

## **Appendix 4 – Climate & Place, (including Accountable Bodies)**

### **Climate & Place**

Lead Members:

- Environment & Climate Change: Cllr Dixie Darch
- Transport & Digital: Cllr Richard Wilkins
- Economic Development, Planning & Assets: Cllr Ros Wyke

Executive Director: Mickey Green

Service Directors:

- Climate, Environment & Sustainability: Kirsty Larkins
- Infrastructure & Transport: Mike O’Dowd-Jones
- Economy, Employment & Planning: Paul Hickson

### **Accountable Bodies**

Lead Members:

- Transport & Digital: Cllr Richard Wilkins
- Economic Development, Planning & Assets: Cllr Ros Wyke
- Environment & Climate Change: Cllr Dixie Darch

Executive Director: Mickey Green

Service Directors:

- Somerset Rivers Authority: Kirsty Larkins
- Local Enterprise Partnership and Connecting Devon & Somerset: Paul Hickson

**Table 1: 2023/24 Climate & Place (including Accountable Bodies) as at the end of December 2023 (Month 9)**

- Climate and Place (including Accountable Bodies) 2023/24 net budget £93.6m, projected favourable variance £7m, favourable movement £1.6m from month seven.

Service Area	Current Expenditure Budget £m	Current Income Budget £m	Current Net Budget £m	Full Year Projection £m	Month 9 Variance £m	A/(F)	RAG Status	Movement From Month 7 £m
<b>Climate, Environment &amp; Sustainability</b>								
Climate & Place Management	0.3	(0.1)	0.2	0.2	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Business Support	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.9	(0.1)	(F)	Green	(0.1)
Somerset Waste	55.7	(6.6)	49.1	49.3	0.2	A	Red	(0.4)
Drainage Board Levy	2.3	0.0	2.3	2.3	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Climate Change Costs	0.8	0.0	0.8	0.8	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Emergency Planning	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Flood & Water	0.9	0.0	0.9	0.9	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Countryside	1.2	(0.7)	0.5	0.5	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Mendips AONB	0.3	(0.2)	0.1	0.1	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Quantock AONB	1.1	(1.0)	0.1	0.1	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Ecology	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)	(0.1)	0.0	-	Green	0.0
<b>sub total</b>	<b>63.6</b>	<b>(8.7)</b>	<b>54.9</b>	<b>55.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Amber</b>	<b>(0.5)</b>
<b>Infrastructure &amp; Transport</b>								
Highways & Transport Commissioning	2.8	(0.6)	2.2	2.2	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Infrastructure Programmes Group	1.4	(0.8)	0.6	0.6	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Highways	17.7	(0.6)	17.1	17.9	0.8	A	Red	(0.2)
Traffic Management	5.5	(4.6)	0.9	0.8	(0.1)	(F)	Green	(0.1)
Transporting Somerset	15.5	(6.0)	9.5	9.4	(0.1)	(F)	Green	(0.1)
Car Parks	5.8	(12.3)	(6.5)	(6.5)	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Fleet Management	1.1	(0.4)	0.7	0.7	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Community Infrastructure	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
<b>sub total</b>	<b>49.8</b>	<b>(25.3)</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>25.1</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Red</b>	<b>(0.4)</b>
<b>Economy, Employment &amp; Planning</b>								
Economy & Planning	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Commissioning Development	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Development Control	7.6	(5.1)	2.5	3.2	0.7	A	Red	0.7
Planning Policy	3.1	0.0	3.1	2.3	(0.8)	(F)	Green	(0.8)
Economic Development	6.4	(1.7)	4.7	4.1	(0.6)	(F)	Green	(0.6)
Building Control	2.0	(1.5)	0.5	0.5	0.0	-	Green	0.0
<b>sub total</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>(8.3)</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>(0.7)</b>	<b>(F)</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>(0.7)</b>
<b>Accountable Bodies</b>								
Somerset Rivers Authority	3.0	0.0	3.0	3.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Local Enterprise Partnership	2.0	(2.3)	(0.3)	(0.3)	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS)	1.2	(0.5)	0.7	(6.3)	(7.0)	(F)	Green	0.0
<b>sub total</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>(2.8)</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>(3.6)</b>	<b>(7.0)</b>	<b>(F)</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Climate &amp; Place Total</b>	<b>138.7</b>	<b>(45.1)</b>	<b>93.6</b>	<b>86.6</b>	<b>(7.0)</b>	<b>(F)</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>(1.6)</b>

