the date when the planning application is registered on the Authority's planning system. This policy is consistently applied each year and therefore does not have a material effect on the year's accounts.

xix) Roundings

Figures are usually shown to the nearest one thousand pounds and therefore some minor roundings may occur.

xx) Going Concern

The financial statements are prepared on the assumption that the functions of the Authority will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. This is evidenced through the Authority's Medium-Term Financial Plan and recent stability in its core National Park Grant from Defra – see Note 30.

Note 2. NEW ACCOUNTING STANDARDS YET TO BE ADOPTED

The Code requires the Authority to disclose appropriate information relating to the potential impacts of any accounting standards that have been issued but have yet to be adopted.

It is not considered that any such upcoming changes in this regard will have a material impact on the overall financial position of this Authority. The implementation of IFRS 16 Leases has been delayed until 1 April 2024, its main impact likely to be recognition of our leased Town Hall offices on the Balance Sheet as an asset and a corresponding liability appearing for the contractual lease payments – as at 1 April 2024 the total value is estimated at £279,000 (see also Note 20).

Note 3. JUDGEMENTS MADE IN APPLYING ACCOUNTING POLICIES

In applying the accounting policies set out in this document the Authority has had to make certain judgements about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events.

There were no such critical judgements made in 2023/24 that would have a significant effect on the amounts in the financial statements.

Note 4. UNCERTAINTIES RELATING TO ASSUMPTIONS AND ESTIMATES USED

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported for assets and liabilities as at the balance sheet date and the amounts reported for the revenues and expenses during the year. However, the nature of estimation means that actual outcomes could differ from those estimates.

The key judgements and estimation uncertainty that have a significant risk of causing material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities with the next financial year (excluding those that are carried at fair value based on recently observed market prices) are as follows:

Item	Uncertainties	Effect if Actual Results Differ from Assumptions/Estimates
Pensions Liability	Estimation of the net liability (before any notional asset ceiling adjustment) 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 (Hymans Robertson LLP) is engaged to provide the Authority with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied.	The effects on the net pension's liability of changes in individual assumptions can be measured. For instance, a 0.1% increase in the discount rate assumption would result in a decrease in the pension liability of £367,000. During 2023/24, the Authority's actuaries advised that the net pension liability (the amount showing on the balance sheet) had increased by £295,000 as a result of previous estimates being corrected as a result of actual experience, decreased by £363,000 attributable to updating of the financial assumptions used and decreased by £330,000 attributable to updating of the demographic assumptions used.
Property, Plant and Equipment - Valuation	The Authority engages a qualified Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) surveyor to provide valuations of land and property assets. The values of assets are adjusted to their current values by reviewing the sales of similar assets in the region, applying indexation and considering impairment of individual assets. The valuer works closely with the finance staff on all valuation matters.	Significant changes in the assumptions of future income streams/growth, occupancy levels, ongoing property maintenance and other factors would result in a significantly higher or lower fair value measurement for these assets. Nevertheless, an adequate quantum of market evidence exists upon which to base opinions of value.

**Note 5. ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN FUNDING BASIS AND ACCOUNTING BASIS
UNDER REGULATIONS – GENERAL FUND**

Activity	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Adjustments on Developers' Contributions Unapplied		
Net Capital grants and contributions unapplied credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	140	133
Adjustments on Capital Adjustment Account:		
Financing of Capital Expenditure - Revenue	114	4
Financing of Capital Expenditure – Capital Grants Applied	270	220
Financing of Capital Expenditure – Developers' Contributions Applied	36	80
Depreciation, Amortisation and Impairment of Long-Term Assets	(57)	(55)
Revenue Expenditure funded from Capital Under Statute	(248)	(301)
Total	115	(52)
Adjustments on Pensions Reserve:		
Net charges made for retirement benefits in accordance with IAS 19	(1,238)	(485)
Employer's contributions payable to the Hampshire Pension Fund	416	428
Total	(822)	(57)
Adjustments on Accumulated Absence Account:		
(Increase)/Decrease in accrual	1	3
Net additional amount to be (credited)/debited to the General Fund Balance	(565)	27

Note 6. EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

This note provides a reconciliation of the main adjustments to the Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund Balances* to arrive at the amounts in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. The relevant transfers between reserves are explained in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

* In the case of this Authority, any final balance is added/deducted from the Revenue Support Reserve (not directly from the General Fund Reserve which simply contains our stipulated minimum reserve).

2023/24 Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statements amounts	Adjustments for Capital Purposes £000	Net change for the Pensions Adjustments £000	Other Differences £000	Total Adjustments £000
Conservation of the Natural Environment	2	3	(2)	3
Conservation of Cultural Heritage	2	2	0	4
Recreation Management and Transport	25	3	1	29
Promoting Understanding	4	4	(1)	7
Rangers, Estates and Volunteers	1	2	0	3
Development Control	13	10	0	23
Forward Planning and Communities	3	3	0	6
Corporate and Democratic Core	2	3	(1)	4
Net Cost of Services	52	30	(3)	79
Other income and expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis	(133)	27	0	(106)
Difference between General Fund surplus or deficit and Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(81)	57	(3)	(27)

2022/23 Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statements amounts	Adjustments for Capital Purposes £000	Net change for the Pensions Adjustments £000	Other Differences £000	Total Adjustments £000
Conservation of the Natural Environment	(6)	70	0	64
Conservation of Cultural Heritage	(4)	45	0	41
Recreation Management and Transport	(74)	51	0	(23)
Promoting Understanding	(7)	84	0	77
Rangers, Estates and Volunteers	0	29	0	29
Development Control	(13)	190	0	177
Forward Planning and Communities	(6)	65	(1)	58
Corporate and Democratic Core	(5)	58	0	53
Net Cost of Services	(115)	593	(1)	477
Other income and expenditure from the Expenditure and Funding Analysis	(140)	229	0	89
Difference between General Fund surplus or deficit and Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(256)	822	(1)	565

Adjustments for Capital Purposes:

This column adds in depreciation, amortisation and impairment and revaluation gains and losses in the service line, and for:

Other operating expenditure – adjusts for the capital disposals with a transfer of income on disposal of assets and the amounts written off for those assets.

Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure – the statutory charges for capital financing i.e. Minimum Revenue Provision and other revenue contributions are deducted from other income and expenditure as these are not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices.

Taxation and Non-specific Grant Income and Expenditure – capital grants are adjusted for income not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices. Revenue grants are adjusted from those received in the year to those receivable without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied throughout the year.

Net Change for Pension 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 Authority as allowed by statute and the replacement with current service costs and past service costs.

For Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure – the net interest on the defined liability is charges to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Other Differences:

Constitutes the amounts debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement with regard to the change in provision for accumulated absences.

Expenditure and Income Analysed by Nature	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Fees, charges and other service income	(485)	(481)
Interest and investment income	(39)	(132)
Government grants and contributions	(4,839)	(4,225)
Other grants and contributions	(270)	(280)
Total Income	(5,633)	(5,118)
Employee expenses	3,729	3,187
Other service expenses	2,247	1,740
Depreciation / Amortisation / Losses	57	55
Total Expenditure	6,033	4,982
(Surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	400	(136)

Note 7. GRANT INCOME

New Forest National Park Authority received an approved core National Park Grant of £3,251,501 from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (£3,691,501 in 2022/23)

Details of other grants and contributions received during the year are shown in the table below:

Grants and Contributions	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Service Specific Revenue Grants and Contributions (included in cost of services):		
Higher Level Stewardship - Government Contributions (Forestry England)	(127)	(182)
PedALL - Government Contributions (Lottery Community Fund)	(92)	(89)
PedALL - Non-Government Contributions	(63)	(45)
YouCAN – Government Contributions (Lottery Community Fund)	0	(189)
New2Nature - Government Contributions (Lottery Heritage Fund)	0	(32)
Farming In Protected Landscapes - Government Contributions (Defra)	(242)	(318)
Landscape Enhancement Initiative - Government Contributions (National Grid)	(101)	(99)
Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund - Government Contributions	(40)	0
Green & Blue Horizons - Government Contributions (National Lottery Heritage Fund)	(404)	0
Access for All - Government Contributions (Defra)	(86)	0
Artist in Residence - Government Contributions (ACE Lottery)	0	(22)
Other – Government Contributions	(55)	(43)
Other – Non-Government Contributions	(30)	(164)
Total	(1,241)	(1,182)
Capital Grants and Contributions:		
Developers' Contributions - Miscellaneous	(140)	(133)
Total	(140)	(133)
Total Grant and Contributions Income	(1,381)	(1,315)

Note 8. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEME

a) Participation in Pension Scheme

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

The Authority participates in the Hampshire County Council administered Local Government Pension Scheme (“the Fund”). This is a funded defined benefit final salary scheme, meaning that the Authority and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liabilities with the investment assets. The Hampshire Pension Scheme is operated under the regulatory framework for the Local Government Pension Scheme and the governance of the scheme is the responsibility of the Pension Fund Panel of Hampshire County Council. Policy is determined in accordance with the Pensions Fund Regulations. The investment managers of the fund are appointed by the Panel.

The principal risks to the Authority of the scheme are the longevity assumptions, statutory changes to the scheme, structural changes to the scheme (i.e. large-scale withdrawals from 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 required by statute as described in the accounting policies note.

b) Transactions Relating to Post-employment Benefits

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

Activity	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
<u>Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account</u>		
Cost of Services:		
Current service cost	1,009	458
Past service cost	0	0
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure:		
Net interest expense	229	27
Total Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	1,238	485
<u>Other Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement</u>		
Re-measurement of the net defined benefit liability:		
Return on plan assets (excluding the amount included in the net interest expense)	1,453	(706)
Actuarial gains and losses arising on changes in demographic assumptions	(263)	(330)
Actuarial gains and losses arising on changes in financial assumptions	(10,744)	(363)
Actuarial gains and losses due to liability experience	918	295
Adjustment for Asset Ceiling 2023/24	0	161
Total Post Employment Benefit Charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(7,398)	(458)
<u>Movement in Reserves Statement</u>		
Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or Deficit for the Provision of Services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the Code	7,814	886
Actual amounts charged against the General Fund Balance for pensions in the year:		
Employers' contributions payable to the scheme	416	428

Asset Ceiling

Under IFRIC14, an asset ceiling limits the amount of the net pension asset that can be recognised to the lower of (1) the amount of the net pension asset or (2) the present value of any economic benefits available in the form of refunds or reductions in future contributions to the plan. An adjustment has been made in the Accounts to apply this asset ceiling, as calculated by the actuary, as the year end results showed a net asset in the pension scheme.

Asset Returns

Asset returns over the accounting period have been higher than expected - this has led to a gain on assets over the accounting period.

Financial Assumptions

There have been changes to the financial assumptions over the period - the discount rate has increased by 0.25%, the CPI inflation assumption has increased by 0.15% and the salary increase assumption has increased by 0.15%. This has resulted in a more positive balance sheet position than if the financial assumptions at the start of the period had been used. The impact of this change is recognised in Other Comprehensive Income.

c) Pensions Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

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

Assets and Liabilities	31 March 2020 £000	31 March 2021 £000	31 March 2022 £000	31 March 2023 £000	31 March 2024 £000
Present Value of the defined benefit obligation	(19,204)	(25,947)	(25,248)	(16,669)	(17,305)
Fair Value of plan assets	11,913	15,252	16,548	15,783	17,466
Adjustment for Asset Ceiling	0	0	0	0	(161)
Net asset / liability arising from defined benefit obligation	(7,291)	(10,695)	(8,700)	(886)	0

Reconciliation of the Movements in the Fair Value of Scheme (plan) Assets:

