

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

## Scrutiny Committee – 5 March 2019

### Financial Monitoring – 2018/19 as at 31 December 2018

This matter is the responsibility of the Leader of the Council, Councillor John Williams

Report Author: Andrew Stark, Interim Finance Manager

#### 1 Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update on the projected outturn financial position of the Council for the financial year 2018/19 (as at 31 December 2018). This is expected to be the last progress report to TDBC Scrutiny/Executive this year. The end of year financial performance report is due in June/July and, whilst the report will be in respect of TDBC it will be presented to the new Council – Somerset West and Taunton. This will be presented alongside the end of year report for West Somerset too.

1.2 Monitoring the budget is an important part of the Council's performance management framework.

1.3 The current revenue forecast outturn for the financial year 2018/19 is as follows:

The General Fund (GF) Revenue Outturn is forecasting a net underspend of £124k.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is forecasting underspend of £356k.

1.4 The current capital forecast position for 2018/19 is as follows:

The General Fund capital account is forecasting spend of £9.594m against a total Programme budget of £76.082m with £49.892m forecast to be spent in future years (£16.611m spent in previous years);

The HRA capital account is forecasting spend of £9.086m against a budget of £17.686m with £8.610m forecast to be spent in future years.

Any overspends or underspends in the capital forecast at this time are shown in **Appendix C**.

1.5 The General Fund reserves forecast balance as at 31 March 2019 is projected to be £2.088m. The balance remains above the recommended minimum reserves

level approved in the Council's Budget Strategy (£1.7m).

- 1.6 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Reserve forecast balance as at 31 March 2019 is £2.428m, which is above the recommended minimum level (£1.8m) set within the Council's Budget Strategy and HRA Business Plan.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Corporate Scrutiny notes the Council's forecast financial performance for 2018/19 financial year as at 31 December 2018.

## 3 Risk Assessment

### Risk Matrix

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall
That the Authority overspends against the approved budget	3	4	12
<i>Mitigated by - Regular budget monitoring reports are produced and managers actively manage the budgets under their responsibility</i>	1	4	4

### Risk Scoring Matrix

<b>Likelihood</b>	5	Almost Certain	Low (5)	Medium (10)	High (15)	Very High (20)	Very High (25)
	4	Likely	Low (4)	Medium (8)	Medium (12)	High (16)	Very High (20)
	3	Possible	Low (3)	Low (6)	Medium (9)	Medium (12)	High (15)
	2	Unlikely	Low (2)	Low (4)	Low (6)	Medium (8)	Medium (10)
	1	Rare	Low (1)	Low (2)	Low (3)	Low (4)	Low (5)
			1	2	3	4	5
			Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
			<b>Impact</b>				

Likelihood of risk occurring	Indicator	Description (chance of occurrence)
1. Very Unlikely	May occur in exceptional circumstances	< 10%
2. Slight	Is unlikely to, but could occur at some time	10 – 25%
3. Feasible	Fairly likely to occur at same time	25 – 50%
4. Likely	Likely to occur within the next 1-2 years, or occurs occasionally	50 – 75%
5. Very Likely	Regular occurrence (daily / weekly / monthly)	> 75%

## **4 Background and Full details of the Report**

- 4.1 This report provides the Council's forecast end of year financial position for revenue and capital expenditure as at 31 December 2018 for the Council's General Fund (GF), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and trading services.
- 4.2 The regular monitoring of financial information is a key element in the Council's Performance Management Framework. Crucially it enables remedial action to be taken in response to significant budget variances, some of which may be unavoidable. It also provides the opportunity to assess any consequent impact on reserves and the Council's the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 4.3 Members will be aware from previous experience that the position can change between 'in-year' projections and the final outturn position, mainly due to demanded service costs and income levels. The budget monitoring process involves a detailed review of the more volatile budgets and a proportionate review of low risk/low volatility budget areas.
- 4.4 Budget Holders, with support and advice from their accountants, regularly review the position and update their forecasts based on currently available information and knowledge of service requirements for the remainder of the year. As with any forecast there is always a risk that some unforeseen changes could influence the position at the year end, and a number of risks and uncertainties are highlighted within this report. However, the following forecast is considered to be reasonable based on current information.
- 4.5 It is clear that the organisation is undergoing major change at present with implementation of the new operating model under Transformation and the preparation for the new Somerset West Taunton Council taking effect in April 2019. All reasonable effort is being undertaken by budget holders and finance staff to ensure that budgets remain under control during this period of disruption.

