



CABINET– 7TH JULY 2021

SUBJECT: PROVISIONAL REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN FOR 2020/21

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with details of the provisional revenue budget outturn for the 2020/21 financial year prior to the annual external audit of the accounts by Audit Wales.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In advance of the 2020/21 Financial Statements being audited and presented to the Governance & Audit Committee on the 30th September 2021 and then Council on the 14th October 2021, this report provides an overview of the Council's performance against the revenue budget for the 2020/21 financial year.
- 2.2 Members receive detailed budget monitoring reports as part of the Scrutiny process throughout the financial year.
- 2.3 The report also includes a range of proposals for the use of surplus General Fund balances and the use of service reserves.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to: -
- 3.1.1 Note the provisional 2020/21 revenue budget outturn position.
- 3.1.2 Agree that the £1.122m Council Tax Collection grant received from the Welsh Government (WG) in 2020/21 should be set aside in an earmarked reserve to help mitigate the financial impact of a potential further shortfall in Council Tax collection rates in the 2021/22 financial year.
- 3.1.3 Endorse a recommendation to Council to maintain the General Fund balance at £11.047m, representing 3% of the 2021/22 net revenue budget.
- 3.1.4 Endorse the proposed use of surplus General Fund balances totalling £9.215m as

detailed in section 5.9 of the report, prior to consideration by Council on the 13th July 2021.

3.1.5 Note the use of service reserves totalling £1.773m that have been agreed by Officers using delegated powers as detailed in Appendix C.

3.1.6 Approve the proposed use of service reserves totalling £2.441m as set out in section 5.10 of the report.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To ensure that Cabinet Members are aware of the provisional revenue budget outturn for the 2020/21 financial year and supportive of the proposed use of reserves.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 The 2020/21 revenue budget was approved prior to the Covid-19 outbreak which subsequently placed unprecedented changes and demands on the services that we deliver to our citizens.

5.1.2 Cabinet will be aware that the Authority has incurred significant additional costs due to the pandemic and has also lost income in several key areas. The Welsh Government (WG) has provided substantial funding to Local Authorities to offset additional costs and income losses through the Covid-19 Hardship Fund, with the total funding allocated to Caerphilly CBC during the 2020/21 financial year being £24.2m.

5.1.3 In addition to the funding provided to offset additional costs and income losses, WG also provided funding to Local Authorities to assist with other financial pressures such as increases in applications for Council Tax support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS), and funding to help mitigate a reduction in Council Tax collection rates due to the economic impact of the pandemic. Specific funding and grants have also been provided for a range of other purposes including digital transformation and financial support in lieu of approved budgetary savings not being delivered due to the impact of the pandemic.

5.1.4 WG has currently committed to providing financial support through the Covid-19 Hardship Fund to the end of September 2021. The position beyond this date is uncertain and this presents a significant financial risk that will need to be closely monitored throughout the 2021/22 financial year.

5.1.5 The 2020/21 provisional outturn position is attached as Appendix A and is summarised below:-

	£m
Net Service Directorate Underspends	12.914
Miscellaneous Finance Underspend	3.772
Council Tax Surplus	1.743
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Underspend	10.018
Schools Underspend	10.070
Total: -	38.517

- 5.1.6 The level of underspend for the 2020/21 financial year is significantly higher than in previous years and reflects the unprecedented impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on changes in working practices and the scale of financial support provided, large elements of which were not provided until the latter part of the financial year.
- 5.1.7 After adjusting for earmarked reserves, 50% of underspends are carried forward by Directorates and are available to meet the requirements of these service areas. The remaining balance is transferred to the General Fund. Overspends are normally funded from future Directorate budgets or balances brought forward from previous years. Service reserves held by Directorates can be used to fund one-off cost pressures or to pump-prime service reconfiguration, but they cannot be relied upon to deliver balanced budgets on a recurring basis.
- 5.1.8 The following paragraphs provide details of the more significant variations against budget by service area.

5.2 Education and Lifelong Learning (£13.105m Underspend)

- 5.2.1 Overall the Directorate is reporting an underspend of £13.105m, of which £10.070m relates to schools. The schools in-year underspend is ring-fenced and as a consequence school balances have increased from £1.3m to £11.3m as at the 31st March 2021. Only 2 schools are carrying forward a deficit balance into the 2021/22 financial year.
- 5.2.2 The underspend for schools is greater than projected due to the receipt of additional grant funding from WG in the latter part of the financial year. This funding totalled circa £5m and supported expenditure that the schools had originally anticipated funding themselves. In addition, some expenditure that schools planned to incur during the year was not incurred due to the impact of the pandemic and schools closures.
- 5.2.3 In addition to the above, schools have been supported by WG through the Covid-19 Hardship Fund. In total £2.3m has been claimed by schools from the Fund for the 2020/21 financial year.
- 5.2.4 Excluding the schools position, Education & Lifelong Learning (including Home to School/College Transport) is reporting an underspend of £3.035m. The most significant variances are as follows: -

	(Over)/ Under £000's
Home to School/College Transport	900
Pension Costs of School Based Staff	292
Relief Supply Cover – Maternity in Schools	(249)
Psychological Service & Schools Based Counselling	397
Advisory & Language Support	132
Professional Statementing	137
EOTAS, Additional Support, Out of County	260
Early Years Central Team	221
Youth Service	185
Library Service	186

