

Scrutiny Report

Scrutiny Committee: Communities
Meeting Date – 12th March 2025



2024/25 General Fund Budget Monitoring Report Communities – (Quarter 3) to end of December 2024

Chair of Committee: Cllr Gwil Wren

Executive Member(s): Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts

Local Member(s) and Division(s) affected: All

Executive Director: Maria G Christofi - Interim Chief Finance Officer (S151)

Executive Summary

This report is the General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for Communities up to and including December 2024 (Quarter 3).

The full General Fund Revenue Monitoring Report was presented to Corporate and Resources Scrutiny Committee on Monday 24th February 2025.

Recommendations:

Scrutiny is asked to consider the following:

1. If there are any general comments or observations that they would wish to consider making to the Executive on the report.

2. If the actions set out in the report are appropriate and if there are any further actions that scrutiny would wish to include in the report.

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Community Services

Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture and Equalities & Diversity: Cllr

Federica Smith-Roberts

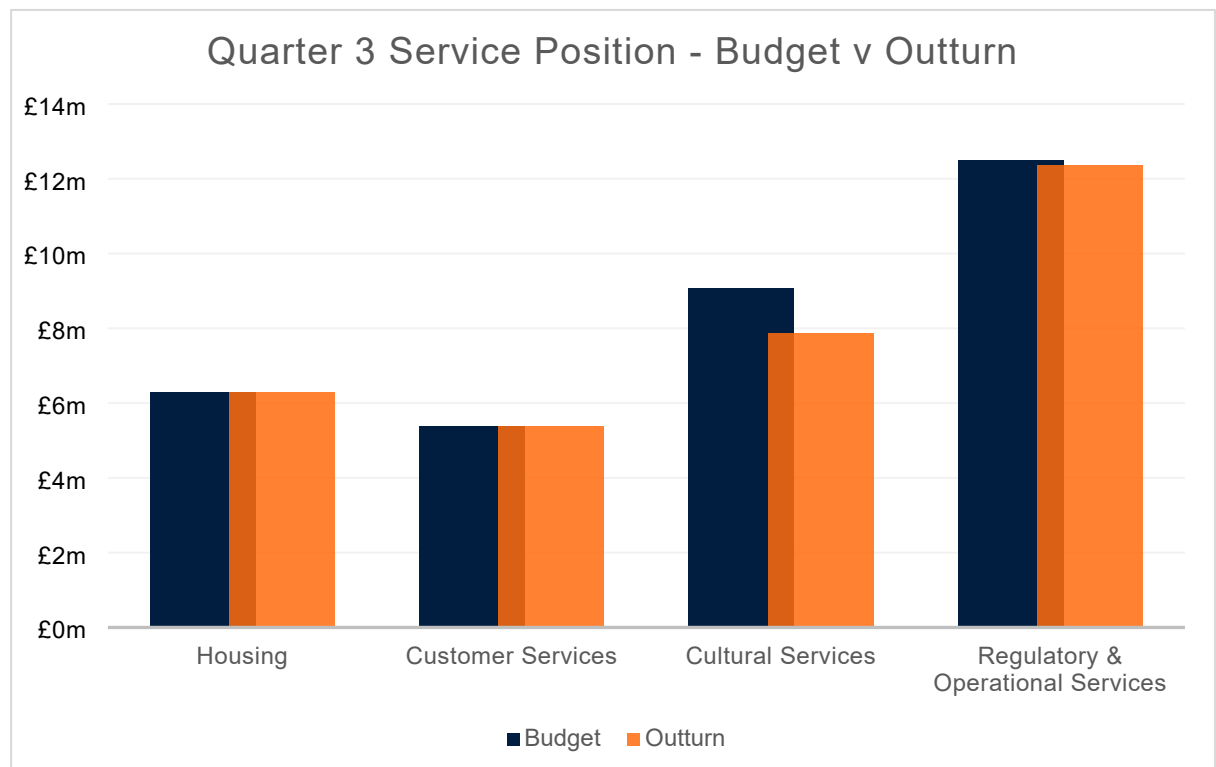
Executive Director: Chris Hall

Service Directors:

- Housing: Kirsty Larkins
- Culture: Elizabeth Dawson
- Customers: Sarah Dowden
- Regulatory and Operational: Sarah Dowden



Chart 1: Budget versus forecast outturn graph



**Table 1: 2024/25 Community Services as at the end of December 2024
(Quarter 3)**

- 2024/25 net budget £33.242m, forecast underspend of £1.314m, a decrease of £0.152m from Month 7.
- 2023/24 net budget £37.400m, outturn underspend of £3.9m.

