

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Executive Director (Finance & Resources)

To

Cabinet

On

14 September 2021

Report prepared by:

Pete Bates, Interim Head of Corporate Finance

Caroline Fozzard, Group Manager for Financial Planning and Control

Agenda  
Item No.

---

## Resourcing Better Outcomes - Financial Performance Report 2021/22 – Period 4

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Cabinet Members: Councillor Ian Gilbert and Councillor Paul Collins

*Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)*

---

### 1 Purpose of Report

The Resourcing Better Outcomes financial performance report is a key tool in scrutinising the Council's financial performance. It is designed to provide an overview to all relevant stakeholders. It is essential that the Council monitors its budgets throughout the year to ensure that it is meeting its strategic objectives and that corrective action is taken where necessary.

### 2 Recommendations

That, in respect of the 2021/22 Revenue Budget Performance as set out in appendix 1 to this report, Cabinet:

#### 2.1 Note the forecast outturn for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account as at July 2021.

#### 2.2 Approve the planned budget transfers (virements) of £1,174,050 from earmarked reserves, as set out in section 4.30.

That, in respect of the 2021/22 Capital Budget Performance as set out in appendix 2 of this report, Cabinet:

#### 2.3 Note the expenditure to date and the forecast outturn as at July 2021 and its financing;

#### 2.4 Approve the requested changes to the capital investment programme for 2021/22 and future years, as set out in section 3 of appendix 2.

### 3 Unprecedented Level of Uncertainty

Some commentators have described the last couple of years as potentially one of most volatile and unpredictable periods in recent history. Clearly Brexit considerations initially and then the response and impact of the pandemic have caused huge disruption and concern to everyday life. Public health worries and economic impacts, together with levels of Government borrowing never seen before in peace time years have all contributed to huge extra fiscal challenges for the country. This context has created additional pressure and uncertainty locally and made effective financial and service planning for Southend-on-Sea challenging.

#### COVID-19 Recovery and Implications

- 3.1 The overall health and economic impact of COVID-19 is still under assessment. The challenge is clearly worldwide, and national governments continue to wrestle with putting in place the right package of measures to save lives and to try to minimise the spread of the virus and its impact across the population. Countries have adopted different strategies and tactics to safely get their respective economies working again.
- 3.2 The pandemic continues to have a major direct operational and financial impact right across the Local Government Sector. All local authorities are struggling with the challenges of uncertainty, large financial pressures and concerns for their residents and local areas in such unprecedented times. Several local authorities are showing signs of significant additional financial stress. Most of the demand and financial pressures highlighted in this report are still inextricably linked directly or indirectly to COVID-19.
- 3.3 Effectively managing the short and medium-term financial challenges that COVID-19 has brought to the Borough will be an important factor in our future success. This report will focus on providing some detail and commentary of the financial variances at a portfolio level that are currently forecast for 2021/22. It should be noted that these estimates have been based on the best information we currently have available and have also been calculated at a very early stage of the financial year.
- 3.4 One of our major areas of concern is the potential impact on service demand 'post COVID-19' or 'living with COVID-19' in the future. This could manifest itself in many ways from increased demand and support because of long COVID-19 symptoms or increased demands on services due to family tensions and breakdown, residents experiencing additional stress and mental wellbeing needs or changing employment issues. The Council and its partners will continue to monitor the situation locally.
- 3.5 The Government has provided a varied range of different financial support mechanisms for the Local Government Sector over the last 18 months. These have been designed to help to support the local management of the pandemic and alleviate some of the financial impact of COVID-19. A huge concern is once this temporary support has been withdrawn then what will be the impact on the Council and local area.

3.6 A good example is the Control Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) specific grant that was announced in 2020/21 and has continued into the first quarter of 2021/22. The Council is deploying this resource locally against the strict eligibility criteria that was set by the Government for its use. Headlines of some of the initiatives that this grant has been used for is summarised below.

- Communicable Disease Consultant providing clinical advice and guidance
- Contact Tracing service to manage higher risk areas, plus digital outreach
- Communications and social marketing to enhance COVID-19 awareness
- Community support capacity for those who may need to isolate
- Some supplementary redeployment of skilled staff locally
- Compliance and enforcement such as additional COVID Ambassadors

### **Comprehensive Spending Review**

3.7 It is still uncertain at this stage whether the Local Government Sector will be issued with a single one-year financial settlement for 2022/23 or if a Comprehensive Spending Review for the next three years will be launched for consultation. The Council remains in a relatively strong financial position for 2021/22 but the size of the financial challenge for the future is already estimated to be very significant. Depending upon national funding and policy decisions taken by Central Government over the coming months then this position could get even more challenging for 2022/23 onwards.

