
Executive Decision- Revenue Budget Monitoring

April-June 2022/23

Decision to be taken by: City Mayor

Decision to be taken on: 8th September 2022

Lead director/ officer: Colin Sharpe, Deputy Director of Finance

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Amy Oliver
- Author contact details: amy.oliver@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

This report is the first in the monitoring cycle for 2022/23 and provides early indications of the financial pressures the Council is facing this year.

The report shows an overall overspend of £12.7m, after the reduction in the Adult Social Care budget detailed below. This overspend is after the use of the funds set aside for the pay award and the £2m contingency within corporate budgets. The forecast overspend is mainly due to pandemic related income shortfalls and the much higher levels of cost and pay inflation being experienced since the budget was prepared. The cost pressures detailed in this report were not known at the time of setting the budget and is consistent with other councils.

The income shortfalls due to the pandemic will be funded from one-off funding set aside in the 2022/23 budget. The remaining overspend of £11m will need to be funded from the managed reserves strategy reducing the one-off funding available to support future years' budgets.

As previously reported, the annual growth in spending on adult social care packages costs are proving to be lower than pre-pandemic levels. Our budget planning was based on the expectation that this trend would reverse after the pandemic. This does not seem to have happened, and it is therefore believed that the growth in the budget for the service can be reduced by £9.4m. This approach is further discussed in section 13 and does carry with it some risk of overspending, but this will be monitored closely. The table at appendix A assumes this decision has been taken.

Children's continue to experience pressure in the Looked After Children's budget as the number of children receiving care and the level of support required has increased.

City Development and Neighbourhoods and Sports Services are reporting a significant overspend mainly relating to additional energy and waste costs and the continued income shortfalls as a direct consequence of the pandemic. The cost increases have arisen primarily because of recent higher inflation, but also due to increasing levels of household waste to be disposed of.

2. Recommended actions/decision

2.1 The Executive is recommended to:

- Note the emerging picture detailed in the report.
- Approve the decrease in the Adult Social Care budget ceiling for 2022/23 of £9.4m and for the in-year underspend to be transferred to the Managed Reserve Strategy. Further detail can be found at paragraphs 13.5, 13.6 and 13.7 of this report.
- Approve the reductions to budgets described at paragraph 18 and for the in-year underspend is transferred to the Managed Reserve Strategy, and delegate authority to the Director of Finance to determine the specific budget ceilings affected.

2.2 The OSC is recommended to:

Consider the overall position presented within this report and make any observations it sees fit

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

N/A

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

The General Fund budget set for the financial year 2022/23 was £307.8m.

Appendix A summarises the budget for 2022/23.

Appendix B provides more detailed commentary on the forecast position for each area of the Council's operations and budget savings.

5. Detailed report

See appendices

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

This report is solely concerned with financial issues.

6.2 Legal implications

This report is solely concerned with financial issues.

6.3 Equalities implications

No Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out as this is not applicable to a budget monitoring report.

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

This report is solely concerned with financial issues

6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

No other implications are noted as this is a budget monitoring report, and therefore no policy changes are proposed.

7. Background information and other papers:

Report to Council on the 23rd February 2022 on the General Fund Revenue budget 2022/2023.

8. Summary of appendices:

Appendix A – Period 3 (April-June) Budget Monitoring Summary;

Appendix B – Divisional Narrative – Explanation of Variances

9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

10. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?