- 5.2.5 Early on in the pandemic it was agreed across Wales that transport contract values would be supported to the level of 75% (April to August 2020), with a real concern that operators would go out of business without support and not be available when schools and colleges reopened. There were only been a small number of contracts that continued during the early months of the pandemic, relating to some pupils who accessed the Trinity Fields Hub. The £900k underspend is not a normal position with regards to the Home to School/College budget, with the savings arising as a direct consequence of the pandemic.
- 5.2.6 The £292k underspend on the Pension Costs of School Based Staff budget follows a more favourable budget position for schools in 2020/21, alongside the challenge of making any staff changes in schools during the end of academic year 2019/20 due to the impact of Covid-19.
- 5.2.7 The £249k overspend on the Relief Supply Cover budget is in line with that reported in recent years (2018/19 £153k overspend; 2019/20 £187k overspend). This budget funds the maternity absence of staff members in schools with the school funding the replacement teacher costs. Due to the trend of overspends in recent years, £200k growth was allocated to this budget as part of the approved revenue budget for the 2021/22 financial year.
- 5.2.8 The £397k underspend for the Psychology Service, School Based Counselling and the Statementing Team are in part linked to late grant funding from WG to support Additional Learning Needs (ALN). In 2020/21 this additional funding displaced circa £226k of anticipated spend from Education core budgets. Further savings in the Psychology Service, Advisory Support and Language Support Teams were linked to in-year vacancies and delays in recruitment.
- 5.2.9 The underspends of £132k for Advisory & Language Support and £137k for Professional Statementing are due in the main to delays in filling vacant posts.
- 5.2.10 The £260k underspend on the Education Other Than At School (EOTAS), Additional Support and Out of County budgets is largely due to reduced spend on the Out of County budget. The EOTAS provision accommodates learners who are unable to attend and learn in a mainstream school setting. The EOTAS Strategy was agreed by Cabinet on the 30th July 2020 and further work will be required to support the financial modelling of the Strategy moving forward. The outturn position on this budget is an improvement on previous years but does include budgetary growth that was allocated for the 2020/21 financial year, delays in some spend linked to the pandemic and new practices linked to pupil support. This is an area where budgets will need to be re-aligned as the EOTAS Strategy is progressed and the outcome of the Additional Support review is determined.
- 5.2.11 The £221k underspend on the Early Years Central Team budget is due to the success of the team in accessing specific grant funding to support staff related costs. The grant funding relates to a number of WG grants, in particular Flying Start and Childcare.
- 5.2.12 The underspends in relation to the Youth and Library Services are linked to premise and resource savings that were a direct consequence of the impact of the pandemic. Both budgets benefited from some in-year staff vacancies and the Youth Service was able to access some additional grant funding in-year.

5.3 Social Services (£5.547m Underspend)

- 5.3.1 The overall outturn position in respect of Social Services for the 2020/21 financial year is an underspend of £5.547m. This consists of an underspend of £121k in respect of Children's Services, an underspend of £3.994m for Adult Services, an underspend of £1.011m for Business Support Services and an underspend of £421k relating to transport costs.
- 5.3.2 Of the £5.547m Directorate underspend, £2.995m can be attributed to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes £1.2m due to the closure of day care facilities, £0.5m through the use of redeployed staff to cover staff absences instead of using casual staff, £0.56m in respect of one-off and short-term services and £0.72m in respect of travel restrictions for staff and service users.
- 5.3.3 A further £2.147m of the underspend can be attributed to the maximisation of grant funding. Welsh Government and the Regional Health & Social Care Partnership Board released additional one-off grant funding late in the financial year that was used to underwrite costs that had already been committed.
- 5.3.4 Staffing vacancies across the Directorate led to an underspend of £1.4m including £410k due to the delayed opening of Ty Isaf residential home for children, £650k in respect of other Children's Services posts and £310k in respect of Adult Services management, fieldwork and administrative posts.
- 5.3.5 Additional one-off underspends and non-recurring income streams contributed to a further underspend of around £1.2m including £370k in respect of prior year adjustments, £450k in respect of deferred income from service users, £180k in respect of budgets managed by partner organisations and £73k in respect of services provided on behalf of other Local Authorities.
- 5.3.6 The underspends identified in paragraphs 5.3.2 to 5.3.5 were partially offset by an overspend of £1.57m in respect of children looked after and an overspend of £0.66m in respect of non-residential care for adults. The underspends described above are largely of a non-recurring nature, but these overspends reflect the increasing demand for these services, which has necessitated additional investment of £2.5m in the Social Services budget for the 2021/22 financial year.

5.4 Communities (£1.648m Underspend)

- 5.4.1 The overall net outturn position for the Communities Directorate is an underspend of £1.648m.
- 5.4.2 The Regeneration & Planning Division is reporting an overall net underspend of £148k.
- 5.4.3 Regeneration is reporting an underspend of £191k, the most significant elements of which are reduced staffing costs in Tourism Venues and Community Regeneration, one-off funding from WG to administer Covid-19 Business Grant payments and an underspend on the Events budget due to cancellations arising from the pandemic.
- 5.4.4 Planning has a net overall overspend of £43k which is primarily due to shortfalls in income in relation to planning applications, building control and search fees.
- 5.4.5 Overall the Infrastructure Division is reporting a net underspend of £233k. £185k of this underspend has been transferred into the Winter Maintenance Earmarked Reserve, with the remaining balance of £48k being transferred into the NCS Sirhowy Enterprise Way Earmarked Reserve.

5.4.6 The Public Protection Division is reporting an overall underspend of £447k, the most significant elements of which are the following: -

- £52k for Community Safety Wardens due to delays in filling vacant posts.
- £93k in Enforcement also largely due to delays in filling vacant posts.
- Pollution underspend of £154k partly due to vacant posts together with grant funding received from WG.
- Catering underspend of £55k.

5.4.7 The Community & Leisure Division is reporting a net underspend of £895k, including the following: -

- Waste Strategy & Cleansing Operations net underspend of £897k, the most significant elements of which are underspends of £648k for Civic Amenity Sites, £194k for Organic Recycling, £77k for Bulky Waste, £289k on the Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) budget and £495k on Cleansing. These underspends are partially offset by overspends of £464k in Residual Waste, £374k in Dry Recycling and £249k in Commercial Waste due to reductions in income.
- Parks, Countryside and Cemeteries Services net underspend of £426k, including underspends in Cemeteries of £170k, £94k for Parks, Allotments and Playgrounds, £84k for Outdoor Facilities and £120k in HQ costs. These underspends are partially offset by an overspend of £41k on Countryside budgets.
- Leisure Services is reporting an overspend of £290k, consisting in the main of an overspend of £185k in Leisure Centres and an overspend of £129k in Outdoor Education. These overspends are partially offset by an underspend in Community Centres.
- Building Cleaning shows an underspend of £191k due to additional income being generated and delays in purchasing an additional vehicle
- Vehicle Maintenance & Fleet Management is reporting an overspend of £327k. This area is subject to an ongoing Service Review under the Council's Transformation Programme.

