

SUBJECT: REVENUE & CAPITAL MONITORING 2020/21

FORECAST OUTTURN STATEMENT - MONTH 9

MEETING: CABINET

DATE: 3rd March 2021 DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 To provide Members with an updated forecast of the revenue and capital outturn position for the current financial year.

1.2 To provide an update on the financial impact of COVID-19 on the Council.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That Cabinet recognises a net revenue forecast non-COVID surplus at month 9 of £142k that represents an improvement of £660k since month 7, primarily as a result of the positive action taken during the financial year in curtailing non-essential expenditure and through cost reductions.
- 2.2 That Cabinet requires senior officers to continue to bare down on all costs for the remainder of the year and wherever possible seek to take advantage of grant monies that materialise late in the year to further increase the year end surplus and in doing so afford Cabinet headroom for policy choice and that includes strengthening the Council's limited reserve and useable capital receipt balances to meet future financial challenges.
- 2.3 That Cabinet can be reasonably assured based on continued dialogue with Welsh Government and funding received to date that all associated and eligible income losses and cost pressures will be funded noting:
 - a) A total net revenue forecast deficit at month 9 of £5.15m, an improvement of £1.28m from month 7 and inherent within which is a forecast deficit of £5.28m that is directly associated with the extraordinary financial pressures attached to COVID-19;
 - b) That since the budget forecasts have been produced for month 9 that Welsh Government has notified the Authority that a further sum of £2.02m will be made available to the Authority relating to claims made to the Hardship fund to cover additional expenditure incurred in December 2020 and income losses incurred during quarter 3 of the financial year, and that will in turn reduce the £5.28m COVID-19 related forecast deficit to £3.26m. A further £1.53m is also expected to be received for items claimed but not yet approved pending further clarification being provided to Welsh Government.

- 2.4 In taking the approach set out above, Cabinet recognises the extraordinary nature of the current year and accepts that significant recurring services pressures have been incorporated into the ongoing budget setting process for financial year 2021/22 unless otherwise mitigated.
- 2.5 Cabinet notes the extent of forecast movements in Schools reserve usage contained in *appendix 1*.
- 2.6 Cabinet considers the forecast capital outturn spend of £22.38m alongside significant slippage of £40.45m, and the presumptions made around the financing consequences, as outlined in *appendix 1*.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 Since entering 2020 the Council has faced significant and unprecedented challenges, notably the flood response and recovery resulting from Storms Ciara and Dennis in February 2020 and the subsequent COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the lockdown restrictions that were put into effect on 23rd March 2020.
- 3.2 Each of these draws significantly on the Council's resources, both in terms of capacity and finances and continues to place an unprecedented strain on the Council. That all said the previously reported non-COVID-19 over spend has now moved into a forecast saving of £142k saving. This has largely resulted from the action taken during the financial year in curtailing non-essential expenditure and through cost reductions recognising the significant and continued financial pressure on the Authority as a result of the pandemic.
- 3.3 Since the month 9 forecast was produced a number of Welsh Government funding announcements have been made and that have resulted in additional specific revenue and capital grant awards. These grant awards are being worked through to ascertain the direct impact that will have on improving the outturn position. Along with senior officers continuing to bear down on cost this will afford Cabinet headroom for policy choice and that includes strengthening the Council's limited reserve and useable capital receipt balances to meet future financial challenges.
- 3.4 **Table 1** and **Table 2** demonstrate a total net overspend forecast at year end of £5.15m.
- 3.5 This forecast comprises forecast COVID-19 income losses of £4.17m and additional costs of £1.11m offset by the small forecast non-COVID-19 saving of £142k.
- 3.6 It is important to note that forecast overspend of £5.15m is presented on a prudent basis in so much that is displays a worst case scenario that does not take into account any of the further Welsh Government funding anticipated to meet the additional costs of the COVID-19 emergency response or further reimbursement of income losses that have equally resulted.
- 3.7 Since the budget forecasts have been produced for month 9 Welsh Government has notified the Authority that a further sum of £2.02m will be made available to the Authority

relating to claims made to the Hardship fund to cover additional expenditure incurred in December 2020 and income losses incurred during quarter 3 of the financial year, and that will in turn reduce the £5.28m forecast deficit to £3.26m. A further £1.53m is also expected to be received for items claimed but not yet approved pending further clarification being provided to Welsh Government.

