

**Appendix 1 - Opening the Books Recommendations Tracker**

Ref	Recommendation	Accountable Officer	Update at November 2023	RAG Rating
1.	<p>A more comprehensive process for identifying current and expected financial pressures should be implemented, to take account of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• future spending pressures</li> <li>• key budget assumptions affecting grant funding and taxation income,</li> <li>• historical accounting issues</li> <li>• expected levels of General Fund reserves and working balances</li> <li>• MRP and interest implications of any new Capitalisation Directions (CDs) approved.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	<p>Assurance meetings are underway - a monthly budget assurance process and independent challenge of expenditure takes place. This is in addition to Cabinet and Scrutiny &amp; Overview Committee review. The assurance meetings provide the Corporate Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the Chief Executive with an opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the forecast outturn, review risks and opportunities, and ensure that savings are delivered and income targets are met. The meetings ensure the Council is doing all it can to reduce overspends and deliver a balanced budget.</p> <p>Two sets of Star Chamber meetings have taken place in 2023 (July and September) for 2024-25 budget setting. These have allowed the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance to scrutinise directorate and corporate budget assumptions and pressures for revenue and capital.</p> <p>Historical accounting issues have been dealt with, redrafting the 2019-20 accounts and the updated accounting treatments will be fed through the following years' accounts.</p> <p>General Fund working balances of £27.5m are being maintained. Other reserves balances are being updated as we work through redrafting the prior years' accounts.</p> <p>MRP and interest implications of Capitalisation Directions have been refreshed and incorporated into the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).</p>	Complete
2.	<p>New and emerging financial pressures identified from R1 above should be reported to members as part of budget monitoring reports, together with a summary of their expected impact on future General Fund balances. This information should help to inform consideration of the Council's overall financial position and any potential requirement for further Government support.</p>	Corporate Director of Resources	<p>Growth was added to 2023-24 directorate budgets to meet known pressures. The 2023-24 budget also included £7.3m budget held in Corporate for adjustments to correct General Fund recharge budgets for recharges to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), Public Health, capitalisation of salaries and corporate support (overhead) recharges. This budget will be allocated during 2023-24 through the monthly financial performance reports as the service level agreements (SLA's) are finalised for HRA and Public Health recharges, and when the review of salary capitalisation and corporate support recharges is finalised.</p> <p>Financial pressures are reported through the monthly financial performance reports and are being considered for the 2024-25 budget and MTFS.</p>	Complete
3.	<p>If the CD adjustment in the financial statements is significantly different from the amount set out in the Direction for that financial year, the Statement of Accounts should explain why.</p>	Director of Finance	<p>To be picked up as the prior year accounts are prepared/finalised.</p>	To be progressed
4.	<p>As CD adjustments represent material items of account they should be separately identified in the Movement in Reserves Statement and the material items note.</p>	Director of Finance	<p>To be picked up as the prior year accounts are prepared/finalised.</p>	To be progressed
5.	<p>The accounting treatment adopted for material CD adjustments should be set out in accounting policy disclosures.</p>	Director of Finance	<p>To be picked up as the prior year accounts are prepared/finalised.</p>	To be progressed
6.	<p>Disclosure notes which reference the CD should be internally consistent.</p>	Director of Finance	<p>To be picked up as the prior year accounts are prepared/finalised.</p>	To be progressed
7.	<p>The Council's Treasury Management Strategy should be more transparent about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how forecast capital receipts are being used to finance different types of capital expenditure</li> <li>• how CDs are funded, and</li> <li>• how MRP charges are being calculated.</li> </ul>	Head of Pensions and Treasury	<p>Further improvements will continue in future years' Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) reports. The TMS and its associated mid-year and outturn reports include details of the funding sources used to finance the capital programme. For 2023-24 and the next two years, capital receipts are to be used almost entirely to finance the capitalisation directions and this is made clear in the tables in the reports.</p> <p>Please see comment on Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charges included under recommendation 8 below.</p>	Underway

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8.	Detailed MRP calculations should be consistent with Treasury Management and budget reports.	Head of Pensions and Treasury	The Head of Pensions and Treasury liaises with the accountants working on the budget reports to ensure consistency. The TMS includes as an appendix the Council's MRP Policy and the detailed calculations are consistent with this Policy. The TMS and associated treasury management reports include the latest available MRP calculations, including those in the most recent Statement of Accounts (Capital Expenditure and Capital Financing note) and in current and medium term budgets.	Complete