3.8 To help to begin to address and close the estimated budget gap over the next five years the Council will continue to aim to achieve financial sustainability by growing local income sources and relying less on grant support from Central Government in the future. The Council will continue to work collaboratively with its partners, increase its focus on the delivery or joint commissioning of services in a targeted way to ensure that those in most need and who will receive the greatest benefit are the recipients of services. It is vital that we learn from our COVID-19 experience and tailor our services and working practices accordingly.

## **4 Revenue – General fund**

4.1 In February 2021, the Council approved a General Fund Revenue Budget requirement for 2021/22 of £136.290M. This report provides details of the current projected outturn position for 2021/22 based on information as at the end of July 2021 (Period 4). In headline terms Council Corporate Budgets and Service Portfolios are currently forecasting a gross overspend of £7.453M for 2021/22, which is around 1.5% of the gross expenditure budget. This estimated position is inextricably linked to the extra demands and costs incurred by the Council due to the impact of the pandemic. In recognition of these circumstances additional financial support has been provided from the Government for COVID-19 in terms of one-off additional grant and compensation for loss of income of around £5.800M. This reduces the net forecast overspend for 2021/22 at this early stage of the year to £1.653M.

4.2 Although the actual level of COVID-19 Grant support will vary based on various factors like the level of local income unachieved etc., we are currently not expecting to receive any further new financial COVID-19 support in 2021/22.

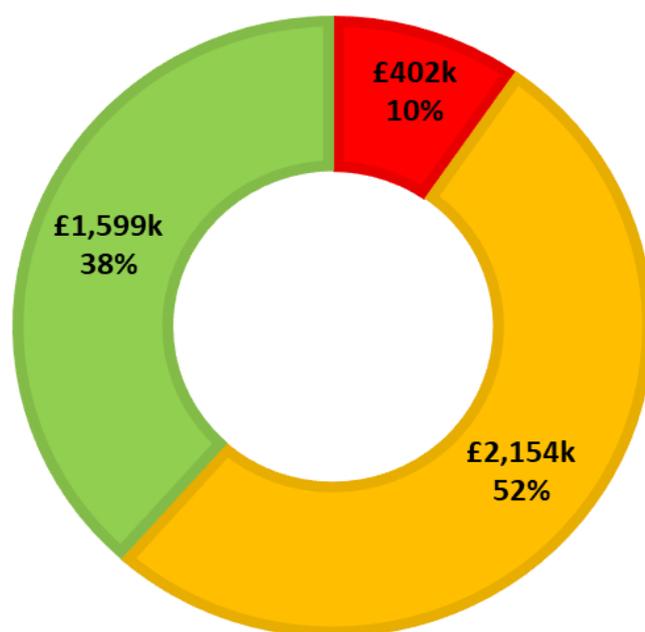
This assumption is predicated on the continuing success of the national vaccination programme and assumes that no further restrictions or additional local burdens are imposed that would have a direct financial impact on the Council. Any new funding announcements or any forced changes to local service arrangements will be reflected, if required, in the Period 6 financial performance update which is scheduled to be reported to the Cabinet meeting in November 2021.

