8 December 2021	ITEM: 10 Decision: 110590						
Cabinet							
Financial Update - Quarter	2 2021/22						
Wards and communities affected:	Key Decision:						
All	Key						
Report of: Councillor Shane Hebb, De Finance	puty Leader and Cabinet Member for						
Accountable Assistant Director: Jonathan Wilson, Assistant Director Finance, Corporate Finance							
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Corporate Director of Resources & Place Delivery							
This report is public							

Executive Summary

This report covers the first six months of the municipal year 2021/22.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Council is managing a funding gap of £34.339m over 2022/23 and 2023/24 as reported to Cabinet in July 2021.

Officers have consistently reported that the Council operates from a low financial base in terms of core funding. The Council had the third lowest band D council tax compared with other unitary councils (only Windsor & Maidenhead and Isles of Scilly were lower, who themselves have a unique local financial context in terms of receivable income and spending requirements) and the average band D council tax in Essex in 2020/21 was £1,503.10 compared with the Thurrock position of £1,332.81 (lowest in Essex). 70% of Thurrock properties are in bands A to C and so raise significantly less than a Band D level. The amount raised from Council Tax in 2020/21 was £69.2m compared with the nearest Unitary neighbour Southend of £84.8m; and in 2020/21 Thurrock projected to raise £120.1m of business rates but was only allowed to retain £36.3m or 30% of the amount collected in the area.

A range of actions have been taken to address the deficit and the remaining funding gap is now £3.888m (subject to the delivery of further staff savings of £6.522m) over the 2 year period for 2022/23 and 2023/24. Risk remains in both delivering the identified savings and addressing the remaining funding gaps, and this is an effort that senior officers are presently working on.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities announced the headline sector position but will not confirm final settlement positions by local authority until mid-December 2021. Confirmed allocations will be part of the budget report to Cabinet at the meeting on 12 January 2022.

General Fund Revenue Monitoring Q2 2021/22

The forecast at the end of September 2021 is an in-year pressure of £0.721m. This position is supported by the planned use of reserves previously agreed, capital receipts generated from the approved asset disposals as previously agreed and savings arising from a managed approach to recruitment. Work continues to address the remaining pressure in the second half of the year.

There is a significant pressure within core services relating to looked after children with increases in the number, type and complexity of cases which has significantly raised the average cost of support/placement packages. This pressure cannot be understated in terms of the challenge at hand. This is consistent with the wider experiences in the sector across the country as the longer term impacts of the pandemic manifest themselves. The current projected overspend in Children's Services is £2.978m after the application of wider mitigations, and the planned use of reserves and grants.

There remains ongoing uncertainty on the full impact that Covid-19 will have on wider services with specific impacts expected to develop further in the Adults and Children's Social Care sector and in terms of potentially increased levels of homelessness. These concerns are part of a national discussion across the sector.

The wider impacts of the pandemic on local funding streams remain under consideration as the support mechanisms in place to support both residents and local business are reduced or come to an end and the longer term economic impacts of the pandemic become clearer. The indications are that these income streams remain resilient in the current year

Housing Revenue Account

The Housing Revenue Account is projecting a breakeven position. There has been a limited impact from Covid-19 to date and the stability of rental income continues to be monitored alongside the reduction in Covid-19 support mechanisms (and particularly the furlough scheme).

Dedicated Schools Grant

The Dedicated Schools Grant is currently forecasting an overspend of £0.510m in 2021/22. This reflects additional High Needs Block funding received in 2021/22, consideration of the 2020/21 outturn position along with the latest sector information available. The projected overspend reflects the higher level of demand for the statutory services required to support pupils with special educational needs.

Capital Monitoring

This forecast position at the end of quarter 2 is that expenditure on General Fund schemes will be £103.645m against a planned budget of £106.213m. Schemes in the Housing Revenue Account are projected to meet the budgeted expenditure.

Treasury Management

The Council continues to manage the portfolio of the now-historic approach and the associated debt to support the ongoing delivery of core services. The net debt of the Council is £428.3m which includes HRA debt of £160.9m and the balance supporting historic capital projects.

1. Recommendations:

- 1.1 That Cabinet comment on the forecast outturn financial position for 2021/22; and
- 1.2 Agree that Thurrock's 2022/23 Schools funding formula be implemented as stated in section 6. This being consistent with Cabinet's decision made for 2020/21 and 2021/22 schools funding formula; and
- 1.3 Agree to accept the Highways England designated funding of £0.750m and add the first phase of the (SEE) Park project to the capital programme.
- 2 General Fund Quarter 2 Monitoring
- 2.1 In February 2021 the Council approved the 2021/22 budget. The funding of the budget has been supported by confirmed ongoing sources including council tax increases and government grant alongside one off solutions to create further space to develop and implement sustainable savings. The funding can be summarised as set out below:
 - Council Tax Increase permanent a 1.99% increase £1.65m;
 - Adult Social Care precept a 3% increase £2.48m;
 - Government grant of £4.853m one off government support for Covid-19;
 - Use of Capital receipts for Transformation Activity –£3m one off subject to disposals;
 - Use of Reserves £3.3m one off:
 - Reduction of Allowances £0.800m;
 - Vacant Post savings (one off) £4m equates to approximately 100 posts; and
 - Income loss contingency £1.300m.
- 2.2 The financial reporting includes the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic which has required a wider range of responses from the Council and continues to be a source of uncertainty. This report sets out the latest assessment of the financial impact on 2021/22 and incorporates the associated funding announced to date by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities.
- 2.3 The Authority will continue to utilise the Control Outbreak Management Fund and the Infection Control Fund to support care providers and local businesses to deliver their services in a Covid-19 secure manner.