9.	The Council is prioritising the use of capital receipts to fund current and future CDs and has recently approved a more ambitious asset disposal strategy to generate additional capital receipts. However, future budget forecasts and financial modelling may need to reflect the fact that if sufficient capital receipts are not generated within anticipated timescales, any CDs not funded from capital receipts would attract MRP at 5% for the next 20 years.	Director of Finance	Dialogue is continuing with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) about options to resolve the cost of borrowing pressures from legacy debt. Current forecasts for capital receipts are meeting the budgeted timing and amount of receipts, however this will need to be reviewed annually as part of the budget setting and MTFS process.	To be progressed
10.	Improvements to the processes that support budget planning and management in adult social care services should be prioritized, to embed a consistent knowledge and use of systems; therefore minimizing inconsistent datasets, to better support service management and budget setting.	Director of Finance	Adult social care services have implemented transformation and improvement projects to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services and in preparation for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection. The quality and use of data has been improved, which supports better service management, budget planning and monitoring. The Adult Social Care & Health strategic finance team is involved in the transformation and improvement projects, and the management capacity within this finance team is being strengthened in the new finance structure (with two Finance Manager posts, rather than one, supporting the Head of Strategic Finance).	Complete
11.	Collective understanding about the cost components of adult social care budgets has significantly improved since 2021. This approach should now be extended so that the income element of the budget, particularly care charges and service-based grant income are equally well understood.	Director of Finance	The management capacity within the Adult Social Care and Health finance team is being strengthened in the new finance structure (with two Finance Manager posts, rather than one, supporting the Head of Strategic Finance) and this will support further improvements. An adult social care workstream has been set up within the Council's Income and Debt Project, which will improve understanding, processes and monitoring of charging, monitoring and debt collection.	Complete
12.	Financial modelling used to predict the unit cost and demand for social care need to be kept under review to reflect Government changes and should be refined and updated as further information becomes available.	Director of Finance	Financial modelling has been used to support budget planning for 2024-25, as well as transformation and improvement projects.	Complete
13.	Further work on demand modelling also need to be carried out across health and social services to ensure that current predictions of demand and future activity levels are robust.	Director of Finance	Demand modelling has been used to support budget planning for 2024-25, as well as transformation and improvement projects.	Complete
14.	The Council needs to ensure that healthcare providers and commissioners make appropriate contributions both to the funding of individual care packages and to the more strategic aspects of service delivery.	Corporate Director of Resources	Adult and children social services are planning a project to further support clients and their families to apply for continuing healthcare (CHC) and discussions with partner organisations will commence to ensure fair contributions towards the costs of the safeguarding partnerships.	To be progressed
15.	Financial modelling should be integrated across the Council, to recognize the potential impact that MTFS savings in other areas of spending (particularly housing) might have on the demand for adult social services.	Director of Finance	The Council utilises monthly assurance meetings and the "Star Chamber" process to check financial modelling and cross-Council impacts from service changes, savings proposals, etc.	Complete

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16.	The Council should review its current workforce strategy and ensure that it becomes an employer of choice for adult services.	Corporate Director of Adult Social Care and Health	The workforce strategy is regularly reviewed to improve recruitment and retention.	Complete
17.	Going forward, the MTFS may need to develop a more transformational approach which builds on the approach already adopted in the recent review of eligibility criteria for adult social care.	Corporate Director of Resources	A more transformative approach has been adopted for the identification of MTFS savings for 2025-27.	Complete
18.	Implementation of the High Needs Management Recovery Plan (HNMRP) needs to be kept under regular review.	Corporate Director of Children's, Young People and Education	The recovery plan is regularly reviewed as part of our Directorate oversight and through the Safety Valve monitoring. This includes financial updates through the financial performance reports and meetings with the Department for Education to review our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).	Complete