## **5 2018/19 Forecast Outturn**

### **General Fund Revenue Account – 2018/19 Forecast as at 31 December 2018**

- 5.1 The Council is currently forecasting an overall net underspend of £124k. This is a small underspend compared to the Net Budget of £13m, and Gross Expenditure of £62m. It should be noted that this forecast assumes the costs of and savings from transformation are within budget.
- 5.2 A Summary Statement of the General Fund Revenue Outturn by Portfolio is provided in **Appendix A**.

**Table 1 - Summary of Significant Forecast Variances for the Year**

	<b>Staffing £000</b>	<b>Other Expend £000</b>	<b>Income £000</b>	<b>Total £000</b>
Deane Helpline	57	(17)	(40)	0
Planning	149	38	(111)	76
Car Parking	0	(267)	267	0
Recycling	0	0	(76)	(76)
Bereavement Services	28	99	(191)	(64)
Environmental Health	0	0	(24)	(24)
Waste Collection	0	102	0	102
HR	0	46	0	46
Legal Services	0	46	0	46
Conduction of Elections	0	(26)	0	(26)
ICT	0	45	0	45
Council Tax collection costs	0	0	22	22
Rent Allowances/Rebates	0	0	(104)	(104)
Housing Benefits	0	0	(163)	(163)
Shopmobility	0	(20)	0	(20)
Leisure	0	(38)	0	(38)
Community Safety	0	51	0	51
Asset Management	160	(18)	(95)	47
DLO	0	100	0	100
Investment Income	0	0	(144)	(144)
Business Rates	0	617	0	617
Transfer from Business Rates smoothing reserve	0	0	(617)	(617)
<b>TOTAL – over / (under) spend</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>(1,276)</b>	<b>(124)</b>

5.3 The main variances to budget are explained as follows:

**Asset Management:** There is a projected overspend of £47k. The use of agency to cover a number of vacancies staff has led to one-off overspend of £160k on staff costs. This reflects the challenging market for property specialist roles. This has been offset by one-off recovery of historic bad debt income of £95k plus a forecast underspend of £18k on bus shelters. Opportunities to further mitigate the cost pressures will be explored during the remainder of the financial year.

**Car Parking:** Car parks are on budget. The income levels forecast in the budget setting has not materialised by £267k and there is an increase in the external contract of £41k. This has been offset by £308k savings in business rates and repairs and maintenance. Base budgets for both costs and income will be realigned for 2019/20 budget estimates.

**Planning:** Increased income of £111k has been invested in the delivery of planning services however, due to the challenging market for planning specialist

roles we have required agency staff to backfill which has contributed to increased spending of £187k, giving a projected overspend of £76k.

**Leisure:** A potential additional contract item for the spa from GLL has not materialised giving a saving of £38k.

**Community Safety:** There is a budget error in the CCTV contract of £51k.

**Shopmobility:** Savings on electricity, maintenance and grant has given underspend of £21k.

**Waste Recycling:** The service is projecting additional income from green waste collection services of £76k with demand for the service exceeding budget expectations. As this is a demand-led service the position can fluctuate, however as the majority of income is received early in the financial year for the annual kerbside collection service the forecast is expected to be reasonably accurate at this stage.

**Waste Collection:** Additional volume costs of £102k are being charged for the year by Somerset Waste Partnership.

**Bereavement Services:** The service has projected additional income of £64k. Bereavement services is a demand led service and usage has increased during the year producing additional income for the service of £191k which has been offset by planned maintenance by contractors, additional staffing of £34k to cover upturn in workload and additional cremator maintenance and repair of £60k and £33k for the purchase, lease and repair of plant and machinery.