- 2.4 The budget allocation also reflects the restructure to the Senior Leadership Team, the deletion of the standalone Place Directorate and the reallocation of Place functions integrated into other Directorates.
- 2.5 The report sets out the latest forecast position for 2021/22 across the main revenue accounts the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Dedicated
- 2.6 The Overall General Fund position is set out in detail in the table below:

Directorate	2021/22 Current Budget	M6 Forecast	M6 Variance
	£000	£000	£000
Adults, Housing and Health	46,625	46,225	(400)
Children's Services	41,781	44,759	2,978
Housing General Fund	1,818	1,818	0
HR, OD and Transformation	8,906	8,556	(350)
Public Realm	35,315	34,902	(413)
Resources & Place Delivery	16,562	15,856	(706)
Strategy, Engagement & Growth	3,791	3,392	(399)
Financing & Corporate Costs	(154,798)	(154787)	11
	0	721	721

3 Directorate Outturn position

Analysis by Service Area:

Adults, Housing and Health

Service	2021/22 Current Budget	Month 6 Forecast	
Assistive Equipment & Technology	649	649	0
Commissioning & Service Delivery	1,030	917	(113)
Community Development	2,101	1,876	(225)
Fieldwork Services	4,671	4,376	(295)
Provider Services	7,508	7,352	(155)
External Placements	30,667	32,709	2,042
Operational Budgets Total	46,625	47,878	1,253
BCF Reserve		(400)	(400)
Hospital Discharge Programme		(548)	(548)
Expenditure relating to Containment Outbreak management		(705)	(705)
Total non-recurrent funding		(1,653)	(1,653)
Total	46,625	46,225	(400)

- 3.1 There is a forecast underspend of £0.400m. This is largely due to a delay in the recruitment of social worker posts across Fieldwork Services. Although the overall value of all vacant posts for the current financial year is estimated to be £0.854m (as per table in paragraph 4.2), these include essential front line service posts which need to be recruited to, but for 2021/22 are being used in part to offset demand pressures in wider services, and specifically, external placements.
- 3.2 The position is heavily reliant upon one-off funding as demonstrated in the above table. The 2021/22 Adult Social Care precept provided £2.5m in additional funding, £1.9m of this was used to uplift provider fees due to fragility of the care market. A further £2.1m met the ongoing cost of increased demand and complexities within Learning Disabilities and Mental Health placements. Hence, the directorate faced an underlying structural deficit of £1.5m at the beginning of 2021/22.
- 3.3 Additional demand pressures of £1.4m, largely in Older People's Residential and Domiciliary Care have increased during 2021/22, now meaning that the structural deficit has increased to over £3m.
- 3.4 The below table shows the external placements budget broken down by care category:

External Placements	2021/22 Current Budget	Month 6 Forecast	
	£000	£000	£000
Older People	6,971	8,455	1,484
Learning Disabilities	15,111	15,510	399
Mental Health	4,447	4,595	148
Physical Disabilities	3,515	3,571	56
Respite Care	622	577	(45)
Total External Placements Budgets	30,666	32,708	2,042

- 3.5 Cost drivers within the Older People budget reflect unprecedented additional demand in the wider health and care system as a result of Covid-19. Changes to hospital discharge practices and increased numbers of discharges into residential care increase the likelihood of longer term funding pressures.
- 3.6 Hospital discharge funding through Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group initially provided £1.644m of funding and supported 1,213 clients. Of the cohort of clients identified in 2020/21, a significant number have remained under the care of the Local Authority permanently and a number of homecare cases have subsequently transferred to more expensive residential settings following assessment of more complex needs.
- 3.7 In 2021/22 a further 804 clients presented through the hospital discharge route to the end of September. This highlights the increased demand in the system that has arisen from the impact of Covid-19
- 3.8 Hospital Discharge only provides a level of free care for the first 4 weeks, after that the full cost reverts to the LA, net of any client contributions then receivable, which is circa 25% of the cost on average.

Children's Services

Service	2021/22 Current Budget	Month 6 Forecast	Month 6 Variance
Children and Family Services	32,237	36,408	4,171
Education & Skills	5,953	5,284	(669)
Head Start Housing Service	848	1,502	654
School Transport	2,743	3,444	701
Operational Budgets Total	41,781	46,638	4,857
Transfromation funding		(160)	(160)
Children's Reserve		(400)	(400)
Covid-19 Grant		(1,019)	(1,019)
Other Grants		(300)	(300)
Total non-recurrent funding	0	(1,879)	(1,879)
Total	41,781	44,759	2,978

3.9 The overall Children's Services forecast outturn position is a gross overspend of £4.857m before any mitigation is applied. The position relies on the use of one-off funding and reserves to reduce the pressure back down to £2.978m in 2021/22. There is concern that these pressures will affect the directorate's ability to contribute towards identified savings in future years and this will remain under assessment.

Children and Family Services

3.10 The below table shows that placements within the Children and Family Service are reporting a gross overspend of £3.650m as a result of increased case numbers, increased complexity of need and large sibling groups. Legislative changes regarding unregulated placements and an increase in remand related cases are causing further budgetary pressures:

Placement Type	Budgeted Placement numbers	September Actual Placements	Variance	Budgeted Average Cost per week	Current Average Cost per week £		forecast	Month 6 Variance £000
Placed with parent/Adoption	9	11	2	C	0	0	0	0
Internal Fostering	133	105	(28)	951	470	3,038	2,391	(647)
Supported Accommodation	21	28	7	875	1,143	396	596	
External Fostering	105	128	23	3,650	912	4,550	5,484	934
External Residential	25	27	2	C	4,300	4,853	6,714	1,861
Secure Placement	0	0	0	C	0	0	0	0
Unegulated	0	3	3		16,473	0	1,008	1,008
Education conribution	0	0	0			(258)	(500)	(242)
Remand	0	4	4	4	4	30	566	
Total LAC	293	306	13			12,609	16,259	3,650

Fostering

3.11 The internal and external fostering placements are not in line with the levels set in the budget. The higher level of external cases creates a pressure a pressure of £0.287m. Thurrock has competitive rates and in the previous year introduced new council tax exemptions for new and existing foster carers. However, the level of new internal carers has not been as projected and retention of existing carers remains difficult. The internal fostering service are reviewing recruitment and advertising campaigns to attract new foster carers to the internal service. The service have recently advertised in the national press for new foster carers and will soon be advertising on national television. A number of other recruitment campaign proposals are under discussion and awaiting approval.