- 4.3 The Council is trying to deal with many of the same uncertainties and financial challenges that all other upper tier authorities right across the country are experiencing. It is still difficult to untangle and isolate specific demand and cost pressures that exist across the Authority due to the impact of COVID-19. It is possible that part of the current financial challenge is a continuation of some of the service pressures that were prevalent and first highlighted back in 2019/20. This possibility should have been minimised and reduced by the extra investment that was approved for key services as part of the budget setting processes for 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- 4.4 The Chancellor announced his expectation that generally national public sector pay (except for the NHS) would be frozen for 2021/22. This has proved not to be the case and negotiations over a 'cost of living' rise for the Local Government Sector is currently still ongoing. The employer's negotiating body on behalf of local government have made a 'final pay rise offer' of 1.75% for 2021/22. At the time of writing this report this 'offer' was still under consideration by the trade unions and negotiating body representing employees.
- 4.5 As part of its approved budget setting arrangements the Council did make provision in an earmarked reserve for the circa £1.3M this pay settlement is estimated to cost. If the final pay rise is agreed at this level, then this amount can be accommodated in 2021/22. It must be highlighted though that this settlement will create a permanent pressure of equivalent value in the Council's revenue base budget from 2022/23 onwards and will increase the current forecast financial gap by circa £1.3M per year. The forecast budget gap for 2022/23 that was reported to Budget Council in February 2021 was £7.300M – so this will increase to an estimated £8.600M.
- 4.6 The 2021/22 approved budget did include a one-off £2.5M earmarked support for Children's Services which has not yet been released or included in the forecast outturn assessment at this early stage of the year. This would clearly reduce the current forecast level of overspending in this area. The situation will continue to be carefully monitored and further consideration and assessment will be provided as part of the Period 6 monitoring report.
- 4.7 The Council's new 'Getting to Know Your Business' programme has now started to be embedded. This programme helped to establish a baseline for all services in terms of their costs, income generation potential, value for money and performance. This data will highlight key lines of enquiry where benchmarking may suggest that either our costs or income levels are above or below average. This will lead to potential changes in operation or highlight areas for Cabinet to consider a review of existing policies.

4.8 Services are also continuing to develop further recovery and mitigation plans to try to improve the current financial situation but more critically prepare for the significant future financial challenge. Adult Social Care is exploring innovative 'strengths based' initiatives to improve outcomes, residents maintaining their independence and VFM. All services are being challenged to try to improve efficiency and productivity to ensure that the resourcing of better outcomes for our residents are achieved at the best value for the local taxpayer.

### Status of Approved Budget Savings and Income Generation Initiatives

4.9 It is vital that the range of budget savings and income generation initiatives that were approved as part of the setting of the 2021/22 budget, totalling £4.155M are delivered or alternative options are considered. The ongoing operational challenges caused by COVID-19 and managing the implications of the pandemic locally has had an impact on the delivery of some of the approved proposals. An overall assessment of progress based on the likelihood of delivery is summarised in the following graphic. Each initiative is being regularly monitored by the Corporate Management Team and the likelihood of successful delivery of the targeted value rated as either Red (High Risk), Amber (Medium Risk) or Green (Very Low Risk).



The proposals that are currently rated as highest risk are summarised in the following table. The major saving area is linked to ICT enabling additional organisational capability and productivity. Progress against the ICT SMART Programme has been severely disrupted due to COVID-19 and the need to prioritise the continuation and resilience of remote safe working. It is expected that the saving target will be delayed. A further progress status update will be provided in the Period 6 Financial Performance Report in November 2021.

CS02	Saving	ICT: Smart programme	320	R
PJ01	Income	Contactless donation points within Parks	2	R
FW04	Saving	Rent Deposit Loans Scheme review	40	R
FW05	Saving	Single Property Visits: Council Tax & Planning	40	R

4.10 Despite the clear and obvious financial challenges highlighted in this report the Council remains in a much stronger and financially resilient position than many other Local Authorities. We clearly cannot be complacent and there will undoubtedly be some very tough choices and decisions to make nationally and locally as part of the Council's budget development for 2022/23 and Medium Term Financial Strategy. In this context it was pleasing to see that Southend-on-Sea Borough Council was ranked in the upper quartile (13<sup>th</sup> out of 56) of all Unitary Authorities across the country in CIPFA's independent Financial Resilience Index which was published in February 2021.

### **Transport, Asset Management & Inward Investment**

4.11 A fundamental review of parking charges and operations was undertaken in 2020/21 to standardise and rationalise parking tariffs in similar locations across the Borough. An extensive review of permits was also undertaken, together with an agreement to trial the new Southend Pass.

4.12 As the country continued to operate under some level of COVID-19 related restrictions in the early part of the year, parking income along with most of the Council's income generating activities directly suffered. The Council also proactively took a local decision to directly support car parking for NHS health and care workers by providing free parking permits until the end of July 2021. In recognition of the national impact on income, the Government extended the sales, fees and charges compensation scheme until the end of June 2021. Positively - in response to the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions and more favourable weather - parking income and activity for the month of June 2021 increased significantly.

4.13 The large shortfalls in car parking income experienced in April and May has resulted in an overall estimated loss for the year against our approved budget of around £1M. It is clearly still very early in the financial year and the situation will be continuously monitored. With plans to extend the tourist season into the autumn, together with a variety of additional events scheduled it is hoped that this forecast position may improve as the year progresses.

