

Central Bedfordshire Council

Executive

5th December 2017

September 2017 Q2 Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring

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This report relates to a Non Key Decision.

Purpose of this report

1. The report provides information on the 2017/18 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) projected outturn revenue and capital position as at September 2017.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is asked to note :

- 1. That the Revenue forecast position is to achieve a balanced budget with a contribution to HRA Reserves of £6.182M, thus strengthening the Council's ability to invest and improve its stock of Council.**
- 2. That the Capital forecast position indicates a net outturn of £8.227M, against a budget of £14.342M. It is proposed that £2.539M of future investment works are deferred to 2018/19.**
- 3. That Right to Buy (RtB) sales will be monitored for the possible impact on predicted surpluses in the medium to longer term.**

4. **The virement of the underspend at Croft Green (£3.725M) to the New Build and Acquisitions budget line, to enable further purchases of properties that will address the increasing temporary accommodation pressure in the General Fund.**

Issues

1. The **revenue** forecast position as at the end of September 2017 projects a year end surplus of £6.182M compared to a budgeted surplus of £6.115M, a increase of £0.067M.
2. The forecast position for the HRA **capital** programme indicates a net outturn below budget at £8.227M; this includes deferred works of £4.009M from 2016/17. It is proposed that £2.539M of future investment works are deferred to 2018/19.
3. The 2017/18 budget for the HRA anticipates a contribution to the Independent Living Development Reserve (ILDR) of £5.796M and contribution to the Strategic reserve of £0.319M. The year end forecast currently suggests a contribution to reserves of £6.182M, comprised of £5.796 to ILDR and £0.386M to the Strategic reserve. This equates to a predicted total reserve balance of £28.053M

Council Priorities

4. Sound financial management contributes to the Council's Value for Money and enables the Council to successfully deliver its priorities. The recommendations will contribute indirectly to all 6 Council priorities.

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

5. None

Financial Implications

6. The financial implications are contained in the report.

Equalities Implications

7. Equality Impact Assessments were undertaken prior to the allocation of the 2017/18 budgets and each Directorate was advised of significant equality implications relating to their budget proposals.

Appendices

Appendix A – Housing Revenue Account Detailed Commentary

APPENDIX A

HRA REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)

1. The HRA annual expenditure budget is £22.524M and income budget is £28.639M, which allows a contribution of £6.115M to reserves to present a net budget of zero.
2. A subjective breakdown of budget, year to date position and forecast outturn is shown in **Table 1** below.

	2017/18 Budget	Budget YTD	Actual YTD	Variance YTD	Full Year Forecast	Variance Full Year Forecast to Budget
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Total Income	(28.639)	(14.320)	(14.331)	(0.012)	(28.858)	(0.219)
Housing Operations	7.696	3.848	3.857	0.009	7.880	0.184
Financial Inclusion	0.461	0.231	0.180	(0.050)	0.378	(0.083)
Housing Investment	0.123	0.062	0.031	(0.031)	0.118	(0.005)
Corporate Resources	2.063	1.031	0.946	(0.086)	2.139	0.077
Maintenance	5.084	2.542	2.504	(0.038)	5.064	(0.020)
Debt related costs	0.119	0.059	0.059	-	0.119	-
Direct Revenue Financing	2.327	1.164	1.164	-	2.327	-
Efficiency Programme	(0.750)	(0.375)	(0.375)	-	(0.750)	-
Interest repayment	3.941	1.970	1.970	-	3.941	-
Principal repayment	1.460	0.730	0.730	-	1.460	-
TOTAL Expenditure	22.524	11.262	11.066	(0.196)	22.676	0.152
Surplus	(6.115)	(3.057)	^(3.265)	(0.207)	(6.182)	(0.067)
Contribution to / (from) reserve (at year end)	6.115	3.057	^3.265	0.207	6.182	0.067
Net Expenditure	-	-	-	-	-	-
^ Included for balancing and illustrative purposes only						