5.48 There is an overspend of £77k in relation to un-budgeted Directorate corporate costs linked to audit fees, bank charges and advertising costs for the Director's post.

5.5 Corporate Services – (£2.684m Underspend)

5.5.1 The final outturn position for the Directorate of Corporate Services is an underspend of £2.684m. The most significant elements of the underspend are the following: -

- Corporate Finance is reporting an overall underspend of £1.009m. A significant element of the underspend relates to one-off funding received from WG for the administration of the Covid-19 NDR Business Grants, and funding provided to compensate for lost court fee income. Underspends have also been generated through delays in filling a number of vacant posts.
- Legal & Governance is reporting a net underspend of £127k due in the main to staff not currently being at the top of their pay scales, some temporary reduced

hours, and savings associated with working from home.

- Business Improvement Services is reporting an overall net underspend of £198k after taking into account the agreed use of reserves for a Fleet Review Officer and two senior posts in the Transformation Team.
- There is a net underspend of £881k for Customer & Digital Services. This includes underspends of £412k in Information Technology, £317k in Procurement and £151k in Customer Services. The most significant elements of these underspends are delays in appointing to vacant posts, staff not being at the top of pay scales and some secondments to the Track, Trace & Protect (TTP) service.
- For People Services there is a net underspend of £204k. This includes underspends of £45k for Human Resources and £172k for Health & Safety which are partially offset by small overspends on other budgets.
- Property Services is reporting a net underspend of £80k and there is an underspend of £362k on Housing Services, excluding the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

5.6 Miscellaneous Finance - (£3.772m Underspend)

5.6.1 Budgets in Miscellaneous Finance underspent by £3.772m, the most significant elements of which are the following: -

- £1.139m underspend on Interest Payments due to delays in borrowing requirements.
- £220k underspend on City Deal borrowing.
- £225k underspend on the Targeted Rate Relief budget.
- £308k on Free School Meals funding held centrally that was not required during the financial year.
- £247k on the Carbon Energy Tax budget.
- £2.962m one-off WG Covid-19 related funding received in the last quarter of the financial year in respect of Digital Transformation and funding in lieu of approved 2020/21 revenue budget savings not being achieved due to the pandemic.
- These underspends were partially offset by overspends on other budgets including £113k on Counsel Fees, £286k to fund the in-year impact of the 2020/21 teachers' pay award, a reduction in investment income of £904k and £149k in relation to a legal judgement in respect of Deri Lakes.

5.7 Council Tax Collection – (£1.743m Surplus)

5.7.1 The surplus figure of £1.743m is inclusive of a one-off Council Tax Collection grant received from WG of £1.122m. This grant has been provided by WG in recognition of the adverse impact that Covid-19 has had on Council Tax collection rates. The actual Council Tax surplus is £621k, which represents a decrease of £429k on the assumed level of £1.050m for the 2020/21 financial year.

5.7.2 As at the 31st March 2021 Council Tax arrears totalled £6.905m which is an increase of £2.701m on the arrears position as at the 31st March 2020. This demonstrates the significant economic impact of the pandemic and the situation is not likely to improve in the short-term. With this in mind it is recommended that the £1.122m WG funding should be set-aside in an earmarked reserve as there is currently no indication from

WG that similar funding will be made available in the 2021/22 financial year. This will help mitigate the financial impact of a potential further shortfall in collection rates.

5.8 Housing Revenue Account (£10.018m Underspend)

- 5.8.1 The majority of the underspend for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is as a direct consequence of Covid-19, with Operatives being unable to enter tenants' homes and Officers not able to engage with tenants effectively. £1.2m of the underspend is in the Building Maintenance budget, in particular the cyclical budget and revenue projects. A further underspend of £1.1m is reported on non-pay budgets such as office costs and various departmental projects. The method of calculating the bad debt provision was also revised in-year, to address a recommendation made during the 2019/20 audit of accounts, which resulted in an underspend of £1.5m .
- 5.8.2 A further £576k of the HRA underspend is in Capital Financing Recharges due to re-profiled borrowing which resulted in lower debt charges. A further £994k of the underspend is due to salary savings, mainly from the turnover of staff throughout the year. Income achieved was slightly lower than budgeted (£177k) and the WHQS delivery team reported a £157k underspend due to vacant posts which directly benefitted the WHQS Programme as it resulted in less fees being recharged to capital. The in-house team however spent £3.5m less than budgeted due to the restrictions from Covid-19. This cost however is recharged to the WHQS Programme and is therefore not shown in the HRA.
- 5.8.3 The HRA allowed for some £17.3m as a contribution towards the WHQS Programme during the 2020/21 financial year. However, progress severely impeded due to the Covid-19 restrictions and the expenditure levels anticipated could not be reached. Therefore, there was a saving of £6.6m in revenue contributions. Due to Covid-19 the Council's plan to complete the WHQS Programme by June 2020 could not be achieved and WG has since extended the deadline to December 2021. Additional costs as a direct result of Covid-19 were £1.86m. These costs included PPE, IT, prolonged void properties, and additional vehicles for social distancing.
- 5.8.4 HRA Working Balances stood at £4.1m at the start of 2020/21 and this was expected to be fully utilised for the WHQS Programme. However, due to the continued restrictions throughout the year, this balance, along with the £10m surplus made in year, will be carried forward to assist the completion of the Programme in the 2021/22 financial year.