Assets	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Opening fair value at 1 April	16,548	15,783
Interest Income	450	732
Re-measurement gain/(loss)	(1,453)	706
Contributions by the Employer	416	428
Contributions by Participants	164	168
Net Benefits Paid Out	(342)	(351)
Closing fair value at 31 March	15,783	17,466

Reconciliation of Present Value of the Scheme Liabilities (defined benefit obligation):

Funded Liabilities	2022/23	2023/24
	£000	£000
Opening present value at 1 April	(25,248)	(16,669)
Current Service Cost	(1,009)	(458)
Interest Cost	(679)	(759)
Contributions by Participants	(164)	(168)
Re-measurement (gains)/losses:		
Actuarial Gains/(Losses) arising from changes in demographic assumptions	263	330
Actuarial Gains/(Losses) arising from changes in financial assumptions	10,744	363
Actuarial Gains/(Losses) due to liability experience	(918)	(295)
Net Benefits Paid Out	342	351
Past Service Costs	0	0
Closing present value at 31 March	(16,669)	(17,305)

Local Government Pension Scheme assets (fair value) comprised:

Assets	31 March 2023	31 March 2024
	£000	£000
Equities	9,091 (57.6%)	8,003 (45.8%)
Government Bonds	2,604 (16.5%)	2,533 (14.5%)
Property	1,073 (6.8%)	1,302 (7.5%)
Cash	174 (1.1%)	140 (0.8%)
Other	2,841 (18.0%)	5,488 (31.4%)
Total	15,783 (100%)	17,466 (100%)

d) Basis and Risks for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

Liabilities 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 assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels etc.

Asset volatility – The liabilities used for accounting purposes are calculated using a discount rate set with reference to corporate bond yields. If assets underperform that yield, this will create a deficit in the accounts. The Fund holds a significant proportion of growth assets which, while expected to outperform corporate bonds in the long-term, creates volatility and risk in the short-term in relation to the accounting figures.

Changes in bond yield – A decrease in corporate bond yields will increase the value placed on the liabilities for accounting purposes, although this will be marginally offset by the increase in the assets as a result.

Inflation risk – The majority of the pension liabilities are linked to either pay or price inflation. Higher inflation expectations will lead to a higher liability value. The assets are either unaffected or loosely correlated with inflation, meaning that an increase in inflation will increase the deficit.

Life expectancy – The majority of the Fund’s obligations are to provide benefits for the life of the member following retirement, so increases in life expectancy will result in an increase in the liabilities.

Exiting employers – Employers who leave the Fund may have to make an exit payment to meet any shortfall in assets against their pension liabilities. If the employer is not able to meet this exit payment, the liability may in certain circumstances fall on other employers in the Fund.

McCloud / Sargeant – The scheme liabilities were updated two years ago to account for the past service costs associated with the McCloud / Sargeant legal judgements.

Virgin Media - In June 2023, the UK High Court (Virgin Media Limited v NTL Pension Trustees II Limited) ruled that certain historical amendments for contracted-out defined benefit schemes were invalid if they were not accompanied by the correct actuarial confirmation. The judgment has now been upheld by the Court of Appeal.

The Local Government Pension Scheme is a contracted out defined benefit scheme and amendments have been made during the period 1996 to 2016 which could impact member benefits. Work is being performed by the Government Actuary’s Department as the Local Government Pension Scheme actuary to assess whether section 37 certificates are in place for all amendments and some of these have been confirmed however, at the date of these financial statements, the full assessment is not complete. Until this analysis is complete, we are unable to conclude whether there is any impact to the liabilities or if it can be reliably estimated. As a result, New Forest National Park Authority does not consider it necessary to make any allowance for the potential impact of the Virgin Media case in its financial statements

The figures in this note have been prepared/estimated by Hymans Robertson LLP, an independent firm of actuaries, estimates for the Hampshire Pension Fund being based on a roll-forward of the latest full valuation of the scheme as at 1 April 2023.

The significant assumptions used by the actuary have been:

Financial & Mortality Assumptions	31 March 2023	31 March 2024
Rate of inflation – CPI	2.60%	2.75%
Rate of increase in salaries	3.60%	3.75%
Rate of increase in pensions	2.60%	2.75%
Rate of increase in deferred pensions	2.60%	2.75%
Rate for discounting scheme liabilities	4.60%	4.85%
Longevity at 65 for current pensioners (male)	23.3 Yrs	22.1 Yrs
Longevity at 65 for current pensioners (female)	25.7 Yrs	24.7 Yrs
Longevity at 45 for future pensioners (male)	23.8 Yrs	22.6 Yrs
Longevity at 45 for future pensioners (female)	26.7 Yrs	25.7 Yrs

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out above. The sensitivity analyses below have been determined based on reasonably possible changes of the assumptions occurring at the end of the reporting period and assumes for each change that the assumption analysed changes while all the other assumptions remain constant. The assumptions in longevity, for example, assume that life expectancy increases or decreases for men and women. In practice, this is unlikely to occur, and changes in some of the assumptions may be interrelated. The estimations in the

sensitivity analysis have followed the accounting policies for the scheme, i.e. on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method. The methods and types of assumptions used in preparing the sensitivity analysis below did not change from those used in the previous period.

Impact on the Defined Benefit Obligation in the scheme (as at 31 March 2024)	Increase of Assumption
	£000
Longevity (increase or decrease in 1 year)	692
Rate of inflation (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	364
Rate of increase in salaries (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	10
Rate of increase in pensions (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	364
Rate for discounting scheme liabilities (increase or decrease by 0.1%)	367

Further information on the Hampshire Pension Fund can be obtained from:

Pensions Services

Hampshire County Council

The Castle

Winchester, SO23 8UB

Telephone: (01962) 845588

Note 9. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND FINANCING

Capital expenditure may be paid for (financed) in various ways including borrowing, the use of internal resources, the receipt of grants or contributions and directly from revenue income. A requirement of capital accounting is that the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) needs to be calculated. The CFR shows the overall indebtedness of the Authority.

