

BLACKPOOL COUNCIL
REPORT
of the
DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
to the
EXECUTIVE
10TH NOVEMBER 2014

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING AS AT MONTH 6 2014/15

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report is the standard monthly financial performance monitoring report, which sets out the summary revenue budget position for the Council and its individual directorates for the first 6 months of 2014/15, i.e. the period to September 2014, together with an outlook for the remainder of the year. The report is complemented with an assessment of progress to date against the Council's latest Capital Programme.

2. Report Format

- 2.1 Separate reports have been prepared for each of the Council's core areas of responsibility:

- Appendix 3a - Chief Executive
- Appendix 3b - Deputy Chief Executive
- Appendix 3c - Governance and Regulatory Services
- Appendix 3c/d - Area Forum and Ward Budgets
- Appendix 3e - Resources
- Appendix 3f - Places
- Appendix 3g - Strategic Leisure Assets
- Appendix 3h - Community and Environmental Services
- Appendix 3i - Adult Services
- Appendix 3j - Children's Services
- Appendix 3k - Public Health
- Appendix 3l - Budgets Outside the Cash Limit

These incorporate summary financial statements which continue to be prepared on a full accruals basis and focus on the forecast revenue and capital outturns for 2014/15. There is an accompanying narrative to explain any areas of significant variance from budget and to highlight any areas of potential pressure along with action plans agreed with service managers to address them. Also included is a graph which shows the monthly progress of cumulative net revenue expenditure against the approved budget.

- 2.2 The combined effect of the directorates' financial performances is aggregated in a summary financial statement at Appendix 1 which mirrors the Council's Revenue Budget Book as restructured. This summary allows proactive month-on-month monitoring of the Council's forecast working balances to be undertaken to ensure appropriate and prudent levels are maintained. Appendix 2 highlights on a 12-month rolling basis those services which trip the designated overspending reporting threshold.

