

**CABINET
19 MARCH 2024**

**BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING REPORT
January 2024
Report by the Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer**

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**
 - a) note the report and annexes.
 - b) note the virements in Annex 2b
 - c) approve the supplementary estimate request of £0.2m as set out in paragraph 92 of Annex B.
 - d) approve the eleven debt write offs totalling £0.2m as set out in paragraph 122 of Annex B.

Executive Summary

2. The business management reports are part of a suite of performance, risk and budget documents which set out the council's ambitions, priorities, and financial performance. The [2022 – 2025 Strategic Plan](#) sets out the Council's ambitions. It also shows our priority activities for the current financial year.
3. This report presents the January 2024 performance, risk, and finance position for the council.
4. Further information is provided in the following annexes to the report:
 - Annex A: Performance as at January 2024
 - Annex B: Finance as at January 2024
 - Annex C: Homes for Ukraine
 - Annex D: Cost of living update
5. The performance section of this report concentrates on performance exceptions (measures reporting Red (off target), or Amber, (slightly off target, Amber for the last two consecutive months or more). The full performance report is included at Annex A.

Performance Overview

6. The Outcomes Framework for 2023/2024 reports on the council's nine strategic priorities. A further priority relates to running the business and includes the customer contact centre and measures included in the council's Financial Strategy. The Outcomes Framework which sits underneath the strategic priorities is comprised of monthly, quarterly, termly, six monthly and annual measures which may change as we progress through the year. At the appropriate period, relevant measures will be included in the report.

7. As at the end of January 2024 the indicators were rated as follows:

January 2024	Green		Amber		Red		Monitoring Only/Data Unavailable		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
Monthly	24	56%	8	19%	4	9%	7	16%	43
Annual (January)	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2
Total	26	58%	8	18%	4	9%	7	15%	45

Table 1: Summary of January 2024 performance for all measures. RAG = Green = meets or exceeds target, Amber = misses target by narrow margin and Red = misses target by significant margin.

8. A total of 45 measures reported in January 2024 (Table 1) 43 monthly measures and two annual measures (OCC01.05 (Progress of application for Local Electrical Vehicle Infrastructure) and OCC05.05 (Number of cycling trips)).

- 26 (58%) of the measures were reported as Green (meeting or exceeding target) in January.
- Eight (18%) were rated as Amber (misses target by narrow margin), of which were Amber or Red for 2+ months.
- Four (9%) were rated as Red (misses target by a significant margin).

9. This bi-monthly Cabinet report is the fifth of 2023/2024. The table (Table 2) below compares monthly measures for the 2023/2024 reporting year, please note the numbers of reported measures fluctuates throughout the year.

Reporting Month	Green		Amber		Red		Monitoring Only/ Data Unavailable		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
April 2023	12	38%	5	16%	4	12%	11	34%	32*
May 2023	27	61%	6	14%	4	9%	7	16%	44
June 2023	17	52%	6	18%	4	12%	6	18%	33*
July 2023	27	57%	8	17%	7	15%	5	11%	47
August 2023	18	56%	4	13%	4	13%	6	19%	32
September 2023	26	60%	6	14%	5	3%	6	19%	43
October 2023	19	59%	5	16%	2	6%	5	16%	32
November 2023	30	63%	5	10%	8	17%	5	10%	48
December 2023	20	63%	5	16%	1	3%	6	19%	32
January 2024	26	58%	8	18%	4	9%	7	15%	45

Table 2: Comparison of monthly reporting measures for Financial Year 2023/2024. *April, June, August, October and December 2023 do not include measures from priority OCC11 (finance).

10. Table 3 lists the performance measures reporting as Red at the end of January 2024. Full details can be found in Annex A.

Performance measures reporting Red for January 2024
OCC11.02 Achievement of planned savings

OCC11.04 Directorates deliver services and achieve planned performance within agreed budget
OCC11.06 Total Outturn variation for DSG funded services (high needs)
OCC11.11 Debt requiring impairment - ASC contribution debtors

Table 3: Red RAG Status Measures January 2024 Reporting Period.