### **Adult Social Care & Health Integration**

4.14 Adult Services are reporting a forecast overspend of £1.3m. The majority of this overspend is due to the delivery of statutorily required care and support to people with physical or learning disabilities aged 18-64. Work is ongoing to improve forecasting in this area for 2022/23.

4.15 The medium to longer term impact of COVID-19 on budgets and service demand remains concerning. Levels of service use amongst older people have been lower than predicted, particularly use of residential care, this has reduced the budget pressure for 2021/22. However, the needs of this group of people

have not gone away and may have escalated over the period of lock down. It is likely that this will result in substantially increased demand in the future, but the timing of the change in trend is uncertain at present.

- 4.16 Alongside the potential for increased demand there are several national policy and funding changes that present a financial risk to the authority. National Hospital Discharge funding is scheduled to be scaled back from September. This is additional COVID-19 related central government funding to support hospital discharge. It funds costs incurred during the first 4 weeks post discharge and has enabled clients to be released from hospital earlier.
- 4.17 Further national guidance is anticipated soon which will allow us to factor in the financial impact on the second half of this financial year. It should be noted that whilst the levels of discharge remain as they are currently, the financial pressures on the Council may increase. New requirements to deliver Liberty Protection Safeguarding support across the Borough are also a potential pressure, as is the impact of care home closures.

### **Children & Learning**

- 4.18 As replicated in many upper tier authorities around the country Children & Learning Services remains a high spend pressure area. It is currently forecasting a net overspend of circa £2.453M, excluding the one-off £2.5M put aside to support the service as part of the approved 2021/22 budget. Although still a concern in headline terms this is a positive financial improvement from both 2019/20 and 2020/21. Most of this reported pressure is shown on Children Services.
- 4.19 Looked After Children (LAC) numbers reached a peak in 2019/20, reduced through 2020/21 and are now at their lowest level for five years. There were 277 LAC as at the end of July 2021. This reduction in LAC numbers is having a positive effect on improving previous and significant spend pressures. Whilst this spend reduction is positive, reliance on LAC external care placements (the most expensive type of provision) remains high as a proportion of overall LAC placements with 91 placements as at the end of July 2021, equivalent to 33%. This is clearly the main cause of the spend pressure within Children Services. Work continues to re-build capacity for additional inhouse foster care placements with the aim of reducing these costs over time and improve outcomes for children in the care system.
- 4.20 The service is also anticipating additional funding pressures following requests from Government for local authorities to meet increased support for unaccompanied asylum seeker placements.
- 4.21 Additionally, there is funding pressure on care package costs for Children with disabilities and there are also increased costs related to COVID-19 resulting from both placement extensions and extra staffing to respond to the crisis.

## **Corporate Services & Performance Delivery**

- 4.22 Approved budget proposals in relation to Council Tax and Business Rates income has increased costs on the service line but upon delivery this will have a higher positive impact and increase the net level of income collectable by reviewing all discounts and exemptions. This 'extra' income will be reported within the Council's funding line. Whilst e-billing is unavailable printing costs continue to be a cost pressure, together with card processing fees as the transition to payments on the website and other electronic methods increase. The net forecast overspend is currently estimated to be £0.280M. There are several vacancies within the Council Tax and Housing Benefit teams that are putting pressure on the teams but also providing some compensating savings.
- 4.23 The most significant forecast financial pressure is within ICT, at this stage of the year £0.7M overspend is predicted. This is due to a combination of reducing levels of external income generated, significant delays experienced in the delivery of planned savings due to the impact of COVID-19 and extra costs associated with maintaining safe resilient remote working capabilities.
- 4.24 Proactive vacancy management across several services within the finance and resources directorate is helping to reduce the total level of forecast overspend at this stage of the year.

## **Environment, Culture, Tourism & Planning**

- 4.25 The shoreline has been subjected to several significant storms and as a result there has been a requirement for an increased level of remedial works to maintain key structures. Significant work is also underway to replace the groynes along the seafront.
- 4.26 Additional support has also been required to assess the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) impact of any relevant planning applications and specialist geotechnic expertise is required to assess the stability of the cliffs.
- 4.27 Culture and Tourism are currently reporting a forecast overspend of around £450,000. COVID-19 has had a major impact across all income generating activities but the most significant has been on our leisure contractor (Fusion Lifestyle). It has been agreed that the management fee for 2021/22 will be waived. This decision was taken to assist in ensuring that our leisure centre provision remains open for visitors and residents. The historical loss of footfall has significantly impacted on their income generating capability. This arrangement was agreed by the Council in March 2021 and will be subject to a further review on 30th September 2021.

