

2020 to 2021 Performance report Quarter 4

Report number:	PAS/WS/21/008	
Report to and date:	Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	27 May 2021
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Decisions Plan: This item is not included in the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: All wards

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Note the impact of COVID-19 on the council's current financial year 2020 to 2021**
- 2. Note the 2020 to 2021 revenue and capital positions as detailed in the report and appendices, and forward any relevant issues or comments to Cabinet for consideration.**

1. Context to this report

1.1 The performance management framework seeks to enable greater understanding of progress towards the council's strategic priorities, as well as giving insight on the delivery of the large range of day to day services to the residents of West Suffolk.

1.2 The purpose of the evolution and development of the performance management framework is to ensure that performance information supplied to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Leadership Team clearly shows:

- progress towards strategic goals
- insight on initiatives that will ensure future progress
- areas that require decisions and actions to keep on track to their goals
- items with a significant level of risk associated with them
- flexibility in approach allowing the escalation of performance successes and challenges
- the relationship between performance indicators and financial delivery.

1.3 COVID-19 impact

1.4 Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in the UK, a number of events have occurred which have had a significant impact on West Suffolk Council's financial position. Some of these have been restrictions imposed by government that have affected West Suffolk Council's investments and services; and others have been announcements of Government financial support.

1.5 The council has played its part in responding to COVID-19, in supporting businesses and the most vulnerable as well as running essential services. The monthly returns to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have detailed the financial impacts of COVID-19, and generally the forecast impacts have remained consistent on a month by month basis. The latest submission, covering the period from April 2020 to March 2021, shows a total impact of £12.2 million (costs of £3.6 million and lost income of £8.6 million). It should be noted that these are required to be gross figures and therefore an element of the additional costs such as internal staff redeployment and costs savings have also been factored into the figures.

1.6 Funding of these additional COVID-19 related costs has been achieved through the work of the council, utilising existing budgets, delivery of COVID-19 related initiatives within existing resources, and external grants. This means the year end position shows these variances to reduce to an overall impact of £1,359,000. This deficit will be funded largely from the previously agreed use of the in-year 2020 to 2021 New Homes Bonus allocation which was previously allocated to support strategic projects. The net deficit balance of £159,000 will then be funded from the council's general fund balance. The Council's financial position and ability to reduce the impact where possible has been helped by previous financial planning and the creation of the West

Suffolk Council as well as quick and effective action to reduce costs as guidance and infection rates changed.

- 1.7 COVID-19 and our response to it has consequently impacted on a number of our local performance indicators – most noticeably around housing and homelessness. Within these figures, the income generated by the council in the current financial year through sales, fees and charges has reduced by £8.6 million, mitigated to a certain extent by the sales, fees, and charges compensation from central government. Further details of the financial impacts of COVID-19 can be found in Appendix F.
- 1.8 In addition to the cost pressures and income losses outlined above, the pandemic is also impacting the council's ability to collect Council Tax and Business Rates. Whilst this will not have a direct impact on the current year's budget position, any deficits on the Collection Fund in the current year will have to be charged to the General Fund budget from 2021 to 2022 onwards.
- 1.9 Whilst we welcomed the financial support that the Government has announced to local authorities for spending pressures, administrative impacts, and lost income compensation, this will not fully cover the additional cost of our response to COVID-19 and income losses. In order to close the budget gap for the current year the council will need to utilise a proportion of its earmarked reserves and general fund balance in the short term as set out in 1.6 above.
- 1.10 The impact of COVID-19 is likely to be felt for years to come as the council will need to make provision in its medium term budget plans for the impact on the collection fund deficits, recovery to pre-covid income and expenditure levels and the replenishment of its earmarked reserves and general fund balances.
- 1.11 A number of the 2020 to 2021 variances referenced in this outturn position report were reported as part of previous quarter monitoring papers and have in the main already been considered as part of the development of the 2021 to 2022 budget. However, now that the final outturn position for 2020 to 2021 is known, Officers will use this data to test the robustness of the 2021 to 2022 key budget assumptions. This work will feed into monthly monitoring and will be reported to members of this committee as part of the quarter 1 2021 to 2022 monitoring reports.

