

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee Cabinet	Date:	31 October 2022 9 November 2022
Subject:	Financial Outturn 2021/22		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Jon Topping, Director of Policy & Resources		
	Email: jon.topping@gloucester.gov.uk	Tel: 396242	
Appendices:	1. Detailed Performance by Portfolio 2. Capital Outturn		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present to members the Council's final general fund revenue, and capital outturn positions against agreed budgets for the 2021/22 financial year, and report on the performance of the Council against certain key financial performance indicators.
- 1.2 For Cabinet to note the final outturn position and to approve the movements to and from earmarked revenue reserves.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the information in the report and make any recommendations to Cabinet.
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:
 - (1) it be noted that:
 - i. The year-end position for the financial year 2021/22 is a decrease to the General Fund balance of £252k against a budgeted increase of £129k.
 - ii. The General Fund balance has decreased from £1.379m to £1.127m at the end of 2021/22
 - iii. That the level of earmarked reserves has decreased by £6.407m to £7.413m, with a release of £6.119m from the Section 31 Grant Repayment Reserve created in 2020/21 because of the Covid-19 pandemic
 - iv. The financial implications of Covid-19 and the gradual economic recovery from the effects of the pandemic during 2021/22 on the Council year end position
 - v. The estimated nature of some of the figures included in this report because of the cyber incident in December 2021

- (2) the transfers to and from earmarked reserves as detailed in the table in section 6 of this report be approved.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 The Council approved the 2021/22 Budget in February 2021. This report sets out the financial position as at the end of the financial year 2021/22 and is based on actual costs and income. Similar to the Quarter 3 Report the financial performance in the months since December 2021 is based on the best analysis that the finance team could achieve using the manual records and systems implemented following the cyber incident. The financial systems data is in the process of being reconstructed and fully reconciled; any differences and pressures arising from this exercise will be managed during 2022/23.
- 3.2 The financial year 2020/21 was dominated by Covid-19 and its impact on the activities and finances of the Council. The pandemic created significant financial challenges for the Council with additional unexpected activities and their associated costs. These challenges have continued into 2021/22 with the focus continuing to be on ensuring the Council has sufficient financial resources to achieve its service delivery obligations.
- 3.3 The cyber incident in December 2021 has led to further financial pressures for the Council and disruption to the collation of this Financial Outturn report. The 2021/22 Outturn figure includes all the costs incurred and committed relating to recovery activities prior to the end of the financial year. The Council has secured several sources of Government funding to support its recovery from the incident totalling £250k.
- 3.4 The reported position at Quarter 3 was a decrease to the general fund by £109k, due to the continued impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's income streams during 2021/22 and the estimated financial consequences of the December 2021 cyber incident. This led to the Outturn position deteriorating by a further £143k to a net budget deficit of £252k against a budgeted net increase in funds of £129k; leading to an adverse variance for the year of £381k.
- 3.5 As noted above, the cyber incident has impacted on the production of this Budget Outturn report and the figures included are based off the November 2021 ledger position, updated with the income and costs incurred since then until March 2022. The manual processes developed ensure the Council continue to meet its obligations in relation to payments, and income collection. Costs in relation to all the major contracts and arrangements have been updated based on the contractual arrangements, income and other costs are included on a best estimate basis.
- 3.6 As note in the Quarter 3 report in response to the continuing implications of the COVID19 pandemic in 2021/22, the Council was allocated £743k grant by Central Government. In addition, the Sales, Fees and Charges (SFC) compensation scheme was extended to the end of Quarter 1; the Government ended this compensation scheme as at the end of June 2021. This report includes the income received from the SFC claim submitted for Quarter 1 of £400k allocated against the service areas affected.
- 3.7 The significant demands on the Council from the Government for the distribution of emergency and economic grants to the local population and businesses have continued throughout 2021/22. This has led to increasing demands on all Council services and partners who should continue to be commended for their dedication in ensuring that the Council has supported all residents and businesses in the city.

