

West Somerset Council

Cabinet – 6 March 2019

Financial Monitoring – 2018/19 as at 31 December 2018

This matter is the responsibility of Councillor Martin Dewdney, Lead Member for Resources and Central Support

Report Author: Andrew Stark, Interim Finance Manager and Deputy S151 Officer

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the projected “outturn” – end of year – financial position of the Council for the financial year 2018/19 (as at 31 December 2018).
- 1.2 The current forecast outturn for the Revenue Budget is a net underspend of £380K.
- 1.3 The General Fund reserves forecast balance as at 31 March 2019 is projected to be £964k. The balance remains above the recommended minimum reserves level approved in the Council’s Budget Strategy (£0.7m).
- 1.4 The Earmarked Reserves projected balance is £3.748m after any transfers to and from earmarked reserves during the year. The majority of these reserves are allocated to business rates funding volatility (£1.290m), Strategic Housing Market Area Assessment (£576k), Planning Policy (£137k), Asset Maintenance and Compliance (£207k), Sustainability (£168k) and Creating a New Council/Transformation (£836k).
- 1.5 The current forecast position for the General Fund Capital Programme in 2018/19 is projected to overspend by £15k against a total approved budget of £13.905m. Forecast spend during the year is £2.137m with £10.037m projected to be spent in future years (£1.746m spent in previous years).

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the Council’s forecast financial performance as at 31 December 2018.

3 Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

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

Likelihood	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
			Impact				

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 2018/19 revenue and capital budgets as at 31 December 2018.
- 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 demand-led services. 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 and 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 £380k. This represents 4.2% of the overall Net Revenue Budget. Table 1 below provides a summary of the forecast position for the year.

Table 1 – Summary Predicted Revenue Position Q3 2018/19

	Original Budget £000	Predicted Outturn £000	Variance £000
Corporate	552	513	(40)
Operations	3,019	2,847	(171)
Housing and Communities	559	518	(40)
Growth and Development	531	444	(87)
Somerset Rivers Authority	25	25	0
Subtotal - Net Service Costs	4,686	4,347	(339)
Interest costs and income	120	79	(41)
Subtotal – Net Costs	4,806	4,426	(380)
Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	601	168	(433)
Transfers to/from General Reserves	0	0	0
NET BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE	5,407	4,594	(813)
Business Rates Funding	(1,964)	(1,531)	433
Revenue Support Grant	(170)	(170)	0

	Original Budget £000	Predicted Outturn £000	Variance £000
New Homes Bonus	(396)	(396)	0
Rural Services Delivery Grant	(214)	(214)	0
Council Tax	(2,216)	(2,216)	0
Collection Fund Deficit - Business Rates	(396)	(396)	0
Collection Fund Surplus - Council Tax	(51)	(51)	0
TOTAL FUNDING	(5,407)	(4,974)	433
NET UNDERSPEND FOR THE YEAR	0	(380)	(380)

- 5.3 Only significant variations to budget are included in this report, with the following overspends and underspends highlighted.

West Somerset Q3 Budget Variances

	Staff £000	Other Expend £000	Income £000	Total £000
Facilities		11		11
Public Conveniences		(13)		(13)
Street Cleansing		(65)		(65)
Private Sector Renewal		(40)		(40)
Member Services		(17)		(17)
Development Control	25		(113)	(88)
Waste		23		23
Elections		(22)		(22)
Environmental Health		(26)		(26)
Rent Allowances/Rebates			(42)	(42)
Housing Benefits			(60)	(60)
Interest Payable & Receivable		(5)	(36)	(41)
Business Rates		433		433
Transfer from Business Rates Smoothing reserve			(433)	(433)
TOTAL – over / (under) spend	25	279	(684)	(380)

- 5.4 The main variances to budget are explained as follows:-

Overspends

- a) Facilities: Overspend of £11k is due to increased security costs and cleaning which is now contracted out.
- b) Waste: Overspend of £23k is due to higher contract costs.

Underspends

- c) Planning: There is a forecast underspend of £88k due to increased planning application income of £113k offset by additional agency costs of £25k.
- d) Public Conveniences: Forecast underspend of £13k, savings from business rates, water and electricity.
- e) Street Cleansing: There is a contract saving of £65k.
- f) Private Sector Renewal: There is saving on the Home Improvement Agency contracts of £40k.
- g) Member Services: There is a saving of £17k on member allowances.
- h) Elections: Forecast underspend of £22k, savings on general election expenditure.
- i) Environmental Health: Forecast underspend of £26k from additional income and reduced expenditure.
- j) Rent Allowances/Rent Rebates: There is a surplus under Housing Benefit subsidy arrangements of £42k.
- k) Housing Benefits: Additional new burdens income of £60k.
- l) Interest Costs and Income: There is an underspend of £5k on interest payable as current cash flow forecasts indicated there will be no need to take on external loan borrowing during 2018/19, plus £36k additional investment interest income due to improved returns compared to budget assumptions.