Yes – recurrent savings in excess of £0.5m

Revenue Budget at Period 3 (April – June), 2022-23

2022-23	Current Budget	Forecast	Variance
	£000's	£000's	£000's
Financial Services	11,564.8	11,564.8	0.0
Information Services	10,389.3	10,389.3	0.0
Human Resources & Delivery, Communications & Political Governance	9,545.4	9,153.5	(391.9)
Legal Services	3,470.7	3,584.2	113.5
Corporate Resources & Support	34,970.2	34,691.8	(278.4)
Planning, Development & Transportation	13,753.4	15,912.8	2,159.4
Tourism Culture & Inward Investment	4,538.8	4,976.9	438.1
Neighbourhood & Environmental Services	31,900.2	34,931.5	3,031.3
Estates & Building Services	5,826.9	7,147.8	1,320.9
Departmental Overheads	829.0	829.5	0.5
Housing Services	3,359.3	4,356.2	996.9
City Development & Neighbourhoods	60,207.6	68,154.6	7,947.0
Adult Social Care & Safeguarding	145,768.5	145,649.7	(118.8)
Adult Social Care & Commissioning	(16,939.3)	(17,122.3)	(183.0)
Sub-Total Adult Social Care	128,829.2	128,527.4	(301.8)
Strategic Commissioning & Business Support	1,944.7	1,641.6	(303.1)
Learning Services	17,562.1	18,010.3	448.2
Children, Young People & Families	67,576.9	68,411.2	834.3
Departmental Resources	1,558.0	1,521.8	(36.2)
Sub-Total Education & Children's Services	88,641.7	89,584.9	943.2
Total Social Care & Education	217,470.9	218,112.3	641.4
Public Health & Sports Services	23,529.9	24,814.8	1,284.9
Total Operational	336,178.6	345,773.5	9,594.9
Corporate Budgets	17,319.9	21,999.3	4,679.4
Capital Financing	6,450.0	5,242.0	(1,208.0)
Total Corporate & Capital Financing	23,769.9	27,241.3	3,471.4
Public Health Grant	(27,884.2)	(28,248.1)	(363.9)
Managed Reserves Strategy	(24,214.5)	(24,214.5)	0.0
TOTAL GENERAL FUND	307,849.8	320,552.2	12,702.4

Divisional Narrative – Explanation of Variances

Corporate Resources and Support

Corporate Resources Department is forecasting to spend £34.7m, £0.3m less than the budget.

1. Finance

- 1.1. The Financial Services Division is forecasting to spend £11.6m as per the budget. Both the Business Service Centre and Revenues and Customer Services continue to experience a number of staffing vacancies as they did in the previous year. The cost savings from this are offset by the additional operating costs of external processing of some local taxation work.

2. Information Services

- 2.1. Information Services are forecasting to spend £10.4m as per the budget. The service continues to use an earmarked reserve to fund new equipment particularly to support agile ways of working, and other development costs over and above “business-as-usual” including costs relating to cyber security and network resilience.

3. Human Resources, Delivery Communications & Political Governance (DCPG)

- 3.1. Human Resources is forecasting to spend £3.6m, £0.3m less than the budget as a result of carrying staffing vacancies and generating additional traded income. DCPG overall is forecasting to spend £5.5m, £67k less than the budget.

4. Legal, Registration & Coronial Services

- 4.1. Legal Services are forecasting to spend £3.6m, £0.1m more than the budget. The service has a number of additional staff to deal with current work demands.
- 4.2. Coronial Services are forecasting to spend £0.9m which means, as in previous years, support from corporate budgets of £0.4m will be required and this is assumed in the forecast.

5. City Catering

- 5.1. City Catering is budgeted to trade at break-even (i.e. without a subsidy) but is facing significant headwinds this year with increasing food costs and pay inflation, together with lower levels of uptake. Meal price increases have previously been kept to a minimum but pay and food inflation now mean that the cost of production is on average more than the prices charged to schools. This issue is being reviewed, but this year the service will need to draw on an earmarked reserve in order to break-even.

City Development and Neighbourhoods

The department is forecasting an overspend of £7.9m on a net budget of £60.2m. The position for each division is as follows:

6. Planning, Development & Transportation

- 6.1. The division is forecasting an overspend of £2.1m. Income from on-street car parking continues to be lower than budget, and under-recovery of £1.2m is anticipated. Infringements into bus lanes are significantly lower than before the pandemic, resulting in a £0.3m shortfall in income on enforcement. To an extent, these are both partial legacies of the pandemic. Partially offsetting this income shortfall, reduced passenger numbers on buses is predicted to lead to an underspend of £0.9m. However, the Government has recently written to councils about maintaining bus services and additional national support for the sector is planned. This predicted underspend will therefore be kept under review. These income shortfalls will be funded by the one-off COVID monies set aside as part of the 2022/23 budget report.
- 6.2. An increase in energy costs across street lighting, traffic signals and signs add £0.9m of budget pressures. In addition, in light of the current market conditions, we are seeing early indications of a reduction in the number of major planning applications being submitted, which could lead to a projected budget shortfall of £0.4m, however, we are continuing to review planning fee income from our own strong pipeline of major schemes, fee structures/charges and key developments in the city.