5.9 Impact on General Fund

- 5.9.1 The table in Appendix B shows the movements on the General Fund balance from the 1st April 2020 to the 31st March 2021, along with agreed commitments for 2021/22. The forecast General Fund balance as reported to Council on 24th February 2021 was £11.232m. The updated position is a balance of £20.262m, an increase of £9.030m. The variations to the forecast are as follows: -

	£m
Increased Contribution from Service Areas (including Miscellaneous Finance)	8.409
2020/21 Council Tax Surplus	0.621
Net Increase: -	9.030

- 5.9.2 It is recommended by the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer that the

minimum balance on the General Fund should be 3% of the Council's net revenue budget, which equates to £11.047m. This results in a surplus General Fund balance of £9.215m being available to support the Council in the delivery of its strategic priorities. Cabinet is therefore asked to endorse a recommendation to Council that the General Fund balance is maintained at £11.047m, with the surplus balance being set aside for the following purposes: -

Description	Amount £m
In-year impact of Pay Awards at 1.75%	0.749
Covid-19 Reserve Top-Up to £3.5m	1.042
Digital Transformation	1.481
I.T. Support for the Transformation Programme	0.500
Local Development Plan (LDP)	0.134
Ash Die Back	0.750
Lawns and Ty Du (Cost Overruns)	0.262
Targeted Rate Relief	0.225
Community Co-ordinators	0.227
Cleaning and Greening	1.000
Decarbonisation Strategy	0.500
Regeneration Project Board	1.000
Licence to Innovate	0.200
Apprenticeship/Graduate Scheme	0.500
Newbridge Leisure Centre Fitness Equipment	0.200
Equipment for Fleet and Vehicle Maintenance	0.210
Bedwas Leisure Centre – Replacement of ATP with 3G	0.235
Total: -	9.215

- 5.9.3 **In-year impact of Pay Awards at 1.75%** - Cabinet will recall that the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a pay freeze for the public sector for 2021/22 except for those earning £24k or less (who would receive a lump sum uplift of up to £250), and those working in certain sectors such as frontline NHS staff. Due to this announcement WG has not received funding for 2021/22 pay uplifts for those staff in Local Government (including teachers) who earn in excess of £24k so consequently nothing was included in the Local Government Financial Settlement.
- 5.9.4 Whilst the Chancellor's statements in relation to pay constraints were acknowledged it was considered prudent to include some provision in the 2021/22 budget proposals for potential pay awards. With this in mind the approved 2021/22 revenue budget includes provision for a 1% increase in teachers' pay from September 2021 and a 1% uplift for APT&C staff from April 2021. The budget also includes funding for those staff who would qualify for the £250 uplift.
- 5.9.5 On the 11th June 2021, the Minister for Education and the Welsh Language published the Third Report of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body (IWPRB), which recommends an increase in teacher's pay of 1.75% from September 2021. This will now be subject to a four-week consultation process. The latest position for APT&C staff is that the trade unions have not accepted the latest pay award offer of 1.5% and negotiations are ongoing. The £250 payment for those staff earning £24k or less is no longer included.
- 5.9.6 Given the current position it is considered prudent to set aside additional funding in 2021/22 for pay increases of 1.75% for both teachers and APT&C staff. The

additional 0.75% will require funding of £749k to be set aside. This position will be reviewed again once the pay awards have been finalised and the confirmed increases will also need to be factored into the budget setting process for the 2022/23 financial year.

- 5.9.7 **Covid-19 Reserve Top-Up to £3.5m** – Cabinet will recall that at its meeting on the 10th September 2020, Council approved a recommendation to transfer £2.713m into an earmarked reserve to meet potential unfunded additional costs arising from Covid-19. During the 2020/21 financial year £255k of this reserve has been utilised to fund elements of claims against the WG Covid-19 Hardship Fund that were disallowed, leaving a balance available on the reserve of £2.458m.
- 5.9.8 As mentioned in Section 5.1 of this report WG provided substantial funding to Local Authorities during the 2020/21 financial year to mitigate the financial impact of Covid-19. However, WG has currently only committed to providing ongoing financial support through the Covid-19 Hardship Fund to the end of September 2021. This presents considerable financial uncertainty for the latter part of the 2021/22 financial year and it is therefore recommended that the Covid-19 earmarked reserve is topped-up by £1.042m, taking the balance available to £3.5m.
- 5.9.9 **Digital Transformation** - As mentioned in paragraph 5.6.1, £2.962m one-off WG Covid-19 related funding was received in the last quarter of the 2020/21 financial year in respect of digital transformation, and funding in lieu of approved 2020/21 revenue budget savings not being achieved due to the pandemic. £1.481m of this funding related to digital transformation and it is recommended that this sum should be set aside in an earmarked reserve to support delivery of the Council's ICT Strategy. Cabinet received a report on the proposed ICT Strategy at its meeting on 9th June 2021, and endorsed a recommendation that £320k of the digital transformation funding should be utilised initially to meet projected one-off revenue costs to support delivery of the strategy.
- 5.9.10 **I.T. Support for the Transformation Programme** – On the 12th June 2019, Cabinet adopted its 'Team Caerphilly – Better Together' transformation strategy as a means of creating and implementing a new operating model for the Council. Subsequent to this Cabinet also agreed a series of ten corporate service reviews on the 22nd July 2020 to support delivery of this ambitious transformation programme.
- 5.9.11 The ongoing rollout of the strategy and corporate reviews is placing significant demands on staffing capacity within Digital Services. It is therefore recommended that £500k be set aside to allow for additional fixed-term resources to be put in place to ensure that key workstreams can be progressed to avoid potential delays in delivering new ways of working that will support the transformation programme.
- 5.9.12 **Local Development Plan (LDP)** – Cabinet will be aware of the ongoing work to replace the Adopted Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan and it is estimated that funding of £274k will be required to support this process in the 2021/22 financial year. A balance of £140k remains on a reserve previously established for the LDP so it is recommended that a further £134k should be set aside to meet the anticipated costs for 2021/22. Funding for subsequent years will be subject to separate reports.
- 5.9.13 **Ash Die Back** - Ash dieback, also known as Chalara fraxinea, is the most significant tree disease to affect the UK since Dutch elm disease, which was first recognised in the 1960's. It will lead to the decline and death of the majority of ash trees in Britain and has the potential to infect circa two billion ash trees (over 1.8 billion saplings and

seedlings to more than 150 million mature trees) across the UK. Given that ash is widespread across the county borough, including our highway network, managing ash dieback will lead to a shift away from 'business as usual' towards new demands and priorities for resources.