- 3.8 As the financial year has progressed the Council has been given clearer commitments of the proposed Welsh Government support and significantly the announcement of further funding for local authorities in August 2020 to supplement funding that had already been provided to assist with meeting income losses and additional costs brought about by the pandemic. Dialogue has continued throughout the financial year with Welsh Government and Cabinet can now be reasonably assured that all such COVID related pressures will be funded.
- 3.9 The Council tactically generated headroom of £1.8m in its Council Fund balance as part of the outturn strategy for 2019/20. Whilst this remains to assist with any under recovery in funding from Welsh Government, the increased comfort around Welsh Government funding means that this provides the Council with the flexibility to reserve this sum to respond to the financial pressures over the medium term.
- 3.10 The immediate focus for the Council whilst it awaits confirmation of full compensating funding from Welsh Government is to manage the significant in year service pressures it is facing, notably within the areas of Waste, Passenger Transport, Additional Learning Needs and Children's Services. To date this has been managed through cost reduction and in taking immediate steps to curtail non-essential expenditure alongside approving the capitalisation of an additional £675k of identified eligible expenditure to be funded from capital receipts under the flexible use of capital receipts directive.
- 3.11 It is inevitable that the Council will face significant financial challenges during the recovery phase of the pandemic as demands on services change in light of a severely altered socio—economic landscape. Alongside this there will continue to be risks associated with Welsh Government support funding being reduced or stopped. It is therefore important that any resulting surplus on the revenue budget is provisionally earmarked to strengthen the Council's limited reserve and useable capital receipt balances to meet those future financial challenges.

3.12 Overall Revenue Position

Table 1: Council Fund 2020/21 Outturn Forecast Summary Statement at Month 9

Service Area	Original Budget 2020/21	Budget Adjustments Months 1-9	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ M9	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ M7	Variance from M7 to M9
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	50,685	(170)	50,515	51,823	1,308	1,707	(399)
Children & Young People	55,539	534	56,073	56,159	86	125	(39)
Enterprise	24,132	(1,530)	22,602	26,431	3,829	4,617	(788)
Chief Executives Unit	4,745	4	4,749	4,745	(4)	62	(66)
Resources	7,746	30	7,776	8,163	387	193	194
Corporate Costs & Levies	22,743	229	22,972	22,985	13	42	(29)
Net Cost of Services	165,590	(903)	164,687	170,307	5,620	6,746	(1,126)
Appropriations	4,857	1,163	6,020	5,756	(264)	(163)	(101)
Expenditure to be Financed	170,447	260	170,707	176,062	5,355	6,583	(1,228)
Financing	(170,447)	(260)	(170,707)	(170,915)	(208)	(157)	(51)
Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	0	0	0	5,147	5,147	6,426	(1,279)

Table 2: Council Fund 2020/21 Outturn Forecast Detailed Statement at Month 9

Service Area	Original Budget 2020/21	Budget Adjustments Months 1-9	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast Outturn	(Under) / Over Spend @ M9	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ M7	Variance from M7 to M9
	'000's	'000's	'000' s	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Adult Services	7,877	(55)	7,822	7,760	(62)	180	(242)
Children Services	14,428	(63)	14,365	15,798	1,433	1,460	(27)
Community Care	24,434	30	24,464	24,523	59	(4)	63
Commissioning	1,483	(65)	1,418	1,312	(106)	(103)	(3)
Partnerships	436	0	436	436	0	0	0

Service Area	Original Budget 2020/21	: Adjustments Annual : Months 1-9 Budget		Forecast Outturn	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ M9	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ M7	Variance from M7 to M9
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's 178	'000's
Public Protection Resources &	1,481	(14)	1,467	1,450	1,450 (17)		(195)
Performance	546	(3)	543	544	1	(4)	5
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	50,685	(170)	50,515	51,823	1,308	1,707	(399)
Individual Schools Budget	47,420	(356)	47,064	46,630	(434)	(316)	(118)
Resources	1,234	10	1,244	1,247	3	14	(11)
Standards	6,885	880	7,765	8,283	518	427	91
Children & Young People	55,539	534	56,073	56,159	86	125	(39)
Business Growth and Enterprise	2,468	(168)	2,300	2,238	(62)	(50)	(12)
Facilities & Fleet Management	5,665	(1,266)	4,399	5,321	922	1,222	(300)
Neighbourhood Services	10,483	(26)	10,457	10,957	500	783	(283)
Planning & Housing	1,951	(133)	1,818	3,063	1,245	993	252
Countryside & Culture (MonLife)	1,348	(8)	1,340	1,461	121	82	39
Finance & Business Development (MonLife)	1,507	116	1,623	1,580	(43)	(107)	64
Leisure, Youth & Outdoor Adventure (MonLife)	710	(45)	665	1,811	1,146	1,694	(548)
Enterprise	24,132	(1,530)	22,602	26,431	3,829	4,617	(788)
Legal & Land Charges	839	(6)	833	806	(27)	40	(67)
Governance, Democracy & Support	3,906	10	3,916	3,939	23	22	1
Chief Executives Unit	4,745	4	4,749	4,745	(4)	62	(66)
Finance	2,597	(63)	2,534	2,573	39	173	(134)
Information, Communication Technology	2,803	135	2,938	2,507	(431)	(431)	0

