

Financial Monitoring 2016/17 – General Fund Revenue

Report by Gary Fairley, Head of Finance and Integrated Service Support

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information on performance against revenue budget in 2016/17 and details of the material variances.

2 Background

2.1 Budget Performance

The detailed budget performance figures shown in appendix 1 result in a net overspend of £1.496 million which is 0.74% of the revised budget for the year. This is a deterioration of £0.938 million on the quarter 1 position reported to Council on 27th September.

The main areas of variance are outlined below:

Pressures

- Demand led pressures in Adult Social Care, particularly the Community Care Resource Panel and in Home Care packages. They are currently projected to overspend by £1.727 million which is £0.976 million more than reported at quarter 1. The increasing projection is related to new pressures across the remit of the panel. Projections of spend in this area can be very volatile given the fluidity of demand and potential high value of individual packages of care;
- Running costs for Care Homes for Older people of £0.227 million;
- Slippage in the opening of Pentland House which has put additional pressure on Bed and Breakfast budgets for Homeless clients. An overspend of £0.390 million is currently projected;
- Loan charges are currently projected to be £0.283 million over budget due to less slippage in the General Services Capital Plan than anticipated;
- Achievement of Council Transformation Targets for procurement savings and for tactical reductions in contracted hours has slipped and is projected to overspend by £0.300 million.

Favourable Movements

- Demand for Residential and Day Care placements for children is lower than budgeted and some high value placements are now being provided in a different way. Spend in this area is now projected to be £1.003 million less than the budget of £3.900 million but is very volatile in its nature;
- A continued growth of properties in Midlothian will generate an improvement on budget of £0.500 million for Council Tax Income.

Detailed information on material variances is contained in appendix 2 which identifies each variance, explains why it happened, outlines what action is being taken to control variances and details the impact of that action.

2.2 Council Transformation Programme

Council approved utilisation of £8.018 million of General Fund Reserve to fund costs associated with the ongoing transformation programme.

At the report date £3.265 million of this has been applied with future commitments of £0.453 million identified for 2017/18 and 2018/19. This leaves £4.300 million as uncommitted.

2.3 General Fund Reserve

The projected balance on the General Fund as at 31 March 2017 is as follows:

	£ million	£ million
Reserve as at 1 April 2016		24.625
Less earmarked reserves utilised in 2016/17		(5.947)
General Reserve at 1 April 2016		18.678
<i>Planned movements in reserves</i>		
Planned Utilisation	(2.668)	
Supplementary Estimates	(0.473)	
Council Transformation Programme Costs	(0.315)	
One-off costs of VSER	(0.042)	
Other	(0.012)	
		(3.510)
Overspend per appendix 1		(1.496)
General Fund Balance at 31 March 2017		13.672

An element of the General Fund is earmarked for specific purposes and this is shown below:

	£ million
General Fund Balance at 31 March 2017	13.672
<i>Earmarked for specific purposes</i>	
Approved contingency level of General Fund Reserve	(8.000)
Budgets earmarked for Council Transformation	(4.300)
Borders Rail Economic Development Opportunities	(0.027)
Available General Reserve at 31 March 2017	1.345

The uncommitted General Fund Reserve at 31 March 2017 is £9.325 million of which £8 million is earmarked as a contingency in the context of the continuing challenging financial outlook, the uncertainty associated with future years grant settlements, pay awards, the economic impact of Brexit and also the potential costs to come from the historic child abuse enquiry. This leaves the remaining £1.325 million as uncommitted.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

Whilst this report deals with financial issues there are no financial implications arising directly from it.

3.2 Risk

Section 95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 requires all Local Authorities in Scotland to have adequate systems and controls in place to ensure the proper administration of their financial affairs.

The assessment of performance against budgets by services is underpinned by comprehensive financial management and budgetary control arrangements. These arrangements are central to the mitigation of financial risk.

Ensuring that adequate systems and controls are in place minimises the risk of significant variances arising, and where they do arise they help to ensure that they are identified and reported on and that appropriate remedial action is taken where possible. The primary purpose of this report is to provide information on historic performance, however the material variances detailed in appendix 2 highlight that the financial management and budgetary control arrangements require continual review and enhancement if financial risk is to be effectively mitigated.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- Community safety
- Adult health, care and housing
- Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- Sustainable growth
- Business transformation and Best Value
- None of the above

3.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The decisions taken to balance the budget will have fundamental implications for service performance and outcomes. The Council's Transformation Programme aims to minimise the impact on priority services.

3.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The proposals in this report do not directly impact on the adoption of a preventative approach.

3.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

No consultation was required.

3.7 Ensuring Equalities

There are no equality implications arising directly from this report.

3.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

There are no sustainability issues arising from this report.

3.9 IT Issues

There are no IT implications arising from this report.

