

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL - REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2.	Date:	Monday 8 April 2013
3.	Title:	Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring Report 2012/13
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

This report presents the forecast outturn position on the 2012/13 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) based upon activity as at the end of February 2013.

The overall forecast is that the HRA will outturn on budget with a transfer to Working Balance (reserves) of £4.524m which is an increase of £2.686m above the approved budget.

6. Recommendations

- **That the Cabinet Member receives and notes the latest financial projection.**

7. Proposals and Details

- 7.1 This budget report is based upon actual income, expenditure and known commitments as at the end of February 2013 forecast to the end of the financial year to give a projected outturn position, compared to budget.
- 7.2 Appendix A of this report provides the Budget Operating Statement for 2012/13 which shows the various income and expenditure budgets lines which make up the net cost of delivering the service. The latest forecast net cost of service is an underspend of £5.449m which, together with interest received and after a revenue contribution to Capital, will result in a surplus over the approved budget of £4.524m which will result in an additional sum of £2.686m to be transferred to Working Balance.
- 7.3 Within the Operating Statement are several budget heads which are either year end adjustments (for example debt management costs £222k) or are subject to external influence and therefore outside direct control, (for example cost of capital charges £14.046m).
- 7.4 Budget Monitoring is therefore focussed upon expenditure and income which is within control, i.e. income of £73.327m, the repair and maintenance budget of £17.438m and supervision and management of £19.365m.

7.5 Budget Monitoring

- 7.5.1 Appendix A, column B demonstrates the projected outturn based upon activity to the end of February 2013.
- 7.5.2 Overall it can be seen that the net cost of service is forecast to be -£5.449m, a surplus of £2.686m as shown in the table below.

	Budget £000	Forecast £000	Variance £000
Expenditure	70,564	69,091	-1,473
Income	-73,327	-74,540	-1,213
Net Cost of Service	-2,763	-5,449	-2,686

- 7.5.3 Several of the budget lines within income and expenditure are forecasting to outturn with a variance to budget. The table below highlights these budgets.

	Budget £000	Forecast £000	Variance £000
Housing Repairs	17,438	16,573	-865
Supervision and Management	19,365	18,954	-411
Rent, Rates, Taxes	77	37	-40
Housing Subsidy	0	-157	-157
Income	-73,327	-74,540	-1,213
Net Variance			-2,686

7.5.4 The balance of this report will focus on the main variations to budget.

7.6 Expenditure

Column B of Appendix A demonstrates that based upon expenditure and commitments to date, total expenditure is forecast to outturn at £69.091m compared to a budget provision of £70.564m, an overall underspend of £1.473m. The major variations are as follows:

7.6.1 Contributions to Housing Repairs

Appendix A demonstrates that the forecast year-end spend on Repairs and Maintenance is for an underspend of £865k compared to budget.

Under the review of the 2011/12 Cost Collection workbook, which is part of the Repairs & Maintenance contract, both contractors have had their Price per Property (PPP) reduced.

The reduction has generated a net saving of £865k. Whilst every endeavour has been made to spend these savings, due to the fact that they were identified late in the current financial year, further additional works cannot be delivered. Therefore, these savings will be carried forward into 2013/14 to address repairs and maintenance items in that year.

Previous reports have highlighted the difficulty in forecasting the empty homes budget given the responsive nature of the service. The original budget was based on an estimated 1,600 minor voids in year. The actual number of voids to end of January was 133 below the sum budgeted and as therefore resulted in the forecast spend below budget. However, this is a responsive budget and close monitoring is ongoing. Alternative works are being prepared which can be released at short notice to take up savings on this head of account.

In addition a bad weather contingency of £200k is in place and is monitored regularly.

Any under spend within the repair and maintenance budget will be carried forward into 2013/14 through the Working Balance to address investment issues identified within the investment requirements in the 30 Year Business Plan.

7.6.2 Supervision and Management

Column B of Appendix A demonstrates that based upon expenditure and commitments to date, total expenditure is forecast to outturn at £18.954m, a forecast overall underspend of £411k.

The main variance is a forecast overspend of £571k on the purchase of furniture within the Furnished Homes Service. However, this is offset by increased income from additional charges generated as more clients take up the option of this service. As income increases, this allows us to make provision to provide additional furniture in the future. The scheme currently has 2,646 customers, an increase of 729 since the beginning of the year (see paragraph 7.7.3).

The increase in spend on additional furniture has been offset by savings elsewhere within Supervision and Management (-£982k). A robust review of centrally held budgets has been undertaken, and savings released where it is apparent that the full budget will not be spent by the year end.