**ICT:** Smartphone 8\*8 rollout has increased revenue costs by £45k but enables greater efficiency and agile working.

**Council Tax Collection:** This projected shortfall of income of £22k is in respect of reduced recovery action.

**Conducting Elections:** Additional income and reduced election costs gives a projected underspend of £26k.

**Environmental Health:** WH Smith court case income gives additional income of £24k.

**Homelessness:** Cost of Bed and Breakfast expenditure is forecast to exceed budget estimates by £413k. This will be funded in 2018/19 by use of reserves and grants received. The council has a statutory duty to house people who find themselves homeless. The numbers of homeless have increased in 2018/19 compared to 2017/18. In April the Homelessness Reduction Act placed extra duties on the council to house the homeless until accommodation can be provided. In 2017/18 councils only had a duty to house the homeless for 28 days.

**Rent Allowances/Rebates:** There is a surplus under HB Subsidy arrangements of £104k.

**Housing Benefits:** Additional new burdens income of £163k.

**Human Resources:** Additional insurance and payroll software costs of £46k

**Interest Costs and Income:** Additional investment income of £144k has been received due to improved returns.

### **Business Rates**

A summary of the new Retained Funding forecast is shown in the table below:

**Table 2 – Business Rates Retention Estimates**

<b>Business Rates Retention Funding Estimates</b>	<b>2018/19 Budget £000</b>	<b>2018/19 Actual £000</b>	<b>2018/19 Difference £000</b>
40% Standard Share of Business Rates Yield	15,219	15,219	0
Rates yield from renewable energy schemes	171	171	0
Tariff to Government	(12,781)	(12,781)	0
Levy Payment	(375)	(926)	(551)
Safety Net Income	0	0	0
S31 Grant	1,358	1,292	(66)
<b>Net Retained Business Rates Funding</b>	<b>3,592</b>	<b>2,975</b>	<b>(617)</b>

5.4 The forecast of Business Rates retained income is £617k lower than the 2018/19 budget. This is primarily due to accounting timing differences, where business rates income is projected to exceed budget – which will be received through the Collection Fund Surplus in 2019/20 – but this leads to a higher levy costs which we must account for in this financial year. The increase income reflects net growth, reduced provisions for appeals/refunds and a higher compensation factor allowed against Small Business Rates Relief. The budget assumed 50% whereas the actual percentage is 69.7%. S31 grants are also lower than budgeted.

5.5 The Council is part of the Somerset Business Rates Pool and should receive a pool dividend for its sharing of the pooling gain, which is currently estimated at £503k. This will be needed to meet the approved funding for transformation programme and transition resources approved by the Council in December 2018.

## **6 General Fund Reserves**

### **General Reserves**

6.1 The following table summarises the movement on the General Reserves Balance to 31 December 2018.

**Table 3 - General Reserve Balance**

	£000
<b>Balance Brought Forward 1 April 2018</b>	<b>2,299</b>
Transformation Programme	(335)
2018/19 Projected Outturn Variance – Q3 Forecast	124
<b>Projected Balance 31 March 2019</b>	<b>2,088</b>
Recommended Minimum Balance	1,700
Projected Balance above recommended minimum	388

- 6.2 The forecast balance as at 31 March 2019 is £2.088m. This would be £388k above the recommended minimum balance of £1.700m. The balance is only a forecast and can change which means it must be caveated at this stage. The final outturn for the year will be reported to the new Somerset West and Taunton Council in June/July this year.
- 6.3 Prudent advice is to maintain reserves above the recommended minimum, to provide some resilience for emerging costs and to provide some flexibility to support measures to address ongoing financial sustainability.
- 6.4 The funding for the Transformation Programme which the Council approved in December is included in Table 3 above.

### **General Fund - Risk and Uncertainty**

- 6.5 Budgets and forecasts are based on known information and the best estimates of the Council's future spending and income. Income and expenditure over the 2018/19 financial year is estimated by budget holders and then reported through the budget monitoring process. During this process risks and uncertainties are identified which could impact on the financial projections, but for which the likelihood, and/or amount are uncertain.
- 6.6 The following risks and uncertainties have been identified:
- 6.6.1 **Fluctuation in demand for services:** We operate a number of demand-led services and the levels of demand do not always follow a recognisable trend. We therefore have to caveat the forecasts in these areas to account for fluctuations.
- 6.6.2 **General Spend:** It is conceivable that, whilst budget holders are optimistic that they will spend all of their budget, we could see underspends of £50k-£100k by year end caused by the cumulative effect of minor underspends in a number of service areas.
- 6.6.3 **Year End Adjustments:** Certain items are not determined or finalised until the financial year end. For example, the final assessment of provisions required for bad debts, and final allocations of support service recharges. These can result in

potentially significant differences to current forecasts.