4.0 Whole Council Summary

4.1 The summary table below shows the forecast outturn position for the Council by Cabinet portfolio. **Appendix 1** provides the breakdown of the totals within each portfolio.

Council Summary	21/22	Year	
	Budget	End	Final
		Final	Variance
Communities & Neighbourhoods	983	953	(30)
Performance & Resources	1,113	1,840	727
Culture & Leisure	1,332	1,383	51
Planning & Housing Strategy	1,331	1,447	116
Environment & Leader	5,969	5,781	(188)
Corporate and Funding	(10,857)	(11,151)	(293)
Total	(129)	252	381

4.2 The General Fund and Earmarked Reserves balances continue to place the Council in a stable financial position in the current uncertain climate of Local Authority funding and the recovery from the pandemic.

4.3 The table above highlights the overall outturn position on the General Fund for the Council. The Council has slowly seen its services recover from the significant impacts that were noted in 2020-21 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, as noted in section 3 above there continues to be uncertainty surrounding the speed with which the Council's income streams will fully recover from the impact of the Covid pandemic, and the full impact of the cyber incident on both the costs and the income of the Council.

4.4 The Covid-19 pandemic, and the cyber incident faced by the Council has caused the year end forecast position to decline further from the forecast net decrease of £109k to the General Fund forecast at Quarter 3, to the net decrease of £252k shown above. Additional funding received from the Government during the year has enabled the Council to maintain control of its financial position, and some of the income streams affected by the cyber incident are simply delays in income receipts to the 2021/22 financial year.

5.0 Significant items of note

Covid-19

5.1 The Covid-19 pandemic that spanned the whole of the financial year 2020/21 continued into the first half of 2021/22 and continued to have a financial and social impact on many of the Council's service areas either leading to additional costs or lost income; leading to various budget variances. The most significant items of lost income were recompensed by a fourth round of the Government's Sales, Fees and Charges Scheme. This contributed the following amounts:

- Car Parking - £0.2 million
- Cultural and Leisure Services - £0.11 million
- Other (Planning, Licensing, Markets, The Arbor) - £0.09 million

Communities and Neighbourhoods

- 5.2 The outturn for this portfolio is generally in line with the Quarter 3 estimate. As noted in the Quarter 3 report the Communities teams have continued their collaborative working with the County Council and the neighbouring districts to ensure a co-ordinated response to the pandemic, and where appropriate costs have been shared. This along with a variety of targeted Government grants has enabled spend to be maintained within the budgeted levels.
- 5.3 During the year the Communities team has received Covid-19 related grants and shared service funding of over nearly £0.6m for which it has managed the spend, in collaboration with the neighbouring districts and County, on a variety of projects from the provision of covid compliance and community protection officers, food safety inspections, and various community school holiday and meal projects. In the final Quarter of 2021/22, the Communities team also managed the Household Support Grant of £0.12m received from the County Council to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills and other essential items.

Performance and Resources

- 5.4 This portfolio includes many of the income generating activities of the Council that have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, including Parking, Commercial Properties, and Revenues & Benefits. It also includes the IT budget which has been impacted by the increased costs in relation to the cyber incident and its remediation. The full year outturn saw a net deficit to budget of £727k that was primarily a result of the slower than hoped for return to normal following the Covid-19 pandemic (affecting the income levels achieved in relation to parking, commercial properties, and the crematorium) and the additional costs incurred by the Council in relation to the IT incident.
- 5.5 The number of people parking in the city centre slowly increased from May 2021, but at a slower rate than forecast in the budget. The incidence of the Omicron variant of Covid over the festive period led to a slowing of this improvement in visitor numbers to Gloucester in December. All of this resulted in a shortfall in parking income for the year of £415k after taking into account the receipt of £200k from the final round of the Government's Sales, Fees & Charges support scheme.
- 5.6 As noted above the IT spend has been affected by the cyber incident but some of this additional cost has been mitigated by grant funding of £250k. The outturn for 2021/22 is a net overspend of £84k.
- 5.7 As noted at Quarter 3, the Council manages more than £30m of Housing Subsidy and benefit payments, and the smallest percentage change can have a significant impact on the final outturn. The final quarter saw a reduction in the adverse position, but still left the Council with a final overspend position of £343k. This cost is out of the Council's control. This pressure is mitigated by new burdens funding from the Government and the increased recovery of historic housing benefit overpayments by the Revenues & Benefits service.
- 5.8 As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and cyber incident, the Revenues and Benefits service have been limited in their ability to follow-up bad and doubtful debtors through the courts, with the courts service recommencing in the middle of 2021/22. These items will be pursued during 2022/23. During the year the Revenues and Benefits service received several additional grants from the Government which have led to a favourable variance of £593k which mitigates the overspent position in relation to Housing Subsidy.