19.	Corporate budgets and High Needs Management Recovery Plan implementation plans need to reflect the upfront investment required to realise longer term savings in High Needs provision.	Corporate Director of Children's, Young People and Education	We are working towards a balanced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget in 2025-26. There has been investment in our Locality Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Support Model which is an Early Intervention Model aimed at supporting Children and Young People's (CYP's) needs at the earliest opportunity. Additional capacity has been created within our Special Schools to ensure CYP are educated within the borough and to reduce the need for places in Non-Maintained Independent Schools outside of the borough.	Complete
20.	Commissioning processes and contract monitoring arrangements should be sufficiently challenging for all service providers, with contract documentation that clearly sets out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the cost and quality of service the Council expects,</li> <li>• eligibility criteria, and</li> <li>• contract monitoring arrangements.</li> </ul>	Corporate Director of Children's, Young People and Education	The Head of Service leads a contracts pipeline meeting for all commissioning leads that informs a monthly meeting with the Cabinet Member focused on contract compliance, provider performance and future plans.	Underway
21.	The Council has significantly improved its understanding of how demand for services influences the revenue budgets in Children's services, but it needs to keep forecasting models under review. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• forecast reductions in placement costs for children in care are not in line with national trends across the rest of the UK,</li> <li>• nationally, increases in reported numbers of children with disabilities (CWD) are also anticipated and the Council needs to work closely with local health services to model expected future demand</li> <li>• demand is also increasing for statutory child protection and safeguarding services, which needs to be recognized in future budgets</li> <li>• there needs to be a greater understanding about the impact that financial savings made in other parts of the Council, especially housing and homelessness services, might have on demand for children services.</li> </ul>	Corporate Director of Children's, Young People and Education	Forecast and modelling of placement costs has been further developed and is now scrutinised at the monthly finance assurance meetings chaired by the Chief Executive.	Complete

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22.	Recent improvements made in the working relationships between Children's services and the corporate finance team, and in the processes put in place to support effective budget management, need to become fully embedded in day-to-day service delivery. To facilitate this process, the Council has contracted directly with the DfE Financial Adviser for a further 12 months' support which should facilitate embedding their expertise into the Children's Services team.	Director of Finance	The new Strategic Finance structure will support the embedding of these improvements. Consultation on the new structure has finished and recruitment is now commencing to posts that are not filled permanently.	<b>Underway</b>
23.	The Council should ensure that information in relation to staffing, budget management and forecasting is accurate and up-to-date, and is embedded in accessible and user-friendly systems so that common data sets can be shared between Children's services and support functions such as HR, payroll and finance.	Director of Finance	The Oracle improvement programme includes an HR workstream (alongside the finance and procurement workstreams) to improve the recording, monitoring and reporting of staffing establishments. The initial scoping work, including the review of current systems and processes, has just commenced.	<b>To be progressed</b>
24.	The Council should consider strengthening early help and prevention services, to help reduce demand for care placements in the borough.	Corporate Director of Children's, Young People and Education	Early help, prevention and intervention services for young people have been brought together under the new post of Head of Specialist Children's Services.	<b>Complete</b>
25.	There is a well thought through sufficiency strategy for foster carers in the borough, and a transformation project to increase in-house foster care is now in place for 2023-24. A move to more in-house foster care could potentially reduce placement costs by 40 – 50%, so delivering this strategy should be a Council priority.	Corporate Director of Children's, Young People and Education	The fostering transformation project that aims to increase the number of in-house foster carers is on track.	<b>Underway</b>
26.	There is now a Direct Payment policy for the 0-17 CWD service, but take-up is relatively low and could be expanded.	Corporate Director of Children's, Young People and Education	Direct payment rates have improved and are now over 40% of care packages provided for children.	<b>Complete</b>
27.	Budget setting spreadsheets and financial modelling tools should be understandable by staff outside the corporate finance team, easy to use and maintain, and link back readily to Council reports.	Director of Finance	All budget setting spreadsheets and financial modelling tools have been revised to be more readily understandable.	<b>Complete</b>
