

showing how the net difference between them is equal to the difference between Lines 7 and 8.

- 5.167. In deciding what needs to be explained, authorities should think about noting the following:
- One-off items of spending or income from last year and this year;
  - Regular items of spending and income where the relevant activity (for example the number of hall bookings) has risen or fallen between the two years or where prices have not changed in line with inflation (for example a price freeze on charges for hall rentals);
  - Items of spending and income that used to be regular but which were made for the last time last year and do not feature in the current year (for example a grant to a sporting association that went out of existence); and
  - Items of spending and income that were made for the first time in the current year and will be made regularly in future years (for example running expenses for a newly opened one stop shop facility).
- 5.168. As authorities have no legal powers to hold revenue reserves other than those for reasonable working capital needs, or for specifically earmarked purposes, whenever an authority's year-end general reserve is significantly higher than the annual precept or rates and special levies, an explanation should be provided to the auditor.

#### The importance of secure email systems and GOV.UK

- 5.169. Almost all parish and town councils now have an official website, as well as official email accounts. An increasing number of councils also provide official email accounts for their councillors as well as for their Clerk and other officers. When choosing a domain name for the council's website and emails, many local council websites are appropriately making use of the exclusive GOV.UK domain (for example, ourparishcouncil.gov.uk), with email addresses being linked to that domain as well.

There are a number of important reasons why local councils of all sizes should ideally obtain an appropriate GOV.UK domain name for their council, and equally importantly, a secure and centrally-managed email system to sit behind it.

First and foremost, obtaining a GOV.UK domain for your council website and email accounts demonstrates the council's official local government status. Members of the public are increasingly cyber security aware, so a GOV.UK domain can also help to build trust, credibility and visibly demonstrates authenticity. Many people will now reasonably expect a local council to have a GOV.UK domain name.

You can find out more information about obtaining a GOV.UK domain name [here](#). Your county association may also be able to offer advice and support in this area and you should seek advice from them in the first instance. Some county associations even have local deals with other tier authorities, offering GOV.UK email accounts