- 5.9 The Commercial Property portfolio is adverse to budget by £135k. This is a result of the continued impact of Covid-19 during Quarter 1 of 2021/22 causing delays in new tenancy arrangements. Several new tenants took up occupancy at the various sites during Quarters 3 and 4 of the year improving the final outturn position. It should be noted that the St Oswald's and Eastgate properties are continuing to perform well against budget despite the impact of the pandemic on retailers. The position is gradually improving in relation to Kings Walk as the Kings Square redevelopment reaches completion, and several new units have opened in the second half of the year, providing income and reducing the pressures caused from additional service charge costs to the Council. The historic investment property portfolio has slowly recovered but has seen the loss of several tenants and reduced income from others as a result of rent holidays and deferrals.
- 5.10 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic reduced the Arbor's ability to provide a full scale catering service for wakes in the Cemeteries & Crematorium service. This combined with the high activity levels the Crematorium that saw increased costs in relation to cremator maintenance, and sanitisation costs in relation to the chapel, has led to an adverse full year position of £355k; after taking into account the receipt of £25k from the final round of the Government's Sales, Fees & Charges support scheme.
- 5.11 The overspend highlighted within the Human Resources area is a result of expected income for apprentice salaries not being met since the introduction of the levy in 2016/17. This is an historic budgetary pressure that has been addressed in the 2022/23 Money Plan.

Culture & Leisure

- 5.12 This portfolio is another portfolio that has been affected by the loss of income due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The final outturn for the year was £51k adverse to budget after taking into account the receipt of £110k from the final round of the Government's Sales, Fees & Charges support scheme.
- 5.13 After being closed for most of 2020/21 the Council's cultural venues started to re-open to the public once more. The Culture & Leisure team ran a successful events programme across the year. The Culture & Leisure team have also been successful in applying for grants from various sources to support their work and to improve the venues. The application of these grants is taking place in relation to the Guildhall during the summer of 2022/23 and will see further works at the Museum in 2023/24.
- 5.14 The Council continues to support the leisure trust in the wake of the pandemic. This has led to additional cost pressures during the year of £112k.

Planning and Housing

- 5.15 This portfolio was adverse to budget by £116k. The cyber incident hindered the Council's ability to respond to planning requests and required several manual processes to be developed to allow the continued provision of the service at a basic level.
- 5.16 As a result of the various issues faced by the Council the planning service was £319k adverse to budget. The Planning Service also faces issues that are common within planning councils around the country as a result of the surge in small scale planning applications from householders who have spent more time at home due to the pandemic. The statutory nature of the fees that can be charged in many cases prevents the full costs of the service provision from being recouped. The final Quarter

of 2021/22 began to see some of the major development projects planned within the city submit their applications which will boost this income stream in 2022/23.

- 5.17 The City Plan review process and its associated costs are being incurred during 2021/22 but as noted at the February 2021 Budget Meeting, the costs incurred in relation to this process have been met by the earmarked reserves specifically put in place for this purpose in the 2020/21 financial outturn.
- 5.18 The overall homelessness budget for the year is favourable by £157k as a result of a combination of the positive steps taken by the Council over the past two years to increase the temporary accommodation capacity available to it, and the actions taken to ensure all Government grant and benefit funding is being promptly claimed. The cyber incident has impacted on the process of ensuring prompt reclaim of the benefit funding. This is being addressed in 2022/23 as the systems and data come back online.