This table sets out the transactions required for the financing of capital expenditure for 2023/24:

	2022/23	2023/24
	£000	£000
Opening Capital Financing Requirement	0	0
Capital Investment		
Vehicles, Plant & Equipment Assets	125	4
Intangible Assets	48	0
Revenue Expenditure funded from Capital under statute (REFCUS)	248	301
Sources of Finance		
Revenue Provision	(114)	(4)
Developers' Contributions	(36)	(80)
Capital Grants & Contributions	(270)	(220)
Closing Capital Financing Requirement	0	0

Note 10. PROPERTY, VEHICLES, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

a) Valuation of Non-Current Assets

Expenditure on long term assets is capitalised provided that it yields benefits to the Authority for more than one financial year. Expenditure that does not increase the value of an asset is charged to revenue as it is incurred.

b) Analysis of Assets

The following list shows the range and number of assets owned by the Authority.

	2022/23	2023/24
Land	2	2
Property	2	2
Vehicles	7	7
Other Equipment	50	39
ICT Hardware	92	29
ICT Software	7	3
TOTAL	160	82

c) Movements on Non-Current Assets during the year

On 8 July 2014 the Authority was gifted a piece of land in Bransgore by Frampton Estates Ltd. The land was given on a 999-year lease for a peppercorn rent but restricting its future use to that for affordable housing.

The Authority built two semi-detached affordable homes on the site, completed in August 2016, and estimated their useful life at 100 years with straight-line depreciation charged. The Authority classified the land and properties as Community Assets and had them revalued by a professional valuer at Hampshire County Council Property Services (MRICS) as at 31 March 2022 on an 'EUV-SH' (Existing Use Value – Social Housing) basis for £400,000.

The Authority purchased a piece of land in Burley in 2021/22 for £40,000 with the intention to build two further affordable homes similar to those in Bransgore. The Authority classified the land as a Community Asset and had it valued by a professional valuer at Hampshire County Council Property Services (MRICS) - giving a current valuation of £40,000 as at 31 March 2022.

In line with the Authority's accounting policies, the land and buildings will be revalued at intervals not less than five years and sooner if any significant changes occur. There were no impairments in 2023/24.

Community Asset	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Gross Carrying Value	475	440
Accumulated depreciation & impairment	(35)	(4)
Net book value of assets at start of financial year	440	436
Movements in year:		
Depreciation	(4)	(4)
Net book value of assets at end of financial year	436	432

Vehicles, Plant and Equipment	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Valuation at purchase	557	665
Accumulated depreciation & impairment	(480)	(505)
Net book value of assets at start of financial year	77	160
Movements in year:		
Additions	125	4
Disposals	(17)	(47)
Depreciation	(41)	(37)
Depreciation written back on Disposals	17	47
Net book value of assets at end of financial year	160	127

Note 11. INTANGIBLE ASSETS

The intangible assets comprise wholly of computer software licences. These are recorded at historic cost and are amortised over their lives (estimated at 3-5 years) on a straight-line basis, commencing from date of acquisition. The amortisation charged for intangible assets in 2023/24 was £14,570. There were no impairments in 2023/24.

Intangible Assets	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Valuation at purchase	356	183
Accumulated amortisation & impairment	(314)	(105)
Net book value of assets at start of financial year	42	78
Movements in year:		
Additions	48	0
Disposals	(221)	(83)
Amortisation	(12)	(14)
Amortisation written back on Disposals	221	83
Net book value of assets at end of financial year	78	64

Note 12. DEBTORS

An analysis of the Authority's debtors as at 31 March is shown below. It relates to sums of money owed to the Authority for goods and services supplied during the year, but not paid for by 31 March, or where the Authority has paid for goods and services in advance of this date but where service provision is not receivable until the next financial year.

Debtors	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Government Departments	748	98
New Forest District Council	119	111
Other Debtors	76	77
Total	943	286

Note 13. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

This table shows the movement in cash in hand, at the bank and in deposits available within 24 hours during the year.

	At 1 April 2023 £000	Cash change in year £000	At 31 March 2024 £000
Cash and Cash Equivalents			
Cash in Bank / (overdraft)	736	537	1,273
Interest Due	3	1	4
Cash equivalent - Money Market Fund	500	0	500
Total	1,239	538	1,777

Note 14. CREDITORS

An analysis of the Authority's current liabilities as of 31 March is shown below. It relates to sums of money owed by the Authority for goods and services received during the year, but not paid for by 31 March, or where the Authority has been paid for goods and services in advance of this date but where service provision is not due until the next financial year.

	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Creditors		
Government Departments	65	171
New Forest District Council	46	77
Other Creditors	423	423
Total Creditors	534	671

Note 15. DEVELOPERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This account reflects developers' contributions received that will be released to finance future years capital expenditure. The developers' contributions shown on the Balance Sheet are split dependant on their repayment status. If they do not have any specified repayment conditions they are shown as Developers' Contributions Unapplied under Usable Reserves, or else they are classed as Liabilities. The split is shown below:

	2022/23 £000	New Receipts £000	Financing of Expenditure £000	2023/24 £000
Developer Contributions				
Creditors	0	0	0	0
Short Term Liabilities	0	0	0	0
Long Term Liabilities	0	0	0	0
Developers' Contributions Unapplied	(1,148)	(133)	80	(1,201)
Total Developers' Contributions Held	(1,148)	(133)	80	(1,201)

Note 16. TRANSFERS TO/FROM EARMARKED RESERVES

The Authority has created a number of earmarked reserves to cover expenditure in future years. This table details those reserves and their movement during the year.