2. Quarter 4 Performance

- 2.1 This report shows the quarter 4 performance and year-end financial outturn position for West Suffolk for 2020 to 2021.
- 2.2 The attached appendices detail the performance as follows:

Appendix A: 2020 to 2021 performance indicators – commentary

This appendix shows a high-level summary of the council’s budget monitoring forecast position for revenue, capital, and reserves, and draws out a number of key performance indicators at strategic priority level.

Appendices B to E: Performance indicators by strategic priority

These appendices support Appendix A and include more detail around how the council is performing against each strategic priority and corporate day to day service delivery.

Appendix F: Income and expenditure report

This appendix shows the current revenue forecast position across West Suffolk, analysed across the different categories of income and expenditure.

Appendices G to H: Financial performance

These appendices contain the financial forecast positions for the council in respect of capital and earmarked reserves.

2.3 Performance Indicators for 2021 to 2022

Appendices B to E include the draft performance indicators for the financial year 2021 to 2022 at the right of each table.

These draft targets will be reported on in the first quarter of the year, however the performance framework is currently under review and these key performance indicators are likely to change as the year progresses.

3. Performance Summary

3.1 The following table shows the quarter 4 performance status for all indicators, grouped by strategic priority and corporate day to day service delivery, and is further detailed in appendices A to E.

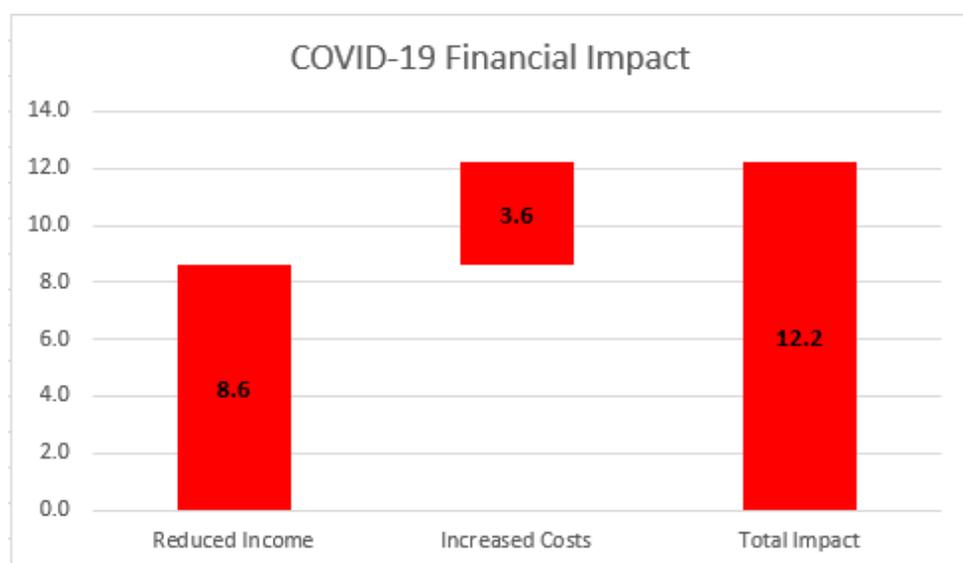
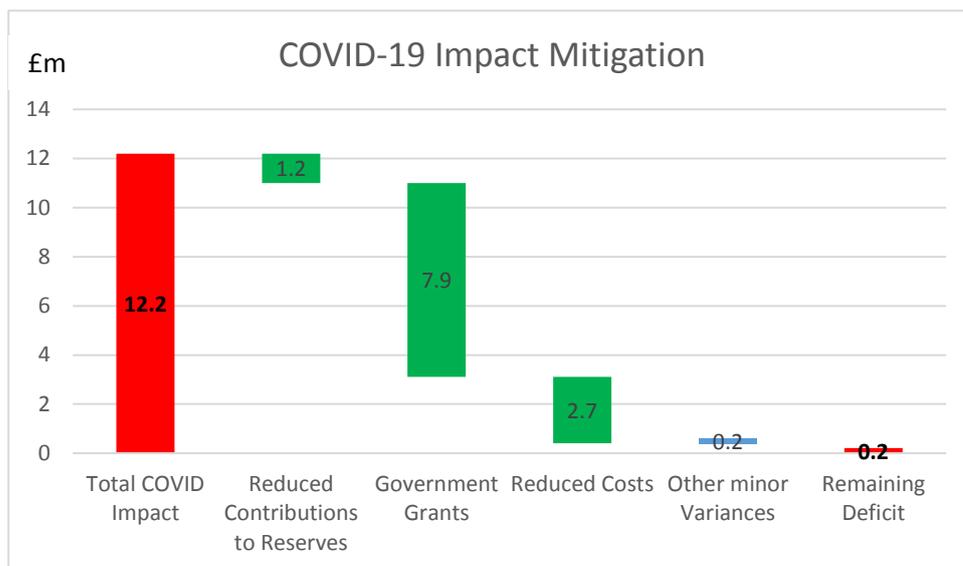
Summary of key performance indicators				
Quarter 4 - year to 31 March 2021				
Appendix and strategic priority	Green: on or exceeding target	Amber: below target within tolerance	Red: below target, outside of tolerance	Data only indicators
B: Inclusive growth	1	1	0	0
C: Families and Communities	2	0	6	3
D: Housing	5	0	0	0
E: Day to day	18	5	6	2
Totals:	26	6	12	5