## **Public Protection**

- 4.28 As a result of changes in people movements and consumer habits (increased time spent or working at home, coupled with a significant increase in home deliveries) there is an increase in the volumes of waste generated from residential properties. Although some of this increase will be recyclable material, there is also an increase in residual waste.

- 4.29 The Council are the waste disposal authority so this increased tonnage is resulting in an estimated extra disposal cost pressure of around £600,000. Any increase in recycling performance will negate some of this additional cost.

### **Budget Virements**

- 4.30 All budget transfers (virements) over £250,000 between portfolios or between pay and non-pay budgets are considered and approved by Cabinet. These budget transfers have a net nil impact on the Council's overall budget. The following budget transfers for Cabinet approval this period are:

<u>£</u>	
516,250	Planned transfer from the Passenger Transport Joint Venture Reserve
340,000	Planned transfer from earmarked reserves to support the Southend Community College due to the impact of COVID-19
317,800	Planned transfer to support the response to Rough Sleeping from the Public Health Reserve (Drugs & Alcohol)
<b><u>1,174,050</u></b>	<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>

## **5 Revenue – Housing Revenue Account**

- 5.1 In February 2021, the Council approved a balanced 2021/22 Housing Revenue Account budget for 2020/21. This report details the projected outturn position for this year based on actual activity and financial performance as at the end of July 2021 (Period 4).
- 5.2 The forecast for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) as at the end of July 2021 indicates that it will have a net surplus of (£450,000) in 2021/22, a positive variance of around (-1.8%) of gross operating expenditure.
- 5.3 This positive position is due to increased levels of rental income received as a result of a lower level of voids within the housing stock. This demonstrates good housing management practice. As the planned affordable homes acquisitions programme progresses into Quarter 2 there is also an anticipated increase in the numbers of units within the housing stock that will further increase the HRA's rental income streams in the future. It must be noted that there is a risk on the levels of rent arrears due to the impact of COVID-19 on tenant's income and their continuing ability to pay. This situation will be kept under constant review and work is ongoing with tenants to try and provide appropriate support and mitigate any impact.
- 5.4 It is currently anticipated that any surplus will be transferred to the HRA Capital Investment Reserve at the year-end for future planned investment into improving the housing stock.

## 6 Capital

- 6.1 Successful and timely delivery of the capital investment programme is a key part of achieving the Southend 2050 ambition and delivering priority outcomes. The investment contributes to the five main themes in the following way:
- 6.2 Pride and Joy – the key investment areas are: the ongoing refurbishment and enhancement of Southend’s historic pleasure pier and the town’s cultural and tourism offer, including parks, libraries and theatres.
- 6.3 Safe and Well – the key investment areas are: the construction and acquisition of new council homes and the refurbishment of existing ones via the decent homes programme; social care with the building of a new care facility and day centre to provide high quality services for people with high and complex needs.
- 6.4 Active and Involved – the key investment area is the Cart and Wagon Shed for the coastal community team to use as part of their community interest company.
- 6.5 Opportunity and Prosperity – the key investment areas are: the Airport Business Park to deliver benefits for both local businesses and local communities, creating thousands of job opportunities and attracting inward investment; the secondary schools expansion programme which is entering its fifth year and when completed will see an additional 1,100 permanent places for 11-16 year old pupils.
- 6.6 Connected and Smart – the key investment areas are: the investment in the borough’s highways and transport network, including the improvements to the A127 Growth Corridor funded by the Local Growth Fund; investment in the Council’s ICT infrastructure and networks to enable and transform outcome focussed service delivery.
- 6.7 In March 2021 the Council agreed a capital investment programme budget for 2021/22 of £79.9M. The outturn for 2020/21 showed a final spend of £66.1M against a revised budget of £71.9M, an underspend of £5.8M. The proposed budget carry-forwards, accelerated delivery requests and other budget re-profiles and amendments resulted in a revised budget for 2021/22 of £94.7M. It was clear that not all this programme was deliverable directly by the Council and so the programme was split so that the schemes to be delivered by South Essex Homes Limited and Porters Place Southend-on-Sea LLP are separately identified. This leaves a capital investment programme of £77.6M to be delivered by the Council.
- 6.8 Despite the challenges to the delivery of the capital investment programme as a result of the global pandemic, the Council’s ambition to facilitate recovery and deliver better outcomes is not diminished. So in line with the approach where schemes can enter the programme during the financial year and not just annually at budget setting, priority projects were approved at the June Cabinet meeting for inclusion into the capital investment programme. This increased the 2021/22 budget deliverable by the Council to £77.8M