## Climate & Place - key explanations, actions, & mitigating controls

Climate and Place is currently forecasting a favourable variance of £7m at outturn, a favourable movement of £1.6m since month seven. The variances across Climate and Place are due to the following:

### Climate, Environment and Sustainability

**Waste Services** is forecasting an overspend of £0.2m at outturn, a favourable variance of £0.4m reported between month seven and month nine. The favourable movement and overall overspend can be explained by the following:

- Total waste volumes to the end of month nine showed an increase of 2.7% compared to last year. However, the variance in waste tonnages is an improving position, moving from 4.1% at the end of month seven to 2.7% at the end of

Month 9. The rise in tonnages is ascribed to unusually high tonnages of garden waste (+17%) and residual waste above expected levels at +2% to the end of month nine. This trend has been forecast to continue for the remainder of the year for budget monitoring. The impact of increased waste volumes has been partially offset by a lower than budgeted inflationary increase to contractor rates.

- The additional bank holiday for the King's coronation, meant that there was an impact on waste collections and was not anticipated in budgets.
- Legislation change for the treatment of POPs (persistent organic pollutants, typically fire-retardant coatings in furniture) has increased contractor costs.
- A change in Legislation regarding DIY waste (removing changes at Recycling Centres) was seen during January. The impact of the legislation is currently under review and assessment will be made later in the month once a clear understanding of tonnage impact has been achieved to assess the robustness of the pressures statement.
- Waste services have been able to negotiate an improved pay award shared with Suez, however this has provided a further unbudgeted pressure within the service. This however has avoided any strike action which would have caused disrupted waste collections across the County and resulted in significant costs.
- Additional income has been received from Garden Waste subscriptions.

**Business Support** is forecasting an underspend of £0.1m at outturn, this is a favourable movement of £0.1m since month seven. The favourable movement is due to sickness and vacant posts being held within the service.

#### Infrastructure and Transport

**Highways** is forecasting an adverse variance of £0.8m at outturn due primarily to an increase in Safety defects across the road network causing significant pressures on the service due to more extreme weather events. The service continues to work hard to successfully complete the investigation and repair works whilst trying to manage and control the overspend. There is a favourable movement of £0.2m since month seven due to estimated reduction in energy costs and a decision to avoid additional cost pressure by continuing to use existing systems rather than replace them. The service is also carrying vacant posts within the Trees and Inspection Teams. The revised position removes proposed savings from jetting, and vegetation clearances on

Bridges which are not currently deliverable; and includes increases in Emergency Works costs following recent flood events. This pressure is a continuation of the situation that Somerset County Council reported in 2022/23.

**Traffic Management** is forecasting a favourable variance of £0.1m at outturn, this is a favourable movement of £0.1m since month seven. This is due to an increase of anticipated income within the service relating to Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTRO).

**Transporting Somerset** is forecasting a favourable variance of £0.1m at outturn, this is a favourable movement of £0.1m since month seven. Updated forecasts within the Accessible Transport show a reduction in Transport costs.