Environment

- 5.19 The primary cause of the favourable budget variance is increased income from recyclable materials. This is a combination of price increases for recyclable materials and improved recycling quantities has led to a significant increase in the income raised by the Council from the sale of the recycling commodities. This has created a forecast favourable variance on the Waste contract of £305k for the year, a further improvement on the Quarter 3 position of £212k
- 5.20 The overspend of £118k in the Waste and Streetcare budget is a result of various budget pressures noted in the Quarter 3 report including the national shortage of HGV drivers creating upward pressures on salary costs, potential issues with the fulfilment of waste collections, and technical issues with the sorting plant equipment during January. This is covered by the favourable income position relation to the sale of recyclable materials.
- 5.21 The final position for the Economic Development service is a favourable variance of £21k, after taking into account the funding of the Major Projects Officer by the Regeneration Reserve.
- 5.22 The overspends for the other services within this portfolio are primarily a result of the various pandemic related activities that have been necessary during the year and are covered either by specific grant funding or the general Government support grants referenced in the summary above.

Corporate and Funding

- 5.23 Similar to 2020/21 the Government has supported the Council's cash requirements during the year through the early payment of s.31 Grants to match the reduced income from Business Rates and Council Tax, that was caused by the various reliefs granted to businesses and individuals by the Government.

6.0 Movement in Earmarked Reserves

6.1 The Council continues to hold an earmarked reserve balance of over £7.4m as shown below:

Reserve Name	Opening Balance	Transfers In	Transfers Out	Closing Balance
Historic Buildings	53	-	-	53
Housing Survey	60	-	-	60
Shopmobility	29	-	-	29
Regeneration	83	261	(199)	145
Insurance	10	-	-	10
Land Adoption	873	-	-	873
VAT Shelter	160	357	(350)	167
Business Rates	1,023	-	-	1,023
Environmental Insurance	900	-	-	900
Repairs	23	-	-	23
Community Builder	62	-	(33)	29
Planning Strategy	248	-	(83)	165
Flooding Works	10	-	-	10
Lottery	22	7	(9)	20
Great Place	22	-	(22)	-
Museum Bequest	305	-	-	305
Transformation Reserve	100	-	-	100
Budget Equalisation	21	558	(332)	243
Destination Marketing	200	-	(50)	150
Homelessness	100	-	-	100
Planning Appeals	50	-	-	50
Communities	30	-	(12)	18
Climate Change	100	-	(34)	66
Neighbourhood Spaces	100	-	(43)	57
Defibrillator	6	-	-	6
Property Sinking Fund	300	-	(300)	-
Collection Fund Timing	8,930	3,097	(9,216)	2,811
Reserves Total	13,820	4,280	(10,683)	7,413

6.2 The Council has drawn down previously reserved funds to pay for their intended usage during 2021/22 and where applicable carried forward amounts for future use.

6.3 There has been a net transfer to the Regeneration reserve in the year. The net surplus from the SWRDA assets generated £261k to contribute to the reserve. The reserve was earmarked to contribute towards the Council's regeneration projects in 2021/22, £199k was spent in year towards this project leaving an overall net transfer to the reserve of £62k. The balance will continue to be used to support future regeneration work.

6.4 The authority continues to receive funding relating to the arrangement for a "VAT shelter" relating to the Housing Stock transfer of 2015. In 2021/22 funding of £357k was received. £350k was allocated from the reserve to contribute to the borrowing costs for the redevelopment of Kings Square and Kings Quarter – the Forum.