Residential & Unregulated placements

3.12 In September 2021, the Government implemented a ban on Local Authorities placing children under 16 in unregulated independent or semi-independent placements, helping to ensure the most vulnerable young people are cared for in settings that best meet their needs. Therefore, Thurrock's unregulated placements need to be converted to alternative residential provision. There are currently three such placements with an associated overspend of £1.008m.

- 3.13 Across the sector it is becoming more challenging to place looked after children in appropriate settings at the budgeted cost levels. This is due to supply issues with associated cost impacts and the average cost of a residential placement has generated a budget pressure of £1.861m
- 3.14 The Directorate, as part of regular placement panel meetings review all high cost settings. There are currently 10 high cost residential placements with an annual cost per placement exceeding £0.130m. High cost placements account for circa 20% of total forecast placement spend.

Remand

- 3.15 All children remanded to secure accommodation automatically become looked after children by their home local authority. If they were looked after prior to going into youth detention accommodation, they continue to receive services under the Children Act 1989, and children not previously looked after acquire this status.
- 3.16 Thurrock currently has four young people in remand placements following an increase in criminal and gang-related activity within the borough and this adds a pressure of £0.536m in 2021/22.

Delayed Legal Proceedings

3.17 The cases subject to ongoing legal proceedings have been delayed by the impact of Covid-19 on the legal system. This means care plans will be resolved over a longer timescale and the estimated costs associated with supporting cases within the legal system are causing a further pressure for the service of £0.365m

Head Start Housing

- 3.18 The Head Start housing (HSH) scheme offers a range of accommodation for young people leaving care with the intention of developing independent living skills before going on to take up a tenancy of their own.
- 3.19 The service purchased three properties and all required modification/improvement works to be made before care leavers could occupy. Of the three properties, only one is currently in use and is almost at full occupancy. The remaining two properties were expected to be operational in October; however there are still delays resulting in the need for additional properties to respond to demand.
- 3.20 A key pressure point is the demand for additional support within the accommodation. Twenty-one young people are currently accessing this provision, which is forecast to cost an additional £0.614m. The majority of these cases developed during the pandemic and cases developed in terms of increased complexity. The support element is procured on a spot purchase basis and it is hoped merging accommodation with support will deliver a more cost effective option going forward.

3.21 It remains difficult to advance tenants to social housing for a number of reasons, including insufficient progress in their study, poor mental health and established networks. HSH and the After Care personal assistants are supporting each tenant to address their concerns and meet their individual needs.

Home to School Transport

- 3.22 Home to school transport are projecting an overspend of £0.701m. The forecast is based on current routes at full cost and this area remains under review to consider opportunities for further cost reduction.
- 3.23 The service is experiencing significant increase in demand for transport services, with twenty-two new children in Independent settings and forty-eight additional children being transported to specialist provision within Thurrock. This is linked both to the increase in pupils in Thurrock and an increase in those receiving support through an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP).
- 3.24 From September 2021, Treetops accounted for thirty-eight of the new students linked to specialist settings due to the expansion linked to the new Treetops Free School that is scheduled to open in spring 2022. This is phase one of a three year expansion of numbers. Pupil Numbers are to increase by forty in each of the next two academic years.
- 3.25 The service is to review all transport to consider options to reduce expenditure and demand. A key consideration will be the review of adherence to eligibility criteria and the use of Passenger Assistants and if this provision is necessary in all circumstances.

Public Realm

Service	Revised 2021/22 Budget	Month 6 Forecast	Month 6 Variance
	£000	£000	£000
Emergency Planning & Resilience	442	447	5
Environment & Highways	1,599	1,492	(107)
Fraud & Enforcement	(116)	(845)	(729)
Highways, Fleet and Logistics	9,369	9,335	(34)
Street Scene and Leisure	20,065	20,214	149
Planning, Transportation & Public Protection	3,955	4,258	303
Planning Delivery Fund	0	0	0
Total	35,314	34,901	(413)

3.26 The overall Public Realm position is forecast to underspend by £0.413m.

Counter Fraud & Enforcement

- 3.27 The Counter Fraud team are in the process of securing contracts for external work with the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The work is generating additional income and there is the potential for further improvement. The position will be monitored and adjusted as further information becomes available.
- 3.28 There is a £0.292m expected loss of parking income this year based on projected parking volumes following the pandemic. Quarter 1 losses will be partly offset by funding from Central Government.

Street, Scene & Leisure

- 3.29 There is a forecast overspend position at month 6 of £0.149m and there remains the ongoing risk related to the waste disposal contracts, which is the directorate's largest and most volatile budget. There are variable elements to the contract which can be impacted by demand and levels of contaminated recycling wastes.
- 3.30 Contained within this position is the cost of responding to the industrial action of £0.109m; this includes the additional costs of setting up and running the nine bring sites offset by the reduction in staffing costs.

Planning, Transportation & Public Protection

- 3.31 Pressures to the value of £0.303m have been identified at month 6. This is largely related to the reductions in planning income against budgeted levels. Losses relating to the first quarter will be partly offset by central government support funding.
- 3.32 Reliance on the use of agency staff and increased overtime within the Environmental Protection Team has led to pressures of £0.085m.