- 6.6.4 **Business Rates:** There are inherent risks and uncertainties within the Business Rates Retention system. The Council's share of business rates funding is directly linked to the total amount of business rates due and collected in the area. The figures are subject to volatility. Forecasts have to reflect this uncertainty. Due to delays caused by the additional work required on last year's accounts, the current forecasts still need to be prepared.
- 6.6.5 The Council carries protection against risk and uncertainty in a number of ways, such as insurances and maintaining reserves. This is a prudent approach and helps to mitigate unforeseen pressures.

#### **Deane DLO Trading Account**

- 6.7 As at 31 December 2018, the DLO is forecasting £100k overspend. There is a projected shortfall in external contract income with the county council. Any overspend will be transferred to the DLO trading reserve. Due to the complexities of the business and the significant sums involved in the DLO operation, the year-end outturn forecast is an estimate at this point in time. This forecast outturn needs to be flagged as a risk and will be continually monitored.
- 6.8 The Trading Account Reserves Position balance brought forward of £395k relates to a retained trading surplus of £80k, plus capital reserves and £315k to fund vehicle replacement.
- 6.9 As agreed within the transformation plan, continuous improvement of DLO services will enhance all aspects of operational efficiency and effectiveness.

#### **Deane Helpline Trading Account**

- 6.10 The Deane Helpline's net budget is £135k. The service is predicting to be on budget at year end. Forecast overspend in staffing of £57k due to increased sickness has been offset by additional income of £40k and IT contract saving of £17k.
- 6.11 There are no funds held in the Deane Helpline Trading Account Reserve, therefore any deficit would have to be underwritten by the General Fund.

#### **General Fund Capital Programme**

- 6.12 The total approved General Fund Capital Programme is currently £76.082m. This relates to schemes which will be completed over a number of years. Of this, Budget Holders are projecting that £9.594m will be spent during 2018/19 with £49.892m due to be spent in future years. £16.611m has been spent on 'current' schemes in previous years. Current in-year spend as at 31 December 2018 is £7.115m. There is overspend of £15k on Play Equipment. The Council is supporting this investment



through the use of Capital Grants and Contributions, Capital Receipts, Revenue Funding and Borrowing

- 6.13 The major areas of capital spend planned for future years include, £3.5m on Somerset Waste Partnership loan, £2.765m on Town Centre Regeneration and £2.669m on Major Transport Schemes. In addition, significant budget approvals have been made by Council within confidential reports – with figures not disclosed in order to protect the Council’s interests during procurement phase.
- 6.14 The major area of capital spend in 2018/19 is £650k on Disabled Facilities Grants, £3.192m on Deane House Accommodation backlog maintenance and improvements, £774k on Transformation costs, £1.135m on Parking Access and Signage, £428K on West Monkton Country Park, £129K on Coal Orchard and £334k on DLO vehicles.
- 6.15 A summary of the General Fund Capital Programme budget and forecast for the year is included in **Appendix C**.

## **7 Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

- 7.1 The HRA is a ‘Self-Financing’ account for the Council’s Housing Landlord function, which is budgeted to break-even (net of approved transfers to/from HRA Reserves). The current forecast HRA Revenue Outturn for 2018/19 is a gross surplus of £356k (1.3% of gross income).
- 7.2 The current forecast outturn for 2018/19 is provided in more detail in **Appendix B**.
- 7.3 The major under and overspends forecast for year are summarised as follows
- 7.4 **Leasehold Income:** Income from leaseholders is higher than budgeted by £65k to reflect the increased cost of maintenance on shared blocks.
- 7.5 **Housing Management:** Vacancies in tenant management, lettings, tenant empowerment, supported housing have created underspend of £351k.
- 7.6 **Insurance:** Insurance costs are higher than budget. Grounds maintenance costs for clearing properties are above budget. The forecast overspend for both is £215k.
- 7.7 **Responsive Maintenance:** A forecast underspend in maintenance of £172k in subcontractors used in electrical works as a result of better scheduling and securing cover for vacant posts.
- 7.8 **Interest Receivable:** Changes to reserve balances mean that the interest received on investments is forecast to be lower than budgeted by £66k.

