



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – INFORMATION ITEM

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE SERVICES AND MISCELLANEOUS FINANCE 2021/22
BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (PERIOD 9)**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND CORPORATE
SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform members of projected revenue expenditure for the Directorate of Corporate Services and Miscellaneous Finance for the 2021/22 financial year.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report projects the anticipated final outturn for the Directorate of Corporate Services and Miscellaneous Finance based upon expenditure and income trends for the first nine months of the financial year.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are requested to note the contents of the report.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure that Members are informed of the projected financial position for the Directorate of Corporate Services and Miscellaneous Finance.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 Corporate Services

- 5.1.1 The Directorate of Corporate Services is currently forecasting an underspend of £1,314k for the 2021/22 financial year, full details of which are provided in Appendix 1.
- 5.1.2 Members are advised that the projected outturn for Education & Lifelong Learning is a net underspend of £1,337k, consequently overall the projected outturn position for Education and Corporate Services is an underspend of £2,651k.
- 5.1.3 There is an anticipated net underspend on Chief Executive and Director of Education & Corporate Services of £23k after the use of agreed reserves to fund the leadership programme.
- 5.1.4 The anticipated net underspend of £449k in Corporate Finance relates in the main to in-year

vacancies, some of which are in the process of being filled, additional one-off grant income, together with the use of reserves to fund an apprentice post and a Finance Officer (Cashless Catering). It has been agreed via a delegated decision that £45k is earmarked to establish a reserve for a Fixed Term IR35 Officer, this has been factored into the net underspend position.

5.1.5 There is an anticipated net underspend of £207k in Digital Services, after taking into account the agreed used of reserves. The underspends will be monitored during the year and may reduce depending on agreed project work. The underspends consist of: -

- A projected overspend of £221k for IT Services which is due in the main to estimated costs of the IT contracts, additional leased Telephone lines, external consultants, agency staff and a reduction in income delays offset by delays in filling vacancies.
- A projected net underspend of £209k on Procurement which relates in the main to delays in filling vacant posts.
- An underspend of £220k for Customer First. This is due in the main to vacant posts still to be filled and secondments to the Track and Trace programme.

5.1.6 Legal & Governance is projecting a net underspend of £51k after allowing for the following to be ring-fenced and transferred to earmarked reserves: -

- Projected underspend on Members related expenditure of £88k. This is due in the main to underspends on Members' Allowances and associated budgets which is partly offset by increased costs on Members' superannuation costs.
- Projected overspend of £21k on Electoral Services, due in the main to additional equipment being purchased in preparation for the local elections. The Electoral Services overspends will be funded from the ring-fenced Election reserve.

5.1.7 The net underspend of £51k for Legal & Governance is due in the main to reduced income levels offset by staff not reaching the top of their pay scales, some temporary reduced hours and savings associated with working from home. These income levels will be monitored closely during the year. The net underspend is after taking into account the agreed use of reserves for an additional Committee Services Officer.

5.1.8 There is a projected net underspend of £164k for People Services mainly consisting of: -

- Human Resources projected net underspend of £89k due in the main to staff being on maternity leave and some temporary reductions in working hours, partially offset by reduced income levels. The net underspend is after taking account of the agreed use of reserves.
- Health & Safety underspend of £174k due in the main to salary savings arising from delays in recruitment after taking account of the agreed use of reserves for an SLA Support Officer. The underspend is partially offset by reduced internal training income due to Covid-19. There are also small forecast savings on vehicle hire.
- Occupational Health underspend of £51k due in the main to salary savings due to delays in recruitment. It has been agreed via a delegated decision that the projected £51k underspend is earmarked to establish a reserve to enable additional clinics as Covid restrictions are lifted, this has been factored into the net underspend position.
- The Communications Unit is projecting a net overspend of £70k, due in the main to reduced levels of internal income arising from Covid-19. Income levels will be closely monitored in year. It is anticipated the lost internal income in this budget has resulted in savings in other service division's printing budgets.
- CMT Support overspend of £30k due to the addition of a new "Support Officer".

5.1.9 There is an anticipated £189k net underspend in Business Improvement Services after taking account of the following: -

- Management – Projected net underspend of £109k due to a vacant Head of Service post, which is partially offset by additional temporary costs for an existing Head of Service to cover duties.
- Projected net underspend of £37k in the Policy Team due to mainly to a delay in filling a vacant post, various one-off savings on budgets.
- Projected underspend of £32k in the Equalities and Welsh Language Team due in the main to some staff not reaching the top of pay scales in the current year.
- Projected small overspend of £5k in the Performance Management Unit.
- Projected net underspend of £15k in the Transformation Team after taking account of the agreed transfer of reserves.
- The transfer of the Community Empowerment Fund has been agreed, this fund is being managed by Business Improvement Services section.

5.1.10 Although Property Services sits within the Economy & Environment Directorate, budget monitoring has traditionally been considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee. For Property Services there is a net projected overspend of £25k, consisting of the following: -

- Management - £31k underspend in the main due to staff on temporary reduced hours offset by the estimated appointment of a new post starting in February 2022.
- Energy - £7k underspend, due to a temporary reduction in hours of a member of staff.
- Estates - £4k overspend due mainly to a reduction in the anticipated level of fee income offset by staff vacancies/reduced hours. The income levels will be monitored closely in-year.
- Non – Operational Properties - £6k underspend mainly due to reduced utility costs being incurred.
- Corporate Facilities – a net £61k overspend mainly due to increased electricity costs for Ty Penallta to comply with the Covid-19 guidance, offset by savings in salaries due to some temporary reductions in hours. The net overspend is after the agreed use of reserves of £80k for Ty Penallta Café.
- Maintenance – Projected £38k underspend due in the main to delays in filling vacant posts and increased fee income.
- Building Consultancy – Projected £43k overspend due in the main to reduced fee income arising from the pausing of the Trinity Fields extension project. The creation of a new Project Manager post is partially offset by delays in filling existing posts.