Resources & Place Delivery

Service	Revised 2021/22 budget	Month 6 Forecast	Month 6 Variance
	£000	£000	£000
Chief Executive	409	412	3
Corporate Finance	5,515	5,426	(89)
Delivery and Strategy	249	240	(9)
Democratic Services	235	230	(4)
Electoral Services	486	390	(95)
Legal Services	2,244	2,173	(71)
Lower Thames Crossing & Transport Infrastructur	751	751	0
Members Services	804	789	(15)
Place Delivery	353	353	0
Property	5,516	5,091	(425)
Total	16,562	15,856	(706)

3.33 The Resources & Place Delivery directorate forecast variance at quarter 2 is £0.706m below budget.

Corporate Finance

3.34 There are a number of vacancies being held within the team while a wider review of staffing level versus service delivery takes place. Collection levels for council tax and NNDR remain high and needs to be monitored as the mechanisms for recovery action become available and cases are progressed. This will impact on staffing levels and the volume of income that is collected. Corporate Overview & Scrutiny recently approved an approach to ensure that a target group of habitual, long-term, intentional non-council tax/business rate payers will be taken through new elements of the available processes, including the committal process.

Lower Thames Crossing

3.35 The forecast assumes the reserves held will cover the cost of activity above the levels already allocated within the base budget. The approach to be taken with regards to any opposition and public consultations will determine whether increase in resources is required in this area.

Property Services

- 3.36 The cost of running a number of buildings is lower than the business as usual budget due to the restricted services being offered during the first quarter coupled with the wider flexible working arrangements.
- 3.37 The service are also running with a number of vacancies within Assets and Facilities Management whilst a restructure exercise takes place.

- 3.38 The notice period required for business tenants in the Purfleet Regeneration has been delayed and not expected to affect 2021/22. The notice period is six months and the budgetary impact related to the loss of income will be realised in the 2022-23 financial year.
- 3.39 Corporate landlord responsibilities are being delivered through a combination of revenue and capital funding as appropriate supporting the management of this budget.

Housing General Fund

Service	2021/22 Budget	Month 6 forecast	Month 6 variance
	£000	£000	£000
Temporary Accommodation – Homelessness	1,427	1,682	255
Refuge	116	116	0
Traveller Sites	53	53	0
Private Housing and Adaptations	222	278	56
Operational Budget total	1,818	2,129	311
Covid-19 Grant Allocation		(255)	(255)
Private housing Reserve		(56)	(56)
Total non-recurrent funding		(311)	(311)
Total	1,818	1,818	0

3.40 The main pressure and risk within the financial position of the directorate remains the demand on homelessness and temporary accommodation (TA). The below table shows a further breakdown of this budget:

Service	2021/22	Month 6	Month 6
Service	Budget	forecast	variance
	£000	£000	£000
Hostel Provision (External)	237	275	38
Brook House Hostel	1	18	17
General Fund Homelessness	1,184	1,409	225
HRA Furnished Lets used by TA	6	(19)	(25)
Total TA Homelessness	1,428	1,683	255

- 3.41 One of the major routes into the homelessness service is as a result of landlords imposing eviction measures. These measures became operational again from July 2021. The concern is that there will be an increase the number of households presenting as homeless. In addition, as the wider economic impacts of the pandemic are felt this may further increase pressure on the service and hence there is the assumed use of reserves in this area.
- 3.42 For 2022/23, a plan is in place to acquire additional housing stock through a combination of directly purchasing stock, additional use of the Phi leasing scheme and repurposing decommissioned sheltered housing accommodation. This is forecast to make significant savings to the General Fund.

- Homelessness Budget through reduced use of private sector landlords and the need to make top up payments.
- 3.43 The services under the housing general fund remit are those that have been significantly impacted by the pandemic.

Private Sector Housing

3.44 The private sector housing service has an income requirement to achieve circa 50% of its overall net costs built into the base budget. One of the key income streams is from the inspections of privately let accommodation. Social distancing measures have meant a restriction in the level of work permitted, which is projected to have a directly detrimental effect on the overall budget position and is supported by the reserve.

Strategy, Engagement & Growth

3.45 The overall Strategy, Engagement & Growth directorate have a forecast underspend at period 6 of £0.399m.

Service	2021/22		Month 6 Variance
	£000	£000	£000
Economic Growth & Partnerships	542	580	38
Social Care Performance	1,230	1,010	(220)
Strategy; Communications & Customer Services	2,020	1,803	(217)
Total	3,792	3,393	(399)

- 3.46 Customer Services have a forecast underspend due to the reduced levels of face-to-face service and the focus on telephony and online functions. There are a number of vacant posts being held by the teams in line with the council's overall approach to vacancies and recruitment.
- 3.47 The Registrars service has been able to resume their function without restrictions from July. The level of demand will affect the final position and income levels, detailed work will be carried out as part of the ongoing monthly monitoring.
- 3.48 The overall positon for the directorate supports the planned savings to be achieved in 2022/23 within the Social Care Performance and Customer Services teams.

HR, OD & Transformation

Service	Revised 2021/22 Budget	Month 6 Forecast	Month 6 Variance
	£000	£000	£000
HR, OD and Transformation	5,242	4,937	(305)
ICT	3,664	3,619	(45)
Total	8,906	8,556	(350)

3.49 The directorate is managing increased demand within available funding and the use of capital and transformation funding resulting in a forecast underspend of £0.350m. Vacancies are being held where possible and support the delivery of the planned permanent savings for 2022/23.

Financing & Corporate Costs

3.50 Core Financing and Corporate Costs are projected to be within budget for the financial year 2021/22 with treasury income offsetting pressures in corporate costs. The most significant pressure relates to the delay to the implementation of the next phase of the pay review.