These savings, together with salary savings arising due to vacancies and under spends on non pay budgets, has offset the increased spending on additional furniture, resulting in the net underspend of £411k.

7.6.3 There are also forecast underspends within the following budgets:

- Rent, Rates and taxes budget (-£40k) in respect of lower Council Tax charges on Void properties.
- The final Housing subsidy claim has now been signed off by the external auditor. The provision made at the year end was slightly higher than forecast, therefore this one-off amount of £157k will be transferred to HRA reserves.

7.7 Income

7.7.1 Column B of Appendix A shows that based upon income received to date the total forecast income collectable is £74.540 an increase of £1.213m over and above the approved budget of £73.327m.

7.7.2 Dwelling rental income is projecting a slight over recovery of £478k due to an improvement in void turnaround rates, however, non-dwelling rents are forecasted to under recover against budget by £36k due to garage voids. A programme of repair has been started in an effort to reduce the numbers of garages which are void.

7.7.3 Income from charges for services and facilities and other fees and charges are forecasting an outturn of £4.256m, an over recovery of income of £771k. This is mainly due to additional income due to the continued growth of the Furnished Homes scheme offsetting the increase in expenditure reported above in 7.6.2.

7.8 Summary

In summary it can be seen in foregoing paragraphs 7.6 and 7.7 that the variance to budget of £2.686m when comparing the forecast net cost of service against the budget of £2.763m is mainly due to variances within housing repairs, supervision and management and the final Housing Subsidy claim together with additional income.

8. Finance

Impact on Working Balance

The report identifies that any deficit or surplus arising from the net cost of service will be transferred to the Working Balance which is reflected through the Appropriations section of the Operating Statement at Appendix A. Any forecast increase/decrease will be added to the budgeted sum shown under transfer to reserves.

Based upon the current forecast out-turn position on the net cost of service, the forecast transfer to balances will increase from £1.838m to £4.524m, an increase of £2.686m. The increased contribution will be utilised to help address budget pressures in the earlier years of the 30 year Business Plan.

HRA Business Plan

Previous reports have identified the establishment of the HRA 30 Year Business Plan which has been formulated in line with requirements set out in the Self Financing Initiative implemented on the 1st April 2012. The current financial year is Year 1 of the Business Plan. Any changes in income and/or expenditure during 2012-13 will have a bearing on the Business Plan, as will any changes in interest rates on loans, and void levels.

All savings/increased costs identified during this financial year are assessed to determine if they will have an ongoing impact across the whole 30 years, or just a one off impact in year.

Based upon activity to date, whilst some of the savings identified are of an ongoing nature, it is anticipated that increased costs arising in future years as a result of the introduction of welfare reform could offset any long term benefit to the Business Plan.

Accordingly, the £2.686m forecast increase in Working Balance will be treated as a one-off gain, and will be utilised to address the funding pressures which occur in the early years of the Business Plan.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

- **Inflation – Non Contractual** –The 2012/13 budget was formulated around an inflation assumption of nil; if inflation rises costs may exceed budget provision. It should be noted that the inflationary increase on the repair and maintenance contract is locked in for the financial year at 3.8 % and this has been provided for within the budget set.
Mitigation: Ongoing monitoring
- **Vacancy Factor**
Salaries budgets assume various levels of vacancies. If vacancies do not arise this could lead to salary costs in excess of budget.
Mitigation: In depth monitoring and forecasting of salary budgets.
- **Repair and Maintenance Voids.** Whilst the current empty home forecast is considered to be a prudent projection based upon 1,600 minor voids, it should be noted that the final number of voids received and completed in year could change. Any change in numbers or values will impact on expenditure.
Mitigation: Ongoing monitoring and triangulation with contractors. Any forecast increase in expenditure will be offset by a reduction in planned revenue works.
- **Rental Income**
Net rental income has been calculated on the basis of 2% void loss. Any increase / decrease on the actual levels of voids will impact on the level of income achieved.
Mitigation: Ongoing monitoring.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The HRA supports the new Corporate Plan Priorities and is central to the long term strategy:

- Making sure no community is left behind.
- Helping to create safe and healthy communities.
- Improving the environment.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Budget and Council Tax Setting Report (2012/13) to Cabinet Member February 2012
- Housing Rents Increase 2012-13
- Director of Finance and Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services have been consulted on the preparation of this report.

Contact Name:

Mark Scarrott, Finance Manager, Neighbourhoods and Adult Services,
Financial Services, Business Partnering, ext: 22007, email
mark.scarrott@rotherham.gov.uk