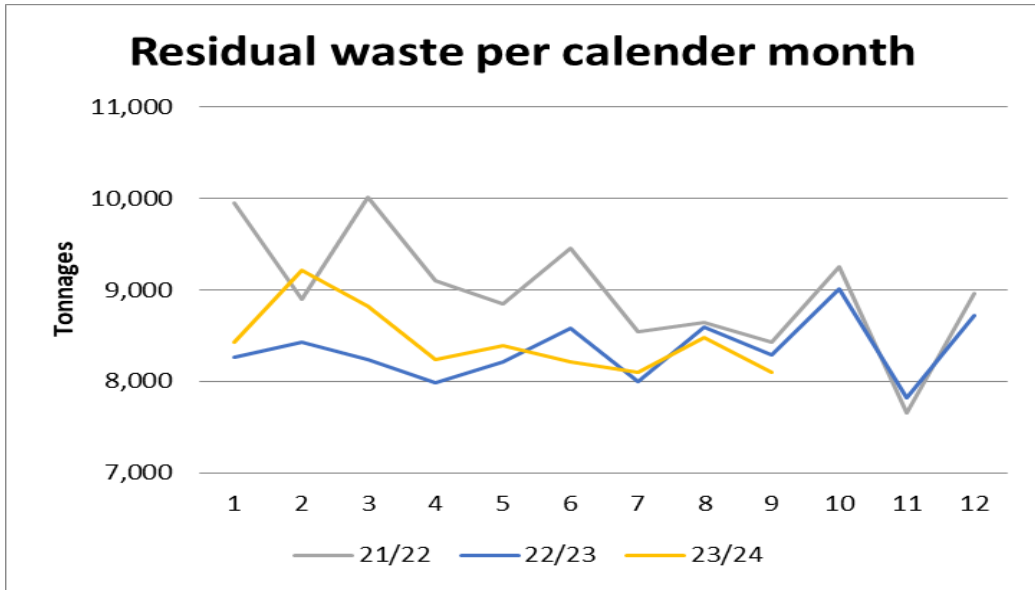
#### Economy, Employment and Planning

**Development Control** is forecasting an adverse variance of £0.7m since month seven. This is due to ongoing reconciliation of income. The most recent forecasts show that Planning income is lower than anticipated. It is likely that economic factors and the increase in planning fees on the 06 December are having an impact on the anticipated budgeted income. This will be monitored, and the service will look at mitigating factors to offset the pressure in this area.

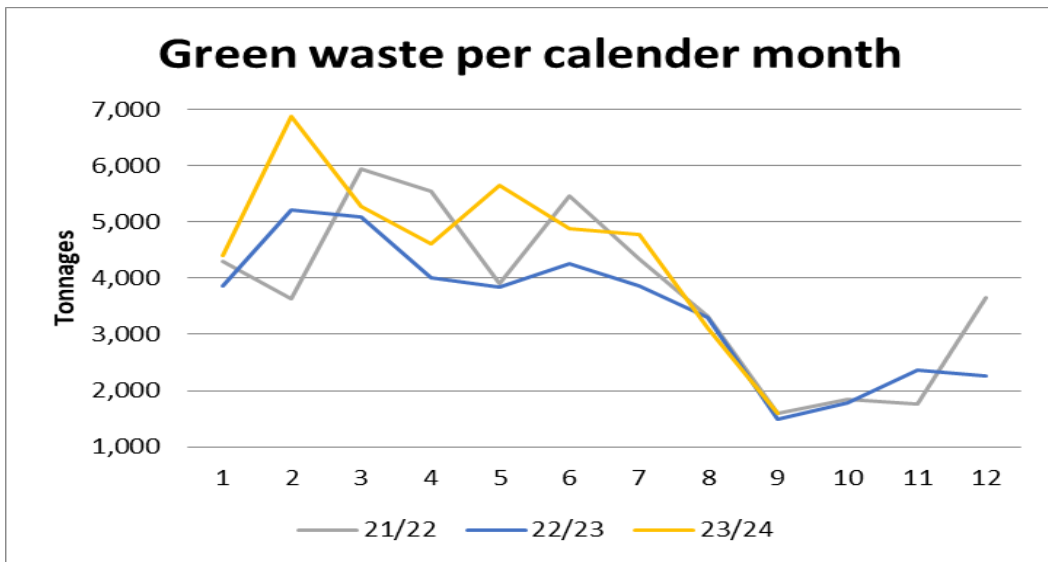
**Planning Policy** is forecasting a favourable variance of £0.8m since month seven. This is due to slippage against the Local Plan and is to be used to offset the current pressure in Development Control. Work is still taking place with regards to the Local Plan however it is recognised that spend will happen in future years.

**Economic Development** is currently showing a positive balance of £0.6m this year. This is in due to a one-off budget provision from last financial year being included in the service budget and planned minimisation of spend because of the Council's financial emergency. In earlier months of this year the service was reporting an in year financial pressure relating to match funding eligibility issues relating to a DWP funding contract being delivered by the service. Subsequent negotiations with DWP give confidence that this will be resolved by end March 2024 but until this matter is concluded it remains a potential call against this balance.

#### **Climate & Place - key performance cost drivers**



The above graph shows the residual waste (per tonnage) per month. The residual waste includes Kerbside collected waste and waste deposited at the recycling centre. The graph currently shows the reduction of waste in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22, however this highlights the unexpected increase in tonnages in the early months for 2023/24. Residual Waste from July to December have reduced and are more aligned to 2022 levels.