28.	Financial modelling and budget reports should be clearer about anticipated growth, funding changes and expected savings and should ensure that this information is accurately and consistently presented to decision-makers.	Corporate Director of Resources	The budget setting process commenced earlier for 2024-25, with the MTFS Update report to Cabinet in October being a month earlier than the previous year, allowing more time for internal decision makers and scrutiny. The published proposed savings and growth have also included more information than last year, with a short description and the potential staffing impact. As well as proposed growth and savings, the MTFS Update report included assumptions on funding levels.	<b>Complete</b>

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29.	2023/24 budget reports could be made easier to understand by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• highlighting key messages for members in the summary report</li> <li>• setting out savings and growth figures separately</li> <li>• setting out assumptions about funding changes in appendices, and</li> <li>• ensuring that all appendices are consistent with the summary report.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	The format and content of budget reports were revised for 2023-24.	Complete
30.	Financial modelling already underway to quantify budget gaps for 2023/24 and future years should, as a minimum, be extended to 2025/26 and the updated assumptions underpinning these plans should be included in budget reports.	Corporate Director of Resources	The MTFS Update report published for Cabinet in October 2023 was extended to show financial modelling of the budget gap over a 4 years period (rather than a 3 years period the year before) and explained the assumptions in the report and appendices.	Complete
31.	Financial modelling should take account of all cost pressures identified, including historical accounting issues and new and emerging financial risks.	Corporate Director of Resources	Financial modelling has now taken account of all cost pressures.	Complete
32.	2023/24 budget reports need to be clear about unavoidable spending growth and the plans in place to manage demand-led items e.g., social care and utilities budgets, down to unavoidable levels.	Corporate Director of Resources	The MTFS Update report published for Cabinet in October 2023 was extended to show financial modelling of the budget gap over a 4 years period (rather than a 3 years period the year before) and explained the assumptions in the report and appendices.	Complete
33.	Until the Council's overall financial position has stabilised, any other proposals for revenue growth should be reconsidered, unless there is a clear expectation that these can generate additional savings.	Corporate Director of Resources	Revenue growth is limited to essential response for service provision and improvement to Value For Money (VFM). Previously indicated/agreed growth for future years was also reconsidered as part of the 2024-28 MTFS Update.	Complete
34.	Section 25 report should present a realistic assessment of the Council's current and expected financial position, and should be expanded to comply with the Local Government Act 2003 by reporting specifically on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expected levels of General Fund balances and reserves,</li> <li>• all identified spending pressures (which should be quantified),</li> <li>• the s151 officer's opinion on the adequacy of those balances,</li> <li>• the split between earmarked reserves and working balances,</li> <li>• confirmation that working balances will be cash-backed,</li> <li>• any new earmarked reserves which need to be established, and</li> <li>• any proposed transfers to and from earmarked reserves.</li> </ul>	Corporate Director of Resources	To be picked up for the 2024-25 Section 25 report to full Council in February/March 2024.	To be progressed

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35.	To provide additional context for decision-makers, the section 25 report could also include information on levels of General Fund balances at neighbouring authorities, and CIPFA guidance on setting levels of balances and reserves.	Corporate Director of Resources	To be picked up for the 2024-25 Section 25 report to full Council in February/March 2024.	To be progressed
36.	Monthly budget monitoring reports should clearly set out the Council's target level of General Fund working balances and compare this to expected balances at the year end. If a significant shortfall is identified, the Council should as a priority either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop plans for bridging the gap, or</li> <li>• consider the requirement for additional Government support.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	This has been implemented. Officers are proposing to not produce a Period 1 narrative financial performance report in future years to allow appropriate resource to produce the end of year accounts in an accurate and timely manner.	Complete
37.	Current savings plans should be rationalised and consolidated, with any duplicated items removed. All savings plans should have nominated "owners" who are responsible for delivering the savings identified within specified timescales set out in budget reports.	Director of Finance	2023-24 savings achievement is monitored on a monthly basis and previously indicated/agreed savings for future years were also reviewed as part of the 2024-28 MTFS Update. All savings business cases have a stated Lead Officer.	Complete
38.	Larger savings plans, say over £0.5m, should have detailed business cases which clearly identify the cost of delivering these anticipated savings, and are subject to robust scrutiny before being included in the budget.	Corporate Director of Resources	Savings business case templates include a section for implementation costs and were reviewed in "Star Chamber" meetings before being proposed in the budget consultation.	Complete