Service Area	Original Budget 2020/21	al Budget Revised et Adjustments Annual 1 Months 1-9 Budget Outturn		Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ M9	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ M7	Variance from M7 to M9	
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
People	1,725	50	1,775	1,663	(112)	(68)	(44)
Future Monmouthshire	(46)	(25)	(71)	12	83	82	1
Commercial & Corporate Landlord	667	(67)	600	1,408	808	437	371
Resources	7,746	30	7,776	8,163	387	193	194
Precepts & Levies	20,379	1	20,380	20,382	2	2	0
Coroner's	117	0	117	152	35	23	12
Archives	182	0	182	182	0	0	0
Corporate Management	293	0	293	62	(231)	(192)	(39)
Non Distributed Costs (NDC)	492	0	492	707	215	215	0
Strategic Initiatives	(167)	228	61	0	(61)	(61)	0
Insurance	1,447	0	1,447	1,499	52	55	(3)
Corporate Costs & Levies	22,743	229	22,972	22,985	13	42	(29)
Net Cost of Services	165,590	(903)	164,687	170,307	5,620	6,746	(1,126)
Fixed Asset Disposal Costs	20	45	65	71	6	6	0
Interest & Investment Income	(252)	0	(252)	(90)	162	162	0
Interest Payable & Similar Charges	4,020	27	4,047	3,716	(331)	(230)	(101)
Charges Required under Regulation	6,251	(108)	6,143	6,062	(81)	(82)	1
Other Investment Income	(1,153)	1,153	0	(14)	(14)	(14)	0
Borrowing Cost Recoupment	(3,425)	50	(3,375)	(3,381)	(6)	(5)	(1)
Contributions to Reserves	143	0	143	143	0	0	0
Contributions from reserves	(747)	(4)	(751)	(751)	0	0	0
Appropriations	4,857	1,163	6,020	5,756	(264)	(163)	(101)

Service Area	Original Budget 2020/21 '000's	Budget Adjustments Months 1-9 '000's	Revised Annual Budget '000's	Forecast Outturn '000's	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ M9 '000's	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ M7 '000's	Variance from M7 to M9
Expenditure to be Financed	170,447	260	170,707	176,062	5,355	6,583	(1,228)
General Government Grants	(64,823)	0	(64,823)	(64,823)	0	0	0
Non Domestic Rates	(32,937)	0	(32,937)	(32,937)	0	0	0
Council tax	(79,572)	(260)	(79,832)	(80,199)	(367)	(385)	18
Council Tax Benefit Support	6,885	0	6,885	7,044	159	228	(69)
Financing	(170,447)	(260)	(170,707)	(170,915)	(208)	(157)	(51)
Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	0	0	0	5,147	5,147	6,426	(1,279)

- 3.13 As the Council continues to transition from the response phase of the pandemic it is important that Cabinet is kept informed as impacts are being assessed.
- 3.14 The Council was already facing financial challenges pre-COVID-19. The pandemic has accentuated the challenge:
 - Services and existing capacity has been redirected and redeployed to ensure that the Council met its core purpose of protecting life. This has seen additional unbudgeted costs being incurred.
 - Many income generating services have had to stop in order to comply with UK and Welsh Government guidance. The income loss and shortfall is significant and ongoing.
 - There is delay in the implementation of some budget savings proposals for 2020/21 as a result of staff resources being diverted to respond to the pandemic.
- 3.15 This report provides a 'point in time' assessment and forecast for 2020/21. The revenue and capital annual forecast at month 9 is shown in *appendix 1*. The forecasts have been prepared on assumptions that remain uncertain. The forecasts have been supplemented by an analysis of pressures including those that are thought without suitable mitigation to impact on 2021/22. This is shown in *appendix 2* and have helped inform the budget setting process for 2021/22.
- 3.16 The table below provides a high level analysis of how the £5.15m reasonable worst case forecast outturn is broken down between the in-year pressures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the forecast position on the Councils core budget.