4 Recommendations

It is recommended that Council note the contents of this report and consider the financial position in the context of the Financial Strategy for 2017/18 to 2021/22.

13th October 2016

Report Contact:

David Gladwin Tel No 0131 271 3113

E mail david.gladwin@midlothian.gov.uk

Background Papers:

MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL

Appendix 1

GENERAL FUND OVERVIEW 2016/17

Function	Revised Budget £	Outturn £	(Underspend) / Overspend £
Management	1,634,196	1,634,196	0
<u>Education Communities and Economy</u>			
Childrens Services	15,556,928	14,657,928	(899,000)
Communities and Economy	4,620,133	4,810,133	190,000
Education	83,372,587	83,482,587	110,000
<u>Health and Social Care</u>			
Adult Social Care	38,526,505	40,014,505	1,488,000
Customer and Housing Services	12,208,117	12,247,117	39,000
<u>Resources</u>			
Commercial Services	16,159,892	16,200,892	41,000
Finance and Integrated Service Support	12,394,783	12,641,783	247,000
Properties and Facilities Management	13,604,559	13,638,559	34,000
Lothian Valuation Joint Board	555,551	555,551	0
Central Costs	1,946,196	2,109,196	163,000
Non Distributable Costs	1,338,436	1,338,436	0
GENERAL FUND SERVICES NET EXPENDITURE	201,917,884	203,330,884	1,413,000
Loan Charges	6,582,639	6,865,639	283,000
Investment Income	(300,475)	(300,475)	0
Council Transformation Programme savings target	(2,104,873)	(1,804,873)	300,000
Allocations to HRA, Capital Account etc.	(4,781,596)	(4,781,596)	0
	201,313,579	203,309,579	1,996,000
less Funding:			
Scottish Government Grant	151,516,000	151,516,000	0
Council Tax	40,600,000	41,100,000	(500,000)
Utilisation of Reserves	9,197,579	10,693,579	1,496,000

Financial Monitoring 2016/17 – General Fund Revenue – Material VariancesEducation, Communities and EconomyChildren's Services

Description of Variance	Reason for Variance	Quarter 1 £000	Quarter 2 £000	Additional information / Action taken
Employee performance factor	Non achievement of performance factor offset by some part vacant posts.	181	181	
Supernumerary staff within the practice teams	High levels of demand are currently being experienced requiring the use of supernumerary agency staff.	94	94	Service Management will review the need for these posts on a regular basis. A new service structure will be implemented in December 2016.
Other non-material variances	Miscellaneous over and underspends covering the remaining areas of the Children's Services budget.	3	3	No impact on frontline service.
Gross Overspend		278	278	
<i>Offset by:</i>				
Residential and Day Education Placements	The requirement for residential placements is lower than anticipated and provided for in the budget. Demand for new placements was low for the first half of the 2016 calendar year.	(912)	(1,003)	This represents a 26% underspend on the Multi Agency Resource Group budget of £3.9 million. The group continue to challenge new demand to keep costs under control and has recently been successful in its work to progress children in secure placements to allow them to move to other forms of care.
Family Placements	Slippage in plans for the usage of additional Scottish Government Grant.	(174)	(174)	The service is developing plans to utilise this funding. This will take place alongside the implementation of the new service structure during the course of 2016/17.
Net Underspend		(808)	(899)	

Communities and Economy

Description of Variance	Reason for Variance	Quarter 1 £000	Quarter 2 £000	Additional information / Action taken
Building Standards Income	There was an artificially high level of income received in 2015/16 as a result of changes to Building Regulations in October 2015. This created a high level of application activity before the new regulations came into force. As a result the numbers and related fee income of warrants in 2016/17 are lower than budgeted.	84	84	The income received for Building Warrants is highly variable and is influenced by the timings of building works.
Planning Income	Applications for planning consent are lower than budgeted.	64	64	The income received for planning applications is highly variable and is influenced by the timing of major developments.
Landlord Registration income	Fewer registrations are due to be renewed in 2016/17 than budgeted.	25	25	Registrations run in a three year cycle.
Other non-material variances	Miscellaneous over and underspends covering the remaining areas of the Communities and Economy budget.	17	17	No impact on frontline service.
Gross Overspend		190	190	

Education

Description of Variance	Reason for Variance	Quarter 1 £000	Quarter 2 £000	Additional information / Action taken
Lifelong Learning and Employability Income	The Skill Development Scotland Employability Fund has been reduced nationally by 40%. As a consequence Midlothian's funding was significantly reduced for 2016/17.	167	167	
Vacancies and Performance Factor	Non achievement of employee performance factor.	36	36	
Gross Overspend		203	203	
<i>Offset by:</i>				
PPP Contracts	Insurance costs are lower than provided for in the	(67)	(67)	Windfall Income.

