Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 2025/26
Date:	18 September 2026
Reporting Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
Contact Officer:	Helen Lyons, Corporate Finance Manager

Is this report restricted? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒ X

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number ☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision ☐
After Council Decision ☐
Sometime in the future ☐
Never ☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒ X

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to present to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the Statement of Accounts of the Council, including the Annual Governance Statement, for the period ending 31 March 2026.
1.2	The Statement of Accounts are an important element of the council's overall corporate governance framework as they provide assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the council's finances and its financial position.
1.3	The Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2026, as attached, have been prepared in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2025/26 based on International Financial Reporting Standards and the Department for Communities Accounts Direction, Circular LG 07/2026.
1.4	The Chief Executive in his role as Chief Financial Officer can confirm that the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2026 has been prepared in the form directed by the Department for Communities and in his opinion the Statement of Accounts give a true and fair view of the income and expenditure and cash flows for the financial year and the financial position as at the end of the financial year.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to 1. Agree that this paper should not be subject to call-in on the basis that an inability to immediately implement the decision would result in a breach of statutory duty in publishing the Council's Statement of Accounts by the legislative deadline of 30th September 2026; and 2. approve the Council's Statement of Accounts and incorporated Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2026.
3.0	**Main report**
	Key issues
	Normal Approval Process
3.1	The Committee will be aware that the normal approval process allows for the Statement of Accounts to be presented to the Audit and Risk Panel to allow them to review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council prior to this report going to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
3.2	The Audit and Risk Panel was presented with these Statement of Accounts at the meeting on 11 September and a copy of the draft Report to those charged with Governance (RTTCWG) for 2025/26 was also provided. The Statement of Accounts have been updated for the audit adjustments

requested to date by NIAO. NIAO have currently identified five audit recommendations, however the audit is still ongoing. The Panel reviewed the annual Statement of Accounts and draft RTTCWG. The Panel did not identify any concerns arising from the Statement of Accounts that needed to be brought to the attention of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Audit Opinion

3.3 It is the Local Government Auditor's opinion that:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with relevant legal and statutory requirements and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2025-26, of the financial position of Belfast City Council as at 31 March 2026 and its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- the statement of accounts has been properly prepared in accordance with the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and the Department for Communities directions issued thereunder; and
- the part of the Remuneration Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with the Department for Communities directions made under the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015; and
- the information given in the Narrative Report for the financial year ended 31 March 2026 is consistent with the financial statements.

Reserves

3.4 **General Fund**

The credit balance on the General Fund has decreased to £60.4m (of which £41.2m relates to specified reserves). The movement on the reserves balance is summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Summary of Reserves Position

Opening Balance	£64.6m
In year movement in reserves	£(4.2)m
Closing Balance	**£60.4m**
Specified Reserves at year end	£41.2m
Balance Available	**£19.2 m**

3.5 **Capital Fund £12,351,855**

The Capital Fund is made up of:

- Belfast Investment Fund (£6,173,649) -created to support key partnership projects to regenerate Belfast and help lever substantial funds from other sources
- Local Investment Fund (£235,213) to fund smaller local regeneration projects
- City Centre Investment Fund (£5,061,185) to support the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Plans
- Social Outcomes Fund (£881,808) to support City Centre projects which might not generate a direct financial return but would enhance the overall City Centre offer and support the attraction of investment.

3.6 **Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund £8,610,149**

This fund is to support neighbourhood regeneration and tourism projects in local neighbourhoods.

3.7 **Leisure Mobilisation Fund £512,392**

This fund is to support the Leisure Transformation Programme and will cover programme level costs including communications, engagement and procurement costs.

3.8 **Capital Receipts Reserve £5,154,574**

These are capital receipts which have originated primarily from the sale of assets, and which have not yet been used to finance capital expenditure.

3.9 **Other Fund Balances and Reserves £1,342,867**

This relates to the Election Reserve (£651,213) which has been set up to smooth the cost of running council elections, the BWUH Subvention Fund (£384,160) to support national and international organisations in bringing their conferences to Belfast and the BWUH Sinking Fund (£307,494) to support planned maintenance and future capital works at the new exhibition centre.

3.10 **Debt**

The overall level of trade debtors had decreased this year from £4.73m at 31 March 2025 to £3.97m at 31 March 2026. An analysis of trade debtors, inclusive of VAT, for the last two years is shown below:

Table 2: Analysis of Trade Debtors

	31 March 2026	31 March 2025
Less than three months	£2,945,848	£3,683,053
Three to one year	£486,512	£785,792
More than one year	£539,547	£262,985
Total	**£3,971,907**	**£4,731,830**

3.11 **Creditors**

The Department for Communities has set councils a target of paying invoices within 30 days. During the year the council paid 99,133 invoices totalling £208,858,841.

	The average time taken to pay creditor invoices was 15 days for the year ended 31 March 2026. The Council paid 87,557 invoices within 10 days, 95,441 invoices within 30 days, and 3,692 invoices outside of 30 days. The council endeavours to process invoices as quickly as possible and has an improvement plan to support this process.
3.12	**Annual Governance Statement (AGS)** The Statement of Accounts include the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the year 2025/26, which has been prepared in line with the Accounts Directive provided by the Department for Communities, NIAO guidance and is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government’ and the recent ‘Addendum’. Specifically the AGS sets out: • scope of responsibility • the purpose of the governance framework • the governance framework in place • review of effectiveness • update on the significant governance issues declared last year • significant governance issues for current year
	The AGS is approved by the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources committee and the Chief Executive. It is subject to review by NIAO as part of their annual audit.
3.13	Financial & Resource Implications None
3.14	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment None
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 - Detailed Statement of Accounts titled “Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 2026”