7. Tourism, Culture & Inward Investment

- 7.1. The number of market traders operating at both markets is still much lower than before the pandemic, with the division forecasting an under-recovery on income of £0.4m as a result.

8. Neighbourhood & Environmental Services

8.1. The division is forecast to overspend by £3m. Domestic waste disposal operates through a PFI contract under which the unitary charge paid by the Council increases each year in line with inflation. The rate of inflation in April 2022 was 11.2%, which exceeded the inflation allowance in the budget, resulting in an overspend of £1.8m. The volume of domestic waste going to landfill rose during 2021/22 and it is anticipated to continue through the current year, with an increase in landfill tax of £2m predicted as a result. Partially offsetting these is the anticipated impact of the annual financial adjustment based on actual activity in the preceding year.

9. Estates & Building Services

9.1. The division is forecasting an overspend of £1.3m as a result of a shortfall in the income, work is currently being undertaken identify the reasons behind this and to identify efficiencies to offset the budget pressure.

10. Departmental Overheads

10.1. Departmental budgets held for added years' pension costs, postage and departmental salaries are forecast to break even.

11. Housing General Fund

11.1. The number of homelessness presentations continues to be high for families and also remains an ongoing challenge in singles. This is due to the support and assistance to those complex individuals that continue to utilise Homelessness services following the pandemic and the move to more permanent independent accommodation being slower, which is expected to lead to an overspend of £0.8m, after the use of reserves and a one-off grant. A further overspend of £0.2m is expected to arise from the impact of fuel prices on the council-wide vehicle fleet.

12. Housing Revenue Account

12.1. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced income and expenditure account relating to the management and maintenance of the Council's housing stock. The HRA is forecast to overspend by £5.5m, in the absence of any action excluding revenue used for capital spending (which is reported in the capital monitoring report).

12.2. Rental income is forecast to fall short of the budget by £0.3m, largely due to the loss of rent on void properties being higher than budgeted.

12.3. The Repairs and Maintenance service is forecast to overspend by £1.4m. Whilst there will be savings on vacant posts of £1.2m this will be partially offset by spend

on contractors of £0.8m to deal with the staffing shortage and address the backlog of void properties. As a result of staffing vacancies and the focus on turning around void properties, less capital work is being undertaken; this will result in an income shortfall of £0.5m. Compensation claims and associated costs arising from an increase in disrepair claims driven by law firms before the introduction of fixed recoverable costs, along with the cost of repairing properties damaged by fires will add a further £0.4m. The fleet of vehicles used by the HRA will cost £0.3m more than the budget.

- 12.4. Management and Landlord Services are expected to overspend by £2.7m. The cost of supplying tenants and leaseholders with heat and hot water through the district heating network is forecast to exceed the budget by £2.4m; recent information suggests that gas costs will be 86% higher this year than last, as supply contracts expire and new ones are entered into. These increases vastly exceed the 7.29% rise in charges from April 2022 being paid by tenants and leaseholders on the network, which were proposed before the scale of energy price increases now being seen were envisaged. Further costs of £0.1m will be incurred to deal with pest control, and £0.2m on utility costs across communal areas as gas and electricity prices increase.
- 12.5. The HRA makes contributions towards general fund activities as well as being charged for a fair proportion of the Council's overheads. These are expected to be £0.3m more than the budget.
- 12.6. Whilst the local government pay award is yet to be confirmed, the current offer of £1,925 for all staff would result in additional costs of £0.8m.
- 12.7. The forecast overspend of £5.5m is clearly significant and as noted above was to a large extent not foreseeable at the time the budget was set. It exceeds the budgeted forecast HRA unallocated reserves at 31 March 2023. Options for managing and financing the overspend during the second half of the year are being considered.