Housing Revenue Account

Service	2021/22 Current Budget	Month 6 forecast	Month 6 Variance
	£000	£000	£000
Development	235	235	0
Financing and Recharges	24,175	24,175	0
Rent and Income	(50,272)	(50,272)	0
Repairs and Maintenance	12,097	12,097	0
Supervision and Management	13,765	13,765	0
Total	0	0	0

- 3.51 Overall, the HRA is forecasting a balanced position at the end of financial year. At present there are no adverse variances identified within repairs and maintenance or operational activities.
- 3.52 Rent collection levels remain in line with the budgeted forecast, but there remains a potential risk of bad debts and arrears as economic impacts of the pandemic develop.
- 3.53 Funding from the 2020/21 outturn position has been earmarked in a reserve to help with any associated decant costs upon the completion of the Calcutta Club properties later on in the year

4 Dedicated Schools Grant

	Funding Settlement	Academy Recoupment	Funding Block transfer	Final DSG	Month 5 Forecast	Month 5 Variance
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Schools	140,936	(135,263)	(673)	5,000	5,000	0
Central						
Services	1,783	0	(200)	1,583	1,610	27
High Needs	28,266	(5,678)	873	23,461	24,199	528
Early Years	12,877		0	12,877	12,832	(45)
Total	183,862	(140,941)	0	42,921	42,921	510

- 4.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant is currently forecasting an overspend of £0.510m in 2021/22. This reflects additional High Needs Block funding received in 2021/22, consideration of the 2020/21 outturn position along with the latest sector information available. This information will be subject to changes at the start of the academic year once the movement in school places is confirmed.
- 4.2 The High Needs Block is the significant area of financial risk and linked to the continued increase in the number of EHCPs. A full review will be undertaken to understand the financial implications once changes for the new academic year are confirmed. In common with wider education authorities in the sector work continues with the Education and Skills Funding Agency to address the financial sustainability of the DSG.
- 4.3 A review of the local offer and commissioned places available in Thurrock continues. The need to challenge schools on the use of the Notional SEN budget and the requirement to progress to an EHCP remains. This will be subject to change once changes for the new academic year are announced.

5 DSG Allocations 2022/23

- 5.1 In July, the Secretary of State for Education announced details of the provisional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations for 2022/23.
- 5.2 The table below shows the provisional information received and includes the 2021/22 allocation for the Schools Block Growth fund and the Early Years Block. These amount along with the final DSG allocations, updated to reflect the Oct-21 School census, will be published in December 2021.

DSG Funding Blocks	Funding	Provisional	Provisional
	Settlement	Settlement	Increase
	2021/22	2022/23	2022/23
	£m	£m	£m
Schools Block	140.936	144.664	3.728
Central Services Block	1.783	1.673	(0.110)
High Needs Block	28.266	31.382	3.116
Early Years Block	12.877	12.877	0.000
Total	183.862	190.597	6.734

- 5.3 The key changes made by the ESFA to the National Funding Formula (NFF) in 2022/23 are:
 - The core factors in the NFF will increase by 3%;
 - The funding floor will ensure that every school is allocated at least 2% more pupil-led funding per pupil compared to the 2021/22 allocation; and
 - The minimum per pupil funding levels will increase by 2%. This will mean that, next year, every primary school will receive at least ££4,265 per pupil and every secondary school will receive at least £5,525 per pupil. These have been discussed and agreed with the Schools Forum in November 2020.
- 5.4 In 2022/23, each local authority will continue to set a local schools funding formula, in consultation with local schools. Thurrock's funding formula will implement the following principles consistent with the decision made by Cabinet for 2020/21 and 2021/22:
 - National Funding Formula values to be applied;
 - Growth fund to be retained to support sufficiency of school places; and
 - Any unallocated funding will be applied to the Basic Entitlement values.

These principles have been discussed with both the Schools Forum and Schools in meeting held during September 2021.

5.5 The Schools Forum are to discuss the transfer up to 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to support increase demand for Specialist placements and Education, Health and Care Plans at its meeting in November. This is a decision for the Schools Forum to make.

6 Public Health

6.1 The Public Health Grant was increased by £0.101m in 2021/22 with the full allocation for the year now being £11.585m. The increase has been largely allocated to reducing waiting lists for sexual health and weight management services. A number of functions could not be delivered whilst the national restrictions were in place and the team are committed to ensuring these services are once again available and working to improve the health of the local population.

- 6.2 Other schemes such as the Thurrock 0-19 Brighter Futures Healthy Families Service will continue to be funded through the grant and provide targeted support and a range of interventions for children, young people and their families across the borough.
- 6.3 The month 6 forecast is an underspend of £0.100m which will be placed into a ring-fenced reserve and allocated in 2022/23 to deal with the anticipated longer term effects of the pandemic on the local population and increased demand for local primary services.

7 Capital Monitoring – 2020/21 Quarter 2

General Fund Schemes

7.1 The current position for General Fund schemes for 2021/22 is summarised below and further detail can be found at Appendix 1.

	Latest Agreed Budget	Projected Outturn to 31/03/2022	Variance against budget
	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure:			
Children's Service ¹	3,820	3,297	(523)
Adult, Housing & Health	3,476	3,056	(420)
Public Realm	23,551	22,400	(1,151)
Resources & Place Delivery	56,477	56,425	(52)
HR, OD & Transformation	18,567	18,145	(422)
Strategy; Engagement & Growth	304	304	0
Commercial Services	18	18	0
Total Expenditure	106,213	103,645	(2,568)
Resources:			
Prudential Borrowing	(80,135)	(79,081)	1,054
Capital Receipts	(841)	(841)	0
Reserves	(0)	(0)	0
Government Grants	(16,315)	(15,278)	1,037
Other Grants	(7,815)	(7,528)	287
Developers Contributions (S106)	(1,107)	(917)	190
Total Resources	(106,213)	(103,645)	2,568
Forecast Overspend in Resources	0	0	0

¹ The schools capital budget is designed around academic years and officers are confident that this will be defrayed in full within the current academic year

7.2 This illustrates a projected outturn at the end of the financial year of £103.645m, which is £2.568m less than the latest agreed budget for the year. This forecast variance is further analysed below.