- 5.9.14 The Authority is responsible for circa 341,000 trees. Based upon recent inspection data and an estimated 80% mortality rate of ash trees, this translates into circa 30,000 trees, which will require felling. Many of these trees are situated along the highway network, in housing estates and in our country and municipal parks. Parks Services have a budget to manage trees on council held land, however, this budget is insufficient to deal with what is a national problem, effecting every Local Authority. It is therefore proposed that £750k is set aside (£250k for the next three years) for both physical works and traffic management costs. This will enable the Authority to effectively manage and deal with the effects of Ash dieback and thus ensure our highway network and public areas are safe for our road users and residents.
- 5.9.15 **Lawn and Ty Du (Cost Overruns)** – It is currently estimated that the ongoing capital schemes at the Lawn Industrial Estate in Rhymney and Ty Du in Nelson will result in overspends of £179k and £83k respectively. It is therefore proposed that £262k should be set aside to meet the projected increase in costs.
- 5.9.16 **Targeted Rate Relief** – There was a budget of £225k in Miscellaneous Finance in 2020/21 for Targeted Rate Relief. Due to the unprecedented challenge of paying in excess of 9,000 Covid-19 Non-Domestic Rate (NDR) Business Grants on behalf of WG with a total value of circa £55m, no scheme was developed in 2020/21 to distribute the Targeted Rate Relief budget. It is therefore proposed to ring-fence the 2020/21 underspend and add this to the current year's budget, resulting in a total sum available of £452k for the 2021/22 financial year. A report will be presented to Cabinet during the autumn setting out a proposed scheme to distribute these funds.
- 5.9.17 **Community Co-ordinators** – It is proposed that £227k is set aside to pilot the introduction of five Community Connectors/Coordinators for an initial period of 12 months. These new roles will provide key points of engagement across Caerphilly's communities and will be advocates that are capable of operating on behalf of the community and across departmental and potentially organisational boundaries to pull together any resources required to address issues that emerge.
- 5.9.18 **Cleaning and Greening** – It is proposed that £1m is set aside to support a broad range of one-off initiatives across the county borough. These will include: -
- A tree planting programme.
 - Enhancements at a number of municipal and country parks.
 - Investment in a number of shrub beds.
 - Certain strategic infrastructure improvements for green spaces and targeted sports facilities.
 - Fly tipping deterrent works.
 - Additional by-pass cleansing.
 - Investment in equipment for community volunteering in cleansing.
 - Clean up and education campaign work.
 - Additional dog fouling and litter bins.
 - Investment (staff and equipment) in town centre cleaning and maintenance works.

- 5.9.19 **Decarbonisation Strategy** - At its meeting on the 25th November 2020, Cabinet agreed the Draft Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan for Caerphilly CBC. The strategy will drive the Council's decarbonisation agenda and will ensure that the Council meets its key ambition of becoming net carbon neutral by 2030.
- 5.9.20 Delivery of the strategy will require upfront investment to implement the necessary changes and funding will be sought from a range of external sources. However, it is likely that external funding will require an element of match funding from the Council and some initiatives may need to be funded solely from our own resources. It is therefore proposed that an initial sum of £500k is set aside in an earmarked reserve to support delivery of the strategy. Business cases will need to be prepared for specific projects moving forward and these will be reviewed by the Regeneration Project Board with appropriate recommendations being made to Cabinet where required.
- 5.9.21 **Regeneration Project Board** – At its meeting in the 30th May 2018, Cabinet approved the establishment of the Regeneration Project Board consisting of cross-party political representation and key Officers. The Board is supported by a Regeneration Assessment Panel consisting of Officers from a range of service areas.
- 5.9.22 The Regeneration Assessment Panel has met on numerous occasions to consider potential capital projects against a Project Prioritisation Toolkit, and has made recommendations to the Board and subsequently Cabinet, to allocate funding for specific projects to be developed further.
- 5.9.23 To date total funding of £2.5m has been allocated to the Regeneration Project Board and £1.933m of this sum has been committed to specific projects. It is proposed that a further £1m should be allocated to the Board for further potential prioritised capital regeneration projects to be developed.
- 5.9.24 **Licence to Innovate** – At its meeting on the 9th December 2020, Cabinet approved the Council's Commercial and Investment Strategy. A funding allocation of £50k was also approved to launch a 'Licence to Innovate' scheme, which encourages Officers to develop commercial and/or innovative proposals for consideration for funding. The scheme has been successful to date and £41k of the available funding has already been allocated to specific projects. It is proposed that a further £200k is set aside for the 'Licence to Innovate' scheme to encourage further initiatives to be developed.
- 5.9.25 **Apprenticeship Scheme** – The Council has used apprenticeship programmes since 1996 to develop the skills required to fill future vacancies and to offer school/college leavers and others opportunities to gain knowledge and skills to enable them to find long term meaningful employment.
- 5.9.26 The last time apprenticeships were funded centrally was in 2018/19 when a reserve of £530k was established. Together with match funding from service areas, we were able to appoint over 20 apprentices for a period of 2 years with relevant learning and development opportunities.
- 5.9.27 It is proposed to establish a new earmarked reserve of £500k to provide further apprenticeship opportunities across the Authority following the same criteria as 2018.
- 5.9.28 Apprenticeships are an ideal opportunity to assist recruitment difficulties and succession planning in some service areas. In addition, Cabinet will be aware that the Caerphilly Public Services Board well-being delivery plan includes an Apprenticeship Action Area which is championed by the Authority. The Action Area is

aimed at developing an apprenticeship programme for the County Borough that meets the future skills requirements of the Authority but also links to future needs of both the local and regional economy and maximises opportunities that will be available through the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Programme.

5.9.29 Further opportunities for future apprenticeships are being considered as part of the production of the Council's Workforce Development Strategy and this will be subject to further reports to Cabinet.

5.9.30 **Newbridge Leisure Centre Fitness Equipment** – It is proposed that £200k is set aside to fund new equipment for the refurbished Fitness Suite at the Centre.

