

MONITORING REPORT FROM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

DATE: 17th December 2009

PURPOSE

To update members on activity within the Children's Services Directorate during the period to November 2009.

BACKGROUND

The Children's Services Directorate budget is projected to overspend by £1.590m: details attached. This represents a predicted increase of £148k on the £1.443m reported last month.

SPECIFIC AREAS FOR ATTENTION

LA funded Children's Services

£128k of the £148k increase is due to the additional cost of placing six new children (from two families) in the care of independent foster agencies at a cost of £800-900 per week. As previously indicated all our Royal Borough foster carers are running at capacity. Given the unprecedented demand for places we are forced to buy from the private sector. Last month there were only eight of our children in such placements, but now there are 14. Last year there were only three. Payments to our own foster carers has increased this month (by £15k) and direct payments to service users have also increased by a relatively small amount. Training of new foster carers is being undertaken. In the medium term this will reduce, though not eliminate, our dependency on independent foster agencies.

The budget is still suffering the high cost of agency social workers. The new offer to Royal Borough social workers has been approved by Employment Panel and is now the subject of negotiations with staff. We are also making plans to recruit more of our own social workers from external sources. Both of these measures will reduce the costs associated with our dependency on agency social workers.

A further meeting of Directors of Children's Services has been held to plan shared services between various combinations of the Berkshire unitary authorities in order to reduce overheads, improve sustainability and the value-added of specialist services.

There is a new budget pressure of £40k arising from the provision of occupational therapy by the PCT for children with statements of special educational need.

DSG

The DSG projected overspend has reduced by £83k from £878k to £795k. Although the out of Borough overspend has increased by £109k most of this is offset by additional recovery on special educational needs recoupment from other local authorities. In other words, we have educated more children with special educational needs than anticipated within in the Royal Borough who are resident in neighbouring authorities. There has also been some underspends on other central DSG budgets such as behaviour support and a reduction in forecasted maternity payments.

MONITORING REPORT FROM DIRECTORS OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

DATE: 17th December 2009

PURPOSE

To update members on activity within the Adult and Community Services Directorates during the period to November 2009.

BACKGROUND

The Adult and Community Services Directorate budget is projected to be underspent by £35k. This is £75k less than the £110k reported last month. This is due to a number of minor adjustments this month covering many of the Adult Social Care budgets, no changes are reported in the Leisure Services, LIHA or Housing budgets.

SPECIFIC AREAS FOR ATTENTION

Revenue Budget

There has been an increase in referrals to the homecare service, due in part to an increase in the discharges from the acute hospital. This has led to an increase in forecast expenditure on community care, which will, should the trend continue, put increasing pressure on the budgets. There is also one additional, high costs, Mental Health placement that has put more pressure on this budget.

There are no other significant issues to report this month.

MONITORING REPORT FROM DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

DATE: 17th December 2009

PURPOSE

To update members on activity within the Environmental Services Directorate during the period to November 2009.

BACKGROUND

There are no changes identified in this month's Budget Monitoring Report from those previously reported.

SPECIFIC AREAS FOR ATTENTION

Revenue Budget

1. The budget pressure of £30k shown on the statement represents the residual costs following the successful transfer of the lease of an empty property.
2. Licensing Income is remaining steady and above the target despite the economic climate with a current estimated surplus of £50k.
3. There is a budget pressure of £25k for emergency works on Highway Trees. This can be offset by a potential £25k additional income from Highway Licences.
4. Overall the Directorate remains at a projected £20k under target and is continuing to monitor all areas of spend.

All as reported to Cabinet on 26th November

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Launch of Web based Travel Portal – 'Voyager'

Free Christmas Park and Ride set up at Windsor Racecourse from Saturday 28th November 2009.

Free half hour parking from 1st to 27th December in Nicholson's, West Street and Grove Road car parks in Maidenhead.

MONITORING REPORT FOR RESOURCES DIRECTORATE

DATE: 17th December 2009

PURPOSE

To update members on activity within the Resource's Directorate during the period to November 2009.

BACKGROUND

The Resources Directorate reports an overspend against approved estimate of £219k, an increase of £130k on that previously reported.

The approved estimate has increased since October from £12,420k to £12,453k.

This movement reflects a supplementary budget applied to Council Tax Collection, to fund the additional agency staff required to clear the correspondence backlog (£33k).

SPECIFIC AREAS FOR ATTENTION

Revenue

- In order to improve the in year collection rate for Council Tax it has been necessary to make use of additional resources in the form of Agency staff. We are struggling to contain this within the existing budget, although we are going to keep reviewing it to try and mitigate this pressure, and currently this could result in an anticipated overspend of £80k. By employing these people it will help to reduce any potential future years collection fund deficit, which the Royal Borough would otherwise have to tax for.
- Due to the current economic conditions the Housing Benefit team have seen their workload increase due to both existing and new claimants. In order to meet targets it has been necessary to make use of Agency staff in processing these claims, leading to an anticipated overspend of £50k. As with the council tax, we will be looking at ways of mitigating this pressure throughout the rest of the financial year.
- The Customer Service Centre is currently reporting an overspend of severance costs of £9k, which were incurred whilst dealing with staffing performance issues in April and May. It is also facing potential pressures due to a spate of short-term and long-term sickness, which is being actively managed.
- Local Land Charges are currently reporting an overspend of £80k. The continued impact of the downturn in the housing market means that it is anticipated that the budgeted income levels will not be achieved.

MONITORING REPORT FOR POLICY, PERFORMANCE & PLANNING

DATE: 17th December 2009

PURPOSE

To update members on activity within Policy, Performance and Planning during the period to November 2009.

BACKGROUND

There is a projected overspend of £40k in Policy, Performance and Planning, which is no change from October 2009.

There has also been no change in the approved estimate since October.

SPECIFIC AREAS FOR ATTENTION

Revenue

Planning Services are reporting that careful management has resulted in no further increase in the overspend of £40k, as reported to November Cabinet

Throughout the year, savings have been identified to help offset the projected shortfall in Planning and Building Control Income, due to the economic downturn.