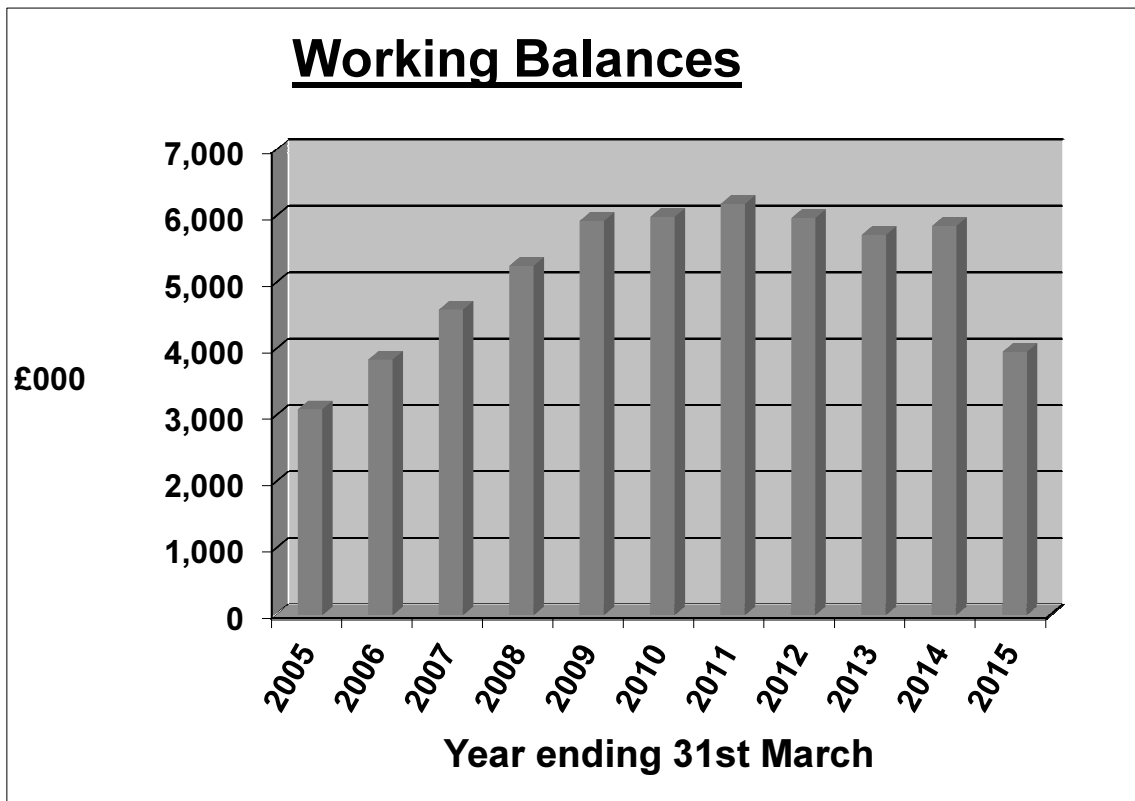
3. Directorates' Budget Performance

- 3.1 The impacts of directorates' revenue budget performance and progress in achieving planned savings fall upon the Council's working balances. The main areas accounting for the month 6 forecast overspend of £1,895k for 2014/15 are summarised below:-

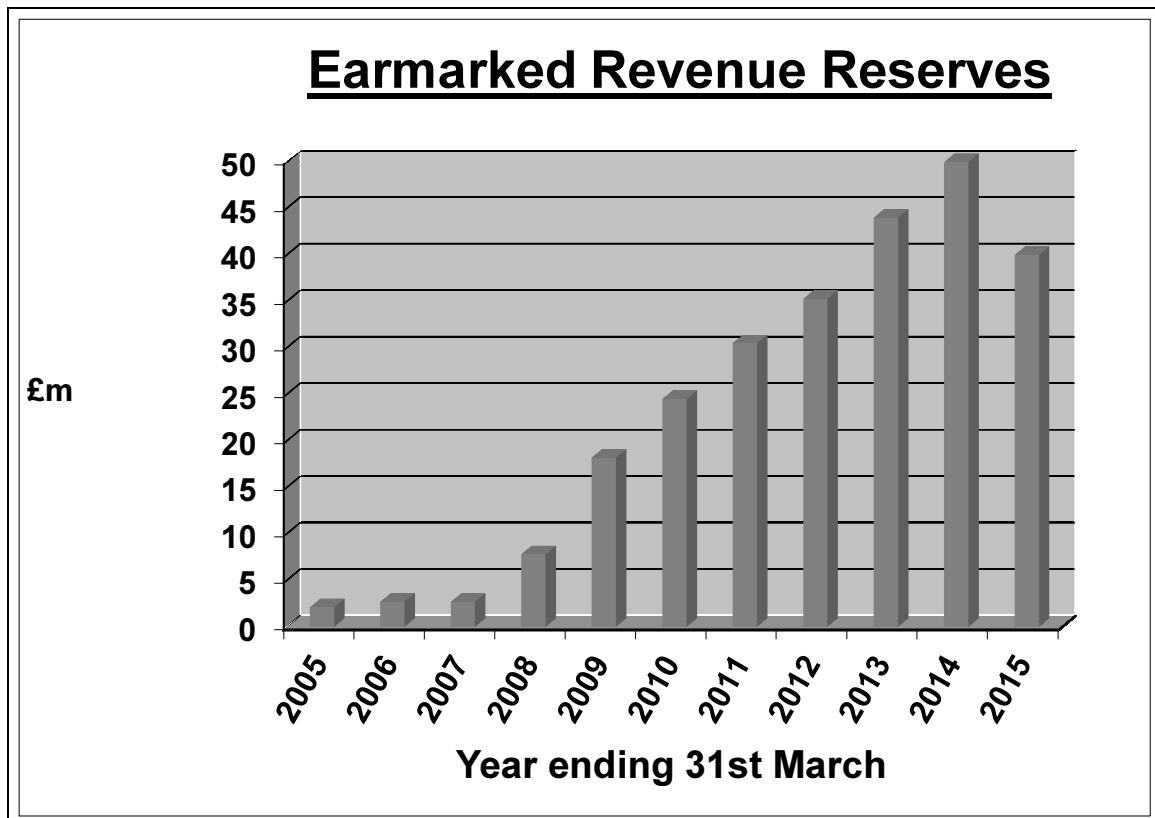
Directorate	Service	Forecast Variance £000
Children's Services	Within the £1,652k overspend Children's Social Care is forecast to overspend by £1,199k, particularly because the reduction in the number of Looked After Children is not meeting plan. There is a further imbalance between the reduced Education Services Grant and the commitments against it (£726k pressure). Overspends in Children's Safeguarding (£70k) and Local Services Support Grant (£82k) are offset by other savings within the directorate.	1,652
Adult Services	Adult Commissioning Placements are forecasting an overspend of £1,072k. Safeguarding is forecasting a £150k overspend following recent Deprivation of Liberty (DoL) cases, partially mitigated by £54k staff savings. More work is needed to identify recurrent savings in this directorate.	925
Community and Environmental Services	With Project 30 pressures being underwritten by Local Transport Plan funding, the remaining financial pressures are: Travel and Road Safety (£270k) which is awaiting management action, Building Services (£270k) which is being reviewed, Building Cleaning (£61k) where savings and Shelter income are lower than anticipated.	601
Contingencies / Reserves, Strategic Leisure Assets	A pressure of £238k is forecast. This is due to the following: an adjustment to reserves to cover the net 2013/14 overspend; Strategic Leisure Assets forecasting an overspend (£398k) due to vacant concession units & the funding of initiatives and the release of uncommitted Public Health funding (£300k) which has partially offset the pressures.	238
Governance and Regulatory Services	The Directorate's pressure of £125k has arisen in Cemeteries and Crematorium, which temporarily has reduced capacity.	125
Places	The Directorate's pressure of £96k mainly comprises £100k which is the remaining balance of the brought forward overspend by Visit Blackpool, for which a recovery plan is in place.	96
Resources	Property and Asset Management is forecasting a £215k pressure, particularly from legal costs, utilities and facilities income. Customer First is forecasting an overspend of £80k, Legal Services £89k and Accountancy £33k. These have been mitigated by other savings within the directorate.	20
2013/14 Service underspends	As per the Executive decision of 8 th September 2014 that underspending services (with the exception of Area Forum and Ward Budgets) totalling £462k be redirected to bolster working balances.	(462)
Area Forum and Ward Budgets	The forecast underspend of £500k is based on previous years' spend patterns.	(500)