	Overall M9 Forecast	Variance to M7	M9 Due to Covid-19 Expenditure Increase	Variance to M7	M9 Due to Covid- 19 Income Loss	Variance to M7	M9 Due to Non- Covid-19 (Core Budget)	Variance to M7
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	1,308	(399)	0	0	0	(177)	1,308	(222)
Children & Young People	86	(39)	(58)	(8)	60	(10)	79	(21)
Enterprise	3,830	(787)	627	(337)	2,983	(619)	220	169
Chief Executives Unit	(4)	(65)	0	(29)	20	(30)	(24)	(6)
Resources	387	195	385	65	1,107	595	(1,105)	(465)
Corporate Costs & Levies	12	(31)	0	0	0	0	12	(31)
Appropriations	(264)	(101)	0	0	0	0	(264)	(101)
Financing	(209)	(53)	159	(70)	0	0	(368)	17
Total	5,146	(1,280)	1,113	(379)	4,170	(241)	(142)	(660)

3.17 The principal in-year non Covid-19 pressures are:

- A significant pressure within Children's Services relating to a continued increase in the number of looked after children (LAC) cases carrying over from 2019/20 and after the budget was approved.
- The 2.75% pay award being much higher than the original 1% budget assumption built into the budget and where it had been expected that Welsh Government funding would be forthcoming.
- Pressures remaining within the Passenger Transport Unit (PTU) and that continue to be worked on as part of the PTU review and where implementation has been impacted by the pandemic.
- Pressures in waste & recycling as a result of delays in the rollout of waste reconfiguration and changes.
- Income pressures relating to Civil parking enforcement where savings targets cannot be met.
- A shortfall against additional commercial income targets as a consequence of the impact of COVID-19 and the current level of market and economic uncertainty which may not be funded by Welsh Government.
- As result of the late receipt of the final settlement from Welsh Government and the disappointment of there being no funding floor introduced, the remaining efficiency savings that were left to be identified during the financial year.

- 3.18 As the financial year has progressed significant forecast budget savings have been identified and added to the budget forecast to mitigate those pressures outlined above.
 Appendix 2 provides an analysis of both the significant forecast pressures and savings, the assumptions upon which they are based as well as the risks and sensitivities that apply.
- 3.19 It is important to note that the majority of the savings identified during year to assist the inyear budget recovery are one-off savings and will not bring any further benefit to future year's budgets. Conversely, the majority of those pressures highlighted above are recurrent pressures and have been considered as part of the wider budget process for 2021/22 and beyond.
- 3.20 The key risk and uncertainty continues to be the amount of compensatory Welsh Government funding that the Council will receive. Announcements by both Welsh Government and UK Government have been made and have confirmed significant levels of commitment to support local authorities.
- 3.21 We are grateful to Welsh Government for the funding that has been provided to Welsh Councils to cover costs to date and that we anticipate could potentially meet the income shortfalls forecast for the remainder of the year. Similarly, recent Welsh Government funding specific grant funding announcements that are not featured in this month 9 forecast and that again will assist the Council in strengthening its outturn position and in turn its limited reserve and useable capital receipt balances.
- 3.22 Beyond Welsh Government funding of in year pressures, assessment will also need to be undertaken of reserve balances and available capital receipts as part of budget setting for 2021/22. Clearly this will require a review of the Council's existing reserve strategy and regard will not only need to be given to the current year situation but also to the medium and long term. Reserve balances are finite and act as only a limited buffer to fund one-off costs.

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 4.1 This report provides an update on the current financial situation and the challenges facing the Council now and over the medium term. It has been prepared at a time of great uncertainty as the Council still transitions from the emergency response phase of the COVID-19 pandemic towards a period of recovery.
- 4.2 The outturn forecast that has been prepared for consideration is predicated on assumptions that have been independently assessed by budget holders and subsequently reviewed as part of the budget monitoring process. These assumptions don't look to represent a policy position that Cabinet is looking to take on when services are re-opening. Rather they represent a reasoned assessment of the impact on services in year based on known information, anticipated future changes and estimates.
- 4.3 **Appendix 2** provides an analysis of the significant forecast pressures and summarises the assumptions upon which they are based as well as the risks and sensitivities that apply.

This has been produced to aid understanding of the forecast and assumptions upon which it has been based.