39.	Progress on the delivery of major savings initiatives should be regularly reported to members in addition to progress in delivering target savings overall.	Corporate Director of Resources	The monthly financial performance reports to Cabinet include narration in the directorate sections on savings that are at risk, as well as the delivery of overall target savings being shown in a table at directorate summary level. Officers are proposing to not produce a Period 1 narrative financial performance report in future years to allow appropriate resource to produce the end of year accounts in an accurate and timely manner.	Complete
40.	The Council has successfully implemented transformational change in a number of areas but may need to extend this approach in order to develop more ambitious savings plans.	Corporate Director of Resources	A more transformative approach has been adopted for the identification of MTFS savings for 2025-27.	Complete
41.	The Council needs to put in place a much clearer process for identifying and accounting for Transformation costs, which only treats such costs as capital expenditure where they meet Government guidance criteria in full.	Director of Finance	An improved process has been implemented with bid forms for transformation funding and coding of transformation costs to specific revenue cost centres that have been set up in the corporate directorate.	Complete
42.	To meet current Government guidelines, the Council should also ensure that any Transformation costs which are capitalised are financed from capital receipts and not borrowing.	Director of Finance	Implemented.	Complete

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43.	The Council should develop a Capital Strategy in line with the current requirements of CIPFA's Prudential Code. This Strategy should clearly set out how capital investment is prioritised and include a requirement for projects previously approved by members to be revisited in the light of the current financial position.	Director of Finance	The Capital Strategy was improved with the help of PWC for 2023-24 to meet this recommendation. Previously approved projects have been revisited as part of both 2023-24 and 2024-25 budget setting rounds.	Complete
44.	An updated version of the rolling three-year capital programme should be presented to members for approval as part of 2023/24 budget reports.	Corporate Director of Resources	The capital programme was agreed by full Council in March 2023 (as part of the budget reports) and the proposed capital programme for the next budget has been further extended to a 5 years programme (2024-29).	Complete
45.	The Council's TMS should set out the assumptions and key risks underpinning expected changes to capital funding streams.	Head of Pensions and Treasury	The current TMS includes changes in funding sources and versions from 2024-25 onwards will highlight key risks.	Underway
46.	The Council should aim to reduce its dependence on borrowing to fund capital investment, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying sources of non-government grant funding, and</li> <li>• generating additional capital receipts from asset sales.</li> </ul>	Corporate Director of Resources	The Council has adopted this approach in financing its capital programme.	Complete
47.	Information contained within the TMS and used to calculate key prudential indicators should be consistent internally and with revenue budgets and capital spending plans approved by Full Council.	Head of Pensions and Treasury	The Head of Pensions and Treasury liaises with the accountants working on the budget reports to ensure consistency.	Complete
48.	The TMS should include up to date financial information and clear performance targets for all types of treasury and non-treasury investments in terms of security, liquidity and yield. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regarding loans to third parties, security arrangements, due diligence processes, and the arrangements in place for monitoring repayment and assessing the possibility of default</li> <li>• regarding investments in council companies, the arrangements for managing performance against financial and non-financial targets, and agreed exit strategies for non-performing companies.</li> </ul>	Head of Pensions and Treasury	The Annual Investment Strategy, as stated in the TMS, emphasises the primacy of "security" over any other investment objective. Details of investment instruments and counterparties to be used are provided in the TMS. Within these overarching constraints, optimum returns are sought in line with potential earnings estimated by external advisers and included in the TMS. In addition to internal procedures, details of specific loans taken out or matured over the previous six months are included in the mid-year review and future outturn reports.	Complete

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49.	The Council's TMS needs to be more explicit, and more realistic about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whether new borrowing will represent external loans or utilisation of existing liquid resources</li> <li>• expected timings of any new external borrowing, and</li> <li>• whether this borrowing will be long or short term</li> <li>• the impact new loan debt will have on revenue debt charges and General Fund budgets in future years.</li> </ul>	Head of Pensions and Treasury	<p>Whilst ongoing improvements will be sought, the TMS and mid-year review include information in respect of three financial years covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Capital Financing Requirement;</li> <li>•Liability benchmarks;</li> <li>•Details of current borrowing;</li> <li>•Borrowing strategy;</li> <li>•Borrowing in advance of need and debt re-scheduling;</li> <li>•Sources of borrowing;</li> <li>•Long term debt profile; and</li> <li>•Details of specific loans taken out or matured over the previous six months</li> </ul> <p>The impact of taking on new loan debt and the risks therein are taken into account in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p>	Underway