Budgets Outside Cash Limit	Parking Services is £810k down on its income target. The Investment Portfolio will overspend by £63k as a consequence of the delay in demolishing the Syndicate building. Treasury Management has a £1,678k favourable position due to the continuing temporary windfall on low interest rates payable.	(800)
Total		1,895

3.2 The graph below shows the impact on the level of Council working balances in-year together with the last 10 years' year-end balances for comparison:



3.3 Whilst the Council maintains working balances to address any in-year volatilities, it also maintains a number of Earmarked Revenue Reserves for such longer-term commitments as future Private Finance Initiative payments and uncertainties within the new Localised Business Rate system. In order to present a complete picture of the Council's strong financial standing an equivalent graph to the above is shown below:



4. Directorate Budget Savings Performance

- 4.1 As at 30th September 2014 66% of the 2014/15 savings target has already been delivered. The full-year forecast predicts that 84% (66% last month) will be achieved by the year-end, which takes into account new in-year pressures and savings.
- 4.2 The full-year effect of the 2014/15 savings in 2015/16 amounts to 92% of the 2014/15 target. This excludes any in-year pressures/savings.

5. Collection Rates

5.1 Council Tax

At the end of month 6 the collection rate for Council Tax was 54.0%. This compares to 53.3% at the same point in 2013/14.

In the light of the reductions in discount and the introduction of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, the target collection rate is 98% over a 5-year collection period.

5.2 Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme was introduced on 1st April 2013. The scheme ensures that support to pensioners continues at existing levels. Working-age claimants are means tested to establish entitlement and a percentage reduction (currently 27.11%) is applied at the end of the assessment to establish the level of support provided.

