

REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 - QUARTER 2

STATEMENT FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At its meeting on 24 November 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the report and unanimously agreed to support the recommendation to the Executive.

During its discussion, the Board explored the following topics:

- Autumn Statement

The Government's Autumn Statement included a number of announcements which would affect local government, but it was confirmed that the precise implications for the Council were still unclear. There was significant additional funding announced for social care pressures and the Council would need to analyse the implications for the budget. The fair cost of care reforms had been delayed but there was an expectation that some elements would still need to be implemented beforehand. The council tax referendum limit had been increased from 3% to 5%, which consisted of 3% for the general rate and 2% for the adult care precept. It was confirmed that each percent of council tax would bring in about £3.5m for the Council depending on the council tax base. However, it was highlighted that this would be offset by increased costs as a result of the increase in the National Living Wage to £10.41 per hour which would affect a number of the Council's contracts, such as in the adult care and school transport sectors. It was expected that the Council's financial settlement would be received around 21 December 2022, and this would be reported to the Executive on 4 January 2023.

In relation to the impact of a recession, it was recognised that this could affect people's ability to pay their council tax bills, but it was highlighted that there was the council tax support system which the district councils operate in their areas.

- Highways

The forecast overspend of £1.570m on Highways could potentially be reduced if there was a lower than expected demand on the winter maintenance budget, such as from a reduced number of grit runs being required. It was confirmed that 85 grit runs had been budgeted for within the winter maintenance budget.

- Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue

In relation to Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue's use of earmarked reserves to mitigate the cost pressure for the wholetime Fire Fighter recruitment, it was confirmed that its reserves would last around three to four years based on that specific cost pressure. The funding and cost pressures for the Fire and Rescue Service were being reviewed as part of the budget setting process.

- Children's Services

The overspend on legal costs for Children's Services was predominantly due to recruitment issues. It was confirmed that there was a significant challenge to attract and retain children's lawyers, so locum support was heavily relied on. However, one of the reasons for the increase in cost was due to locum children's lawyers also now becoming hard to recruit and retain, and therefore were commanding quite a sizeable cost in the competitive recruitment market. It was also confirmed that another contributory factor to the overspend was the increase in the number of children in care and that these cases need to be legally represented in court which was creating an additional demand. Furthermore, the increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children was creating additional challenges around age assessments and the need for legal representation in court.

The Board reflected on whether there was an opportunity for joint working across the East Midlands region to address this recruitment challenge, but it was highlighted that the same issues around recruitment and increased demand were being experienced by other councils across the region which was creating a very competitive market.

Agenda Item 6

EXECUTIVE DECISION – 6 DECEMBER 2022

CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 - QUARTER 2 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

STATEMENT FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At its meeting on 24 November 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the report and unanimously agreed to support the recommendation to the Executive.

In its discussion on this item, the Board explored the following topic:

- Appendix D - Education Transport Links to School (Route Sustainability) Project

Concerns were raised as to whether the health and safety aspect of children cycling to school on busy roads was considered in the cost versus benefit analysis of these sustainable travel schemes. Further information was requested on the funding being put into cycling to encourage its use and how much analysis was undertaken for these sustainable travel schemes on the health and safety aspects, particularly for cycling.

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CORPORATE PLAN SUCCESS FRAMEWORK 2022/23 - QUARTER 2

STATEMENT FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At its meeting on 24 November 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the report and unanimously agreed to support the recommendation to the Executive.

During its discussion, the Board explored the following topics:

- **Waste and Recycling**

(Section 4.2 of the report: PI 39: Percentage of Household waste to landfill)

The majority of waste in Lincolnshire goes through the Energy for Waste plant. If the amount of waste going to landfill started to increase, then this would imply that more waste was being created and could not be disposed of through the Energy for Waste plant or for other reasons. It was highlighted that as the Energy for Waste plant largely worked at capacity, there was a risk of having a greater landfill figure if there was a greater presentation of waste.

(Section 4.4 of the report: PI 37: Recycling Rate (new national formula) and PI 38: Recycling at County Council owned Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC))

As part of the Board's exploration of these indicators, it was confirmed that in relation to the new national formula, different categories of waste were categorised differently by the Government at different times, and these subtle changes affect the overall recycling rate figures. As an example, wood was now classed as recoverable materials rather than recycled materials so instead of being automatically recycled, any opportunity to reuse the wood would be considered first.

An educational campaign was ongoing across Lincolnshire between the County Council and district councils to improve residents understanding of what can go into the different bins. The underlying trends of recycling rates indicate that this was having a positive impact. It was confirmed that a breakdown of the waste and recycling data by district was considered by the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership, and each of the partners could influence and address this agenda and try to work collaboratively and consistently across the county. The Chairman of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee highlighted that more detailed waste and recycling information had been requested at the Committee's last meeting in October 2022 to look at the variations by district and to see if there were any changes in behaviour that could be positively influenced to drive the recycling rate up.

The Board also explored the reasons for lower presentation of waste at Household Waste Recycling Centres and whether a contributory factor could be the cost of living crisis which was causing people to buy less, and as a result less waste was being generated.

- **Education**

(Section 4.4 of the report – PI 1: Percentage of schools that are judged good or outstanding and PI 2: Percentage of pupils in outstanding or good schools)

There was a combination of reasons for schools not being judged good or outstanding, which included the quality of teaching and learning, safeguarding issues and the quality assurance process for children educated off site at an alternative provision setting. It was confirmed that there were some issues in terms of the quality of teaching and learning which had been highlighted in some of the Ofsted Inspection reports and the Council was following up on these with the Regional Schools Commissioner.

- **Early Years**

(Section 4.3 of the report: PI 67: Percentage of eligible 2-year-olds who are in receipt of their Early Years Entitlement)

The Board reflected on the 80% target and questioned whether the Council should be aiming for 100% to ensure all young children were engaged in an Early Years setting.