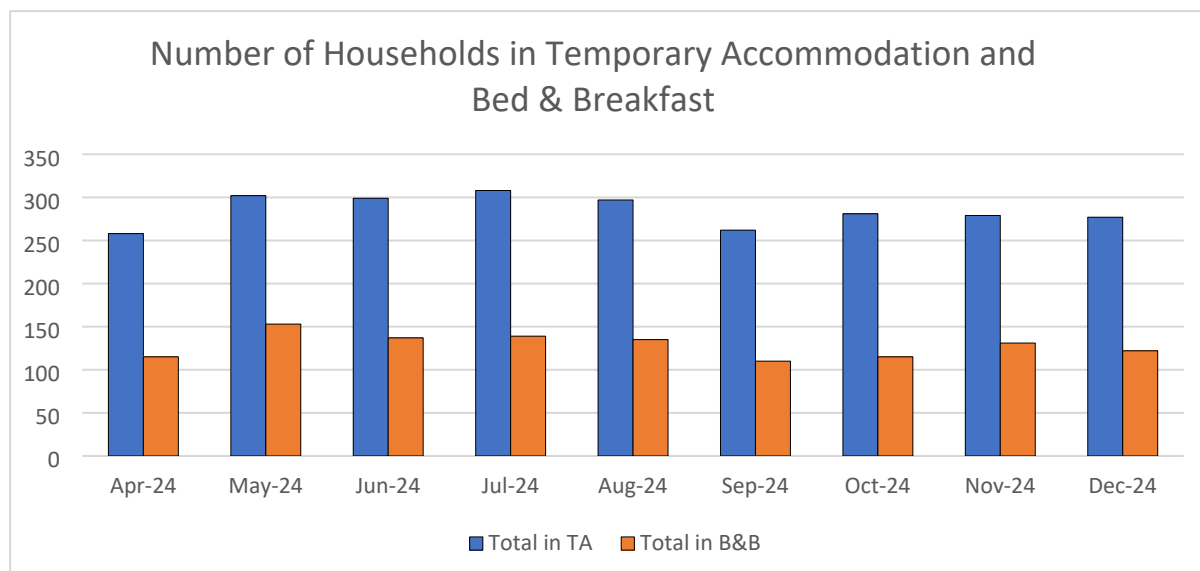
Service Area	Current Expenditure Budget £m	Current Income Budget £m	Current Net Budget £m	Full Year Projection £m	Quarter 3 Variance £m	Overspend / (Underspend)	RAG Status	Ongoing Pressure £m	One-off Pressures £m	Movement From Month 7 £m
Housing										
Service Director - Housing	0.146	-	0.146	0.115	(0.031)	Underspend	Green	-	-	0.000
Housing Strategy	0.331	(0.285)	0.046	0.216	0.170	Overspend	Red	-	0.170	0.050
Housing Options	10.640	(5.545)	5.095	5.569	0.474	Overspend	Red	-	0.474	0.064
Housing Enabling	0.617	(0.143)	0.474	0.376	(0.098)	Underspend	Green	-	-	0.003
Private Sector Support/ DFG's (SIP)	1.353	(0.823)	0.530	0.015	(0.515)	Underspend	Green	-	-	(0.117)
Displaced Person Service	1.069	(1.069)	-	-	-	On-budget	Green	-	-	-
sub total	14.156	(7.865)	6.291	6.291	-	On-budget	Green	-	0.644	(0.000)
Customer Services										
Customer Services	6.466	(0.721)	5.745	5.745	-	On-budget	Green	-	-	-
Somerset Lifeline	2.235	(2.600)	(0.365)	(0.365)	-	On-budget	Green	-	-	-
sub total	8.701	(3.321)	5.380	5.380	-	On-budget	Green	-	-	-
Cultural Services										
Service Director - Cultural Services	0.146	-	0.146	0.146	-	On-budget	Green	-	-	-
Library Service	5.204	(1.034)	4.170	4.170	-	On-budget	Green	-	-	-
Heritage Service	1.749	-	1.749	1.749	-	On-budget	Green	-	-	-
Leisure - Sports Centre	2.864	(0.494)	2.370	1.170	(1.200)	Underspend	Green	-	-	-
Museums	0.044	(0.003)	0.041	0.012	(0.029)	Underspend	Green	-	-	-
Theatres	2.587	(1.975)	0.612	0.612	-	On-budget	Green	-	-	-
Visitor Centres	0.262	(0.404)	(0.142)	(0.022)	0.120	Underachievement	Red	-	0.120	-