The above graph shows the green waste (per tonnage) per month. It is expected to see a downwards trend between month 6-12 (September to April) due to the seasonality of garden waste. The graph currently highlights a higher tonnage of green waste compared to 2021/22 and 2022/23 for the early months of 2023/24, this has been

driven by the unusually mild, damp, weather this year propagating plant growth and increasing the moisture content of the material.

### **Climate & Place - key risks, future issues & opportunities**

Due to the current economic climate, there are several key risks and future issues that need to be taken into consideration:

- **Contract inflation** is applied at various times throughout the year, as the increase in contract could be led by RPI or CPI it is currently difficult to predict accurately what the impact for each contract might be. In addition, there are a number of contractual disputes which are being worked through. It is anticipated that these can be resolved in a timely matter, but in resolution may see increased costs agreed.
- **Impact of cost-of-living crisis.** As costs continue to rise, spending habits may change therefore it is possible that services across Economic and Community Infrastructure will see a decrease in income budgets.
- **Staff vacancy levels.** Difficulties in recruiting permanent staff across Climate and Place continue to impact on the ability to deliver services, where possible agencies have been used to fill critical roles. However, this has a financial impact as generally the cost of these staff is higher than budgeted for. This reflects the national picture and is the same across a number of sectors.
- **Road Safety.** There has been an increase in the number of people killed or seriously injured on our road network. The Council continues to run education and training programmes to seek to prevent accidents on the network and we will consider if there are any changes in causative factors and review programmes, as necessary.
- **Systems and Reporting.** Finance is continuing to work with service to bring together and understand five legacy authority budgets. There is a great deal of work to do to understand, relocate and align the legacy information to make one budget for Climate and Place. This work runs alongside the implementation of the new MS Dynamics finance system and Solver budget monitoring interface. It is there important to note that this may result in unknown under or overspends for the service.

Risks can be identified due to the change in climate. It is exceedingly difficult to be able to identify financially what the impact of climate change will be year on year, but risks with a potential financial impact include:

- Icy conditions will see a high demand on the Highways service to grit primary and secondary routes.
- Increased rainfall which has raised the risk of flooding across the County. This will require input from the Emergency Planning department, Highways and Traffic Management to help ensure residents can safely navigate around the affected areas.
- The extreme changes in weather will impact the road surfaces which continues to increase the safety defects reported and increases the costs of investigation and corrective action for potholes.

### **Accountable Bodies**

#### Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA)

Somerset Rivers Authority is currently reporting to be within budget and are not anticipating any draws from or to reserves.

#### Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

LEP is currently reporting to be within budget in this financial year.

#### Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS)

The Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) programme included a phase one contract with British Telecommunications plc. To meet state aid requirements that contract included provisions which allowed for "clawback" of public subsidy where take up of services exceeded the levels which the supplier had modelled. Delivery has completed and the contractual monitoring period to calculate amounts of clawback is now operational. The supplier is contracted to provide its calculation of the final clawback amount as of 31 March 2024, after which date relevant clawback funds are to be returned to CDS. The CDS collaboration will process any clawback so that collaborating public sector funders receive a proportionate return based on their original investment. At this initial stage it is estimated that the sum accruing to Somerset council is likely to be in the region of £7 million although this is subject to potential change.

### **Accountable Bodies - key risks, future issues & opportunities**

Somerset Council acts as the accountable body for the Heart of the Southwest LEP, providing a service across the core functions of the LEP and its programmes. This is in the context of an assurance framework for this programme funding meeting Government principles and expectations. In performing these functions, Somerset Council works closely with the LEP core team, and the services Somerset Council provides are specified and resourced via a service level agreement between the LEP and Somerset Council.

LEP performance is subject to periodic assessment and an annual formal review by Government – the most recent of these for 2022/23 looked positively on Somerset Council’s accountable body services to the LEP.

Somerset Council, working with Plymouth Torbay and Devon County Councils, has submitted an integration plan to Government outlining proposals for how LEP functions are transferred and conducted by the authorities post the Government ceasing to fund LEPs post March 2024 and how revenue funding balances and legacy capital funds held by the LEP are managed post this date. Government sign-off of the proposals in the plan are awaited and dialogue with the LEP Board advised by the Council’s Section 151 Officer are ongoing and will determine the position regarding the division of these funds in due course.