Business Rates

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

Table 2 – Business Rates Retention Estimates

Business Rates Retention Funding Estimates	2018/19 Budget £000	2018/19 Actual £000	2018/19 Difference £000
40% Standard Share of Business Rates Yield	(6,662)	(6,662)	0
Rates yield from renewable energy schemes	(30)	(30)	0
Tariff to Government	4913	4,913	0
Levy Payment	545	882	337
Safety Net Income	0	0	0
S31 Grant	(730)	(634)	96
Net Retained Business Rates Funding	(1,964)	(1,531)	433

- 5.5 The prediction of Business Rates retained income is £433k lower than the 2018/19 budget
- 5.6 This is primarily down to paying a larger levy than budgeted for as the Council's income has risen due to higher compensation factor allowed against Small Business Rates Relief. The budget assumed 50% whereas the actual percentage is 65.2%.
- 5.7 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 £488k. This figure is not accounted for in Table 1 as it will probably change on completion of the NNDR3 return for the year 2018/19, and won't be confirmed until the end of the financial year. The aim of pooling is to increase funding to support measures for delivering financially sustainable council services and investing in growth and infrastructure initiatives.

General Fund Reserves

- 5.8 The following table shows that the current General Reserves balance is £899k, and the current forecast underspend could increase this balance to £964k at the year end.

Table 3 – General Reserves Balance 31 March 2019

	£000
Balance Brought Forward 1 April 2018	899
Budget Transfer to Transformation re Programme variance	(24)
Budget Transfer to Reserve for BAU Transitional Costs	(121)
Transformation Programme funding	(170)
2018/19 Projected Outturn Variance – Q3 Forecast Underspend	380
Projected Balance 31 March 2019	964
Recommended Minimum Balance	700
Projected Balance above recommended minimum	264

- 5.9 The current recommended minimum balance is £700k – the projected balance at 31 March 2019 of £964k would be £264k above the recommended minimum balance. In view of the Council’s future financial pressures the prudent advice is to maintain reserves above the recommended minimum, to provide limited resilience for emerging costs and to provide some flexibility to support measures to address ongoing financial sustainability.
- 5.10 The funding for the Transformation Programme which the Council approved in December is included in Table 3.

Earmarked Reserves

- 5.10 Earmarked Reserves are amounts that have been set aside for specific purposes from existing resources, where the expenditure is expected to be incurred in future years. The table below provides a summary of the movement in earmarked reserve balances during 2018/19 financial year to date.

Table 4 – Estimated Earmarked Reserves Balance 31 December 2018

	£'000
Balance Brought Forward 1 April 2018	4,249
Transfers From Earmarked Reserves in 2018/19	(1,111)
Transfers To Earmarked Reserves in 2018/19	610
Current Balance	3,748

- 5.11 The table above shows that the current projected reserves balance is £3.748m after proposed movements to and from reserves during the year have been included. Full details of earmarked reserves can be found in **Appendix A** to this report. A significant proportion of the balance (£1.290m) relates to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve which is committed to provide a contingency for business rates funding volatility, £576k for community land fund to support bringing forward affordable housing and £738k which is committed to support Transformation and Creating a New Council.

Capital Budget Predicted Outturn 2018/19

- 5.12 The following table summarises the position for both general schemes and Hinkley-funded schemes. Actual spend up to 31 December 2018 totals £884,355 and at this stage only a small variance against budget has been reported.

Table 5 – Summary Capital Programme Forecast as at 31 December 2018

	General Schemes £'000	Hinkley Funded Schemes £'000	Total £'000
Total Programme Budget	9,630	4,275	13,905
Spend in Previous Years	1,127	619	1,746
Forecast Spend 2018/19	970	1,167	2,137
Forecast Spend in Later Years	7,548	2,489	10,037
Total Forecast Capital Spend	9,645	4,275	13,920
Net Underspend (-) / Overspend	15	0	15

- 5.13 A scheme by scheme analysis of the 2018/19 Programme at 31 December 2018 is set out in **Appendix B**.

6 Links to Corporate Aims / Priorities

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

7 Finance / Resource Implications

- 7.1 Contained within the body of the report.

8 Legal Implications

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

9 Environmental Impact Implications

- 9.1 None for the purpose of this report.

10 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

- 10.1 None for the purpose of this report.

11 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 11.1 None for the purpose of this report.

12 Social Value Implications

- 12.1 None for the purpose of this report.

13 Partnership Implications

- 13.1 None for the purpose of this report.

14 Health and Wellbeing Implications

14.1 None for the purpose of this report.

15 Asset Management Implications

15.1 None for the purpose of this report.

16 Consultation Implications

16.1 None for the purpose of this report.

17 Scrutiny Comments / Recommendation(s)

17.1 Members discussed the report and the following comments were made:

- (i) The report included the narrative of waste overspend £23k in the list of overspends. This has been corrected for this report.
- (ii) The description of East Wharf in the capital programme should be amended to East Quay.
- (iii) The description of Watchet Bowling Club in the capital programme should be amended to Watchet Community Hall
- (iv) A member queried on when Business Rates would be a mainstream business stream in the future. The Interim Head of Finance reminded members of the current uncertainty of business rates as source of funding beyond 2019/20. He said that TDBC and WSC would be responding to the government's current consultation on business rates reform.

Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny – Yes**
- **Cabinet – Yes**
- **Full Council – No**

Reporting Frequency: Quarterly (except Quarter 1)

List of Appendices

Appendix A	Summary of Proposed Earmarked Reserves
Appendix B	Capital Programme Outturn 2018/19

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