Adult Social Care

13. Adult Social Care

- 13.1. The council budget report for 2022/23 made reference to the fact that due to the uncertainty the pandemic created in estimating future care package costs, an early review of the cost projections built into the budget would take place.
- 13.2. Prior to the pandemic in the years 2016-2020 adult social care package costs have been within +/- 1% of the budget. However, during 2020/21 growth in need (and hence growth in package cost) of existing clients dropped below the budgeted trend rate seen pre-pandemic and this continued into 2021/22. The impact of this and the loss of a significant number of older people in

expensive residential care during 2020 meant that the actual gross package cost in 2021/22 was £6.7m less than had been assumed in the budget which was set in September of 2020.

- 13.3. The budget for 2022/23 was similarly set in September 2021, prior to knowing the full impact of the pandemic on 2021/22. Moreover, it assumed that growth in need would return to pre-pandemic levels both in the second half of 2021/22 and into 2022/23 albeit with some offsetting reduction in 2022/23 due to the continued application of strength-based reviews and the application of more care related technology.
- 13.4. In year growth in need in 2021/22 was 4.6% rather than the budgeted level of 6% (the rate incurred in 2019/20). A review of the current year's first quarter performance indicates that the rate of growth in need is currently similar to 2021/22 and not returning to pre-pandemic levels. The impact of the backlog in client reviews on this rate is uncertain.
- 13.5. A full review of all of the budget assumptions has been carried out in light of the financial out-turn for 2021/22 and the performance to date in 2022/23. As a result, it is recommended that the growth of £16m in gross package costs originally included in the 2022/23 budget be reduced by £7.4m to take account of the realised lower than expected growth in need in 2021/22 and the currently expected lower growth in 2022/23.
- 13.6. Levels of income from clients and from the ICB (formerly CCG) appear to have stabilised post pandemic and it is recommended that a £2m increase to the budgeted income is made in 2022/23 to take account of this.
- 13.7. The total recommended reduction to the 2022/23 ASC budget for these two items is therefore £9.4m, the table at appendix A assumes this budget reduction. The net remaining growth would be £6.6m. It can be noted that this exceeds by five times over the £1.3m raised from the 1% adult social care precept.
- 13.8. In addition, a forecast underspend of £0.3m is attributable to the ongoing difficulties in recruitment to posts, with many posts being on the national 'shortlist' for hard to fill roles. This includes qualified social workers, occupational therapists, best interest assessors and approved mental health professionals. As a consequence, many of these posts continue to remain unfilled despite attempts to recruit, resulting in underspends on staffing budgets. As all of these roles are critical to the delivery of social care, recruitment remains a priority and underspends are therefore not intended to be ongoing into future years. A budget reduction is therefore not proposed.

