



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 21ST FEBRUARY 2023

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE SERVICES AND MISCELLANEOUS FINANCE 2022/23
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 2022/23 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 a net underspend of £554k for the 2022/23 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 £1,059k, consequently overall the projected outturn position for Education and Corporate Services is an overspend of £1,613k.
- 5.1.3 There is an anticipated net underspend on Chief Executive and Director of Education & Corporate Services of £29k.
- 5.1.4 The anticipated net underspend of £390k 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 a number of fixed term posts.

5.1.5 There is an anticipated net underspend of £663k in Digital Services, after taking into account the agreed use of reserves. The underspends will be monitored during the year and may reduce depending on agreed project work. The underspends consist of: -

- A projected underspend of £307k for IT Services which is due in the main to delays in filling vacancies, offset with the additional use of consultants to fund project work and reduced income levels.
- A projected net underspend of £247k on Procurement & Information Governance which relates in the main to delays in filling vacant posts.
- An underspend of £110k for Customer First which is due in the main to vacant posts still to be filled offset by reduced income levels.

5.1.6 Legal & Governance is projecting a net underspend of £198k after allowing for the following to be ring-fenced and transferred to earmarked reserves: -

- Projected underspend on Members related expenditure of £101k. 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 £198k on Electoral Services, due in the main to the costs of the local elections. The Electoral Services overspends will be funded from the ring-fenced Election reserve.

5.1.7 The net underspend of £198k for Legal & Governance is due in the main to a one-off increase in income levels, some staff not reaching the top of their pay scales, some temporary reduced hours, delays in filling vacant posts and savings associated with working from home. The 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 £499k for People Services mainly consisting of: -

- Human Resources projected net underspend of £162k due in the main to delays in filling vacant posts and some temporary reductions in working hours. The net underspend is after taking account of the agreed use of reserves.
- Health & Safety underspend of £237k due in the main to salary savings arising from delays in recruitment after taking account of the agreed use of reserves for Fire & Asbestos Officers. The underspend is partially offset by reduced internal training income as courses are restarting after Covid-19.
- Occupational Health is projecting a net breakeven position after utilizing some agreed ring-fenced reserves to provide additional clinics as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.
- The Communications Unit is projecting a net underspend of £100k, due in the main to delays in filling vacant posts and increased levels of internal income, partially offset by the increased costs of printing levels. Income levels will be closely monitored in year.
- CMT Support is anticipated to break even.
- Leadership Development Program is anticipated to break even.
- The Apprentice Program is progressing with a number of apprentices employed. It is envisaged that any unused budget this year will be ring-fenced to support the program moving forward.

5.1.9 There is an anticipated £436k net underspend in Business Improvement Services after taking account of the following: -

- Management – Projected net underspend of £111k due to a vacant post, which is partially offset by additional temporary costs for an existing Head of Service to cover duties.
- Projected net underspend of £158k in the Policy Team due in the main to a delay in filling a vacant post and various one-off savings on budgets.

- Projected underspend of £84k 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 and delays in filling vacant posts.
- Projected small underspend of £7k in the Performance Management Unit.
- Projected net underspend of £37k in the Transformation Team due in the main to delays in filling vacant posts, after taking account of the agreed transfer of reserves.
- The Community Empowerment Fund is expected to fully spend in this financial year.
- Projected net underspend of £8k in the Decarbonisation Team. This team has been brought together from the posts within Policy to aid reporting on the decarbonisation agenda. All posts were within other sections of Business Improvement Services.
- Asylum Dispersal Funding is projecting a £30k underspend due to the additional one off grant.

5.1.10 Although Property Services is managed 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 underspend of £9k, consisting of the following: -

- Management – Net £67k underspend due in the main to staff on temporary reduced hours and delays in appointing to vacant posts. This is after taking into account the agreed use of reserves for the purchase of Monitors and Laptops for the section.
- Energy - £2k underspend, due to a temporary reduction in hours of a member of staff.
- Estates – £98k overspend. This is due to reduced fee income levels, partly offset by small salary savings. The fee income will be monitored closely in-year.
- Non – Operational Properties - £47k underspend mainly due to additional income.
- Corporate Facilities – a net £31k overspend mainly due to increased electricity costs for Ty Penallta, partially offset by savings in salaries due to some temporary reductions in hours. The net overspend is after the agreed in-year virement of £225k to cover the dilapidation costs from the vacation of a building leased to the Authority.
- Maintenance – Projected £7k underspend due in the main to delays in filling a vacant post along with staff on temporary reduced hours and some staff not paying into the pension scheme.
- Building Consultancy – Projected £14k underspend due to additional income generated from Fees offset by some additional consultancy costs.