11. This table indicates the direction of travel of measures compared to December (monthly) 2023.

Status changes – December 2023 to January 2024	
Red to Green	Not applicable
Amber to Green	OCC01.02 Total No. of streetlights fitted with LED Lanterns
Red to Amber	OCC11.03 General balances are forecast to remain at or above the risk assessed level
Green to Amber	OCC07.07 % of Education Health & Care Plans completed within 20 weeks OCC10.05 The percentage of customer telephone calls abandoned at the Customer Service Centre
Amber to Red	Not applicable
Green to Red	Not applicable

Table 4: Change in Performance across December 2023 to January 2024.

Performance Exceptions

12. This section of the report details all measures reporting Red or Amber status (*consecutive for two months or more*) with extracted supporting commentary from the Directorate, the full commentary can be seen at Annex A. The exception report focusses on the ten exceptions, four measures have a Red rating and the six measures that have reported an Amber rating for two months or more.

13. **Priority OCC01: Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our activities.**

This priority has three measures being reported in January 2024: two are Green and one Amber.



Figure 1: Priority OCC01 Monthly performance for 2023/2024 financial year

Measure:	December Status:	January Status:	Director:
OCC01.07 Total % of household waste which is reused, recycled, or composted	Amber	Amber	Bill Cotton

Table 5: Priority OCC01 Measure Exceptions - January 2024

OCC01.07: Waste performance is reported a month in arrears and the figure reported is the forecast end of year performance for 2023/24. The forecasts are variable and may go up or down.

On 31 January 2024 Defra published statistics for Waste Disposal Authorities for

2022/23, confirming Oxfordshire remains first nationally for the overall percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted for the tenth year in a row with a recycling rate of 57.2%.

This is a great achievement and testament to the great partnership working between Oxfordshire County Council and the City and District Councils through the Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership, and of course our residents.

However, most local authorities including Oxfordshire saw recycling rates decrease from 2021/22, and Oxfordshire's forecast recycling rate for 2023/24 remains below target. This is because for some time recycling rates have plateaued despite continued behavioural change campaigns and encouraging residents to use the exiting recycling collections better. This could be due to a number of factors in combination, for example lighter weight packaging materials, new housing growth, and changing behaviours due to the current economic conditions.

To meet Oxfordshire Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy targets a step change is needed which can only be made by the district councils and the county council acting together. However, nationally local authorities have been unable to commit investment in significant changes in waste services because anticipated Government waste policy changes have been repeatedly delayed by Defra.

Locally, campaign work to inform residents and encourage behaviour change is continuing. For example, an Oxfordshire Reuses event is to be held in Oxford in March promoting reuse, composting, and recycling.

14. Priority OCC04: Support carers and the social care system

This priority has eight measures being reported in January 2024: four Green, two Amber and two monitoring only.



Figure 2: Priority OCC04 Monthly performance for 2023/2024 financial year

Measure:	December Status:	January Status:	Director:
OCC04.04 % of residents aged under 65 receiving ASC who manage their care by using a direct payment	Amber	Amber	Karen Fuller
OCC04.05 % of older residents who receive long-term care and are supported to live in their own home	Amber	Amber	Karen Fuller

Table 6: Priority OCC04 Measure Exceptions - January 2024

OCC04.04: Performance remains in line with the national position. 12 people would need to transfer to Direct Payments in the year to be on target.

There are three key actions to stabilise this measure:

1. Review of individual team performance at the monthly performance board.
2. The Adult Social Care forum asks if a direct payment has been considered for each new service recipient and this data is used to understand barriers to the uptake of direct payments.

3. Increased communications to social care teams to actively promote direct payments.

OCC04.05: The number of older people supported to live at home continues to increase, as does the number of hours of support provided overall. Performance is 2% points below the 60% target, but this is not a significant concern as some fluctuation is expected. The number of older people supported to live at home is 3.9% more than 12 months ago, compared to a 1.1% increase in people in care homes. The council is currently supporting 3,653 older people with long term support of whom 2,118 are being supported to remain living in their own home.

15. Priority OCC07: Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.

This priority has seven measures being reported in November 2023: one Green, two Amber, zero Red, and four monitoring only/data unavailable.



Figure 3: Priority OCC07 Monthly performance for 2023/2024 financial year

Measure:	December Status:	January Status:	Director:
OCC07.04 Increase the % of children in foster care	Amber	Amber	Lisa Lyons

Table 7: Priority OCC07 Measure Exceptions - January 2024

OCC07.04: 486 children (62.4%) are currently supported in foster care out of a total of 795 cared for children (including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children). This has improved for the second successive month, increasing by 1.4% since November 2023. The vast majority of occasions where the council seeks a foster care placement results in the child being placed in foster care.

