

Cabinet – 18th September 2023

Minute 36: Finance and Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 to end of July 2023 (Period 4)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance & Resources) summarising the current forecast position at this early stage of the financial year and which highlighted where corrective action would be necessary and reasonable mitigation is required to try to deliver a balanced financial position by the end of the year.

Resolved:-

1. That the unprecedented levels of reported financial pressure and challenges right across the local government sector as set out at Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be noted.

2. That, in respect of the 2023/24 Revenue Budget Performance as set out in Appendix 2 to the submitted report:

(i) The forecast outturn for 2023/24 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account as at 31 July 2023, be noted.

(ii) The plans and intentions to try to reduce the forecast overspend of the Council's revenue budget for 2023/24 be noted and that the Chief Executive and Executive Director (Finance & Resources) be requested to explore all opportunities within their delegated powers and authority to improve the financial position by the year-end as set out in section 5 of the submitted report.

(iii) The planned budget transfers (virements) of £308,600 from earmarked reserves, as set out in section 5.50 of the submitted report, be approved.

3. That, in respect of the 2023/24 Capital Budget Performance as set out in Appendix 3 of the submitted report:

(i) The expenditure to date and the forecast outturn as at 31 July 2023 and its financing, be noted.

(ii) the Corporate Performance Report as at 31 July 2023 set out in Appendix 4 of the submitted report, be noted.

Recommended:

4. That the requested changes to the capital investment programme for 2023/24 and future years, as set out in section 4 of Appendix 3 of the submitted report, be approved.

Reasons for Decisions

To provide detailed financial information on the financial performance of the Council. The report sets out the key variances by budget holders and associated management action being implemented to address the identified issues.

Other Options

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 Councillors and to also formally manage the Council's exposure to financial risk.

Note: The decisions in resolutions 1 to 3 above constitute an Executive function and the recommendation in 4 above constitutes a Council function.

Cabinet Member: Cllr Cox

***Called-in to Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee**

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee – 5th October 2023

Minute 37: Finance and Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 to end of July 2023 (Period 4)

The Committee considered Agenda Item 7 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18 September 2023, 'Finance and Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 to end of July 2023 (Period 4), Cabinet Minute No.36 refers. The report of the Executive Director (Finance & Resources) had been called-in and referred to the Policy and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Finance and Corporate Performance report set out the current operating environment and the significant increases experienced in both service demand and the ongoing unavoidable inflationary cost pressures, summarised the current forecast position and highlighted the need to make some difficult choices and take decisive action.

A brief discussion took place on tree net gain in the City, following which the Leader explained that in future he would request that any figures be reported in terms of tree canopy change rather than tree net gain.

The Leader confirmed that he would ensure a written response was provided to the Committee in relation to point 8.8, the average length of pre-proceedings for the Public Law Outline (PLO) in order to provide clarification on the above target of 14 by 4.7 due to late expert assessments.

It was highlighted that the Legal Services team had significant problems with permanent recruitment and as a result expenditure on agency staff to cover vacant roles was forecast to cause a pressure of £120,000.

The Leader reported that it would be clarified outside of the meeting how long the transition of Mental Health services was expected to take.

In relation to the quarterly snapshot of families with children in Bed and Breakfast for over 6 weeks, the Leader confirmed a written answer would be provided to the Committee to advise how many were out of area placements.

Resolved:

That the following recommendations of the Cabinet (1-3) be noted:

1. That the unprecedented levels of reported financial pressure and challenges right across the local government sector as set out at Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be noted.
2. That, in respect of the 2023/24 Revenue Budget Performance as set out in Appendix 2 to the submitted report:
 - (i) The forecast outturn for 2023/24 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account as at 31 July 2023, be noted.
 - (ii) The plans and intentions to try to reduce the forecast overspend of the Council's revenue budget for 2023/24 be noted and that the Chief Executive and Executive Director (Finance & Resources) be requested to explore all opportunities within their delegated powers and authority to improve the financial position by the year-end as set out in section 5 of the submitted report.
 - (iii) The planned budget transfers (virements) of £308,600 from earmarked reserves, as set out in section 5.50 of the submitted report, be approved.
3. That, in respect of the 2023/24 Capital Budget Performance as set out in Appendix 3 of the submitted report:
 - (i) The expenditure to date and the forecast outturn as at 31 July 2023 and its financing, be noted.
 - (ii) The Corporate Performance Report as at 31 July 2023 set out in Appendix 4 of the submitted report, be noted.

That the following recommendation to Council be noted:

4. That the requested changes to the capital investment programme for 2023/24 and future years, as set out in section 4 of Appendix 3 of the submitted report, be approved.

Note: Recommendations 1-3 are an Executive Function. Recommendation 4 is a Council function.

Cabinet Member: Councillor T Cox