

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: 3 June 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 Friday 31 May 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 March 2024.

Current Situation

The Council has five standing committees which have delegated powers to make decisions, including financial decisions, regarding the services which included within their terms of reference, subject to the committee having the necessary budget. The Council's coding system and management accounts reflect the committee structure.

Council financial years run from 1 April to the 31 March following. Consequently the Council is now in the 2024/25 year. However for the first meeting of the Council year the management accounts presented to each Committee are those based on 2023/24 activity but also showing 2024/25 budget.

The Council is early in the new year and the 2024/25 income and expenditure does not as yet yield any meaningful information. However if there were significant variances against the agreed budgets these would be reported even at this early stage; as yet there are no such variances for this committee for 2024/25.

Within each committee, there are individual cost centres, comprising three digits, typically representing a discrete service entity, to which income and expenditure is allocated against previously agreed revenue budgets.

This 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 80th Anniversary of D-Day and to mark the 50th 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.

Within each cost centre income and expenditure is then allocated to a four-digit nominal ledger code; these codes are common across the cost centres. Nominal ledger codes further refine the costs associated with the cost centre and correspond to a specific type of account, such as materials or staffing costs. Codes commencing with "1" are income codes; codes commencing with "4" are expenditure codes.

The report which is presented to Members has a number of columns, as follows and working from left to right:

1. 2022-23 Budgeted income and expenditure (I&E).
2. 2022-23 Actual I&E.
3. 2023-24 Total – this is the original budget as agreed in January 2023.
4. 2023-24 Actual YTD – this is the actual I&E shown in the Council's ledger.
5. 2023-24 Projected – this is the revised I&E projection made in November 2023 and approved by the Council in January 2024.
6. 2023-24 Committed – this column is not currently used but would show committed I&E in the management accounts e.g. for an order for goods or services which has been issued but which has yet to be invoiced. However note that accruals are/will be made in the financial accounts at year end.
7. 2024-25 Agreed shows the budgets set by the Council at its meeting in January 2024.
8. This column indicates where 2024-25 expenditure is being funded from an earmarked reserve rather than precept.
9. This column is not used.

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 Provisional outturn (subject to further year- end adjustments)	2024/25 Estimates agreed by the Council January 2024
Expenditure	£528,635	£491,714	£467,784	£571,960
Less income	-	(£8,822)	(£10,206)	(£2,670)
Net expenditure	£528,635	£482,892	£457,578	£569,290
Transfer from Earmarked reserves	-	-	(£4,114)	-
Movement from general reserve	£528,635	£482,892	£453,464	£569,290

The provisional outturn for 2023/24 is 13% below original net expenditure and therefore the financial position is favourable with the Committee's services being delivered within budget.

MATTERS TO NOTE

A comprehensive review of the budgetary position was undertaken during the budget cycle. The RFO would refer members to the finance/ budget reports which were approved at those meetings for further details. However I would draw attention to the following:

1. Whilst provisional outturn for 2023/24 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.

As part of the year end process sums have been transferred to earmarked reserves to allow for expenditure in relation to these items. However, in accordance with proper accounting practice these transfers are from the general fund to the earmarked reserves and are not shown against the cost centres.

2. Spending over original budgets may, where appropriate, be met from earmarked reserves. Consequently 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 £5,114 and the difference (£4,114) has been funded from the earmarked reserves and this is shown on the management accounting report.

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 March 2024.