5.9.31 **Equipment for Fleet and Vehicle Maintenance** – A recent inspection by the Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency has identified some important requirements to maintain vehicle safety and compliance, namely: -

- Replacement of antiquated commercial vehicle lifting equipment, which due to age has none of the modern safety features such as automatic chocks or fail-safe devices. This equipment also includes a set of replacement HGV column lifts (the existing equipment been condemned by our insurers due to defects), and a four post HGV lift that repair parts are no longer available for. Total cost £40k.
- Replacement MOT brake testing equipment – The current MOT testing station brake tester is 30+ years old and has become unreliable and is soon to be removed from DVSA's list of approved equipment. In addition, this machine is unsuitable for modern Heavy Vehicle testing. Total cost £70K
- Replacement of the fuel tanks at Bedwas Highways Depot. The final cost is to be determined but it is estimated to be circa £100k and a specialist contractor has been engaged to prepare tender documents to enable us to go out to tender.

5.9.32 It is proposed that funding of £210k is set aside for the above.

5.9.33 **Bedwas Leisure Centre – Replacement of ATP with 3G** - In 2015, Bedwas Artificial Training Pitch (ATP) was inspected as part of a biannual routine and the inspection highlighted that the ATP was in poor condition. Work was done to improve the surface but this was only a short-term measure as the carpet was near the end of its usable lifespan.

5.9.34 In 2018 a further report was prepared and this highlighted many issues with the seams coming apart in numerous locations. The carpet was found to be thin and had moved causing the cross field lines to bend/move out of line. There were also a number of torn areas, fire damaged patches and poor repairs that needed attention.

5.9.35 The current situation is that further repairs cannot be carried out as the carpet is not sufficiently robust. It is therefore proposed that the current ATP is replaced with a 3G for football and rugby at a cost of circa £235k.

5.10 General Usable Service Reserves

5.10.1 As outlined in paragraph 5.1.7, after adjusting for earmarked reserves 50% of underspends are carried forward by Directorates and are available to meet the requirements of these service areas in subsequent financial years. The table below provides a summary of the reserves arising from cumulative Directorate underspends along with projected balances after taking account of the approved use of reserves in 2020/21, and the current approved use of reserves for 2021/22: -

Service Area	Opening Balance (01/04/20) £m	In-Year Movement 2020/21 £m	Closing Balance (31/03/21) £m	Approved Use Of Reserves £m	Current Balance £m
Education & Lifelong Learning	0.00	1.517	1.517	(0.723)	0.794
Social Services	4.035	(0.622)	3.413	(0.378)	3.035
Communities	(0.575)	1.198	0.623	(0.349)	0.274
Corporate Services	1.869	(0.135)	1.734	(0.518)	1.216
Totals: -	5.329	1.958	7.287	(1.968)	5.319

5.10.2 Cabinet will note that approval has already been given in the 2021/22 financial year for the use of service reserves totalling £1.968m. These relate to the following: -

- £195k in Education & Lifelong Learning for dilapidation costs arising from the termination of the lease at Crumlin Institute (approved by Cabinet on the 9th June 2021).
- £1.773m approved by Officers using delegated powers: -
 - Education & Lifelong Learning £528k.
 - Social Services £378k.
 - Communities £349k.
 - Corporate Services £518k.

5.10.3 Details of the £1.773m use of service reserves using delegated powers are provided in Appendix C. The individual proposals all have a value below £100k and can therefore be agreed by Directors in consultation with the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer. Details are included in this report for noting by Cabinet.

5.10.4 Cabinet is asked to consider and approve further proposals for the use of service reserves with individual values in excess of £100k, for the following purposes: -

Description	Amount £m
Education & Lifelong Learning	
- Expansion of Glan Y Nant	0.270
- ALN Covid-19 Grant displaced expenditure	0.226
- Leadership Development Programme for Schools	0.100
Social Services	
- Tackling the backlog of minor works of adaptation	0.100
- Additional staffing in Caerphilly MyST	0.250
- Staffing at Beatrice Webb and Ty Clyd	0.320
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)	0.173
- Cover for long-term social work absences	0.100
Communities	
- Purchase of Tractor	0.110
- Purchase of Hook Loader	0.124
Corporate Services	
- I.T. support for Schools	0.500

- Learning & Development fixed-term appointments	0.168
Total: -	2.441

- 5.10.5 **Expansion of Glan Y Nant** - Due to the current and increasing demand for specialist provision (for pupils who are unable to access mainstream provision) there is a need to increase the current capacity at The Learning Centre, Glan Y Nant. As part of the Education & Lifelong Learning Directorate's capital budget an amount of £442k has previously been identified to support a double classroom extension and play area. In addition, an amount of £60k has been allocated in the Capital Programme for the site's carpark. The proposed additional funding of £270k is required to support this programme of development. This includes a new toilet block, storeroom and cloakroom, lobby area and covered walkway to the main school building.
- 5.10.6 **ALN Covid-19 Grant displaced expenditure** - On the 18th February 2021 the Authority received late notification of funding in relation to Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Covid-19 Support (£554k). The terms and conditions of this grant award stipulated that spend had to be incurred by the 31st March 2021. Whilst it was possible to displace some funding in relation to spend against other grants (and carry that displaced grant underspend into the summer term) it was not possible to do that for the whole of the £544k. Consequently, core spend in relation to Education Psychologists, School Based Counselling and the Statutory Team were charged against the grant to ensure that this funding was retained by the Authority. The level of core spend displaced was £226k and it is proposed that this is earmarked to support ALN provision during the 2021/22 academic year. This will greatly assist with support for young people.
- 5.10.7 **Leadership Development Programme for Schools** – It is proposed to set aside a further £100k for the expansion of a Leadership Development Programme across Caerphilly schools. This further funding will enable wider access to leadership development training.
- 5.10.8 **Tackling the backlog of minor works of adaptation** - A combination of the national Covid-19 restrictions upon contractors and a reluctance by service users to allow contractors into their homes as those restrictions were eased, has led to delays in undertaking minor works of adaptations to service users' properties to make them more accessible. Therefore, it is proposed to earmark £100k to tackle the backlog that has built up because of these delays.
- 5.10.9 **Additional staffing in Caerphilly MyST** - The Caerphilly MyST service provides intensive support to families and foster carers and has proved successful in recent years in managing the increasing demand for out-of-county residential placements for children. The model provides better outcomes for the families involved and is more cost effective than residential placements. Therefore, it is proposed to earmark £250k to fund an expanded model for 12 months with a view to making this a permanent arrangement should this pilot period deliver further successes.
- 5.10.10 **Staffing at Beatrice Webb and Ty Clyd** - Service user to staff ratios at Beatrice Webb and Ty Clyd residential homes for older people have historically been higher than in the other four residential homes operated by Caerphilly CBC. However, the increasing complexity of the service users currently accommodated at these two homes means that this is no longer sustainable. Therefore, it is proposed to earmark £320k to provide one additional care worker in each home at all times for a period of 12 months whilst options for a more permanent funding model are explored.