Tourism	0.111	(0.010)	0.101	0.024	(0.077)	Underspend	Green	-	-	-
(wellbeing) Community Grants	0.021	(0.001)	0.020	0.020	-	On-budget	Green	-	-	-
sub total	12.988	(3.921)	9.067	7.881	(1.186)	Underspend	Green	-	0.120	-
Regulatory & Operational Services										
Registration	1.985	(2.047)	(0.062)	(0.065)	(0.003)	Overachievement	Green	-	-	(0.003)
Environmental Health	4.355	(0.328)	4.027	3.793	(0.234)	Underspend	Green	-	-	(0.001)
Bereavement Services	1.007	(2.444)	(1.437)	(1.321)	0.116	Underachievement	Red	-	0.116	0.108
Harbours	0.066	(0.028)	0.038	0.038	-	On-budget	Green	-	-	0.001
Ports	0.230	(0.148)	0.082	0.022	(0.060)	Underspend	Green	-	-	-
Street Cleansing	5.618	(0.872)	4.746	4.446	(0.300)	Underspend	Green	-	-	0.060
Open Spaces	5.711	(2.542)	3.169	3.456	0.287	Overspend	Red	-	0.287	0.067
Public Conveniences	0.558	(0.474)	0.084	0.022	(0.062)	Underspend	Green	-	-	(0.070)
(wellbeing) Community Safety	0.012	-	0.012	0.004	(0.008)	Underspend	Green	-	-	(0.001)
CCTV	0.797	(0.594)	0.203	0.200	(0.003)	Underspend	Green	-	-	(0.044)
Licensing	0.668	(1.058)	(0.390)	(0.456)	(0.066)	Overachievement	Green	-	-	0.002
Resorts	0.388	(0.204)	0.184	0.239	0.055	Overspend	Red	-	0.055	(0.001)
Coroners	1.344	-	1.344	1.510	0.166	Overspend	Red	-	0.166	0.046
Operational Support	0.689	(0.103)	0.586	0.586	-	On-budget	Green	-	-	-
Scientific Services	0.437	(0.414)	0.023	(0.009)	(0.032)	Underspend	Green	-	-	(0.033)
Markets	0.230	(0.335)	(0.105)	(0.089)	0.016	Underachievement	Red	-	0.016	0.021
sub total	24.095	(11.591)	12.504	12.376	(0.128)	Underspend	Green	-	0.640	0.152
Community Services Total	59.940	(26.698)	33.242	31.928	(1.314)	Underspend	Green	-	1.404	0.152