Analysis of forecast variance

	Re-profiling of expenditure at Month 6	Capital schemes requiring additional funding	Completed Projects	Forecast variance against budget at Month 6
Expenditure:	£000	£000	£000	£000
Children's Service	(520)	0	(3)	(523)
Adult, Housing & Health	(420)	0	0	(420)
Public Realm	(1,145)	0	(6)	(1,151)
Resources & Place Delivery	0	0	(52)	(52)
HR, OD & Transformation	(422)	0	0	(422)
Total	(2,507)	(0)	(61)	(2,568)

- 7.3 This shows that the forecast underspend is principally due to slippage/budget re-profiling on current schemes (£2.507m). Consequently, the funding remains allocated to specific current schemes.
- 7.4 There are no schemes exceeding their capital budgets projected to the end of the current year. However, work continues to assess the final forecast position on the A13 widening works project as a whole, which will be reported to the Standards and Audit Committee and the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Committee in due course.
- 7.5 A number of capital schemes are also expected to complete construction in future years with expenditure totalling £41.639m. Budgets for these schemes have been profiled accordingly.
- 7.6 Schemes that are at a feasibility or at an earlier stage of development have been excluded from the reported position. The total projected budgets of £74.877m include school improvement works, the A13 East Facing slip road, Grays South development and the 21st Century Care Home.

Addition to the Capital Programme – phase 1 SEEPark

7.7 On 22 July 2020, Cabinet, considered a report from ASELA that provided an update on progressing the economic agenda for the South Essex region. At that meeting, Cabinet agreed to support a collaboration with South Essex Authorities to deliver regeneration across South Essex.

- 7.8 Since that date, ASELA has developed a number of detailed work programmes and is engaging directly with government to promote the development and regeneration of South Essex with the aim of increasing prosperity and quality of life for residents.
- 7.9 The South Essex Estuary (SEE) Park is one of the 5 anchor programmes in progress. Borne out of the Green Blue Infrastructure Study delivered in 2019, it ensures that 30% of the green space across South Essex remains protected, thus delivering on the government's commitment to protect 30% of UKs land in a boost for improved and recovering biodiversity. Strategically, SEEPark is placing nature at the centre of South Essex economic regeneration and it will deliver significant place-making benefits. Environmentally, by mitigating climate change and flooding, creating nature recovery networks and enhancing biodiversity. Socially, by providing better access to green space for all residents and allowing improved inter-connected active travel. Economically, by increasing eco-tourism, creating green tech jobs and providing a local opportunity to carbon offset at scale for local business.
- 7.10 The first stage of programmed works is described as the 'Central Thames Marshland'; 40 miles of connected coastal pathway, that will run from Coalhouse Fort in the West to Leigh on Sea in the East. The first phase of capital works will start from Coalhouse Fort and finish at Fobbing Marsh, and will act as a showcase for future ASELA Green Blue ambitions. Design work has been undertaken during 2021, and the intention is to build and deliver in 2022.
- 7.11 The council has been offered a total of £750,000 through HE Designated Funds to develop and deliver the first phases of the ASELA SEE Park project. Funding will be spread over the current and 2022/23 financial years and will incorporate consultancy and build work.
- 7.12 Consequently it is recommended that Cabinet accept the funding and include an addition to the capital programme for the first phase of the SEE Park project

Housing Revenue Account Schemes

7.13 The current position for Housing Revenue Account schemes for 2021/22 is summarised below:

HRA Capital Programme – Projected Outturn

	Latest Agreed Budget	Projected Outturn to	
		31/03/2021	
	£000	£000	
Expenditure:			
Transforming Homes	38,496	31,059	
Housing Development	3,227	3,227	
Total Expenditure	41,723	34,286	

	Latest Agreed Budget	Projected Outturn to
		31/03/2021
Resources:		
Prudential Borrowing	(29,837)	(22,094)
Capital Receipts	(1,346)	(1,652)
Reserves	0	0
Government & Other Grants	0	0
Major Repairs Reserve	(10,540)	(10,540)
Total Resources	(41,723)	(34,286)
Forecast Overspend in Resources	0	0

- 7.14 The budget for Transforming Homes in 2021/22 is £38.496m and the forecast spend is currently £31.059m. Much of the expected slippage relates to the Tower Block Refurbishment project, where a revised programme is currently being developed. Spend, as at 30 September 2021 was £12.906m.
- 7.15 The revised budgets for 2021/22 for HRA New Build Schemes are set out below. The current forecast is the £3.227m budget will be delivered. These projects will utilise receipts held under Right to Buy sharing agreement between the Council and central government.

HRA New Build Schemes

	Revised Budget	Spend YTD	Forecast	Variaı from Re Budg	vised
	£000	£000	£000	£000	%
Calcutta Rd	2,838	2,104	2,838	0	0%
Claudian Way	202	1	202	0	0%
Tops Club	117	0	117	0	0%
Prince of Wales	70	58	70	0	0%
Total	3,227	2,163	3,227	0	0%

8 Treasury

8.1 This section is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA Prudential Code and presents details of treasury management activity for the 6 months to 30 September 2021.