- 5.10.11 **Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)** - The challenges faced throughout the Covid-19 pandemic have contributed to a backlog in DoLS referrals. Therefore, it is proposed to earmark £173k to employ a team manager and two senior practitioners for 12 months to tackle the backlog.
- 5.10.12 **Cover for long-term social work absences** - Demographic changes within the social work teams has led to increased absences from work due to maternity leave. These long-term absences increase the pressures on the remaining workforce so it is proposed to earmark £100k to enable staff cover during such extended periods of absence.
- 5.10.13 **Purchase of Tractor** – The Parks Service currently has a fleet of 4 large highway tractors, which are used to maintain sports fields and large expanses of open public space. Two of the fleet were purchased in 2010, and one in particular needs replacing at a cost of circa £110k. A replacement tractor will reduce down time and the cost of repairs, and will increase productivity whilst providing a valued service to stakeholders and residents.
- 5.10.14 **Purchase of Hook Loader** – An order was placed during the 2020/21 financial year for the purchase of a new hook loader but delivery was delayed due to Covid-19 and Brexit. It is therefore proposed to earmark £124k to fund the purchase in the 2021/22 financial year.
- 5.10.15 **I.T. Support for Schools** - In October 2019 the Authority embarked on the ambitious WG funded five-year schools project commonly known as EdTech. During the latter part of the 2019/20 financial year the Authority committed to a Network Infrastructure investment of £1.7m. This WG funded investment will ensure that all schools will meet the ambitious schools' digital standards for Wales. As a result of the investment the ICT Support Team are now responsible for maintaining and supporting a new infrastructure of network switches (x450), access points – internal (x1800) & external (x200), servers and network cabinets across 86 schools.
- 5.10.16 In 2020 the EdTech programme saw an investment in End User Devices in the region of £2.3m. As a result, the schools now require support for Windows, Apple and Google devices all of which are in addition to existing devices already in use within schools. Schools now require additional support for the following: -
- Troubleshooting and resolving issues with laptops, iPads, Chromebooks, Desktops, Monitors, Audio visual equipment and printers etc.
 - Deployment of Windows, Apple and Google software.
 - Configuration and installation of devices
- 5.10.17 The ICT Support Team is now supporting over 30,000 devices across the school estate. The impact of Covid-19 has seen learning move online and the demand for fast reliable infrastructure and support has never been greater. The existing team of staff is unable to meet the challenging demands of additional support currently whilst managing and upskilling on new technology.
- 5.10.18 Since EdTech is a five-year funded programme and as we move to the next phase of investment, the demands on the ICT Support Team are enormous. To ensure that we are able to respond to these challenges it is proposed to temporarily increase the number of ICT support staff for schools by six. It is proposed to employ two Grade 6 Client Technicians and four Grade 4 Client Technical Assistants on a fixed-term basis for a period of two years.

5.10.19 In addition to the schools EdTech programme, the Authority has also embarked on the rollout of the Office 365 E5 licence which requires a dedicated team. To fully utilize the suite of products available to the Authority and to deploy the security features early in the rollout it is proposed to employ two Grade 8 E5 Deployment Architects also on a fixed-term basis for two years.

5.10.20 The total cost of the proposed fixed-term appointments is £500k.

5.10.21 **Learning & Development fixed-term appointments** - The Council is developing an ambitious and forward-thinking Workforce Development Strategy to support a workforce that is fit for the future and equipped with the necessary skills to innovate and deliver the Council's Transformation Programme. To ensure that we provide comprehensive learning and development programmes, training initiatives and access to a wide range of digital resources, so that our employees will have every opportunity to enhance their skills and fulfil their potential, the central coordination of workforce development is key.

5.10.22 Whilst we are considering the appropriate resources required for the future delivery of a coordinated workforce development function, it is proposed to set aside funding of £168k to appoint staff on a fixed-term basis to undertake the initial planning and scoping.

5.11 Conclusion

5.11.1 Despite the significant challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic the Council's financial position has been well managed during the 2020/21 financial year. The significant financial support provided by WG has been vital to maintain financial resilience, albeit that ongoing support through the Covid-19 Hardship Fund is currently only confirmed until the end of September 2021. This presents a significant financial risk and the position will need to be closely monitored as we progress through the 2021/22 financial year.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 There are no assumptions within this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 The 2020/21 revenue budget outturn position does not require an integrated impact assessment to be completed as it is a statement of fact and is reported for information only.

7.2 A number of the proposals for the use of the surplus General Fund balance and service reserves are directly linked to approved key strategies and initiatives that have previously been the subject of detailed reports that would have considered equalities implications, links to well-being objectives etc. Links to the relevant reports are included in the list of background papers at the end of this report.

7.3 Many of the other proposals for the use of balances are of an operational nature and do not require integrated impact assessments to be completed.

7.4 The specific details of how some of the sums set-aside will be utilised is yet to be

determined. Once this has been established integrated impact assessments will be completed where required.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 As detailed throughout the report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report other than the proposals to fund additional fixed-term posts in specific areas.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been reflected in this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 1972.

