

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: 29 January 2024
Title: Finance Report
Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

Should Members have any queries about this report advance notice would be appreciated, in writing, by 5pm on the Friday before the meeting to allow for a full response at the meeting.

Background

Detailed income and expenditure statements for budgets which are the responsibility of this committee are enclosed. The period to which this report relates is 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023.

Current Situation

A full review of the budgetary position was undertaken during the budget cycle. Most areas of interest were raised at the last meeting of this committee and at the extra-ordinary meeting of the council. The RFO would refer members to the finance/ budget reports which were approved at those meetings for further details.

The Committee's services are divided into two base revenue cost centres, responsibilities as follows:

| <u>Cost Centre</u> | <u>Area</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 402 | Community Infrastructure | This cost centre relates to the infrastructure found in the town including bus shelters, bins, benches, Christmas lights, cycle racks, defibrillators, church clock and floral displays. |
| 408 | Community Activities | This relates to community events like the Advent Fayre, Remembrance Day parade, anniversaries, as well as supporting the Youth Council. For the 2024/25 budget provision has been made to commemorate the 80 th Anniversary of D-Day and to mark the 50 th Anniversary of the creation of the Town Council. |

Current year budget: In terms of the report presented at this meeting, the current year (2023/24) budget is now those figures which were projected when the estimates were revised and agreed by the Council at its meeting on 8 January 2024. It should be noted that the revised estimates were produced by your officers in the autumn of 2023. This means that, with the year end (31 March 2024) approaching, there will be some cases where the actual spend to date exceeds the revised estimates. Conversely there will be other lines where actuals will be year-end not reach the revised estimate figure. Overall the impact on budget should be broadly neutral when the year-end accounts are produced.

Members are reminded that expenditure is not necessarily incurred evenly over the course of the year. For example the vast majority of expenditure in relation to nominal ledger code 4025 (insurance) is incurred in April each year when the annual premium is paid. There will also be similar patterns on the income side such as football and cricket pitch hires.

Note that in relation to recharges from the office and works teams (nominal ledger codes 4892 to 4899 inclusive), these have been processed to 30 November 2023.

Estimates for 2024/25: These are shown in the report in the three columns on the right-hand side of the page.

SUMMARY FOR 2023/24

Overall the management accounts show the following in relation to the current year:

| | 2023/24 Original budget- Jan. 23 | 2023/24 Projected estimate- Nov.23 | 2023/24 Year to date (Month 9) |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Expenditure | £528,635 | £491,714 | £571,960 |
| Less income | - | (£8,822) | (£2,670) |
| Net expenditure | £528,635 | £428,892 | £569,290 |

The projected estimate (net expenditure) for the current financial year is 18.9% below original net expenditure and therefore the Committee’s services are being delivered within budget.

Some of the underspend relates to budget lines which the Council has not needed to utilise this year due to careful asset management. Ahead of the year end your officers will be thoroughly examining the various budget lines and proposals will come forward following the financial year end (31 March 2024) for a number of these underspends to be transferred into the earmarked reserves to allow projects to continue and to provide for prudential reserves where expenditure has not been required this year but will in future years. On several nominal codes where expenditure is likely to be under-budget the revised budget is retained at the original. A proposal will come forward at final accounts stage for any difference between spend and budget to then be transferred to the earmarked reserve at year end. The affected codes are cost centre 402 nominal ledger codes 4035, 4036, 4037, 4039, 4040, 4066, 4067,

4166, 4210, 4215; and cost centre 408 nominal ledger codes 4103, 4111, 4141, 4160, 4161 and 4169.

There have also been reductions in the recharges in relation to the works team across most cost centres, compared with original budget. This is due to staffing costs being lower than originally budgeted for and this has impacted the bottom-line.

Over-spends on nominal budgets may, where appropriate, be met from earmarked reserves. Any adjustments will be made at final accounts stage (31 March 2024) and will then reduce revenue expenditure for the year. For example for budget 4200/402 (street furniture) the original budget was £1,000, the revised budget projection was £4,600 and the year-to-date spend £5,033. The additional spend may be taken from the earmarked reserve.

Environmental Impact

The Council declared a Climate Change Emergency at its meeting on 26 June 2019; with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Officers are continually assessing the environmental impact of services and assets to ensure where possible measures are taken to support the Council's climate declaration of carbon neutrality by 2028. This extends to the procurement of goods and services.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Members are reminded that collectively they are custodians of the public purse with most of the funding coming from the taxpayers of Witney. Therefore, Officers ensure they get best value, value for money, and comply with the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and Procurement Policy.

Financial Implications

This report forms part of the Council's due diligence and a process in line with its Financial Regulations. The financial implications are detailed above and also in the attached appendices.

Recommendations

Members are invited to approve the report and the management accounts of the Committee's services to 31 December 2023.