- 6.5 As forecast in the Money Plan and Budget, amounts have been drawn down against various of the earmarked reserves for use against expenditure included in the 2021/22 budget papers.
- 6.6 An amount of £558k was transferred to the Budget Equalisation Reserve during the year in line with the Money Plan. The continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic into the 2021/22 financial year has led to an amount of £332k being drawn from this reserve to relieve budget pressures that were caused as a consequence of this. There was however a net transfer to the reserve in the year of £222k to provide the Council with funds to manage future unexpected budget pressures.
- 6.7 The Government pays Section 31 grants to the Council to compensate for changes to the increases in business rates that it implements centrally that reduce the amount of business rates collectable. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic the Government increased the levels of additional retail and hospitality reliefs available to businesses in 2020/21. Elements of these schemes were continued into 2021/22 as the pandemic continued through that winter. The Council precepts (the payments to the County Council and Central Government) are set in the January 2021 of each year for the following financial years prior to the finalisation of the Government support schemes to businesses. In 2020/21 and 2021/22 the Government needed to make up-front payments using s.31 grants to the Council for it to maintain its cash flow obligations to the precepting authorities. In a normal year these shortfalls or overpayments would be received or collected in the subsequent financial year. In 2020/21 due to the significant nature of this timing difference the Collection Fund Timing Reserve was created to account for the repayment in 2021/22 of the grants received early. During 2021/22 the amount repaid was released from the reserve and an amount added for the lower level of grants received early that will be collected by the Government during 2022/23; giving a net release from the reserve of £6,119k.

7.0 Capital Programme

- 7.1 The outturn position for the Capital Programme £23.9m against the budget for the year of £25m.
- 7.2 Expenditure for 2021/22 has seen the completion of Kings Square and seen significant progress with the Kings Quarter – The Forum project, demolition of Bruton Way multi story car park and Bentinck House has been completed and work has started on phase 3b of the new development which will see commercial space and residential flats built. Primark took ownership of their new store in Kings Walk during the year creating a new external look for the Centre.
- 7.3 The Council continues to work with partners to deliver projects, such as Cathedral Quarter as part of the Heritage Action Zones with The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission. The agreement to join Ubico for waste services has seen the Council purchase new domestic waste vehicles for this partnership.
- 7.4 The nature of capital projects means that many of them span a number of financial years; budgets are set per project any unspent budgets at the end of any one financial year may be carried forward into the next
- 7.5 A summarised table for the Capital Programme is shown as Appendix 2.

8.0 Prompt payment performance

8.1 The Council aims to make payments to all suppliers promptly and in accordance with contract terms. Due to the cyber incident that occurred in December 2021 we do not have access to sufficient data to provide these statistics in full for 2021/22. Following the cyber incident processes have been put in place to ensure the continued payment of the Council's creditors as promptly as is feasible in the circumstances. These processes allowed for the payment of over 1,850 invoices during Quarter 4 in an appropriately controlled fashion and ensured minimal delays in payment.

	Q 1		Q 2		Q 3		Q 4		TOTAL	
Number paid within 30 days of receipt of invoice	1,467	97%	1,612	96%	-	-%	-	-%	-	-%
Number paid over 30 days from receipt of invoice	52	3%	67	4%	-	-%	-	-%	-	-%
Average Days to Pay (from receipt of invoice to payment date)	5		6		-		-		-	

9.0 Social Value Considerations

9.1 There are no social value implications as a result of this report.

10.0 Alternative Options Considered

10.1 A wide range of options are explored by officers in order to reduce budgetary pressure, to achieve savings targets, and to ensure value for money.

11.0 Reasons for Recommendations

11.1 It is a good practice for members to be regularly informed of the current financial position of the Council. This report is intended to make members any of any significant issues in relation to financial standing and any actions that officers are taking in response to identified variances.

12.0 Future Work and Conclusions

12.1 Work will continue to reach savings targets or limit in year budget pressures.

13.0 Financial Implications

13.1 All financial implications are within the report, which is of a wholly financial nature.

14.0 Legal Implications

14.1 There are no legal implications from this report. One Legal have been consulted in the preparation this report.

15.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

15.1 There are no specific risks or opportunities as a result of this report

16.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

16.1 A PIA screening assessment has been undertaken and the impact is neutral. A full PIA is not required.

17.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety / Sustainability / Staffing & Trade Union

17.1 None