Earmarked Reserve	Balance at 1 April 2022 £000	Transfers during 2022/23 £000	Balance at 1 April 2023 £000	Transfers during 2023/24 £000	Balance at 31 March 2024 £000
Landscape Partnership	(4)	4	0	0	0
Corporate Partnerships	(4)	4	0	0	0
Land Management	(7)	7	0	0	0
Vehicle Replacement	(20)	20	0	0	0
Green & Blue Horizons	(52)	52	0	0	0
ICT Replacement	(87)	60	(27)	27	0
Climate Change	(19)	15	(4)	4	0
Nature Recovery	(44)	32	(12)	12	0
Communications	(8)	0	(8)	8	0
Health & Wellbeing	(178)	0	(178)	0	(178)
Housing	(88)	(7)	(95)	(16)	(111)
YouCAN	0	0	0	(103)	(103)
LEI Scheme	(47)	47	0	(78)	(78)
PEDALL	(69)	12	(57)	(17)	(74)
Planning Grants	(29)	0	(29)	(22)	(51)
Land Advice Service	(86)	11	(75)	28	(47)
Sustainable Development	(62)	(2)	(64)	28	(36)
Rockford Farm	(33)	0	(33)	0	(33)
Pay	(10)	10	0	(30)	(30)
New Routes to Nature	0	0	0	(29)	(29)
WWII Legacy	(18)	0	(18)	0	(18)
Forest Farming	0	0	0	(17)	(17)
Green Halo / Greenprint	(15)	4	(11)	1	(10)
Building Maintenance	(7)	0	(7)	0	(7)
NF Transport	(21)	10	(11)	9	(2)
Capital/Major Projects	(533)	33	(500)	0	(500)
Planning/Risk Reserve	(138)	35	(103)	(17)	(120)
Financial Stability Reserve	0	(440)	(440)	44	(396)
Revenue Support Reserve	(19)	(22)	(41)	(22)	(63)
Total	(1,599)	(115)	(1,714)	(189)	(1,903)

Note 17. USABLE RESERVES

The Authority retains a General Fund Reserve to cover contingencies and unforeseen expenditure. This table shows the movement in the year together with other usable reserves. The balance will largely be used to fund future years' expenditure.

Usable Reserves	Balance at 1 April 2022 £000	Net Movement 2022/23 £000	Balance at 1 April 2023 £000	Net Movement 2023/24 £000	Balance at 31 March 2024 £000
General Fund	(300)	(50)	(350)	0	(350)
Earmarked Reserves	(1,599)	(115)	(1,714)	(189)	(1,903)
Developers' Contributions Unapplied	(1,044)	(104)	(1,148)	(53)	(1,201)
Total	(2,942)	(270)	(3,212)	(242)	(3,454)

Note 18. UNUSABLE RESERVES

Capital Adjustment Account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing their acquisition or enhancement under statutory provisions. The account is debited with the costs of depreciation, impairment and amortisations as assets are consumed and credited with the amounts set aside by the Authority for the financing of capital expenditure.

The account contains accumulated gains and losses on Property, Plant and Equipment assets arising before 1 April 2007. The balance on the Capital Adjustment Account is matched by long-term assets within the balance sheet and does not represent actual funds available to the Authority.

Capital Adjustment Account	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Opening Balance at 1 April	(559)	(674)
Depreciation/Amortisation/Impairments	57	55
Revenue Expenditure funded from Capital under statute	248	301
Financing of Capital Expenditure from Revenue Resources	(114)	(4)
Financing of Capital Expenditure from Developers' Contributions	(36)	(80)
Financing of Capital Expenditure from Capital Grants	(270)	(220)
Closing Balance at 31 March	(674)	(622)

Other Unusable Reserves:

Other Unusable Reserves	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Pension Reserve:		
Opening Balance at 1 April	8,700	886
Movement in Year (See Note 8)	(7,814)	(1,047)
Adjustment for Asset Ceiling 2023/24 (Note 8)	0	161
Closing Balance at 31 March	886	0
Accumulated Absences Account*:		
Opening Balance at 1 April	64	63
Movement in Year - Increase/(Decrease)	(1)	(3)
Closing Balance at 31 March	63	60

* Due to changed ways of working following the coronavirus pandemic, it was not possible to look at the flexi balances of staff as at 31 March 2024 and instead the most recent years' data was used as an estimate. Actual leave balances as at 31 March 2024 were used.

Note 19. FINANCING ACTIVITIES

Long-Term Investments

Money Market Investment

Under capital accounting rules the Authority is permitted to lend a proportion of its funds for more than 364 days. No loans had more than 364 days to run to maturity at the 31 March 2024.

Financial Instruments Balances

The borrowings and investments disclosed in the balance sheet are made up of the following categories of financial instruments (all short-term, Level 1):

	31 March 2023 £000	31 March 2024 £000
Financial Instruments		
Trade Creditors	534	571
Total Financial Liabilities	534	571
Investments:		
Loans & Receivables at amortised costs	1,500	2,000
Cash & Cash Equivalents:		
At amortised cost	739	1,277
At fair value	500	500
Other Assets:		
Trade Debtors at amortised cost	177	167
Total Financial Assets	2,916	3,944

Investments classified at amortised cost consist of:

- Loan to the UK Debt Management Office

Cash & Cash Equivalents consists of:

- Bank Current Account (Amortised Cost)
- Money Market Fund (Fair Value through Profit or Loss)

The gains and losses recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account in relation to financial instruments relate to Interest Income which was £132,000 for the year (total of £39,000 for 2022/23).

Note 20. LEASES

During 2011/12 the Authority moved into shared premises at Lymington Town Hall with New Forest District Council (the owners) and signed a 15-year lease. The premises are not owned by the Authority and therefore no asset is recorded in the Authority's accounts.

An initial rent-free period was negotiated within the lease, and this has been treated as a lease incentive in accordance with Authority's accounting policies. This saving has therefore been spread across the whole term of the lease. Consequently a £4,000 rent-free saving was made to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement during the year.

The annual rent is currently £108,000. Current future minimum lease payments due under the non-cancellable lease in future years are now:

	31 March 2023 £000	31 March 2024 £000
Lease Rental Payments		
Not later than one year	108	108
Later than one year but not later than 5 years	9	171
Later than 5 years	0	0
Total Lease Payments	117	279

Future lease payments in the table above have increased as the break clause (May 2024) has passed, without being taken up by the Authority, therefore the costs shown are now those until the end of the lease in November 2026.