3. The year to date variances across the HRA show an favourable variance of £0.207M, whilst the full year forecast shows an favourable variance of £0.067M resulting in a full year surplus of £6.182M
4. The full year expenditure forecast is showing an adverse variance of £0.152M which is a result of under achievement of the Vacancy Management Saving and additional fire safety assessment and audit work following the Grenfell Tower tragedy. Fire safety at all properties requiring fire risk assessment will be reviewed during the rest of this financial year. The Corporate recharge forecast adverse variance of £0.077M reflects the outturn for 2016/17, but at this stage is currently an estimate as the final calculation does not take place until year end.
5. The full year income forecast is showing a favourable variance of £0.219M which is a result of additional rental income from properties that have recently been purchased for use as transitional accommodation.

HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME

6. The HRA Capital budget is £14.342M which includes slippage from 2016/17 of £4.009M.
7. The full year forecast within Stock Protection at £5.978M, a positive variance of £0.067M. Projects relating to Future Investment are forecast to outturn at £2.249M, an underspend of £3.509M and with proposed slippage into 2018/19 of £2.539M.
8. Analyses of forecast and variance, for each HRA scheme is presented at **Table 2** below. The proposed funding of the programme is shown at Table 3.

	Budget 2017/18	Full Year Forecast	Variance	Monthly Budget Monitoring September 17		
				Profiled YTD	Actual YTD	Variance
Stock Protection	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
General Enhancements	105	105	0	50	2	(48)
Fire Safety & Alarm Systems	104	104	0	40	12	(28)
Garage Refurbishment	115	115	0	17	7	(10)
Paths & Fences Siteworks	110	124	14	54	0	(54)
Estate & Green Space Improvements	326	326	0	34	24	(10)
Energy Conservation	538	538	0	238	147	(91)
Roof Replacement	555	555	0	0	0	0
Assisted Living Technology	13	13	0	0	10	10
Central Heating Installation	738	738	0	175	180	5
Rewiring	233	233	0	130	106	(24)
Kitchens and Bathrooms	777	777	0	555	511	(44)
Central Heating communal	26	26	0	0	(12)	(12)
Door Replacement	290	270	(20)	146	90	(56)
Structural Repairs	221	221	0	81	44	(37)
Aids and Adaptations	425	350	(75)	225	150	(75)
Drainage and Water Supply	36	50	14	18	16	(2)
Capitalised Salaries	510	510	0	251	250	(1)
Asbestos Management	258	258	0	126	153	27
Parking Schemes	236	236	0	0	0	0
Investment Panel Programme	50	50	0	0	0	0
Communal/PIR Lighting	73	73	0	73	41	(32)
Targeted Door Replacement	6	6	0	3	3	0
Sheltered Housing Refurbishment	150	150	0	140	147	7
New Windows	150	150	0	139	116	(23)
Sub Total	6,045	5,978	(67)	2,495	1,997	(498)

	Budget 2017/18	Full Year Forecast	Variance	Monthly Budget Monitoring September 17		
				Profiled YTD	Actual YTD	Variance
Future Investment	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Stock Remodelling	130	346	216	66	76	10
Houghton Regis Central	2,000	275	(1,725)	102	38	(64)
Site Development	315	26	(289)	2	2	0
Garage Site Development	269	100	(169)	13	9	(4)
Croft Green	3,895	170	(3,725)	0	0	0
New Build & Acquisitions	1,017	1,017	0	1,017	770	(247)
Crescent Court	313	15	(298)	8	8	0
Havelock Road	200	200	0	25	(3)	(28)
Windsor Drive	158	100	(58)	10	9	(1)
Sub Total	8,297	2,249	(6,048)	1,243	909	(334)
TOTAL HRA	14,342	8,227	(6,115)	3,738	2,906	(832)

Table 3

Source	£'000
Revenue Contributions	2,327
Useable Capital Receipts	4,000
Independent Living Development Reserve	275
Strategic Reserve	1,625
Total	8,227