- 6.9 £57.8M of this budget is identified as strategic schemes such as the Airport Business Park, the Delaware and Priory new build, Footways and Carriageways Schemes and Highways Schemes funded by the Local Growth Fund and via the Local Transport Plan.
- 6.10 The Council's capital investment programme plans are ambitious but capital resources are finite, both in terms of affordability and capacity to deliver. We need to ensure that investment is focussed on priorities and that priority projects have viable delivery plans. Major new investment such as the Levelling Up Fund bids, if successful, will need to be resourced to enable delivery. Therefore a MoSCoW review is underway to re-assess and re-prioritise the capital investment programme on an on-going basis. This enables prioritisation by categorising capital projects as 'must have', 'should have', 'could have' or 'will not have' (at this time). The results of the first stage of this review are included in this report but the review is on-going and further changes will be included in the Period 6 performance report to Cabinet in November. Capital challenge sessions will also be held with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance Delivery and the resulting requested changes to the capital investment programme will be included in the Period 6 performance report to Cabinet in November.
- 6.11 Schemes will be re-assessed in light of the Council's updated outcomes, refreshed roadmap and recovery priorities (where major projects are in the capital investment programme these are included as strategic schemes). Some schemes may be removed from the main programme entirely and others held as 'subject to viable delivery plans' until it can be demonstrated that there is the capacity and resources to deliver them in the timescales indicated. Schemes can then be brought back into the main programme as and when it is appropriate to do so.
- 6.12 Approximately 30% of the programme deliverable by the Council is financed by Government grants and external developer and other contributions and at the end of July over 70% of that had been received. The rest of the programme is funded by capital receipts, the use of reserves or by borrowing. Funding schemes by borrowing has a revenue consequence of approximately £70k for every £1M borrowed.
- 6.13 This report details the projected outturn position for 2021/22 based on information as at the end of July (period 4). The report includes details of progress in delivering the 2021/22 capital investment programme and in receiving external funding relating to that year.
- 6.14 Since June Cabinet the Investment Board has agreed some proposed new schemes can progress to Cabinet for consideration. As a result of the above and the on-going review, this report also includes any virements between schemes, re-profiles across years, new external funding and proposed new schemes and additions.
- 6.15 The progress of schemes for 2021/22 is detailed in sections 1 and 2 of Appendix 2 with Section 3 setting out the resulting requests to:

- Carry forward £5,521,000 of 2021/22 scheme budgets into 2022/23.
- Bring forward £200,000 of budget from 2023/24, £138,000 into 2021/22 and £62,000 into 2022/23.
- Add scheme budgets totalling £90,000 into 2021/22 where new external funding has been received.
- Add scheme budgets totalling £647,000 into 2021/22 and £990,000 into 2022/23 for new schemes and additions to the capital investment programme to be delivered by the Council.
- Add scheme budgets totalling £500,000 into 2022/23 for new schemes and additions to the capital investment programme to be delivered by subsidiary companies and joint ventures.
- Action virements of budget between approved schemes.

6.16 As at the end of July the capital outturn for 2021/22 is currently estimated at £73,914,000 for schemes to be delivered by the Council and £16,122,000 for schemes to be delivered by subsidiary companies and joint ventures. The amount to be delivered by the Council is expected to reduce following the on-going review of the capital investment programme as highlighted in 6.10 and 6.11. An updated assessment will be included in the Period 6 performance report and presented to Cabinet in November 2021.