A targeted campaign is in place to increase internal foster care looking at specific locality areas where we need to recruit foster carers.

The new South Central Independent Fostering Agency Framework is now in place to provide additional external foster placements. 62.4% of Oxfordshire children are looked after in foster placements whereas nationally the figure is 68%.

When a child needs a placement, we will always look where possible that we prioritise foster family-based care over alternatives and within this are looking at how we support our foster families to care for more complex children and young people.

16. Priority OCC11: Running the business - Finance.

This priority has 15 measures being reported in January 2024: nine Green, two Amber and four Red.



Figure 4: Priority OCC11 Monthly performance for 2023/2024 financial year

Measure:	December Status:	January Status:	Director:
OCC11.02 Achievement of planned savings	Red	Red	Lorna Baxter
OCC11.03 General balances are forecast to remain at or above the risk assessed level	Red	Amber	Lorna Baxter
OCC11.04 Directorates deliver services and achieve planned performance within agreed budget	Red	Red	Lorna Baxter
OCC11.06 Total Outturn variation for DSG funded services (high needs)	Red	Red	Lorna Baxter
OCC11.10 Debt requiring impairment - Corporate Debtors	Amber	Amber	Lorna Baxter
OCC11.11 Debt requiring impairment - ASC contribution debtors	Red	Red	Lorna Baxter

Table 8: Priority OCC11 Measure Exceptions - January 2024

Please refer to 'Financial Position' Section and Annex B for additional information relating to OCC11: Running the business - Finance.

Performance Highlights

- This section of the report concentrates on several highlights achieved this period in delivering our strategic priorities.

Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work.

Link: [Proposal to move county council offices to new carbon-neutral offices set to progress](#)

Proposals to move Oxfordshire County Council's headquarters from the new part of County Hall on New Road to a refurbished net-zero, green Speedwell House campus on Speedwell Street in Oxford are progressing. It is envisaged that the Speedwell Street offices would be an exemplar for carbon-neutral offices and providing exciting opportunities to deliver regeneration in Oxford.

Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire

Link: [Council closes gender pay gap and betters national averages](#)

Oxfordshire County Council has further reduced the gap between what men and women are paid and remains better than the national average across public sector organisations.

A report to a meeting of full council in December reported that there had been a decrease in the mean gender pay gap from 2.3% in 2022 to 1.2% in 2023.

Since 2017, an employer that has a headcount of 250 or more employees on a 'snapshot date' has been required to comply with regulations on gender pay gap reporting. Gender pay gap calculations are based on employer payroll data drawn from a specific date each year. This specific date is called the 'snapshot date'. The 'snapshot date' for Oxfordshire County Council (as with most other public authority employers) is 31 March every year.

Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents.

Link: [New strategy aims to improve health outcomes for all](#)

More than a thousand people in Oxfordshire have helped the county council prepare a new strategy to improve health outcomes for local people over the next five years. The new health and wellbeing strategy for Oxfordshire 2024–2030 has been developed by [Oxfordshire's Health and Wellbeing Board](#) – the partnership between local NHS services, the county council, the city and district councils and [Healthwatch Oxfordshire](#).

The strategy can be read in full by visiting [Oxfordshire County Council's website](#). This strategy has been informed by the themes in the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System Strategy published in March 2023. Over 1,000 residents from many seldom heard communities were also engaged with to learn what challenges they face and what helps them stay well and healthy. Residents can find out more by reading [Healthwatch Oxfordshire's engagement report](#).

Support carers and the social care system

Link: [Supporting vulnerable people to find their voice](#)

Plans to improve the way vulnerable children and adults are supported to be heard during decisions around their own health and care took a step forward following a council meeting on Tuesday 19 December.

Oxfordshire County Council's advocacy services help people understand their rights, communicate their needs and preferences and ensure that their voices are heard in decisions about their care and support.

The council's cabinet agreed to recommendations that lay the foundations to bring the council's advocacy services together for both children and adults. This will give providers the opportunity to put forward bids that enhance both services at the same time.