Description of Variance	Reason for Variance	Quarter 1 £000	Quarter 2 £000	Additional information / Action taken
	contract which leads to a refund from the contractor. Contractual refund of funding paid to cover reparation of malicious damage that was not utilised.	(17)	(17)	This will be addressed in the 2017/18 budget setting process.
Other non-material variances	Miscellaneous over and underspends covering the remaining areas of the Education Service budget.	(9)	(9)	No impact on frontline service.
Net Overspend		110	110	

Health and Social Care

Adult Social Care

Description of Variance	Reason for Variance	Quarter 1 £000	Quarter 2 £000	Additional information / Action taken
Community Care Resource Panel	Assessed needs are currently more than budgeted. The budget is £30 million, demand led and subject to demographic pressures. Individual packages of care sometimes in excess of £100k per annum and as a consequence projections in this area can be volatile.	497	1,453	An underlying over-commitment of around £900k at the start of the financial year has been partially addressed through the review of high cost packages. The increasing projection in 2016/17 is due to a combination of demand led pressures covering Physical Disabilities, Learning Disabilities, Older People and Mental Health. A review team is in place and has begun work to review existing packages of care with a view to reducing the existing level of commitments whilst still meeting critical and substantial need and also keeping in year spend within budget. At this stage it is too early to factor in any reductions arising from the review.
Home Care / Midlothian Enhanced Rapid Response and Intervention Team (MERRIT)	Additional employee costs due to the volume of care packages being provided.	254	274	The service continues to prioritise hospital discharges. There are currently some additional complexities associated with moving packages of care to external providers.

Description of Variance	Reason for Variance	Quarter 1 £000	Quarter 2 £000	Additional information / Action taken
Care Homes for Older People	Projected overspend on running costs, including cleaning materials and first aid supplies, at both Highbank and Newbyres.	108	83	Additional supply costs associated with increased complexity of residents. A review of budgets is now underway.
	Projected overspend on staffing costs to cover gaps in the rota.	120	144	Sickness absence levels at Highbank have been high particularly at the start of the financial year. Managers are working closely with HR to address this issue and some improvements have been seen. Plans are underway to recruit to the locum bureau to ensure that when extra staff are required this can be done in the most cost effective manner.
Gross Overspend		979	1,954	
<i>Offset by:</i>				
Public Protection	Scottish Government funding provided specifically for Adult Support and Protection requirements. Some spend relevant to this funding is in the form of care packages and is met from the Resource Panel budget.	(150)	(140)	No impact on frontline service but underspend offsets care and support costs related to protection issues.
Learning and Development	Spend continues to be constrained to counter pressures elsewhere in the service.	(128)	(102)	No impact on frontline service and offsets cost of essential cover for front-line staff with mandatory training requirements.
Joint Equipment Store and Aids and Adaptations	Demand is currently less than budgeted but spend level tends to vary over the course of the year.	(79)	(124)	No impact on frontline service.
Other non-material variances	Miscellaneous over and underspends covering the remaining areas of the Adult Social Care budget.	(44)	(100)	No impact on frontline service.
Net Overspend		578	1,488	

Customer and Housing Services

Description of Variance	Reason for Variance	Quarter 1 £000	Quarter 2 £000	Additional information / Action taken
Homelessness accommodation	Specialist treatment required in the conversion works to re-use Pentland House has led to delays in the project, with completion now targeted for 1 st April 2017. The saving against the Bed and Breakfast budget will therefore not be made.	229	390	The budget provided for an average 82 B and B places per week until 1 st August 2016 and 36 spaces thereafter once Pentland House was available for use. Average occupancy is currently 85 places.
Other non material variances	Miscellaneous over and underspends covering the remaining areas of the Customer and Housing Services.	13	11	No impact on frontline service.
Gross Overspend		242	401	
<i>Offset by:</i>				
Housing Benefit Subsidy	It is anticipated that income will be higher than budgeted for.	(193)	(163)	The 2016/17 budget was set based on the experience of previous years. However, in 2016/17 the subsidy receivable is now anticipated to be higher.
Customer Services Staffing	Customer Services is currently under review so current vacancies are being held until the review runs its course.	(123)	(131)	It is anticipated that vacancies will be filled once the review reaches its later stages.
Revenues Service Vacancies	Vacancies in the Revenues Processing Team that were unfilled for a period or remain unfilled in addition to some maternity savings.	(43)	(68)	No impact on frontline service.
Net Overspend / (Underspend)		(117)	39	