### **HRA - Risk and Uncertainty**

- 7.9 As with the General Fund, budgets and forecasts are based on known information and the best estimates of the Council’s future spending and income. Income and expenditure over the financial year 2018/19 is estimated by budget holders and then reported through the budget monitoring process. During this process risks and uncertainties are identified which could impact financial projections, but for which the likelihood and/or amount are uncertain.

**Housing Revenue Account General Reserves**

- 7.10 The HRA reserves at the start of the year were £2.778m. The forecast underspend of £356k less the funding of additional Transformation and Transitional costs for 2018/19 reduces the balance to £2.428m. This is above the minimum recommended reserve level of £1.800m by £628k, providing a level of resilience to unplanned fluctuation in costs.

**Table 3: HRA Reserve Balance**

	£k
Balance Brought Forward 1 April 2018	2,778
Budget transfer to Reserve for BAU Transitional costs	(178)
Budget transfer to Transformation re Programme variance	(172)
Transformation Programme Funding	(356)
Forecast Outturn 2018/19 (as at 31 December 2018)	356
<b>Forecast Balance Carried Forward 31 March 2019</b>	<b>2,428</b>
Recommended Minimum Balance	1,800
Forecast Balance above recommended minimum	628

**8 HRA Capital Programme**

- 8.1 The HRA approved Capital Programme is £17.686m. This relates to schemes which will be completed over the next five years. The Council is supporting this investment through the use of Capital Receipts, Revenue Funding and Borrowing.
- 8.2 **Appendix C** provides a breakdown of the HRA Capital Programme Outturn by scheme.
- 8.3 The capital programme can be split into three distinct areas:
- 8.4 **Major Works:** £7.499m of the capital budget in the HRA relates to major works on existing dwellings and includes works such as kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems, roofs, doors and windows. Actual spend at 31 December 2018 is £4.333m. Forecast expenditure to 31 March is £5.781m.
- 8.5 **Improvements:** A total of £2.535m capital budget relates to such as disabled facilities adaptations, asbestos removal, environmental improvements and extensions. Actual spend to 31 December 2018 is £501k. Forecast expenditure to

31 March is £1.217m.

- 8.6 **Development:** The remaining budget of £7.652m is for the provision of new housing through Creechbarrow Road, Weavers Arms and the Social Housing Development Programme. Actual spend to 31 December 2018 is £1.959m with forecast expenditure to 31 March £2.088m.

## **9 Links to Corporate Aims / Priorities**

- 9.1 The financial performance of the Council underpins the delivery of corporate priorities and therefore all Corporate Aims.

## **10 Finance / Resource Implications**

- 10.1 Contained within the body of the report.

## **11 Legal Implications**

- 11.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

## **12 Environmental Impact Implications**

- 12.1 None for the purpose of this report.

## **13 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications**

- 13.1 None for the purpose of this report.

## **14 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 14.1 None for the purpose of this report.

## **15 Social Value Implications**

- 15.1 None for the purpose of this report.

## **16 Partnership Implications**

- 16.1 A wide range of council services are provided through partnership arrangements e.g. GLL for leisure services and Somerset Waste Partnership for Waste and Recycling services. The cost of these services is reflected in the Council's financial outturn position for the year.

## **17 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

- 17.1 None for the purpose of this report.

## **18 Asset Management Implications**

18.1 None for the purpose of this report.

## 19 Consultation Implications

19.1 None for the purpose of this report.

## 20 Scrutiny Comments / Recommendation(s)

20.1 Scrutiny comments and recommendations are invited at this meeting, and will be provided to the Executive as a verbal update due to timing of meetings and issuing of agendas.

### Democratic Path:

- TDBC Scrutiny – 5 March 2019
- TDBC Executive – 6 March 2019

**Reporting Frequency: Quarterly (except Quarter 1)**

### List of Appendices

Appendix A	General Fund Revenue Account Outturn Summary
Appendix B	Housing Revenue Account Outturn Summary
Appendix C	General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme Outturn Summary

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