STOCK PROTECTION

9. It is anticipated that Stock Protection will outturn on budget at £5.978M, a positive variance of £0.067M.
10. There is a year to date underspend of £0.498M. This is primarily due to spend being behind profile at various projects including; Energy Conservation (£0.091M), Aids and Adaptations (£0.075M), Door Replacement (£0.056M), Paths & Fences Siteworks (£0.054M), General Enhancements (£0.048M), Kitchens and Bathrooms (£0.044M), Structural Repairs (£0.037M) and Communal/PIR Lighting (£0.032M).
11. There is a potential risk of an over spend on the fire safety capital budget, whilst the Council responds to changing fire safety guidance and best practice following the Grenfell tower incident. For example the installation of sprinkler systems in blocks of flats of four floors or higher is being investigated.

FUTURE INVESTMENT

12. Houghton Regis Central is a site comprising the vacant former Co Op site, the Grade II listed Red House and Red House Court in Houghton Regis town centre. The development will involve re-development in two stages, with construction initially taking place on the Co Op site to allow the current Red House Court residents to move to new apartments. This would enable the existing building (Red House Court) to be demolished, to then provide homes and new facilities on the existing site. The scheme will comprise 168 independent living apartments on a mixed tenure basis.
13. The scheme received planning consent in November 2016 and it is proposed that construction will start on site in the summer of 2018. The reason for the revised start date is due to re-programming following the establishment of new governance structures. This will enable a comprehensive tender pack to be prepared and a robust procurement process to be followed. As a result it is predicted that only £0.275M of the original budget of £2M will be spent in this financial year.

14. Major construction work at the Croft Green Development was forecast to commence in summer 2017 with completion forecast for the winter of 2018. The contract sum that has been received from the contractor is significantly higher than anticipated and means that the project in its current form is not financially viable. In the circumstances it is proposed instead to undertake a remodelling of the accommodation at Croft Green, which would take place during 2018/19. The cost of these works is estimated at £0.5M, and has been requested as part of the HRA Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that is currently under review.
15. There are increasing homelessness pressures, which are impacting upon General Fund (GF) transitional accommodation (TA) budgets. The approach being taken is to create “system resilience” for the future, establishing flexible provision across Central Bedfordshire, to be managed intensively as either TA and/or supported housing. The Housing Service has created an Intensive Property Management Team (within the HRA) that will manage all of the properties and rooms that are used for TA on a ‘hotel-style’ basis, in part to maximise income; but more importantly, to avoid cost at the level seen in neighbouring local authorities.
16. Over time, it is envisaged that this provision will increase to circa 250 units (homes, single rooms, shared accommodation). The use of this circa 250 units will function flexibly, as both TA and accommodation based supported housing, the main aim being to avoid cost to the system. Whilst management and maintenance costs are significantly higher for this type of accommodation, the greater concentration of tenancies will also generate additional income for the HRA. More importantly, this approach directly facilitates the Housing GF efficiencies, to reduce TA Budget provision over a three year period.
17. As part of this approach it was proposed and agreed to transfer Greenacre, the former care home in Dunstable, from the GF into the HRA. In the short to medium term this can provide flexible bedsit accommodation for up to 42 households, addressing demands for TA or Supported accommodation. In the longer term the site could be regenerated to provide new housing supply and would certainly enhance the HRA’s portfolio of assets. Work has commenced on refurbishing the site on a phased basis so it can start to provide accommodation from the latter part of 2017. The first phase will inform the refurbishment of the rest of the block. Various planning and building regulation permissions are being sought currently.
18. Further to this approach, of reducing GF expenditure, it is now proposed to vire the underspend at Croft Green (£3.725M) to the new build and acquisitions budget line, to enable further purchases of properties that will address the increasing temporary accommodation pressure.