During 2014/15 the Authority was given a donated asset (land) in Bransgore on a 999-year lease – two affordable homes have since been built on the site and it appears as an asset shown in note 10.

Note 21. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

During 2023/24 payments to Members of the National Park amounted to £58,676 compared to £61,791 the previous year. These figures include all allowances plus travel and subsistence payments.

Member	Allowance (£)	Expenses (£)	Total (£)	Appointed by
D Andrews	397	0	397	New Forest District Council
G Bailey (Chair of Planning Committee)	4,430	0	4,430	Test Valley Borough Council
D Bence (Authority Chair)	5,339	686	6,025	Secretary of State – National
S Bennison	397	43	440	New Forest District Council
G Bisson	967	0	967	Parish
R Clewer	2,215	0	2,215	Wiltshire County Council
Z Clewer	2,194	0	2,194	Wiltshire County Council
D Harrison	1,489	0	1,489	Hampshire County Council
P Heneghan (Chair of Resources Committee)	4,430	0	4,430	Secretary of State – National
V Mander (Deputy Chair of Authority)	3,215	0	3,215	Secretary of State – National
K Mans	1,481	0	1,481	Hampshire County Council
A McEvoy	(453)	0	(453)	Hampshire County Council
G Parker	4,656	684	5,340	Secretary of State – National
N Penman	2,215	0	2,215	Hampshire County Council
P Power	142	0	142	Standards Committee - Independent
C Rackham	2,215	0	2,215	New Forest District Council
J Sanger	774	0	774	Parish
A Sevier (Chair of Standards Committee)	1,837	231	2,068	New Forest District Council
V Sharp	156	0	156	Standards Committee - Independent
S Tarling	1,259	0	1,259	Parish
R Taylor	195	0	195	Parish
M Thierry	2,215	0	2,215	Hampshire County Council
S Trow (Deputy Chair of Planning Committee)	3,322	806	4,128	Secretary of State – National
L Parker-Jones	754	0	754	Hampshire County Council
J Reilly	1,809	184	1,993	New Forest District Council
D Tipp	1,809	129	1,938	New Forest District Council
D Poole	1,809	0	1,809	New Forest District Council
M Kendal (Deputy Chair of Standards Committee)	1,893	0	1,893	Hampshire County Council
M Davies	1,375	0	1,375	Parish
B Stratford	1,375	0	1,375	Parish
Total 2023/24	55,913	2,763	58,676	

Note 22. OFFICERS' REMUNERATION

The following table sets out the 2023/24 remuneration disclosures for Senior Officers whose full-time equivalent salary is less than £150,000 but equal to or more than £50,000:

Post holder information (Post title)	Salary (including Fees & Allowances) £	Total Remuneration excluding pension contributions £	Pension contributions (17.5%)* £	Total Remuneration including pension contributions £
Chief Executive	114,941	114,941	20,115	135,056
Executive Director Strategy and Planning	83,388	83,388	14,593	97,981
Head of Environment and Rural Economy	60,351	60,351	10,561	70,912
Head of Resources (Chief Finance Officer)	59,293	59,293	10,376	69,669
Solicitor and Monitoring Officer	40,575	40,575	7,101	47,676

Note: The Solicitor and Monitoring Officer is a part-time role, the full-time equivalent salary is £50,042.

The table below sets out the same information for 2022/23 for comparison:

Post holder information (Post title)	Salary (including Fees & Allowances) £	Total Remuneration excluding pension contributions £	Pension contributions (17.5%)* £	Total Remuneration including pension contributions £
Chief Executive	110,810	110,810	19,392	130,202
Executive Director Strategy and Planning	80,400	80,400	14,070	94,470
Head of Environment and Rural Economy	58,097	58,097	10,167	68,264
Head of Resources (Chief Finance Officer)	56,069	56,069	9,812	65,881

* The current rates and adjustments certificate for the Hampshire Pension Fund certifies a common rate for all employers, individual adjustments are added or subtracted from the common rate to produce individual employer rates. The individual adjustment for the New Forest National Park Authority gives a contribution rate of 17.5% of pensionable pay for 2023/24.

Note 23. TERMINATION BENEFITS

There were no compulsory redundancies or other paid departures agreed during the 2023/24 financial year (none in 2022/23).

Note 24. EXTERNAL AUDIT COSTS

The Authority incurred £40,100 (2022/23 £14,829) in fees from its appointed auditor, Ernst & Young LLP, relating to the external audit for 2023/24. It also paid Ernst & Young LLP a further £10,397 related to the 2021/22 audit and received an audit fee relief grant of £5,600 from government. There were no other services provided by the appointed auditor to the Authority this year.

Note 25. RELATED PARTIES

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

Central Government has effective control over the general operations of the Authority. It is responsible for providing the statutory framework within which the Authority operates, provides the majority of funding in the form of grants and prescribes the terms of many of the transactions that the Authority has with other parties. Details of transactions with government departments are set out in this document.

During 2023/24 New Forest District Council continued to provide some Financial Services, Human Resources, GIS, ICT and Health & Safety support to the Authority; the total cost of all these services in 2023/24 was £129,000 (£129,000 in 2022/23). The Authority also leases its offices from the Council and has other various transactions with it; total expenditure for the year was approximately £295,000 (£299,000 in 2022/23). During 202/24 the Authority provided ranger and archaeological services to New Forest District Council, the total cost of these services was £51,000 (£48,000 in 2022/23).

The land in Bransgore gifted to the Authority in 2014/15 on a 999-year lease by Frampton Estates Ltd which is owned by a former Member of the Authority, namely Mr. Richard Frampton, has been developed for affordable housing.