5.1.11 There is a projected underspend of £256k on Housing Services (excluding HRA) which consists of the following: -

- General Fund Housing is expected to show a £200k underspend at this stage, although there are some offsetting over and underspends contributing to this position. This service area includes a statutory duty for Temporary Accommodation which is demand led and difficult to predict, but trends show an annual increase in the need for this service evidenced by the increase in B&B accommodation over the past few years and in particular placements made during the pandemic. The government embargo on evictions, which ended in June 2021, plus the requirement for landlords to provide an extended 6 months written notice (remaining in place until March 2022) has restricted the normal flow of homeless activity, but activity for Covid related placements still remains high. We therefore anticipate referrals requiring emergency housing to increase.
- The demand for B&B placements as a result of Covid-19 has been significant with on average 70 cases per month, together with accompanying security costs for the relevant establishments. Welsh Government have funded these costs (net of any housing benefits) from the Covid Hardship Grant and have confirmed this funding will remain in place for the remainder of this financial year. However, once this funding has ceased, the funding commitment will fall on the General Fund. In the long term, however, Welsh Government has set out an ambitious Programme for Government with the aim of making our community a better place to live and work, which will be achieved in part, by reforming

homelessness services to focus on prevention and rapid rehousing, which should in theory eradicate the need for B&B placements. Emergency Accommodation will still be required but on a smaller scale and officers are currently undertaking a review with regard what this provision will look like for CCBC in the longer term. In the meantime, the Council are looking to maximise its Caerphilly Keys Private Rented Sector project and recently launched its own website whilst running a heightened media campaign in December in an attempt to attract more landlords to the project, so that the Housing Solutions Team can maximise move on within that sector.

- Supporting People have also confirmed additional funding in year for the Homeless Prevention Officers which has contributed to the underspend.
- Private Sector Housing is expected to show a £56k underspend at this stage. In previous reports there was concern regarding the under recovery of the Agency Income Fee which has historically been generated from the private housing capital programme. This budget relies on its fee income to be able to fund the service. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, officers were unable to progress with any works, (other than emergencies) and as such have not been able to receive any significant fee income. The reduced activity during the pandemic has created a backlog of work which officers are now trying to manage, together with a significant disruption on staffing levels due to long term sickness.
- Welsh Government have offered up a lost income financial assistance grant as a consequence of Covid-19, and claims made for the lost agency fee were fully successful last financial year and continue to be claimed this financial year. During the year there has been an increase in claims in respect of the Post Asset Management programme which is commissioned from the HRA. This is due to the delay in progressing with this work whilst committing to achieve the WHQS deadline. This financial assistance by WG has supported the budget to remain in a relatively manageable position for this financial year, but officers are reviewing the budget for long term sustainability.

5.2 Miscellaneous Finance

5.2.1 There is an overall projected underspend of £1,108k in Miscellaneous Finance.

5.2.2 There is a projected net underspend of £478k on Capital Financing budgets which is due to the following: -

- £827k underspend on Debt Charges due to delays in borrowing requirements.
- Investment income being £349k less than the budgeted level due to the timing of new medium to long term investments due to Covid-19.

5.2.3 There is a projected overspend of £63k on the Trade Union budget. We are currently still in discussions with Trade Union colleagues to review and update our Facilities Agreement to ensure that equitable support arrangements are in place.

5.2.4 The Counsel Fees budget is projected to be breakeven at present, but this is a volatile budget that will be monitored closely in year.

5.2.5 The remaining projected overspends in Miscellaneous Finance consist of the following: -

- £16k on the Class 1A NI savings, this is due in the main to a reduced take-up of the Tusker GASS car scheme.
- £47k on Bank Charges due to the increased costs of processing “faster payments” and increased transaction fees due to the move to “cashless payments”.
- £13k for the Authority contribution to the Coroner service.

5.2.6 The remaining projected underspends for Miscellaneous Finance consists of the following: -

- Subscriptions - £7k
- Carbon Energy Tax - £247k (scheme ended in 2019-20).

- £12k Community Schemes budget due to the cancellation of events.
- £306k -City Deal debt charges due to delays in the borrowing requirement.
- £272k due to delays in recruitment to Head of Service posts.

5.2.7 It has been agreed to establish the following earmarked reserves: -

- £75k via a delegated decision for a Fixed Term Committee Services Officer, this has been factored into the net underspend position.
- £503k from the CERA budget for various approved projects.

5.2.8 Management of the Community Empowerment Fund has been agreed, this has resulted in the transfer of this budget to Business Improvement Services.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 The projected outturn position is based on actual income and expenditure details to the end of December 2021.

6.2 Forecasts have been made following discussions with Managers based on current information available.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 This report is for information only so an IIA is not 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.

10. CONSULTATIONS

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

11. STATUTORY POWER.

11.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2003 and the Council's Financial Regulations.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Corporate Services & Miscellaneous Finance 2021/22 Budget Monitoring Report
(Period 9).

Background Papers:

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