HRA EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME

19. Since 2010 the Housing Service has been using Housemark to provide a benchmarking service. The analysis provided has assisted in identifying the areas where HRA expenditure is high relative to other stock retained authorities. Benchmarking has indicated, for example, that we should review the Repairs Delivery model, the result of which has been the achievement of 'in year' savings and further proposals for HRA efficiencies going forward.
20. The HRA revenue budget for 2017/18 was reduced by £0.750M, as part of the Council's efficiency programme.
21. This year's HRA efficiency target comprises mainly increased service charge income within Supported Housing (£0.150M), reduced Day to Day and Void maintenance costs (£0.130M), and savings resulting from the tenancy sustainment approach (£0.110). The remaining £0.360M is made up of: savings related to Business Process Review and Management rationalisation, reduction in cost relating to Sheltered Housing and reduced communications costs resulting from use of new media. The overall efficiency target for 2017/18 is forecast to be fully achieved.

HRA ARREARS

22. Table 4 shows a breakdown of the HRA debt position at September 2017.

Table 4 debt

<u>Debt Analysis - Tenant Arrears</u>						
Description of debt	0-4 weeks	4-8 weeks	8-13 weeks	13-52 weeks	Over 1 yr	TOTAL
	£M	£M	£M	£M	£M	£M
Current Tenant	0.177	0.144	0.090	0.112	0.000	0.523
Former Tenant	0.006	0.006	0.015	0.083	0.432	0.542
						1.065
<u>Debt Analysis - Other Arrears</u>						
Description of debt	From 1 to 30 days	From 31 to 60 days	From 61 to 90 days	From 91 to 365 days	Over 1 yr	TOTAL
	£M	£M	£M	£M	£M	£M
Misc recoveries	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Shops	0.012	0.000	0.000	0.009	0.009	0.030
Void recoveries	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.015	0.024	0.039
	0.012	0.000	0.000	0.024	0.033	0.069

23. Total tenant debt amounted to £1.065M compared to £1.012M at the end of August 2017. Current Tenant Arrears (CTA) are £0.523M or 1.6% (£0.496M or 1.43% at August) of the annual rent debit of £32.616M, against a target of 1.8%, whilst Former Tenant Arrears (FTA) are at 1.66% with a balance of £0.542M against a target of 1.75% (1.66% with a balance of £0.543M at August). £0.021M of tenant debt was written off in Quarter 2. Housing Benefit payments account for 53.63% of the rent and service charge income received.
24. In light of welfare reform Housing Operations have implemented a pro-active approach to managing the impact on rent arrears. This includes early intervention, rightsizing where necessary, increased contact with our residents, supporting tenants in making the right decisions regarding payment of rent and strong enforcement action when all other options have been exhausted. A new Tenant App is shortly to be launched whereby tenants will find it even easier to engage with staff and access more information, for example the balance on their rent account. It is hoped that this new service will have a similarly positive impact on maximising income, and will assist the Service in driving channel shift wherever possible, thereby freeing up resources for other needs. This will be the first tangible step that the Housing Service is taking for its tenants to positively drive forward access to more services electronically. This is a significant milestone.
25. Contacts with other Registered Providers of social housing have enabled us to benchmark, research good practice, and ensure genuine unrecoverable debts are presented for write off quarterly. This ensures the FTA officer is concentrating their time on cases with the highest probability of recovery. Since 2015 recovery of FTA debt has taken on a completely different approach from previous years as research has shown that the probability of recovery can actually increase with the age of the debt. For example, if a family is evicted from one of our properties it can take between 3 to 12 months for the family to resettle, enabling a trace to be made and thus the debt can be pursued.
26. Debt recovery plans may be put in place and take several years to settle. An affordable payment plan reviewed on a regular basis increases the probability of full recovery. Where contact is maintained, debt can be recovered up to 6 years after becoming an FTA, however where a period of 2 years has elapsed and no contact or trace has been possible the debt will be put forward for write off.
27. There is currently £0.069M of non tenant arrears (£0.060M at August), which comprises the following: rents at shops owned by the HRA, service charges

and property damage relating to existing and former tenants.