Funding is provided by the county council and Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB), with BOB ICB responsible for the adult's health-related elements of the contract.

Invest in an inclusive, integrated, and sustainable transport network.

Link: [Road maintenance carried out in Oxfordshire using latest low carbon recycling technique](#)

A programme of resurfacing has been completed in Oxfordshire using an innovative technique which recycles the top layer of old road surfaces that are removed before new surfaces are put in place.

Oxfordshire County Council carried out the work using 'cold recycling' with its contractor Milestone Infrastructure and its supply chain partners Aggregate Industries, Drayton Construction, Hazell & Jeffries and OCL Regeneration in September and October 2023.

During this programme, over 4,000 tonnes of cold recycled material was laid, saving an estimated 75 tonnes of carbon – equivalent to 92 flights from London to New York. It also avoids the environmental impact of disposing of thousands of tonnes of waste planings and the need to extract virgin aggregates.

Preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces.

Link: [Cycling and walking improvements set to come to Didcot](#)

Didcot residents and visitors are set to benefit from potential improvements that will encourage cycling and walking in and around the town and neighbouring villages.

Oxfordshire County Council has approved the Didcot Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), which will set out how to improve the town's active travel network, reduce the reliance on private motor vehicles and cut congestion.

The LCWIP will provide a ten year plan for the delivery of cycling and walking interventions to maximise the uptake of active travel to help meet the travel needs of the growing populations of Didcot and surrounding areas. It will be reviewed and updated regularly.

The Didcot plan is the seventh LCWIP to be approved in Oxfordshire, following on from Oxford, Bicester, Abingdon, Witney, Banbury, and Kidlington.

Creating opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.

Link: [Funding for new Didcot school for children with special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\)](#)

Funding for a new school for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) was approved by Oxfordshire County Council's cabinet on Tuesday 23 January 2024.

A total of £14.4 million will be invested in the planned school, which will be located in Didcot.

Initial design work has started and the education specification will be published for public consultation in February. It is intended that the school will have capacity to teach 120 children with special educational needs related to autism and/or social, emotional and mental health.

Subject to planning permission, construction work is scheduled to begin in 2025 with a projected opening date of 2026/27.

The proposal for the school in Didcot will be the first of two new special schools planned for the area, which will take the total number of Oxfordshire special schools to seventeen.

Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic, and social benefit

Link: [Launch of all-electric bus fleet to service Oxford passengers](#)

A partnership between Oxfordshire County Council and bus operators has launched what will be one of the biggest UK fleets of electric buses outside London.

The £82.5 million project will deliver 159 new battery buses on to the roads of Oxford – the first of which have already gone into service. It has also funded two associated electric charging hubs at the city's bus depots.

The bus fleet has been funded through a collaboration between the county council and Oxford Bus Company, owned by The Go-Ahead Group, and Stagecoach. The council was awarded £32.8m from the government's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme and contributed £6m directly, while bus operators invested £45m.

The groundbreaking infrastructure project is a huge boost to Oxford's vision to creating a more sustainable, decarbonised public transport system and improving air quality.

Strategic Risk Management Overview

18. A strategic risk is a risk to the council's strategic priorities or long-term outcomes; or a risk with a significance that has an impact at the corporate level.

19. The table below provides an overview of the current strategic risk position. Strategic risks are reviewed monthly as part of the Business management and monitoring process. Risks can be added and escalated at any time during the year.

Risk Name	Risk Description	31 Jan 2024				Direction of Travel
		Inherent Score	Previous Residual Risk Score	Current Residual Risk Score	Current Residual Risk Rating	
01. Financial Resilience	The council is not financially sustainable in the immediate/medium term.	25	12	12	●	➡
02. Cyber security	A successful and significant Cyber-attack leading to disruption, damage or compromise of any of the council's computer services, information systems, infrastructure or data.	25	15	15	●	➡
03. HIF1&HIF2	HIF1 and HIF2 become undeliverable and/or potential financial risk to the council	16	12	12	●	➡
04. Managing Demand across Adult's and Children's Services	Fluctuating demand of community across Oxfordshire can result in varying requirements in resource.	15	12	12	●	➡
05. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)	Local area SEND partnership inspection outcomes found widespread systemic failure. Delay for children having their SEND needs met. Reputational damage (locally, regionally, and nationally).	25	16	16	▲	➡
06. Oxford Core Schemes	Failure to deliver Oxford Core Schemes (Traffic Filters, Workplace Parking Levy, Zero Emissions Zone and associated city area schemes such as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods) with public support.	20	16	16	▲	➡
07. Strategic Workforce Planning	A risk that the county council's workforce does not have capacity, capability or resilience to deliver key functions, statutory services or transformational changes required to ensure the councils objectives and long-term priorities are met. Further, that the diversity of the workforce satisfies statutory requirements.	16	12	12	●	➡
08. Policy & Budget	Inability to seek agreement in relation to the policy and budget framework from a minority administration.	25	20	20	▲	➡
09. Delivering the Future Together	Failure to deliver organisation wide transformation.	25	16	16	▲	➡