6.17 The 2021/22 capital budget is part of the wider capital investment programme spanning several years. The table below shows the revised programme if all the above requests are approved:

**Programme to be delivered by the Council (GF and HRA):**

	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	Total £000
At June Cabinet	77,845	43,334	14,829	9,182	7,219	152,409
Reclassifications between sections*	715	770	770	776	0	3,031
Amendments	(4,646)	6,573	(200)	0	0	1,727
Revised programme	73,914	50,677	15,399	9,958	7,219	157,167

**Programme to be delivered by Subsidiary Companies and Joint Ventures:**

	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	Total £000
At June Cabinet	16,837	17,719	16,329	10,374	3,250	64,509
Reclassifications between sections*	(715)	(770)	(770)	(776)	0	(3,031)
Amendments	0	500	0	0	0	500
Revised programme	16,122	17,449	15,559	9,598	3,250	61,978

\* HRA Disabled Adaptations are deliverable by the Council but were included in the programme to be delivered by Subsidiary Companies and Joint Ventures in error.

## **7 Other Options**

- 7.1 The Council could choose to monitor its budgetary performance against an alternative timeframe, but it is considered that the current reporting schedule provides the appropriate balance to allow strategic oversight of the budget by members and to also formally manage the Council's exposure to financial risk. More frequent monitoring is undertaken by officers and considered by individual service Directors and the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) including the implementation of any necessary remedial actions.

## **8 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 8.1 The regular reporting of Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring information provides detailed financial information to members, senior officers and other interested parties on the financial performance of the Council. It sets out the key variances being reported by budget holders and the associated management action being implemented to address any identified issues.
- 8.2 It also informs decision making to ensure that the Council's priorities are delivered within the approved budget provision.
- 8.3 It is important that any adverse variances are addressed in order for the Council to remain within the approved budget provision or where this cannot be achieved by individual service management action, alternative proposals are developed and solutions proposed which will address the financial impact. Members will have a key role in approving any actions if the alternative proposals represent significant changes to the service delivery arrangements originally approved by them.

## **9 Corporate Implications**

- 9.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map

The robustness of the Council's budget monitoring processes and the successful management of in-year spending pressures are key determinants in maintaining the Council's reputation for strong financial probity and effective stewardship. This approach also enables the Council to redirect and prioritise resources to ensure the delivery of agreed outcomes for the benefit of local residents, local businesses and visitors to Southend-on-Sea.

- 9.2 Financial Implications

As set out in the body of the report and accompanying appendices.

- 9.3 Legal Implications

The report provides financial performance information. It is good governance and sensible management practice for the Council to consider monitoring information in relation to plans and budgets that it has adopted.

Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 requires the Council as a best value authority to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness”. Monitoring of financial and other performance information is an important way in which that obligation can be fulfilled.

The Council is required by section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs. The Council is also required by section 28 of the Local Government Act 2003 to monitor its budget and take corrective action, as necessary. The Council’s chief finance officer has established financial procedures to ensure the Council’s proper financial administration. These include procedures for effective budgetary control. To comply with these best practice arrangements, it is important that Cabinet receive information and comment accordingly on the performance of the revenue and capital budgets as set out in the report.

#### 9.4 People Implications

None arising from this report

#### 9.5 Property Implications

None arising from this report

#### 9.6 Consultation

None arising from this report

#### 9.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

None arising from this report

#### 9.8 Risk Assessment

Sound budget monitoring processes underpin the Council’s ability to manage and mitigate the inherent financial risks associated with its budget, primarily caused by the volatility of service demand, market supply and price.

The primary mitigation lies with the expectation on CMT and Directors to continue to take all appropriate action to keep costs down and optimise income. Any adverse variances will require the development of remedial in year savings plans and appropriate spending reductions wherever possible. The ultimate back-stop mitigation would be to draw on reserves to rebalance the budget, but this will only be done at year end and will only be considered should all other in year measures fail.

With the likely scale of funding pressures and future resource reductions continuing, it is important that the Council holds a robust position on reserves and maintains the ability to deal positively with any issues that arise during this and future financial years.

## 9.9 Value for Money

The approved budget reflects the Council's drive to improve value for money and to deliver significant efficiencies in the way it operates. Monitoring the delivery of services within the budget helps to highlight areas of concern and to assist in the achievement of improved value for money.

## 9.10 Community Safety Implications

None arising from this report

## 9.11 Environmental Impact

None arising from this report

## 10 Background Papers

Approved 2021/22 Budget – Report to Council 25 February 2021

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 – 2025/26

## 11 Appendices

Appendix 1 Period 4 – July 2021 Revenue Budget Performance 2021/22

Appendix 2 Period 4 – July 2021 Capital Investment Programme Performance 2021/22