In 2015/16 the 15 UK National Parks established a joint company "National Parks Partnerships LLP" to develop corporate partnerships at a national level. All of the National Parks, including this Authority, have given initial funding of £80,500 each to the venture and a further £12,000 will be invested in early 2024/25.

One former Member and one Senior Officer of the Authority are Directors of New Forest Marque (New Forest Produce Ltd) who received a cash grant and staffing support from the Authority equating to around £25,000 in 2023/24 (£25,000 in 2022/23).

There were no other material transactions with any Chief Officers, Members or any other related parties during the year.

Note 26. PROVISIONS

No provisions have been established or utilised during 2023/24.

Note 27. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

The Authority is not aware of any contingent liabilities.

Note 28. NATURE AND EXTENT OF RISKS ARISING FROM FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Key Risks

As with any organisation, the Authority’s activities expose it to a variety of financial risks in the application of financial instruments, although the Authority does not require debt financing and currently does not have any debt exposure. As such the key risks are in relation to financial assets and are:

Key Risks	Definition	Risk Management Procedures
All Risks	Overall consideration of all risks	The Authority’s overall risk management procedures focus on the unpredictability of financial markets and implementing restrictions to minimise these risks. It ensures adoption of the Code of Practice requirements in full, a Treasury Policy Statement and Prudential Indicators, all of which are monitored and reported on at least twice a year.
Credit Risk	The possibility that other parties might fail to pay amounts due to the Authority	The Authority produces an Annual Treasury Investment Strategy setting out maximum levels of investment with certain counterparties and the use of ratings to fully evaluate them. Our most significant other credit risk is our trade debtors but there is no history of default, and all are due in under three months. The Authority holds no collateral as security.
Liquidity Risk	The possibility that the Authority might not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments	The proposed and maximum liquidity structure of the Authority investments are set out within the Annual Treasury Investment Strategy. The risk is significantly reduced due to our ability to

		access short term borrowings from the Markets if necessary.
Re-financing Risk	The possibility that the Authority might be requiring to renew a financial instrument on maturity at disadvantageous interest rates or terms	The Authority has a clear, wide set of potential counterparties and maturity timescales to reduce this risk at source. The Authority has no significant financial liabilities of longer than one year.
Market Risk	The possibility that financial loss might arise for the Authority as a result of changes in such measures as interest rates movements	The Authority is exposed to interest rate risk, but the impact would not be material – a 1% change in interest rates would impact by +/-£21,000 (0.4% of expenditure). The Authority has no shareholdings or assets/liabilities in foreign currencies.

Note 29. EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

The Authority is not aware of any significant events after the reporting period.

Note 30. GOING CONCERN

The concept of a going concern assumes that an authority's functions and services will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future and least twelve months from the date of audit completion. The provisions in the Code in respect of going concern reporting requirements reflect the economic and statutory environment in which local authorities and similar bodies operate. These provisions confirm that, as authorities cannot be created or dissolved without statutory prescription, they must prepare their financial statements on a going concern basis of accounting.

Local authorities and similar bodies carry out functions essential to the local community and are themselves revenue raising bodies (with limits on their revenue raising powers, arising only at the discretion of central government). If an authority were in financial difficulty, the prospects are thus that alternative arrangements might be made by central government either for the continuation of the services it provides or for assistance with the recovery of a deficit over more than one financial year. As a result of this, it would not therefore be appropriate for our financial statements to be provided on anything other than a going concern basis. The Authority's accounts are therefore produced under the Code and assume that the Authority's services will continue to operate for the foreseeable future.

The potential impact(s) of recent wider economic uncertainty, in particular the high levels of UK inflation and low growth, have been fully considered and factored into the future financial planning of the Authority, not least the comprehensive cashflow forecast completed up to March 2026. The Authority is therefore in a strong financial position to successfully react and withstand any potential further downside events.

The Authority's year-end reserve balances as at 31 March 2024, as reported in these statements, show £0.35m in the General Fund Reserve and a further £1.90m in Earmarked Reserves. The Authority has carried out an assessment of the impact of foreseeable changes on its future income and expenditure and is satisfied that there is no material uncertainty relating to the Authority's going concern.

The Authority is forecasting to be within its original budget set for 2024/25. However, should any overspend occur this year, a plan is in place for it to be financed initially through the repurposing of some Earmarked Reserves, these would then be replenished in future financial years. The Authority has undertaken cash flow modelling through to March 2026 which demonstrates our ability to work within our Capital Financing Requirement and Cash management framework, maintaining £0.35m in the General Fund Reserve and forecasting £1.77m in Earmarked Reserves.

The Authority thereby concludes that it is appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis, and that the Authority will be a going concern, 12 months from the date of the audit report, based on its cash flow forecasting and the resultant liquidity position of the Authority.

Note 31. AUTHORISATION OF ACCOUNTS FOR ISSUE

This Statement of Accounts has been authorised for issue on 8 February by Ms Victoria Mander (Deputy Chair) and Mr Nigel Stone, CPFA FCCA (Chief Finance Officer). The accounts reflect all known post balance sheet events up to the authorised for issue date.

Glossary

Accruals Basis

Accounting for income and expenditure during the financial year in which they are earned or incurred, not when money is received or paid.

Actuary

A person or firm who analyses the assets and future liabilities of a pension fund and calculates the employers' contributions required to cover existing and future costs.

Affordable Homes

Those for which the costs (in particular rent) are reduced to a maximum of 80% of normal market costs.

Amortisation

The process of writing down the cost of an asset or liability through depreciation or repayment of the principle over a suitable period of time.

Capital Adjustment Account

The account that reflects the difference between the costs of long-term assets consumed and the capital financing set aside to pay for them.

Capital Expenditure

Expenditure on the acquisition or creation of a long-term asset or expenditure that adds to the value of an existing assets (not merely maintenance).

Community Asset

Assets that an authority intends to hold in perpetuity, which have no determinable useful life and which may, in addition, have restrictions on their disposal.

Contingent Liability

A potential liability that is uncertain due to the outcome of an event that is yet to occur.

