

Budget monitoring - over/(under) spend (all figures are in £ thousands)

Revenue	£000s
Income year-end variance	(366)
Expenditure year-end variance	525
Net year-end variance to budget before use of General Fund:	159
Utilisation of General Fund balance	(159)
Net year-end actual variance to budget	0
Capital	
Net year-end underspend variance to budget (allowing for carry forward and external funding)	(1,131)
Reserves	
Net year-end under utilisation variance to budget (excluding Section 31 grants)	6,010

Key performance indicators

	Value	Target	Trend
Families and Communities			
Number of households in temporary accommodation (as at last day of month).	88	55	
Number of households in bed and breakfast accommodation (as at last day of month).	21	15	
Day to day			
Total amount of debt over 90 days (£).	674,925	250,000	
Percentage rate of return on investments.	0.33%	0.65%	
Car park income (£)	1,921,385	6,172,338	
Income from Waste & Street Scene services (£)	2,363,402	2,721,562	
Overall Apex budget (£)	729,355	482,343	
Percentage of contacts - online/email	38.00%	30.00%	
Income from entire property portfolio (£).	5,585,001	5,592,822	
Percentage of void properties.	5.45%	6.90%	

Appendix A - Balanced Scorecard

Quarter 4 - year to 31 March 2021

Commentary

As with the first three quarters, the final quarter's performance has been overshadowed by the COVID-19 outbreak and resultant lockdown from 23rd March 2020. This triggered the business continuity plans across all services at West Suffolk Council to meet the challenges presented by the outbreak. The announcement of a second and third lockdown through November and January has required an additional set of solutions.

Financial performance - The shortfall against budget is driven by a combination of loss of income and additional costs incurred as a result of dealing with COVID-19 and the lockdowns.

The key drops in our revenue streams are driven by:

- reduced usage and suspension (following the need to redeploy staff) of charging in our car parks during the first lockdown.
- the closure of the Apex and cancellation of events.
- trade waste income dropping as businesses cancel or postpone collections.
- the suspension of brown bin collection during the first lockdown.
- the much reduced markets offering.
- significantly reduced activity in the smaller income areas (leisure services, grounds maintenance, vehicle maintenance etc.)

Planning Application income is also below budget but this may be a timing issue connected to when planning applications come forward rather than a COVID-19 specific impact.

Costs have been driven up primarily by provision of accommodation for homelessness following government instruction to find space for all homeless individuals during lockdown.

There are also increased costs for cleaning, personal protective equipment (PPE) and information technology hardware for home-working.

The council has sought to mitigate these increased costs and reduced incomes wherever possible through tight budgetary management, and utilisation of central government funding where available such as the COVID-19 Local Authority Support Grant and Sales, Fees and Charges Compensation. Further details are available in appendix F.

The earmarked reserve balance at the year end is £6.01 million higher than budgeted, further details on individual reserves are available in appendix H. The increased balance is mainly due to timing differences on the council's Capital Programme, leading to reduced financing requirements during the year. These requirements will increase during the coming years as projects come to fruition. Central Government provided Section 31 Grants upfront (£16.4 million) to cover the expanded rate reliefs introduced to combat the impact of COVID-19. These reserves will be required as those reliefs are foregone through into 2021 to 2022.

Number of households in temporary accommodation - In order to respond to the governmental instruction to provide accommodation during the COVID-19 outbreak more places have been found and funded. This position has continued through the lock-down period.

Number of households in bed and breakfast accommodation - Strategic choice to move vulnerable people out of bed and breakfast accommodations into the increased provision of temporary accommodation (see above). This position has continued through the lock-down period.

Debt over 90 days - The underlying position is worsening with commercial property and trade waste debt increasing during this volatile period of supply and income certainty. The council is taking a pragmatic approach and is working with tenants regarding payment profiles as a result of COVID-19.

Car parking - Parking charges were suspended in April and May and underlying car park usage was very low. The recommencement of charging in June and increased usage have improved the position income, however town centre footfall and subsequent car park usage, although on the increase, are still lower than previous years. The January lockdown is expected to have a further effect on the income as footfall in the town centres reduces.

Property income - This still remains strong in the final quarter but there is an accompanying increase in our bad debt provision as the uncertainty of income causes the aged debt position to increase. We are experiencing significant impacts on these metrics in the remainder of 2020 to 2021 as tenants seek to offset the lost income caused by the COVID-19 lockdown.