At the end of month 6 the collection rate for those who have to pay Council Tax Reduction Scheme, either for the first time or in addition to a proportion of their Council Tax, is 37.0%. This compares to 38.1% at the same point in 2013/14.

There is a possibility that for 2014/15 the underlying rate of collection of Council Tax Reduction Scheme will be lower than 2013/14 due to accumulated arrears.

5.3 Business Rates

Prior to 1st April 2013 Business Rate income was collected by billing authorities on behalf of central government and then redistributed among all local authorities and police authorities as part of Formula Grant. From 1st April 2013 the income relating to Blackpool is shared between central government (50%), the Council (49%) and the Fire Authority (1%). Consequential adjustments were made to the Formula Grant equivalent.

At the end of month 6 the collection rate for Business Rates was 51.0%. This compares to 54.0% at the same point in 2013/14.

From April 2014 Business Rate payers have been entitled to elect to pay by 12 monthly instalments instead of over 10 months. This has allowed businesses more time to pay which has had an impact on the percentage collection rate when compared to 2013/14.

The actual Business Rate deficit for 2013/14 was £2.82m. The Council's share of this is £1.38m (49%) and provision for this was included in the 2013/14 revenue accounts.

6. Capital Monitoring Performance

6.1 All active capital schemes have been included within Appendix 4. The purpose is to present the overall position of capital spend. The schemes are shown individually where total scheme budget is greater than £500k and grouped as "other schemes" otherwise. As in previous financial years the emphasis regarding capital monitoring will be on scheme variance rather than in-year progress since many schemes cross financial years such as the major housing developments. Therefore, some degree of flexibility for the management of slippage is necessary in order to balance the overall capital programme each year to the funding allocations available.

6.2 As at month 6 an overall nil variance on capital schemes is anticipated.

7. Summary Cash Flow Statement

7.1 As part of the reporting format for this financial year a summary cash flow statement is included at Appendix 5. This provides a comparison of the actual cash receipts and payments compared to forecast for 2014/15.

7.2 During the first 6 months of the year the Council's net cashflow has resulted in a decrease in temporary borrowing due to the receipt of front-loaded Government Grants. While temporary investment rates and temporary borrowing rates are low the treasury team will delay taking any new long-term borrowing to fund planned capital expenditure. The interest charged by Lancashire County Council on the Local Government Reorganisation Debt is lower than anticipated. As a result the delay in taking new long-term borrowing and the lower interest charge from Lancashire County Council mean that a favourable credit variance is once again forecast for 2014/15.

8. Summary Balance Sheet

8.1 In order to provide a complete picture of the Council's financial performance, Appendix 6 provides a snapshot of the General Fund balance sheet as at the end of month 6. The key areas of focus are any significant movements in debtors, cash and cash equivalents, bank overdraft and creditors, as these impact upon the Council's performance in the critical areas of debt recovery, treasury management and Public Sector Payment Policy.

8.2 Over the 6-month period there has been an increase in Property, Plant and Equipment of £13.5m and an increase in short-term borrowing of £5.0m, which in the main reflects the early receipt of capital grants.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

- 9.1 Although an improvement upon month 5 position by £152k the Council is still predicting a significant deterioration in its financial standing in comparison with Budget. Working balances are estimated to fall by £1,895k against the budgeted position over the year. This fall is in the context of working balances at the start of the year of £5,869k, an erosion of 32.3%.
- 9.2 In response to the financial position the Director of Resources is holding regular meetings with individual Directors to discuss the robustness and integrity of current year budget forecasts; the plans in place to deliver an in-year breakeven position; specific directorate reserves & provisions and the 2015/16 budget-setting process that will integrate with the consultation programme that the Deputy Chief Executive is scheduling.
- 9.3 The Executive is asked:
- i) To note the report; and
 - ii) To require the respective Directors and Director of Resources to continue to closely monitor and manage financial and operational performances, particularly in Children's Services, Adult Services, Parking Services and Community and Environmental Services; and
 - iii) To recommend the Finance and Audit Committee to continue to independently review the financial and operational performances of the services listed in ii).

Steve Thompson
Director of Resources
23rd October 2014