Borrowing

8.2 The Council's borrowing position as at 30 September 2021 is summarised in the table below:-

Source of Loan	£m
Long Term Market Loans	29.0
Long Term PWLB	196.3
Long Term Market Loans re Investments	95.0
Long Term PWLB re Investments	483.3
Temporary Market Loans Re Investments	348.9
Other Temporary Market Loans	307.1
Total Debt	1,459.6
Total Investments	(1,031.3)
Total Net Indebtedness	428.3

- 8.3 The net indebtedness (borrowing less investments) of the council is £428.3m, made up of £160.9m of PWLB long-term debt relating to the HRA and £267.4m of long and short-term debt relating to historic capital funding.
- 8.4 The Council continues to fund the £84.0m ex-PWLB debt on a temporary basis. Interest rates fell to 0.10% in March 2020 due to the Pandemic and forecasts predict that the rate will remain at this level for the time being although there has been recent speculation of increases to the base rate late in 2021 and early in 2022.
- 8.5 This forecast would suggest that further interest savings should still be accrued for future years compared with the costs of borrowing longer-term debt. However, predictions for the bank base rate are open to change depending on government responses to market events and developments and continue to be closely monitored by officers with appropriate action taken as necessary. The bank base rate, whilst indicating a direction of travel, does not directly impact on the council's borrowing that is largely through other public sector bodies.
- 8.6 The council's PWLB debt portfolio currently consists of six elements, one of £160.9m of loans taken out with regards to the HRA settlement undertaken on 28 March 2012 and the others of £25m at 1.89%, £93.75m at 1.77%, £150m at 0.68%, £100m at 0.80% and £150m at 0.87% all on a two year EIP repayment plan to replace short term borrowing.
- 8.7 Officers repeatedly assess the council's LOBO loans for any early repayment opportunities but the premia involved of approximately £29m and the high refinancing costs again make it unfavourable to currently undertake any rescheduling. Officers will continue to monitor the council's debt portfolio for any rescheduling opportunities.
- 8.8 The council has also borrowed funds to facilitate the building works carried out by Thurrock Regeneration Ltd at the St Chads site in Tilbury. Officers are continuing to investigate opportunities to raise long-term funds to finance these

works but, as short-term rates are currently low and predicted to remain there for the foreseeable future, the council will continue to borrow on a short-term basis until the long term funds become attractive in comparison. All interest costs are met by Thurrock Regeneration Ltd with the council benefiting from an interest rate premium.

Investments

8.9 The corresponding figures for investments are set out in the table below:-

Source of Investment	Balance at 30/9/21 £m
Overnight Cash Investments	20.0
Short Term Cash Investments (2 to 365 days)	1.3
Repayable Capital Investments	823.2
Repayable Non Capital Investments	82.8
Fund Manager Investments- Repayable on demand	104.0
Total Investments	1,031.3

- 8.10 A proportion of the internally managed investments are held for very short time periods in order to meet day to day cash requirements.
- 8.11 The Council maintains its investment in the CCLA Property Fund and, has also only increased its capital/non-capital investments in line with pre-agreed commitments. No new investments have been made.
- 8.12 Investment activity has allowed the council to achieve a surplus of circa £115m over four years this is after costs such as debt interest payments.
- 8.13 Internally held balances currently stand at £21.3m and will remain around that level at the financial year-end. These investments are mainly held with Banks and Building Societies on a fixed term basis ranging from overnight to 3 months in duration.
- 8.14 All investments made have been with organisations included on the "List of Acceptable Counterparties and Credit Limits" within the 2021/22 Annual Treasury Management Strategy and the total sums invested with individual institutions have been contained within the limits specified therein.

9 Reasons for Recommendation

9.1 The Council has a statutory requirement to set a balanced budget annually. This report sets out the budget pressures in 2021/22 along with actions to mitigate these pressures and deliver a breakeven position.

10 Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

10.1 This report is based on consultation with the services, Directors' Board and portfolio holders.

11 Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

11.1 The implementation of previous savings proposals has already reduced service delivery levels and the council's ability to meet statutory requirements, impacting on the community and staff. There is a risk that some agreed savings and mitigation may result in increased demand for more costly interventions if needs escalate particularly in social care. The potential impact on the council's ability to safeguard children and adults will be kept carefully under review and mitigating actions taken where required.

12 Implications

12.1 Financial

Implications verified by: Jonathan Wilson

Assistant Director Corporate

Finance

The financial implications are set out in the body of this report. Council officers have a legal responsibility to ensure that the Council can contain spend within its available resources. Regular budget monitoring reports continue to come to Cabinet and be considered by the Directors Board and management teams in order to maintain effective controls on expenditure. Measures in place are continually reinforced across the Council in order to reduce ancillary spend and to ensure that everyone is aware of the importance and value of every pound of the taxpayers money that is spent by the Council.

12.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: lan Hunt

Assistant Director Law and Governance

and Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal implications set out in the report. There are statutory requirements of the Council's Section 151 Officer in relation to setting a balanced budget. The Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Section 114) prescribes that the responsible financial officer "must make a report if he considers that a decision has been made or is about to be made involving expenditure which is unlawful or which, if pursued to its conclusion, would be unlawful and likely to cause a loss or deficiency to the authority". This includes an unbalanced budget.

12.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: Natalie Smith

Strategic Lead - Community Development and Equalities

The Equality Act 2010 places a public duty on authorities to consider the impact of proposals on people with protected characteristics so that positive or negative impacts can be understood and enhanced or mitigated as appropriate. Services will be required to consider the impact on any proposals to reduce service levels through a community equality impact assessment which should seek to involve those directly affected.

12.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, and Impact on Looked After Children

There are no other implications arising directly from this update report.

13 Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

There are various working papers retained within the finance and service sections.