Resources

Commercial Services

Description of Variance	Reason for Variance	Quarter 1 £000	Quarter 2 £000	Additional information / Action taken
Waste Disposal Charges	Movement in tonnage and price.	119	119	Market conditions in the recycling market have resulted in issues with disposing of recycle. A report to Council on 9 th February 2016 covered this in more detail and efforts continue to resolve the situation. This is partly offset by lower than anticipated residual tonnages in the early part of the year.
Burials Income	Income from the Burials Service is lower than the original year to date forecast.	90	71	The number of burials varies throughout the year.
Zero Waste	Procurement and transition costs for the Zero Waste project exceeds the remaining budget	0	33	An update report is scheduled for November.
Taxi-cards	The taxi-card scheme was closed to new entrants in 2015/16 but usage by remaining participants is higher than budgeted.	26	26	
Gross Overspend		235	249	
<i>Offset by:</i>				
Street Lighting Electricity	Spend is lower than at the same point last year.	0	(82)	Conversion to LED lighting leads to lower consumption but this is offset by growth from new Housing Developments.
Staff Vacancies	Vacancies across the service have exceeded the performance factor.	(76)	(52)	This predominantly relates to Waste Services due to changes in the service provided and delays in recruiting to new posts.
Fuel Costs	Waste Services vehicles have lower fuel usage than was anticipated when setting the budget.	(68)	(68)	This will be reflected in future years budgets.
Other non-material variances	Miscellaneous variances covering the remaining areas of the service.	16	(6)	No impact on frontline service.
Net Overspend		107	41	

Finance and Integrated Service Support

Description of Variance	Reason for Variance	Quarter 1 £000	Quarter 2 £000	Additional information / Action taken
Mi-Future	The costs of staff in SWITCH during the year are projected to exceed budget.	130	133	6 months budget is moved to Switch with displaced employees. The Mi-Future team continues to work towards a satisfactory resolution for each employee in SWITCH and when compared to severance costs SWITCH remains a cost effective solution. As at 30 th September 2016 there were 16 people in SWITCH on placements, some of whom are funded by services.
Central Postages	The volume and cost of postages exceeds budget of £122k.	49	45	Despite changing suppliers and securing better prices the volume and mix of postages continues to exceed budget. Work continues to address this by reducing postage volumes, avoiding all unnecessary postage costs and maximising compliance with contractual requirements.
Photocopying	Costs associated with the new centralised Council wide contract are greater than estimated due to higher than anticipated volume of use. The budget is £129k.	33	33	A review of activity is underway with the aim of minimising volumes and reducing reliance on paper in accordance with EWiM principles.
Bank Charges	The shift towards electronic payments has led to increased transaction costs.	24	23	A review of bank charges is underway with the aim of negotiating lower rates with service providers.
Occupational Health	A change to the external provider has resulted in an unexpected cost. The budget is £86k.	15	13	The previous provider was very competitive but is no longer operating. Budgets for future years will be revised to incorporate the new terms.
Gross Overspend		251	247	

Properties and Facilities Management

Description of Variance	Reason for Variance	Quarter 1 £000	Quarter 2 £000	Additional information / Action taken
Energy Costs	The price mix between standing charges and for consumption has changed for electricity supply.	0	41	Standing charges have increased.
Loanhead Leisure Centre – loss of income	Loanhead Leisure Centre will close temporarily in January 2017 before re-opening as part of the new Loanhead Community Hub in August 2017.	34	38	Work is ongoing to identify alternative locations for various activities and classes currently held at the centre.
Gross Overspend		34	79	
<i>Offset by:</i>				
Catering Staffing	Difficulty recruiting to vacant posts.	(30)	(45)	Efforts continue to recruit to vacant posts targeting entry level applicants where appropriate.
Net Overspend		4	34	

Other

Description of Variance	Reason for Variance	Quarter 1 £000	Quarter 2 £000	Additional Information / Action taken
Loan Charges	The 2016/17 budget provided for planned slippage in the General Services Capital Plan. To date slippage has been less than planned.	283	283	
Central Costs	Insurance costs – an increase in the likely settlement costs of existing claims.	112	163	Detail of these claims is being reviewed and any mitigating action required will be put in place. A review of likely settlement costs since quarter 1 gave rise to increased exposure to one high value claim.
Transformation Savings - Procurement	A target of £350k for procurement savings was set for 2015/16 which mainly reflected slippage in targeted savings for previous years. It is projected that £200k of this will be achieved.	150	150	Procurement plans are currently being refreshed and this may identify further savings in 2016/17. Contract savings have been made or are planned for 2016/17 which impact on the Capital Account and the Housing Revenue Account.

Transformation Savings – Tactical Reductions in contracted hours	The target of £150k will not been achieved in 2016/17	150	150	Progress in taking forward a voluntary reduction in hours initiative and promoting flexible retirement options have been delayed because of the focus on low pay. Work in the remainder of the year is expected to deliver a part year saving.
Council Tax Income	A continued growth in Band D equivalents results in a higher than budgeted Council Tax yield.	(452)	(500)	The continued growth in Band D equivalents will be factored into Council Tax income budgets for future years.