- 3.2 The increased number of metrics that are falling below target relate to the issues raised in section 1.3 above.

Note: Appendix A is a summary of appendices B to E.

4. Financial outturn summary

- 4.1 The year-end revenue outturn position shows a net overspend of **£159,000, after the use of £1,200,000 of New Homes Bonus receipts in year** and before the utilisation of 3.2 per cent of the council's general fund balance of £4.9 million. This is a significant improvement on previous forecast outturn reports. This is primarily as a direct result of a number of new burden payments received directly from central government and/or via Suffolk County Council, something the council has continued to successfully lobby for.
- 4.2 £1.1 million in total has now been received during 2020 to 2021 through these new burden type funding streams, in recognition of the significant costs associated with administration and management of the following COVID-19 initiatives:
- The national and local business grants schemes
 - The national self-isolation payments scheme
 - Re-opening our high street safely scheme, and
 - The local work of the 'Home But Not Alone' team during the three National lockdowns experienced during 2020 to 2021.
- 4.3 The council took steps early to redeploy existing paid staff to these initiatives, managing closely any additional incremental costs to the overall budget given the impacts already experienced in loss of income streams and increased COVID-19 related costs such as housing and Personal Protection Equipment.
- 4.4 The council also took steps to reduce spend where possible, especially in those areas where the associated income had reduced or in some cases completely stopped. It is through a combination of approaches, including those referenced above, that has enabled significant progress to be made to bring the council's 2020 to 2021 financial year outturn back on track, with a much smaller net contribution now required from the general fund balance from that previously predicted.
- 4.5 Of this £159,000 net variance, £12.2 million can be directly attributed to the impact on council income services and the emergency responses to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 outbreak this financial year. As demonstrated by the graphs below, the council has been able to mitigate the £12.2 million deficit caused by the COVID-19 pandemic by utilising government grant funding, and through reductions in expenditure, some of which can be directly linked to the effects of the lockdowns. These reductions include reduced spend on utilities, printing and postage and transport expenditure. A summary by income and expenditure type can be found in Appendix F, with comments for significant variances.



4.6 Capital programme

The council has spent £31.9 million of its capital budget of £83.6 million for 2020 to 2021, with requested carry forwards of £57.0 million as a result of project timings. Further detail by individual capital project can be found in Appendix G.