Table 9: Strategic Risk Overview for January 2024. Please note that a strategic risk regarding resilience in the face of climate change will be forthcoming early in 2024.

Homes for Ukraine

20. Annex C sets out an update on grant funding allocations for the Homes for Ukraine scheme and the use of that funding.

Since the Homes for Ukraine scheme launched in March 2022, the UK government has provided £1.1 billion to councils through a £10,500 tariff for each arrival in their area. The tariff reduced on 1 January 2023 to £5,900 for each new arrival in addition to the 'thank you' payment to sponsors. The original tariff allocation was intended to cover two years, this is now being stretched to cover three years, plus another 18 months following the recent announcement to extend visas for this longer period of time.

The overall grant funding to date (based on the number of arrivals) for the Homes for Ukraine programme in Oxfordshire is now £23m. The funding allocated across the county, city and district councils had increased to £20m by December 2023. The Oxfordshire Migration Partnership (known as 'Silver') has allocated this additional funding across a range of shared programmes and this is managed by the County Council's Programme Management Team (PMT) who provide a quarterly update to the Oxfordshire Migration Partnership.

A partnership delivery plan was approved by the district and county council Chief Executives in May 2023 and sets out the agreed priorities for the partnership. The plan is preventative in its approach, and our ambition remains to maintain an Oxfordshire refugee and asylum migration system that ensures a warm welcome for all new arrivals and embraces and supports independent living for those staying in the county. An outcomes framework is being finalised to measure progress against our key deliverables in the delivery plan. The partnership is committed to maximising the use of all available funding across the system to deliver the priorities.

Financial Position

21. As shown below directorates are forecasting an overspend of £12.3m (2.1%). After taking account of an increase in interest receivable on balances held by the council and the use of funding held in contingency and the COVID-19 reserve, the overall forecast is balanced to the net operating budget.

	Latest Budget Jan-24 £m	Forecast Spend Jan-24 £m	Forecast Variance Jan-24 £m	Forecast Variance Jan-24 %	Forecast Variance Nov-23 £m	Change Since Nov-23 £m
Adult Services	229.3	229.3	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0
Children's Services	172.0	185.0	13.0	7.5%	12.8	0.1
Environment & Place	75.3	72.4	-2.9	-3.9%	-0.8	-2.1
Public Health	4.1	4.1	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0
Community Safety	27.7	28.1	0.4	1.4%	0.5	-0.1
Resources	73.5	75.4	1.9	2.6%	2.0	-0.1
Directorate Total	581.7	594.1	12.3	2.1%	14.4	-2.1

	Latest Budget Jan-24 £m	Forecast Spend Jan-24 £m	Forecast Variance Jan-24 £m	Forecast Variance Jan-24 %	Forecast Variance Nov-23 £m	Change Since Nov-23 £m
Budgets Held Centrally						
Capital Financing	28.4	28.4	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0
Interest on Balances	-16.6	-18.9	-2.2	13.5%	-1.8	-0.4
Contingency ¹ and Inflation	9.2	0.5	-8.7	-94.5%	-7.0	-1.7
Un-ringfenced Specific Grants	-44.0	-44.0	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0
Insurance	1.4	1.4	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0
Contribution from COVID-19 reserve	-7.4	-8.8	-1.4	19.0%	-1.4	0.0
Contribution from Budget Priority Reserve	-2.4	-2.4	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0
Contributions to reserves	21.3	21.3	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0
Contribution to balances	7.6	7.6	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0
Total Budgets Held Centrally	-2.5	-14.8	-12.3	498.8%	-10.2	-2.1
Net Operating Budget	579.4	579.4	0.0	0.0%	4.2	-4.2
Business Rates & Council Tax funding ²	-579.4	-579.4	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0
Forecast Year End Position	-0.0	0.0	0.0		4.2	-4.2

22. The overall forecast has reduced by £4.2m since November 2023. This reflects the reduction in the forecast directorate overspend and the use of contingency and additional interest on balances to manage the directorates pressures.