50.	The Council should update its TMS, revenue budgets, and medium-term financial plans to reflect more up to date assumptions about future interest rates.	Head of Pensions and Treasury	The TMS includes a substantial appendix commentating on expected future movements in interest rates as supplied by the Council's external advisers and a paragraph covering borrowing policy in relation to possible future movements in interest rates. The advisers' advice is updated in the mid-year review.	Complete
51.	Given the expected increase in UK interest rates going forward, the Council should also consider the potential benefits of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a debt reduction strategy, and</li> <li>• replacing short term, variable rate borrowing with long term, fixed rate loans where repayment profiles are matched against the expected useful life of the asset.</li> </ul>	Corporate Director of Resources	The Council has a strategy in place to reduce debt through asset disposals (albeit hampered by the need to use capital receipts to fund capitalisation directions) and regularly reviews borrowing/refinancing options.	Complete
52.	The Council's published MRP policy should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain the MRP framework and calculation options are as set out in current statutory and non-statutory guidance,</li> <li>• highlight any significant changes to the guidance since last year, and</li> <li>• confirm that these requirements are being correctly applied.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	The Council's MRP policy was updated for 2023-24.	Complete
53.	The Council should review its MRP policy and underlying calculations, to confirm that the annual charge has been calculated in line with statutory and non-statutory guidance, and that realistic levels of MRP have been built into General Fund budgets.	Director of Finance	The MRP charge for 2019-20 was reviewed as part of the restatement of the Statement of Accounts for that year. Subsequent years will be checked as the annual accounts are brought up to date.	Underway
54.	Corporate guidance should be provided on key accounting areas such as the preparation and evidencing of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bank reconciliations</li> <li>• other key reconciliation processes</li> <li>• bad debt write-offs, and</li> <li>• calculation of bad debt provisions at the year-end.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	The new Strategic Finance structure will support the production and improvement of corporate guidance. The new structure creates a new Finance Manager post (reporting to the Chief Accountant) for systems development, guidance notes and training.	To be progressed



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55.	Bank reconciliations should be completed weekly, with copies provided to the corporate finance team together with evidence confirming that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each bank statement reconciles back to the ledger,</li> <li>• all suspense and holding account items have been cleared, and that,</li> <li>• cash flow forecasts used to make treasury management decisions have been updated as necessary.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	This improvement is contingent on the implementation of recommendation 54 above.	To be progressed
56.	A “dashboard” process (or equivalent) should be established to confirm that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeder system reconciliations are undertaken monthly throughout the year,</li> <li>• any reconciling items are investigated,</li> <li>• mis-postings have been corrected, and</li> <li>• all suspense and holding account balances have been cleared.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	The new Strategic Finance structure includes a new Accountant post reporting to the systems Finance Manager to add capacity to ensure that monthly feeder system reconciliations are carried out. A dashboard process will be implemented once the new structure has been recruited into.	To be progressed
57.	Bad debt provisions should be calculated on a consistent basis, based on the age of the debt and a realistic assessment of collectability. As a general rule, based on practices that we have observed elsewhere, all debts over 5 years old should be written off and all debts over 2 years old should be at least partially provided for.	Director of Finance	The calculation of bad debt provisions has been reviewed and figures are being updated in the prior years' accounts.	Complete
58.	The Council is carrying a significant amount of debt which is more than 7 years old and, although much of this is fully provided for, most of these debts should be written off.	Corporate Director of Resources	An Income and Debt project has been set up to review income collection processes and the achievability of collecting historic debt.	To be progressed
59.	A Prepared by Client (PBC) list should be obtained from the audit team and used to ensure that a comprehensive set of working papers is produced each year.	Director of Finance	To be picked up for future years' audits.	To be progressed
60.	Templates should be introduced to ensure that working papers are prepared to a consistent standard and support all transactions, disclosures and balances in the Statement of Accounts.	Director of Finance	The new Strategic Finance structure will support the development of templates, through the creation of three Finance Manager posts under the Chief Accountant (for closing & reporting, capital & property companies, and systems).	To be progressed