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Background Papers:

[Cabinet \(30/05/18\) – Future Regeneration Projects – New Project Governance Arrangements.](#)

[Cabinet \(12/06/19\) – Future Caerphilly Transformation Strategy, Team Caerphilly – Better Together.](#)

[Cabinet \(22/07/20\) – Strengthening Team Caerphilly.](#)

[Cabinet \(30/07/20\) – Education Other Than At School \(EOTAS\) Strategy.](#)

[Council \(10/09/20\) – Financial Outlook.](#)

[Cabinet \(25/11/20\) – Reduce, Produce, Offset, Buy \(A Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan for Caerphilly County Borough Council.](#)

[Cabinet \(09/12/20\) – Commercial and Investment Strategy.](#)

[Council \(24/02/21\) – Budget Proposals for 2021/22 and Medium-Term Financial Outlook.](#)

[Cabinet \(09/06/21\) – Proposed ICT Strategy.](#)

[Cabinet \(09/06/21\) – Youth Service Removal from Lease and Use of Crumlin Institute.](#)

Appendices:

Appendix A - Provisional Outturn Summary 2020/21

Appendix B - Movement on General Fund

Appendix C – Use of Service Reserves Approved by Officers Using Delegated Powers

PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2020/21**SUMMARY**

SERVICE AREA	UNDERSPEND (OVERSPEND) £m	TAKE TO GENERAL FUND £m
Education & Lifelong Learning	3.035	1.517
Social Services	5.547	2.753
Communities	1.648	0.622
Corporate Services	2.684	1.342
Miscellaneous Finance	3.772	3.772
Council Tax Surplus	1.743	0.621
TOTALS	18.429	10.627

OTHER	UNDERSPEND (OVERSPEND) £m	TAKE TO GENERAL FUND £m
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	10.018	N/A
Schools	10.070	N/A
OVERALL TOTAL SURPLUS	38.517	10.627

Service area surpluses are subject to a 50% take to General Fund balances after specific agreed earmarking of funds.

Council Tax surpluses are transferred in total to General Fund balances.

School and HRA balances must be ring-fenced to those service areas.

APPENDIX B

MOVEMENT ON GENERAL FUND

	£m	£m
Opening Balance 01/04/2020		15.022
Use of Funds as Previously Agreed by Council: -		
Budget Strategy Contribution 2020/21	(1.050)	
Communities Directorate Write-Off	(0.575)	
Covid19 Earmarked Reserve	(2.713)	
Total Funds Taken In-Year		(4.338)
Funds Transferred into General Fund: -		
Education & Lifelong Learning – 50% Directorate Underspend	1.517	
Social Services - 50% Directorate Underspend	2.753	
Communities - 50% Directorate Underspend	0.622	
Corporate Services - 50% Directorate Underspend	1.342	
Miscellaneous Finance	3.772	
Council Tax Surplus 2020/21	0.621	
Total General Fund Contribution 2020/21		10.627
Closing Balance 31/03/2021		21.312
2021-21 Commitments Previously Agreed by Council: -		
Budget Strategy Contribution 2021-22		(1.050)
Current General Fund Balance		20.262

APPENDIX C

Use of Service Reserves Approved Using Delegated Powers

Education & Lifelong Learning: -	£
Post-16 Education Provision review work	42,000
Extension of Health & Safety post to support schools	41,000
Contribution to drainage works at Sue Noakes Leisure Centre	10,000
Development of software to support PDG Access grant applications	13,000
Development of Servalec information system	32,000
Contribution to post-16 school improvement	72,000
Additional computer monitors for Secondary Schools	32,000
Additional Chromebooks for EOTAS pupils	15,000
Additional Laptops for EOTAS teachers	11,000
PC upgrades in Public Libraries	75,000
Expressive Arts Practitioner (1 Year fixed-term appointment)	60,000
Elective Home Education post (1 Year fixed-term appointment)	55,000
Pupil Learning Opportunity	70,000
Sub-Total	528,000
Social Services: -	
Additional Duty Officer in Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) for 12 months	35,000
Fixed-Term Reporting Officer (2 years) for the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)	95,000
12-month extension of Service Manager contract in Children's Services	82,000
Contribution to regional Family Intervention Team (2 years)	57,100
50% contribution to Housing Technical Officer post (2 years)	40,000
Contribution to regional Continuing Care post	8,713
Fixed-Term Adult Protection Co-ordinator for 12 months	60,000
Sub-Total	377,813
Communities: -	
Building Cleaning - Purchase of electric vehicles and replacement equipment.	73,000
Demountable office accommodation at Tir y Berth Depot.	45,000
Refurbishment of 2 Refuse Collection Vehicles	25,000
Replacement refuse bins and containers	14,000
Additional one-off funding for the Caerphilly Enterprise Fund	70,000
Rhymney High Street - Public realm improvements	50,000
Reusable Nappy Vouchers	15,000
Wattsville Pavilion Car Park improvements	57,000
Sub-Total	349,000
Corporate Services: -	
Asylum Dispersal Area - Fixed-Term Policy Officer (12 months)	27,500

Joint Leadership Development Programme with Gwent Police	62,210
Development of Covid-19 dashboard (CodeBase 8)	50,000
Automation of Complaints Handling Process	79,335
Azure work with Red Cortex to support the transformation to Cloud technology	20,000
Automation of the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) requests process	17,500
Automation of the Subject Access Request (SAR) process	13,125
Improvements to the interface between the OLAS General Ledger system and Proactis	9,995
Support and enhancements for the Education SIMS database	3,980
Generator control panel replacement for the Data Centre	10,600
Online security enhancements - Upgrade of Access Control Server (ACE) to Identity Service Engine (ISE)	20,000
Deployment of Wireless Controllers for Edtech rollout.	9,720
Research and development work with Azure to aid the use of Cloud space	30,000
Technical support to move virtual desktop to Azure	16,000
ICT Digital Strategy - Additional consultancy days required that were delayed due to Covid-19	13,250
Development of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system.	50,000
Ty Penallta Café - Repurpose an area of the Restaurant into an agile working hub	85,000
Sub-Total	518,215
Overall Total: -	1,773,028