14 Appendices to the report

Appendix 1: Summary of 2021/22 Capital Programme

Report Author

Sean Clark

Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property

Summary of 2020/21 Capital Programme

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Summary of the 2021/22 General Fund Capital Programme	Арј	proved Bud	lget	Pro	Projected Outurn		CY Spend	% Spend against
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	(Sep-21)	CY Forecast
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Childrens Service	3,820	1,500	0	3,297	2,020	0	1,129	34.24
Adults; Housing and Health								
Community Development	1,120	1,000	0	950	1,170	0	128	13.47
Provider Services	242		0	242			120	2.00
Better Care	810		0	560		_	197	35.00
Housing General Fund			0					
Housing General Fund	1,304		0	1,304 3,056		0 0		
	3,476	3,407	U	3,036	3,887	U	1,146	37.37
Public Realm								
Highways Maintenance	17,779	6,034	2,238	17,034	6,778	2,238	3,617	21.23
Resident Services	105		0	105		-	0,011	0.00
Environment	5,209		0	4,803		0	143	
Counter Fraud & Investigation	458		0	458			360	
	23,551	12,184	2,238	22,400		2,238	4,120	
		,	,	,	,	,	,	
Resources & Place Delivery								
Corporate Assets	4,430	500	0	4,378	500	0	884	20.19
Highways Major Projects	39,864			39,864			18,388	46.13
Regeneration Projects	12,183		887	12,183		887	902	7.40
,	56,477	20,800	887	56,425			20,174	35.75
	,	,		,	,		,	
HR, OD and Transformation	18,567	270	30	18,145	691	30	6,756	37.23
Strategy; Engagement & Growth	304	63	0	304	63	0	26	8.55
0	40	0	0	40	0	_		2.22
Commercial Services	18	0	0	18	0	0	0	0.00
Total Expenditure - General	106,213	38,284	3,155	103,645	40,789	3,155	33,353	32.18

Table 6 – Summary of the 2020/21	Project Status	App	oroved Bud	get	Pro	jected Out	urn	CY Spend	% Spend against
General Fund Capital Programme, by scheme status		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	(Sep-20)	CY Forecast
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
	Not yet started	18	0	0	18	0	0	0	
	Work commenced	9,271	0	0	9,270	0	0	5,117	
	Scheme completed	18	0	0	15	0	0	14	
	Demand led	2,168	0	0	1,768	400	0	154	
Total: Childrens Service		11,475	0	0	11,071	400	0	5,285	47.74
		·							
	Not yet started	69	0	0	69	0	0	0	
	Work commenced	559	0	0	559	0	0	4	
	Scheme completed	108	0	0	103	0	0	103	
	On hold	1,920	0	0	872	1,049	0	474	
	Demand led	1,716		35		380	35	24	
	Feasability Stage	533	0	0	533	0	0	160	
Total: Adults; Housing and Heal	th	4,905	380	35	3,852	1,429	35	765	19.86
, and the second						,			
	Not yet started	21	0	0	21	0	0	0	
	Out to tender	2,930	0	0	2,930	0	0	-7	
	Work commenced	11,334	2,758	2,050		2,757	2,050	2,302	
	Scheme completed	485	0	,	476	. 0	,	9	
	Completed retention o/s	19	0	0	19	0	0	0	
	On hold	5,125	970	200	1,450	3,485	400	429	
	Demand led	1,511	200	0	1,416	296	0	261	
Total: Environment, Highways 8	Counter Fraud	21,425	3,928	2,250	17,646	6,538	2,450	2,994	16.97
						·			
	Not yet started	73	190	0	23	240	0	0	
	Design stage	4,733	1,823	0	2,511	4,046	0	467	
	Contract formation	131	0	0	131	0	0	0	
	Work commenced	33,708	11,391	5,084	33,420	34,462	13,116	16,732	
	Scheme completed	129	0	0	129	0	0	100	
	Completed retention o/s	161	0	0	161	0	0	10	
	On hold	7,520	6,158	0	1,600	11,315	762	624	
	Demand led	4,210	0	0	2,126	2,084	0	89	
	Feasability Stage	815	0	0	815	0	0	15	
Total: Place		51,480	19,562	5,084	40,916	52,147	13,878	18,037	44.08

Table 6 – Summary of the 2020/21	Project Status	Approved Budget			Pro	jected Out	urn	CY Spend	% Spend against
General Fund Capital Programme, by		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	(Sep-20)	CY Forecast
scheme status									
	Not yet started	1,913	465	50	1,890	488	50	0	
	Design stage	230	0	0	30	200	0	0	
	Out to tender	37	0	0	37	0	0	0	
	Work commenced	7,848	120	30	7,848	120	30	1,437	
	Scheme completed	184	1,000	0	136	1,000	0	23	
	Completed retention o/s	125	0	0	125	0	0	17	
	On hold	3,888	2,724	0	534	3,354	2,724	0	
	Demand led	938	44	0	929	53	0	88	
	Scheme Removed	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total: Finance, Governance and Property		15,173	4,353	80	11,529	5,215	2,804	1,565	13.57
			·						
	Work commenced	8,875	2,903	0	8,081	3,698	0	859	
	Scheme completed	15	. 0	0	0	. 0	0	0	
	Demand led	630	0	0	236	430	0	-34	
	Scheme Removed	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total: HR, OD and Transformation		9,542	2,903	0	8,317	4,128	0	825	9.92
,		,	,		,	,			
	Work commenced	277	0	0	278	0	0	99	
	On hold	25	0	0	5		0	5	
Total: Customer Services		302	0	0	283			104	36.75
									330
	Work commenced	18	0	0	18	0	0	0	
Total: Commercial Services		18	0	0	18		0	0	0.00
Total Expenditure - General Fund		114,320	31,126	7,449	93,632	69,876	19,167	29,575	31.59

Table 7 – Summary of the 2020/21 Housing Revenue Account	Approved Budget			Projected Outurn			CY Spend	% Spend against
Capital Programme	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	(Sep-20)	CY Forecast
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Adults, Health and Housing								
Provider Services	6,651	2,014	155	6,651	2,014	155	1,361	
Better Care	23,041	0	0	23,041	0	0	3,291	
Total Expenditure - HRA	29,692	2,014	155	29,692	2,014	155	4,652	15.67

Table 8 – Summary of the 2020/21	Project Status	Approved Budget			Projected Outurn			CY Spend	% Spend against
Housing Revenue Account Capital		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	(Sep-20)	CY Forecast
Programme, by scheme status									
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
	Design stage	12	0	0	12	0	0	12	
	Work commenced	29,303	1,890	155	29,303	1,890	155	4,328	
	Completed retention o/s	377	124	0	377	124	0	312	
Total Adults, Health and Housing - HRA		29,692	2,014	155	29,692	2,014	155	4,652	15.67