61.	Closedown work should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• detailed review of year-end working papers at pre-audit stage</li> <li>• analytical review on all material transactions, disclosures and balances.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	To be picked up for future years' closedowns.	To be progressed

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62.	Working papers should specifically address new audit requirements on key accounting estimates for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• land and property valuations</li> <li>• IAS 19 disclosures, and</li> <li>• any material provisions or accounting estimates.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	To be picked up for future years' closedowns.	To be progressed
63.	Timely production of year-end accounts and in-year financial information should be a corporate priority going forward, with visible and effective leadership ensuring that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• financial statements are published by 30 September each year, and</li> <li>• outturn reports are published on a regular basis throughout the year.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	Timely production of new year-end accounts will continue to be difficult as we catch up on prior years' accounts.  Financial performance reports are published monthly. Officers are proposing to not produce a Period 1 narrative financial performance report in future years to allow appropriate resource to produce the end of year accounts in an accurate and timely manner.	To be progressed
64.	Closedown plans should be reviewed and updated to ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the key tasks identified reflect all Code and PBC requirements,</li> <li>• all tasks are allocated to named individuals, and that,</li> <li>• as much work as possible is completed in advance of 31 March each year.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	To be reviewed for 2023-24 closedown.	To be progressed
65.	Closedown work should be less dependent on a small number of staff within the corporate finance team by involving all service-based finance staff as well as Exchequer and Treasury Management personnel.	Corporate Director of Resources	To be reviewed for 2023-24 closedown.	To be progressed
66.	Staff briefings on year-end close should be developed and extended to include, for example, technical training on Code disclosures and audit requirements.	Director of Finance	To be reviewed for 2023-24 closedown.	To be progressed
67.	Written guidance should be provided to all staff involved in year-end close.	Director of Finance	To be reviewed for 2023-24 closedown.	To be progressed
68.	Project management arrangements should ensure that all audit queries are responded to promptly and comprehensively.	Director of Finance	To be reviewed for future years' audits.	To be progressed
69.	Regular meetings between the Section 151 officer and the local external audit team, and regular progress reports to the Audit Committee, should be used to monitor both the production of year-end accounts and the progress being made by external audit.	Corporate Director of Resources	This is being carried out to bring prior years' accounts up to date.	Complete

Ref	Recommendation	Accountable Officer	Update at November 2023	RAG Rating
70.	The published Statement of Accounts should either include the complete version of the Annual Government Statement, a summarised version to meet Code requirements, or, as a minimum, clear signposting as to where the AGS can be found.	Corporate Director of Resources	Agreed.	Underway
71.	2021/22 pension fund accounts should be completed as soon as possible. The 2021/22 pension fund annual report should also be drafted and published as this is now overdue.	Head of Pensions and Treasury	It is expected that the 2021-22 and 2022-23 draft annual reports will be published by 31 January 2024.	Underway
72.	Going concern disclosures in Note 1.2 should explain why the going concern assumption remains appropriate given the Council's current financial position.	Director of Finance	To be picked up as the prior year accounts are prepared/finalised.	To be progressed
73.	The Statement of Accounts should include credit risk disclosures on trade and loan debts, together with an aged analysis of debtors and summary information on debts past due date not yet impaired.	Director of Finance	To be picked up as the prior year accounts are prepared/finalised.	To be progressed
74.	To demonstrate that all relevant Code requirements have been met, the Council should complete CIPFA's detailed disclosure checklist each year.	Director of Finance	To be picked up as the prior year accounts are prepared/finalised.	To be progressed
75.	Spreadsheet-based cross-referencing and consistency checks should be extended to include cross-checks on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• movements in useable and unusable reserves</li> <li>• the Expenditure and Funding Account, and</li> <li>• the subjective analysis of Net Cost of Services in Note 1C.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance	To be picked up as the prior year accounts are prepared/finalised.	To be progressed
76.	Some complex accounting matters have been outstanding for several years. Resolving these matters, and making appropriate adjustments to prior year's financial statements, should be regarded as a priority.	Corporate Director of Resources	This has been picked up in the restatement of the 2019-20 Statement of Accounts.	Complete