4.7 Earmarked reserves

The council's balance on earmarked revenue reserves at the end of the financial year is **£37.6 million** after Section 31 grant adjustments (see below), against a budgeted closing balance of **£31.5 million**. This net under-utilisation is primarily as a result of underspends on the vehicle and plant reserve as a result of timings of replacing the fleet (£2.0 million), additional contributions to the capital project financing reserve as a result of reduced borrowing and minimum revenue provision due to project timings

(£1.1 million) and reduced utilisation on the capital programme due to timing delays (see also appendix G) partly offset by releasing the in-year New Homes Bonus allocation into the general fund to support day to day services as a result of the financial impact of COVID-19.

- 4.8 This year end reserve position includes a £16.4 million adjustment in the business rates equalisation reserve, primarily relating to Section 31 grants from central government to cover the business rates foregone due to schemes introduced to counter the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown (that is, Retail, Hospitality and Leisure 12 months business rates holiday).
- 4.9 Details of the individual reserve balances and movements during the year can be found in Appendix H.

5. Alternative options

- 5.1 In order for the council to be able to meet its strategic priorities it is essential that sufficient and appropriate financial resources are available. There are no alternative options.

6. Consultation and engagement

- 6.1 This report and the figures and commentary therein have been compiled by the Finance team in consultation with the relevant budget holders, services, and Leadership Team.

7. Risks

- 7.1 The West Suffolk Risk Register is a document that records all known strategic risks that may impact the ability to deliver services and performance of West Suffolk Council. Each risk is described and the relative inherent impact and probability of the risk coming to pass is estimated. The actions and controls that are undertaken to mitigate this risk are then laid out resulting in a revised residual impact and probability estimate.
- 7.2 The challenges presented by the COVID-19 outbreak and accompanying lockdown have obviously impacted all of the risks contained in the register. In order to provide focus for the urgent risks presented a dedicated section has been added to appendix I for COVID-19 specifically – risk reference WS00. The actions and controls are based around the development of county wide recovery plans. This is a developing position and will be defined in greater detail as these plans are devised.
- 7.3 The West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register is updated regularly by the Risk Management Group. The Group is comprised of service representatives, including Health and Safety, supported by a director and the portfolio holder

for Resources and Performance. Assistant directors and/or service managers may be required to provide further information as requested by the group.

- 7.4 The aim of this process is to provide assurance that all strategic risk has been identified and that there are mitigating actions and controls in place to reduce these risks to an acceptable level.
- 7.5 At its most recent assessment on 7 January 2021, the Group reviewed the Target Risk, the risk level where the council aims to be, and agreed a Current Risk assessment. These assessments form the revised West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register at Appendix I.
- 7.6 Part of this assessment included the consideration of the controls and actions in place to address the individual risks. Where target risk levels are lower than the current risk assessment, further action is either being taken or planned in order to treat the risk and meet the target.
- 7.7 Some individual controls or actions have been updated and those that were not ongoing and had been completed by March 2021 have been removed from the register.

8. Implications arising from this proposal

- 8.1 All implications arising from the proposals are covered within the report and its associated appendices.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix A – Performance indicators - commentary
Appendix B – Performance indicators - Growth
Appendix C – Performance indicators - Families and Communities
Appendix D – Performance indicators - Housing
Appendix E – Performance indicators - Day to day
Appendix F – Income and expenditure report
Appendix G – Capital Programme
Appendix H – Earmarked reserves
Appendix I – Strategic Risk Register
- 9.2 We are aware that some elements of these appendices are not fully compatible with current accessibility standards. It is the council's intention to review and reformat these in order to fully comply with the standards for the first quarterly reports of the 2021 to 2022 financial year, which will take place in July 2021. In the meantime, please contact accountancy@westsuffolk.gov.uk if you have any questions regarding this report or its appendices or require them in an alternative format.

10. Background documents

- 10.1 None.