Creditor

An individual or body to which the Authority owes money as at the Balance Sheet date.

Current Asset

An asset that is disposable or realisable within one year.

Current Liability

A liability that is due to be settled within one year.

Current Service Costs

The increase in the present value of pension liabilities expected to arise from employee service within the given period.

Debtor

An individual or body that owes money to the Authority as at the Balance Sheet date.

Defined Benefit Pension Scheme

A pension scheme whereby the pensioner's benefits are specified, usually relating to the length of service and salary.

Depreciation

The measure of wearing out, consumption or other reduction, in the useful economic life of a long-term asset. This can arise from use, the passage of time or obsolescence through change.

Developers' Contributions

Where a development is judged to increase costs on the wider Community, a planning authority can request an appropriate payment as a condition of gaining planning permission. These are often called 'Section 106' agreements, after the relevant statute. Funds can be requested for 'Open Space' and/or 'Affordable Housing' and/or 'Transport' and/or 'Ecological Mitigation' needs.

Donated Asset

Assets that are received or acquired as gifts from other entities are termed as donated assets.

Earmarked Reserve

This is an amount in the Authority's accounts which has been set aside for a specific purpose.

Equities

Shares in a company (UK or overseas).

Fair Value

The amount for which an asset could be exchanged, or a liability settled, between knowledgeable & willing parties in an arm's-length transaction.

Financial Instrument

A financial instrument is a contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity.

General Fund

The excess income over expenditure in the Income and Expenditure Account after adjusting for movements to and from reserves and other non-cash items. This balance is needed as a cushion against unforeseen expenditure.

Impairment Loss

A loss arising from an event that significantly reduces an asset's value.

Intangible Asset

An asset that does not have physical substance but is identifiable and controlled by the Authority, bringing benefit for a period greater than one year (often ICT software).

Inventory

Goods that are acquired in advance of their use or resale. Their value at year-end is shown on the Balance Sheet and any sales/usage is charged through the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

The LGPS is a nationwide scheme for employees working in local government; the scheme for this Authority is administered by Hampshire County Council.

Long-term Asset

An asset that is held for a period greater than one year and used for the provision of services.

Net Book Value (NBV)

The value of an asset as recorded in the accounts – equating to the net current replacement or original cost less depreciation to date.

Operating Lease

A lease whereby the risks and rewards of ownership of the leased goods remain with the lessor (the owner of the asset).

Past Service Cost

The increase in pension liabilities from prior periods of employee service, arising out of new or improved retirement benefits.

Provisions

An estimated figure within the accounts for liabilities that are known to exist but cannot be measured accurately.

Related Party

An organisation, body or individual that has the potential to control or significantly influence the Authority, or to be controlled or influenced by the Authority.

Revenue Expenditure Funded From Capital Under Statute (REFCUS)

Expenditure that is classified as capital expenditure but does not result in the creation or enhancement of a long-term asset held by the Authority. Such expenditure is treated as revenue expenditure and charged to the relevant service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Straight-line Basis (Depreciation)

Dividing a sum equally over a number of years.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Disclaimer of Opinion

We were engaged to audit the financial statements of New Forest National Park Authority ('the Authority') for the year ended 31 March 2024. The financial statements comprise the:

- Authority Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement,
- Authority Balance Sheet,
- Authority Movement in Reserves Statement,
- Authority Cash Flow Statement
- the related notes 1 to 31 including material accounting information and including the Expenditure and Funding Analysis.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24.

We do not express an opinion on the accompanying financial statements of the Authority. Because of the significance of the matters described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we have not been able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

Basis for disclaimer of opinion

The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (Statutory Instrument 2024/907) which came into force on 30 September 2024 required any outstanding accountability statements for years ended 31 March 2015 to 31 March 2023 to be approved not later than 13 December 2024 and the accountability statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 to be approved not later than 28 February 2025 ('the backstop date').

The audit of the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 for New Forest National Park Authority were not completed for the reasons set out in our disclaimer of opinion on those financial statements dated 29 November 2024.

Our audit work in the current year was focused on transactions in the year and the current year balance sheet.

As a result of the disclaimer of opinion in the prior year and the scope of our audit work which was impacted by the backstop date, we do not have sufficient appropriate audit evidence over the following:

- in the balance sheet and accompanying notes: the opening balances and closing reserves position.
- in the comprehensive income and expenditure account and accompanying notes: comparatives and income and expenditure transactions that are impacted by the opening balances shown in the prior year balance sheet.
- in the cash flow statement and accompanying notes: opening balances, comparatives and in-year cash flow movements that are calculated as a movement between the opening and closing balance sheet.

Therefore, we are disclaiming our opinion on the financial statements.

Matters on which we report by exception

Notwithstanding our disclaimer of opinion on the financial statements we have nothing to report in respect of whether the annual governance statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit, performed subject to the pervasive limitation described above, or our knowledge of the Authority.

We report to you if:

- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we are not satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2024.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

Responsibility of the Chief Finance Officer

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Chief Finance Officer's Responsibilities set out on page 7, the Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom, 2023/24, for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view and for such internal control as the Chief Finance 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 Chief Finance Officer is responsible for assessing the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Authority either intends to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

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

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our responsibility is to conduct an audit of the Authority's financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and to issue an auditor's report.

However, because of the matters described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we were not able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

We are independent of the Authority in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and the Code of Audit Practice 2024 and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

Scope of the review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice 2024, having regard to the guidance on the specified reporting criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2024, as to whether the New Forest National Park Authority had proper arrangements for financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined these criteria as those necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether the New Forest National Park Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy,

efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2024.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether the New Forest National Park Authority had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Delay in certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate until the NAO, as group auditor, has confirmed that no further assurances will be required from us as component auditors of New Forest National Park Authority.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of New Forest National Park Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 85 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

REDACTED

Simon Mathers (Key Audit Partner)

Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)

Southampton

10 February 2025