4.4 By far the greatest uncertainty that exists is the level of Welsh Government funding to be received to offset additional costs incurred in responding to the COVID-19 emergency response and the significant income losses that have resulted where services have ceased as a result of the lockdown restrictions in place. However, this risk has diminished as a result of funding received to date and the significant amount of further funding still available to local authorities in Wales via Welsh Government's COVID Hardship Fund.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 5.1 This forecast outturn report represents an assessment of the forecast for the 2020/21 financial year based on nine months of data. More so than ever the combination of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that it is only part way through the financial year, and combined with the uncertainties on the level of Welsh Government funding support, means that a level of risk uncertainty should be attributed to the forecast.
- 5.2 However, there is an increasing level of comfort that Welsh Government funding will meet additional costs and losses of income brought about by the response to and the impact of the pandemic. However, this continues to represent a risk that will only be mitigated by monthly and quarterly submissions to Welsh Government being agreed. And furthermore and beyond those impacts resulting from COVID-19 there exists a number of significant cost pressures that need to be managed regardless.
- 5.3 The Council has recently maintained formal reporting to Cabinet at month 2 (period 1), month 5 (period 2) and outturn, with more frequent budget monitoring information being undertaken at a departmental level and reported to management and the Strategic Leadership Team. Only where circumstances necessitate it is more frequent formal reporting to Cabinet required.
- As a result of the significant financial challenges facing the Council there will be a more frequent reporting of the in-year revenue and capital outturn forecast. Formal reporting will take place at months 2, 5, 7, 9 and outturn. There will be no formal reporting of the month 11 outturn forecast as the financial year-end will have already taken place by the time the report has been prepared.
- 5.5 The update of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the development of the budget proposals for 2021/22 and the medium term have been challenging. Welsh Government confirmed their provisional funding settlement on the 22nd December 2020 with the final settlement due to be announced on 2nd March 2021. As a result of the late notification of funding, the final budget proposals for 2021/22 will not be considered by Cabinet until the 3rd March 2021.
- 5.6 There is also further uncertainty given that the UK Government has only undertaken a one-year Comprehensive Spending Review which consequently does not enable Welsh Government to provide any additional certainty around indicative budget settlements for Welsh local authorities in future years. The Council also waits on the Chancellor's Spring budget announcement and any impacts, beneficial or adverse, that this might have for Welsh Government when considering additional funding support for local authorities during 2021/22.

6. REASONS:

- 6.1 To ensure that the gravity of the financial challenges facing the Council are understood and that reasonable actions are being taken to safeguard the ongoing financial sustainability of the Council.
- 6.2 To provide a timely update on the current financial circumstances and challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and that will in turn lead to the Council needing to plan and plot a revised course to ensure it remains financially sustainable into the future.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 The resource implications of the current in-year forecast outturn are contained in this report and the attached appendices. At its worst the forecast outturn exhibits an over spend of £5.15m. Welsh Government COVID-19 support funding is expected to cover the majority of this although it remains unclear as to how far that will extend, though levels of confidence have increased significantly given Welsh Government commitments throughout the year.
- 7.2 The financial challenges facing the Council and resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic are significant in the current year and over the next 4 years of the MTFP. Not just for this Council but all councils across Wales and the UK. The Council is having to incur significant costs in its response effort and this will continue as it transitions towards recovery. Furthermore and resulting from the restrictions that UK Government and Welsh Government have had to put in place to contain the spread of the virus we are suffering significant shortfalls in our income levels. Some of these will return more quickly than others as services are able to be safely turned back on.
- 7.3 In terms of how the Council will respond to the challenges faced in the current year and over the medium term this will very much depend on the level of compensating funding received from Welsh Government and the flexibilities afforded to Welsh local authorities to spread the impact over more than one financial year. We are grateful to Welsh Government for the funding that has been provided to Welsh Councils to cover costs to date and that we anticipate could potentially meet the income shortfalls forecast for the remainder of the year.
- 7.4 The Council is working on the basis that it will be fully funded by Welsh Government. However, there is clearly a risk that this will not happen and beyond this there are significant non COVID-19 pressures being managed. Options to mitigate these risks are limited with recourse to draw on the Council Fund, specific earmarked reserves and useable capital receipts. However each of these are at historically low levels and only just above prudent minimum levels.
- 7.5 The more immediate steps have been to curtail non-essential expenditure. Going forward more targeted and planned cost reductions will be challenging and the Council will as always look to minimise impact on service delivery. Though this cannot be guaranteed and is expected if Welsh Government funding falls short of expectations.

7.6 There are resultant consequences for the MTFP and the budget process for 2021/22 and these have been developed in parallel and feed into the normal budget cycle and process.

8. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 8.1 This report provides Members with information on the revenue and capital outturn position of the Authority and carries no decisions. There are therefore no equality of future generations' implications directly arising from this report.
- 8.2 Any such impacts will be fully considered subsequently when Council receives the budget recovery plan and revised budget proposals.

9. CONSULTEES:

Senior Leadership Team Cabinet

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Revenue and capital forecast Outturn report – month 9 **Appendix 2** – Pressure analysis – assumptions, sensitivities and risks

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