Community Services - key explanations, actions & mitigating controls

Housing

The General Fund Housing Service continues to forecast a balanced outturn position for 2024/25.

The Housing Options service has seen an increase in the numbers approaching the service and the number of cases which the Council has a responsibility to provide relief or main duty accommodation. This continued demand for temporary accommodation within the last nine months is demonstrated as follows:



Actions are being progressed by the service to mitigate the need for Bed & Breakfast accommodation, and we are striving towards reducing the necessity of temporary staffing following the restructure and streamlining processes within the service.

The Housing Options service is forecasting an overspend of £1.364m. This will be mitigated by savings of £0.474m derived from the Private Sector Support / DFG service, and a drawdown of £0.890m from Earmarked Reserves ringfenced for this service area.

Savings on permanent staffing budgets within the Housing Enabling and Housing Director services have offset pressures, derived from historical income budgets within the Housing Strategy service unable to be achieved.

Cultural Services

The cultural services are forecasting an underspend of £1.186m, there is no change from Month 7.

Regulatory and Operational Services

Regulatory and Operational Services are forecasting an underspend of £0.128m, a decrease of £0.152m from Month 7. Regulatory and Operational Service have a number of demand led services and it is important to note that whilst there has been

a decrease in the underspend that the service are also absorbing one off pressures within the budget.

Bereavement Services are forecasting an overspend of £0.116m. This is due to income being lower than anticipated within Taunton Crematorium. There are significant repairs required to one of the cremators that has now been forecasted within the budget.

Open Spaces are forecasting an overspend of £0.287m, an increase of £0.067m from Month 7. This is due to the Ground Maintenance contact costs within the east of the county being higher than anticipated.

Resorts are forecasting an overspend of £0.166m. This is due to the impact on income due to a damp summer season.

Coroners is forecasting an overspend of £0.166m, an increase of £0.047m from Month 7. This is a demand led service.

To help mitigate the above pressures Regulatory and Operational Services have underspends across other services. Those that have improved positions since Month 7 are listed below:

Public conveniences are forecasting an underspend of £0.062m, an increase of £0.070m from Month 7. This is due to successful negotiated contributions towards running costs for some sites alongside controlled cost reductions.

Table 2: Service Management Actions included in the forecast outturn

Service Management Actions	Month 7	Quarter 3	Movement	Comments
	£m	£m	£m	
Housing	(0.530)	(0.644)	(0.114)	Implemented in the forecast. Relate to underspends within Housing are held to absorb any overspends within the service.
Cultural Services	(0.120)	(0.120)	-	Implemented in the forecast. Relate to underspends within Cultural Services are held to absorb any overspends within the service.
Regulatory and Operations	(0.454)	(0.640)	(0.186)	Implemented in the forecast. Relate to underspends within Regulatory and Operations are held to absorb any overspends within the service.
Total Management Actions	(1.104)	(1.404)	(0.300)	

Performance of agreed MTFP savings proposals

Community Services have 36 agreed savings proposals for 2024/25 totalling £2.866m. Whilst budgets have been adjusted to reflect the savings these are monitored throughout the year to ensure that these are achieved, or alternative substitute savings are sought to offset any unachievable savings.

As at the end of December 72.7% or £2.084m of the savings have been achieved. 15.5% of the savings totalling £0.443m have been identified as on track, to achieve these savings services will need to cease and income through Fees and Charges needs to be achieved. 11.8% of the savings totalling £0.339m have been identified as at risk or unachievable. The unachievable savings are in the main due to income generation through and agreed savings prior to amalgamating 5 authorities into one. Where savings are unachievable or at-risk Community Services are offsetting underspends elsewhere within the service.

Table 3 –MTFP savings (At risk / Unachievable)

Community Services	Saving 2024/25	At Risk £m	Unachievable £m
Customer Services	Lifeline Services - alignment of fees and charges for new customers from April 2023	(0.106)	-
Cultural Services	Funding for Taunton Visitor Information centre		(0.114)
Regulatory & Operational Services	Contract rationalisation for grounds maintenance contracts		(0.050)
Regulatory & Operational Services	Contract rationalisation for street cleansing contracts		(0.050)
Regulatory & Operational Services	Increased Berrow & Brean Beach Parking fees		(0.012)
Regulatory & Operational Services	Fees and Charges - Beach Parking at Berrow and Brean Beaches		(0.007)
Total		(0.106)	(0.233)