5.1.11 There is a projected overspend of £1.67m on Housing Services (excluding HRA) which consists of the following: -

- General Fund Housing is expected to show a £1.4m overspend at this stage, which is mainly as a result of ongoing Bed & Breakfast placements.
- This service area includes a statutory duty for Temporary Accommodation which is demand led and difficult to predict. 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, but this funding stopped in March 2022. A replacement grant has been awarded from WG called The No-one Left Out grant (£403k), but this has significantly reduced from the original Covid Hardship funding received for the previous 2 years. WG have since increased the No-one Left Out grant by a further £393k for Caerphilly this which has assisted in reducing the predicted overspend. WG have also recently confirmed further funding in 2023/24 of £623k. There has been a Covid reserve set up corporately and details of how this can be claimed are still being considered, therefore any funding from this has not been assumed at this stage. In addition to this, it is likely that B&B placements will increase further as more people are expected to find themselves homeless as a consequence of the Cost-of-Living crisis especially since the introduction of the new Renting Homes Wales Act in December 2022. Furthermore, there could be an increase and delay with placements as a result of the current Ukraine situation. It is important to note that for every temporary

accommodation placement, the council has to fund on average 80% of the cost. The DWP only funds on average 20% of the cost via housing benefits, which is why the overspend is increasing.

- 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. However, this a long-term strategy likely to take 5-10 years. 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 maximising its Caerphilly Keys Private Rented Sector project and recently launched its own website whilst running a heightened media campaign in an attempt to attract more landlords to the project, so that the Housing Solutions Team can maximise move on within that sector.
- Growth has been requested for this budget for 2023/24 with an ongoing review and expectation that the growth will reduce over time as B&B placements will fall in line with the preventing homeless strategy.
- Private Sector Housing is expected to show a £270k overspend at this stage. 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. In addition, the increase in construction costs/rates and material supplies are also a concern together with a significant impact on contractor availability, which is now the main reason work is unable to progress, resulting in a reduction of fee income to balance the budget.
- Welsh Government 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 over the past two years. However, that support ended in March 2022. There is an intention to claim on the internal covid reserve once the process has been agreed but any funding likely to be received has not been assumed at this stage. Officers are reviewing the budget for long term sustainability as part of the MTFP process and growth is being considered as part of this process.

5.2 Miscellaneous Finance

5.2.1 There is an overall projected underspend of £2.231m in Miscellaneous Finance.

5.2.2 There is a projected net underspend of £1.213m on Capital Financing budgets which is due to the following: -

- £389k underspend on Debt Charges due to delays in borrowing requirements.
- Investment income being £824k more than the budgeted level due to the new medium to long term investments along with increases in interest rates.

5.2.3 There is a projected overspend of £68k 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: -

- £38k on the Class 1A NI savings, this is due in the main to a reduced take-up of the Tusker GASS car scheme.

- £57k net of recharges on Bank Charges, due in the main to increased on-line payments and post office cards.
- £44k additional contribution to the Coroners levy due to increased costs of the service.

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

- Subscriptions - £8k
- Carbon Energy Tax - £247k (scheme ended in 2019-20).
- £4k Carbon Management Scheme.
- £438k due to delays in recruitment to Head of Service posts.
- £322k on Free School Meal Grants
- £367K from the City Deal, there will be no need to borrow to fund any City Deal capital contributions in 2022-23.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The projected outturn position is based on actual income and expenditure details to the end of December 2022.
- 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 and Miscellaneous Finance 2022/23 Budget Monitoring Report (Period 9).

Background Papers:

Council (24/02/22) – Budget Proposals for 2022/23 and Medium-Term Financial Outlook