

INFORMATION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
MANAGEMENT TEAM	OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	6 SEPTEMBER 2022	9
GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 - POSITION AS AT 31st JULY 2022			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the General Fund Revenue Budget of the Council as at 31st July 2022 and specifically for those areas under the remit of the Committee.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Chief Financial Officer – the report is based upon information extracted from the financial ledger system of the Council for the period to 31st July 2022 and feedback received from budget holders.

LINK TO INFORMATION

General Fund Revenue Budget monitoring Report to 31st July 2022:

<http://www.fylde.gov.uk/council/finance/budget-monitoring/>

WHY IS THIS INFORMATION BEING GIVEN TO THE COMMITTEE?

This information is provided to enable the committee to consider and scrutinise periodic revenue budget monitoring reports for those areas under the remit of the Committee.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2022/23

POSITION AS AT 31ST JULY 2022

Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the General Fund Revenue Budget of the Council as at 31st July 2022. The report includes a narrative description of the most significant variances from the profiled latest budget and details any actions required to address these. Appendix A to this report shows the value of the most significant variances for all of the Council services by Committee and provides a brief explanation for each variance.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council operates a system of Revenue Budget Monitoring which revolves around the production of detailed monthly monitoring reports for budget holders. Significant variances from the expected budget position at the point of monitoring, both for expenditure and income, are summarised in monitoring reports which are periodically reported to each Programme Committee for information purposes. This report therefore details the findings and issues emerging from budget monitoring carried out to 31st July 2022.
- 1.2 It should be noted that work continues on improving budget profiling across the Council in order that budget profiles more accurately reflect the spending pattern of individual budgets across the financial year. This serves to enhance budget monitoring and focus attention on true variances rather than budget profiling issues. This is a continuous process with budget holders so that the improved profiling continues to refine the budget monitoring system.
- 1.3 Council approved the 2022/23 budget at its meeting on 3rd March 2022. Subsequently on 23rd June 2022 the Finance and Democracy Committee approved the financial outturn position for 2021/22. The impact of those approvals, including savings and growth items approved at the Council budget meeting, along with slippage from 2021/22 as approved by the Finance and Democracy Committee, are now reflected in the financial ledger. Therefore, this report monitors expenditure and income against the updated approved budgets for 2022/23.

2. Budget Rightsizing Exercise

For a number of years the Council has carried out an annual budget rightsizing exercise to analyse underspends which have occurred over the last 3 financial years and to adjust current and future year budgets to better reflect the level of resource requirement in the context of current financial constraints. This process will be repeated during 2022/23 and the resulting changes will be reflected in the latest budgets and updates to the Councils Financial Forecast.

3. Conclusions

The Council has seen particular volatility in expenditure and income levels since the commencement of the pandemic which has required that the Council continues the approach to continually seek opportunities to achieve savings and efficiencies to enable a balanced budget position and financial stability to be maintained.

As a consequence of the uncertainty about the impact of the pandemic on national public finances, the Government implemented a one-year Spending Review for 2022/23 and the Council, as with all Local Authorities, received a one-year funding settlement for the year. This was the second year running that the funding settlement was for one-year only. The MTFs report presented to Council in March 2022 sets out the full context of the financial landscape of the council, including an assessment of the key financial risks which primarily relate to uncertainties around reviews of the future funding regime for local government. The report can be found at this link: [MTFS Report March 2022](#).

UK CPI was 0.7% in March 2021 but thereafter began to steadily increase. Initially driven by energy price effects and by inflation in sectors such as retail and hospitality which were re-opening after the pandemic lockdowns, inflation then was believed to be temporary. Thereafter price rises slowly became more widespread, as a combination of rising global costs and strong demand was exacerbated by supply shortages and transport dislocations. The surge in wholesale gas and electricity prices led to elevated inflation expectations. CPI for July 2022 registered 10.1% year on year, up from 9.4% in June 2022. Increasing inflation is exerting significant upward pressure on prices for utilities and on supplies and services across all sectors of the economy, which in turn increases the base costs for both revenue and capital budget items. The situation is particularly acute in the construction sector where supply chain issues and price increases are combining to put increased risks on the delivery of capital programme schemes. This is likely to be a continuing issue for the council during 2022/23 and this has resulted in current scheme delays and reviews on scheme costings.

Regular budget monitoring reports are an integral part of the Council's financial monitoring framework and these reports will be available on the Council's website.

External pressures outside the Council's control are impacting on all local authorities. Instructions remain in place that officers should not commit to any unnecessary expenditure and should seek to maximise efficiencies wherever possible.

Finance staff work continuously with budget holders across the Council and are heavily reliant upon budget-holders to be able to understand and quantify the potential impact of in-year hotspot variances within their areas of responsibility.

In light of the potential for future general reductions in central government funding from 2023/24 onwards, the Council needs to continue with the approach to delivering savings and efficiencies which have helped deliver balanced budgets and provided contributions to reserves over recent years.

Through continued focus on the importance of financial stability the Council has delivered a significant savings programme in recent years and has continued to reduce overheads wherever possible. Ongoing modernisation work and business improvement will continue to make Council services more efficient, save money and maintain high quality frontline services to customers. For Fylde Council to continue to successfully meet the new challenges that it faces it is vital that this approach continues and that all reasonable opportunities for further cost-reduction measures and for the generation of additional income are seriously considered. Prudent financial management in previous years has provided a level of reserves which allows the necessary time to determine how this council can best respond to the challenges ahead.

We are now just past the first quarter of 2022/23 financial year and much uncertainty exists with respect to the remainder of the year. Therefore, it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions on the in-year financial position. The financial risks facing the Council, as set out to Council in March 2022 and updated to Finance & Democracy Committee in June 2022 remain alongside the significant additional risks presented by the pandemic. Instructions issued by Management Team that budget holders remain prudent are still in place, and the overall financial position of the council will be captured in the next update of the financial forecast in the Medium Term Financial Strategy which will be presented to members in the forthcoming committee cycle.