Education and Children's Services

14. Education and Children's Services

- 14.1. The department is forecasting to spend £89.6m, some £0.9m more than the budget. This is mainly a result of increased placement costs for children looked after, partially offset by vacancy savings.
- 14.2. The number of children looked after and other placements of 648 at the start of the year was 22 higher than the budget due to an overestimate of the numbers leaving care in 2021/22. Also taking into account the changes detailed below, the additional placements add £0.5m to the budgeted cost. During the first quarter there have also been some increases to existing placement costs to reflect increasing need, which have added a further £0.3m to the budgeted cost.
- 14.3. Overall, there has been a net reduction of 5 in the number of placements in the first quarter. Of the 49 new entrants who remain in care at the end of the quarter, 50% were under 5 years and were predominantly placed in foster homes which are a relatively low cost provision. As a result, the average annual cost of new entrants in the first quarter was low at £26k. Similarly of the 54 leaving care in the first quarter, two thirds were in low or zero cost placements (placed for adoption or placed with parents).
- 14.4. The budget and forecast assumes a more varied mix of children and young people coming into and out of care across the year compared with the first quarter with a consequent impact on the average placement costs.
- 14.5. At the time the budget was set there was a degree of uncertainty regarding the longer-term impact of the pandemic on placement numbers. As a result it was decided to maintain the budget at 2021/22 levels in order to have longer to assess this impact and to use the ear marked social care placement reserve to address short term spends in excess of this budget. It was estimated that £1m would be required from the reserve in 2022/23 to remain within that existing budget.
- 14.6. The current 2022/23 forecast for total placement costs is £36.5m. The current forecast placement costs will require £2m from the earmarked reserve to remain in budget, £1m more than estimated. This forecast spend of £36.5m is however, essentially the same as the £36.4m incurred in 2021/22 and if the forecast is realised this will buck the recent trend of significant year on year increases in placement costs (£2.8m in 2019/20, £1.9m in 2020/21 and £4.2m in 2021/22). Clearly, we are only at the first quarter and events could change the forecast significantly.

- 14.7. The placement cost budget will be subject to review as part of the budget setting process for 2023/24 which will take place later this year. Key to this will be an assessment of the trends in the foreseeable mix (in terms of age and complexity of need) of children and young people being placed into care in the medium term, which in turn drives average annual entrant placement costs.
- 14.8. There continue to be difficulties in recruiting qualified social workers, and there is a continued reliance on agency staff as well as our own trainee staff. This has resulted in staffing underspends in social care. Similarly, the administration staffing across the department is running with a 14% vacancy level as a result of staffing churn and recruitment difficulties, providing further savings.
- 14.9. The numbers of SEN children being assisted with transport is currently 1,490. There has been further progress in the use of personal transport budgets (with much lower cost than taxi provision) with 181 now using this method of support. Taxi prices were increased by 10% from April due to fuel cost increases which was not foreseen in the budget. There has also been an increase in in-house transport costs and this together with the taxi price increases means that there is no scope left in the budget for a net growth in numbers needing assistance from the new academic year. All journeys by taxi from the new academic year are currently being procured under the new dynamic purchasing system (DPS) arrangements and we will have to wait to evaluate what impact this has on average unit costs. The intention was that the DPS could help to exert downward pressure on prices through increased competition. The new transport policy is also now in place and it is hoped that this will help to mitigate against further net growth in numbers albeit against a backdrop, as explained below, of sustained high numbers of new referrals for education, health and care plans.
- 14.10. There was a significant increase in the number of requests for education, health and care plans in 2021 (23% above pre pandemic levels) and to date in this calendar year numbers are on a par with 2021. Additional staff have been budgeted for in 2022/23 to deal with this additional caseload and most of these have now been recruited. The number of plans completed to date in this calendar year (January to June) is double the figure completed in the same period last year.
- 14.11. In summary the social care placement cost overspend of £2m highlighted above is offset by net staffing vacancies in social care specifically and across the department as a whole particularly in administration, reducing the overall forecast overspend, prior to any use of the social care placement reserve, to £0.9m.

- 14.12. At this stage of the year there is no change to the forecast overspend in the High Needs Block for 2022/23 outlined in the previous out-turn report. The dedicated schools grant reserve balance is in deficit by £3.6m at 1 April 2022 and is expected to rise further this year to £9.3m at 31 March 2023. Whilst an allowance for pay increases has been made within the current forecasts, the extent to which the final agreed teacher and support staff pay rises need to be fully accommodated from the grant will of course have an impact on the projected deficit. The DfE have made initial contact to discuss our cumulative deficit. We will be providing the DfE later in the year with a ‘management recovery plan’ which includes, in a standardised DfE format, a detailed projection of our future demand and costs together with the mitigating actions we are deploying. The DfE requests this from all councils with DSG deficits.