PROMPT PAYMENT INDICATOR

28. The performance target for payment to suppliers, where there is no dispute over the amount invoiced, is 90% of invoices paid within 30 days of invoice receipt date. The HRA performance for September was 98% of 224 invoices (98% of 249 invoices in August) paid on time). Work is ongoing to create 'end to end' system integration between SAP and the QL system, so as to improve performance overall. This project is progressing well and has significantly improved timescales for making payment.
29. Since the beginning of the financial year, actions that have been implemented to improve this aspect of the service have resulted in a dramatic improvement to the extent that performance has been consistently above 90%. This new process will be built on to ensure that all contractors use the same process for invoicing. Avoiding variance in approach ensures that a consistent performance level can be maintained.

HRA CAPITAL RECEIPTS

30. New Right to Buy (RtB) discounts and proposals for re-investing the capital receipts came into effect from April 2012, which increased the maximum discount available to tenants from £0.034M to their current level of £0.079M.
31. Up to the end of September 2017, 35 RtB applications were received with 14 properties being sold, compared to 41 Applications and 14 sales over the same period in 2016/17. It is currently projected that the number of RtB sales will be approximately 25 to 30 for the year, resulting in a residual receipt for the year of circa £3M.
32. The Council has a balance as at quarter 2 of useable capital receipts of £8.052M, of which £4.1640M is reserved for investment in new social housing. The Council has entered into an agreement with the Secretary of State to invest these receipts in new social housing. The use of these receipts is restricted to schemes that do not receive Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) funding.
33. The retained receipt from RtB sales can represent no more than 30% of the cost of the replacement properties. Since the agreement was signed in 2012, £4.763M has been spent on replacement properties up to 30 September 2017. The Council is committed to spend a further £13.643M on replacement properties by 30 September 2020.

34. The HRA's Budget proposals for the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) propose significant investment in new build (in excess of £15M by 30 September 2020).
35. Current projections suggest RtB sales will not have a negative impact on the Business Plan, particularly if the number of new build properties exceeds the properties sold. However if annual RtB sales were to make up a significant percentage of the Housing Stock, such that it diminished by 10% (equivalent to approximately 500 properties) or more over the period to 30 September 2020, then this would pose a threat to the surpluses predicted both in the medium and longer term.
36. If additional sales continue to represent a small percentage of the Council's stock, so there is no material impact on the Business Plan, there is a significant benefit as retained receipts will provide the Council with additional funds for reinvestment.
37. As at 1 April 2017 the balance of HRA Usable Capital receipts was £6.474M. It is anticipated that £3M of RtB receipts will be retained in the current year, which delivers a subtotal of £9.474M. It is proposed to use £4.0M of usable receipts to part fund the Capital programme, so the balance carried forward is forecast to be £5.474M.

RESERVES

38. The total reserves available as at year end 2016/17 were £23.771M, comprising £2.0M in HRA Balances, £14.898M in the Independent Living Development Reserve, £6.673M in the Strategic Reserve and £0.200M in the Major Repairs Reserve.
39. The current position indicates a year end balance in reserves of £28.053M. HRA Balances are projected to remain at a contingency level of £2.000M, with the Independent Living Development Reserve increasing to £20.419M, the Strategic reserve reducing to £5.434M, and the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) remaining at £0.200M.
40. In total this equates to a forecast contribution to reserves for the year of £6.182M, offset by spend from reserves of £1.900M to result in a net increase of £4.282M.
41. An Investment Strategy has been formulated, that sets out proposals for the

use of the reserves that are forecast to materialise in the short to medium term. This strategy is referred to in the HRA Budget Report that was approved by Council in February 2017, and continues to be refined as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

Table 5 – Reserves

Reserves **Month: September 2017**

Description	Opening Balance 2016/17	Spend against reserves	Release of reserves	Proposed transfer to Reserves	Proposed Closing Balance 2017/18
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
HRA Balances	2,000	-	-	-	2,000
Independent Living Development Reserve	14,898	(275)	-	5,796	20,419
Strategic Reserve	6,673	(1,625)	-	386	5,434
Major Repairs (HRA)	200	-	-	-	200
	23,771	(1,900)	-	6,182	28,053