23. The forecast for Adult Services remains a balanced position. Risks within the council elements of the pooled budgets are being managed by the service.

24. The forecast overspend for Children's Services has increased by £0.1m since November. Whilst the Home to School transport has remained unchanged from the £3.6m overspend reported to Cabinet in January, additional unbudgeted expenditure of £0.9m is required to fund temporary senior management posts within Education. In addition, there is £0.5m pressure relating to the reallocation of staffing savings. As reported throughout the year on-going underlying pressures are driven by a combination of increased care placements costs, and

¹ Includes £4.2m one – off funding.

² As set out in paragraph 135, additional Business Rates surplus levy funding of £0.6m notified on 22 February 2024 has been added to the Business Rates Reserve, pending agreement about the use of this funding.

reliance on agency staff to cover vacancies. Action continues to be taken through a range of organisational, governance and business process controls as well as market management activity to address the underlying pressures but it is taking time for these to have an impact.

25. There is a forecast overspend of £0.4m for Community Safety as a result of reallocated budgeted staffing savings and an increase in training costs. A one-off payment of £0.2m made for a disabling injury/illness is recommended to be funded by a supplementary estimate.
26. The forecast underspend for Environment & Place has increased by £2.1m compared to the November forecast. There is a reduction in energy costs from lower energy activity, a reduction in waste management costs and additional income from enforcement activity.
27. The forecast overspend for Resources has reduced by £0.1m, mainly due to a number of vacancies in Communications, Strategy and Insight.
28. 73% of the savings of £10.2m which were not achieved as planned in 2022/23 are currently assessed as delivered or are expected to be delivered in 2023/24. 27% are assessed as amber or red.
29. 81% of the 2023/24 savings are assessed as delivered or are expected to be delivered and 19% are still assessed as amber or red. Action is continuing to be taken to ensure that the delivery of both existing planned savings and new budget reductions is maximised in 2023/24. The anticipated achievement of savings is incorporated into the forecast directorate position.
30. The forecast 2023/24 deficit compared to Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding for High Needs is £22.9m. This is £4.6m higher than the £18.3m forecast deficit approved by Cabinet in May 2023. The CIPFA code of practice currently requires negative High Needs DSG balances to be held in an unusable reserve. The forecast deficit would increase the cumulative negative High Needs DSG balance held in this reserve from £41.1m as at 31 March 2023 to £64.0m at 31 March 2024.
31. £0.5m continues to be held in corporate contingency to meet the cost of pay inflation for vacant posts if they are recruited to. The balance of £8.7m, which includes £4.2m one – off funding, has been used to support directorate pressures. After taking account of the use of contingency and funding from the COVID-19 reserve to support the overall forecast position, as well as supplementary estimates agreed earlier in the year balances would be £29.8m, £0.4m lower than the risk assessed level of £30.2m at year end.

Financial Implications

32. This report includes an update on the forecast financial position and risks for the council along with action being taken to manage the budget within the position agreed by Council in February 2023. Strong and sustained financial management, collective action and oversight continues to be required to ensure

that services are managed within budgets for the rest of 2023/24 and on-going in 2024/25.

Comments checked by: Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resource and Section 151 Officer.

Legal Implications

33. The Council's constitution at Part 3.2 (Budget and Policy Framework) and Part 3.3 (Virement Rules) sets out the obligations and responsibilities of both the Cabinet and the Full Council in approving, adopting and implementing the council's budget and policy framework.
34. The Council has a fiduciary duty to council taxpayers, which means it must consider the prudent use of resources, including control of expenditure, financial prudence in the short and long term and the need to act in good faith in relation to compliance with statutory duties and exercising statutory powers. The report sets out as at January 2024 performance, risk and finance position for the Council as part of its fiduciary duty to implement budgetary controls and monitoring.

Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law and Governance

LORNA BAXTER

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