

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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**Date:** 18 March 2024  
**Title:** Finance Report  
**Contact Officer:** Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

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***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 January 2024.

### CURRENT SITUATION

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 including the Advent Fayre, Remembrance Day parade and anniversaries. For the 2024/25 budget provision has been made to commemorate the 80 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day and to mark the 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the creation of the Town Council. The cost centre also includes a number of grants to community organisations including those in relation to children & youth provision, the town bus service, town band, youth council, the carnival, the Christmas lights switch on and the play day.

A comprehensive review of the budgetary position was undertaken during the budget cycle. ordinary meeting of the council. The RFO would refer members to the finance/ budget reports which were approved at those meetings for further details.

Current year budget: In terms of the report presented at this meeting, the current year (2023/24) budget is now the “Projected” column (fifth column from the right). This was agreed by the Council at its meeting on 8 January 2024. However it should be noted that the revised estimates were produced by your officers in the autumn of 2023 and so with the year end (31 March 2024) rapidly approaching, there will be some cases where the actual spend to date will now exceed the revised estimates. Conversely there will be other lines where actuals will at year-end will not now 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.

Estimates for 2024/25: These are shown in the report in the 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 10)
Expenditure	£528,635	£491,714	£372,483
Less income	-	(£8,822)	(£10,206)
Net expenditure	£528,635	£482,892	£362,277

The projected estimate for the current financial year is 8.7% below original net expenditure and therefore the financial position is favourable with the Committee’s services being delivered within budget.

#### MATTERS TO NOTE

1. Whilst expenditure to date is below the projected estimates a portion of the underspend relates to budget lines which the Council has not needed to utilise this year due to careful asset management, projects which are either in progress or have been delayed or lines which are included in the budget to save for future expenditure.

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 overspends 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. The codes likely to be affected are: cost centre 402 nominal ledger codes 4035, 4036, 4037, 4039, 4066, 4067, 4105, 4166, 4210, 4215; and cost centre 408 nominal ledger codes 4103, 4111, 4141, 4160, 4161 and 4169.

2. Code 4014/ 402 – Community Infrastructure, Electricity. This is in relation to the Buttercross and floodlighting of St Mary’s Church and of the War Memorial. Spend during the year to date (£1,649) and the revised estimates (£3,101) reflect energy costs being lower than budgeted for this time last year (£4,100). The expectation is that bills will continue to fall during 2024/25 as a result of the reduction in wholesale prices.
3. 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 £5,079. The additional spend may be taken from the earmarked reserve. Similarly with arboriculture, budget 4040/401 where the original/ revised budget is £20,000 but spend to date is £21,465.

In relation to the ten months to 31 January 2024, the net expenditure across this Committee’s services is £362,277, which is 69% of the original estimate (£528,635) and 75% of the revised estimate (£482,892).

#### 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 January 2024.