Public Health and Sports Services

15. Public Health

- 15.1. Public Health is forecasting to spend £22.0m, £0.4m more than the budget of £21.6m.
- 15.2. The overspend is mainly due to spend on the Community Wellbeing Champions and additional pay pressures due to the impact of the NHS pay settlements. The funding for this is provided by the additional public health grant of £0.4m.
- 15.3. Demand for sexual health services is returning to pre-pandemic levels following the ending of lockdowns. Nevertheless, the legacy of the pandemic continues to have an impact on how the service is delivered following the success of an online testing service provided during lockdown. Moreover, the demand for contraceptive services has increased post pandemic. As in 2021/22 the provider is being paid at a fixed amount to date this year rather than on activity levels until such time as activity returns to normal and changes to delivery models are made permanent in order to ensure the financial viability of the provider.
- 15.4. A backlog of GP provided NHS health checks has built up over the preceding two years. There is no indication at this stage that additional funding will be required to make good on the back log.
- 15.5. The substance misuse service has successfully bid for additional grant funding from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) totalling just over £1m for 2022/23, to assist in delivering community drug and alcohol treatments.

16. Sports Services

- 16.1. The forecast subsidy for sports services is £2.9m, £920k more than the budget.
- 16.2. £420k of this increase relates to utility cost increases with gas rising by 86% compared to last year and electricity rising by 52%. The sports and leisure sector are significantly impacted by energy prices.
- 16.3. The balance of the increase is substantially a result of the slow recovery of income levels following the pandemic. The service is forecasting to achieve 95% of budgeted income leaving a shortfall of nearly £400k. Given that we are only at the first quarter, there remains a degree of uncertainty with this forecast. This compares favourably with the 63% of income achieved in 2021/22 as the service gradually reopened.
- 16.4. Membership numbers are recovering strongly and increasing, and numbers should be boosted later in the year when the refurbishments at Braunstone, Spence Street and Aylestone centres are completed. Non-membership casual patronage has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. There have also been issues in recruiting swim teachers and gymnastic coaches with a consequent impact on income. New prices for a range of membership types apply from August and the impact is reflected in the forecast.
- 16.5. Income levels may however be susceptible to wider cost of living pressures as the year progresses.

Corporate Items & Reserves

17. Corporate Items

- 17.1. The corporate budgets cover the Council's capital financing costs, items such as audit fees, bank charges, contingencies and levies. This budget is currently forecasting to be £4.7m overspent.
- 17.2. On the 25th of July an initial pay offer was made from employers of a flat rate of £1,925 on all pay points, backdated to April 2022, along with an additional 1 day of annual leave for all employees from 2023. The initial modelling estimates that this will cost the Council approximately £11.6m, £7.3m more than is budgeted for in 2022/23. The budget for pay awards is held centrally until they are agreed therefore the overspend for the Council is currently being shown here. Members will be aware that the pay offer is significantly higher than could have been reasonably foreseen when the budget was prepared being driven by the significant recent cost of living increases.

- 17.3. This overspend has partially been offset by the use of the £2m contingency and additional income from investments due to the recent higher interest rates.

18. Budget Savings

- 18.1. In the 2022/23 budget report it was noted the Council need to continue to find savings in future budgets, to manage the impact of government funding settlements which are expected to be inadequate.
- 18.2. Where savings are made as part of a service review, decisions will be taken in the normal manner through a decision report. Where savings are incidental or can be made through management action, it is proposed to continue our previous practice of seeking approval to budget adjustments through routine budget monitoring reports. This is the second report in which we have included such adjustments.
- 18.3. Approval is sought to make the following budget adjustments:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	£000	£000	£000
Reduction in the budget for place marketing	13	13	13
Increased income from De Montfort Hall.	100	100	100
Efficiency through increased use of technology within the Housing Division.	30	30	30
Increased income and reduction of 0.5FTE in Estates and Building Services.	82	82	82
Reduction in budget for the City Festival, Museums and City Centre Tourism.	20	40	40
Change in contracting and deletion of a post within Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services.	30	30	30
Reduced number of hanging baskets provided.	0	19	19
Reduction in budget through targeted crossing patrols.	32	66	66
Additional income from the completed review of fees and charges at Leisure Centres	0	0	114
TOTAL	307	380	494