

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL - REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2.	Date:	Monday 7th April 2014
3.	Title:	Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring Report 2013/14
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

This budget monitoring report presents the forecast outturn position on the 2013/14 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) based upon actual income and expenditure to the end of February 2014.

The overall forecast is that the HRA will make a contribution to working balance (reserves) of £0.369m, a variation of -£2.968m against approved budget.

6. Recommendations

- **That Cabinet Member receives and notes the latest financial projection against budget for 2013/14.**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 This budget report is based upon actual income, expenditure and known commitments as at the end of February 2014 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 2013/14 which shows the various income and expenditure budget lines which make up the net cost of delivering the service. The latest forecast net cost of service is (-£8.781m) which, together with Revenue Contribution to Capital (RCCO) costs of £8.437m and interest received (-£25k) will result in an overall surplus of £0.369m 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 £14.602m).

7.4 Budget Monitoring is therefore mainly focussed upon expenditure and income which is within control, i.e. income of £78.904m, the repair and maintenance budget of £17.996m and supervision and management of £20.065m.

7.5 Budget Monitoring

7.5.1 Appendix A, column B demonstrates the projected outturn based upon activity to the end of February 2014.

7.5.2 Overall it can be seen that the net cost of service (before RCCO and interest received) is forecast to be -£8.781m, a surplus of £2.968m as shown in the table below.

	Budget £000	Forecast £000	Variance £000
Expenditure	73,091	71,232	-1,859
Income	-78,904	-80,013	-1,109
Net Cost of Service	-5,813	-8,781	-2,968

7.5.3 Several of the budget lines within income and expenditure are forecasting to outturn with a variance to budget as highlighted in the table below:

	Budget £000	Forecast £000	Variance £000
Expenditure:			
Housing Repairs Account	17,996	17,240	-756
Supervision and Management	20,065	19,072	-993
Rents, Rates & Taxes	174	214	40
Provision for Bad Debts	742	793	51
Cost of Capital Charge	14,602	14,402	-200
Income:			
Dwelling Rents	-74,245	-74,519	-274
Non Dwelling Rents	-792	-741	51
Charges for Services	-3,602	-4,342	-740
Other Fees and Charges	-214	-361	-147
Net Variance			-2,968

7.5.4 It can be seen that there is a forecast increase in income and an under spend on the expenditure budget.

7.5.5 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 actual spend and commitments to date, total expenditure is forecast to outturn at £71.232m compared to a budget provision of £73.091m, a reduction in spend of £1.859m. The main 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 currently forecasting an overall underspend of £756k against a budget of £17.996m.

7.6.2 The empty homes budget is difficult to forecast as this is a very responsive service. The original budget has been set based upon an estimated 1,500 minor voids in year. At the end of January there were 256 more void completions than budgeted. The main reason for the increase is the impact of the Welfare Reform as more tenants requested a transfer to smaller properties.

Within the Housing Repairs budgets there is an overall forecast overspend on Empty homes due to increase in minor voids.

However, this is offset by a forecast under spend on overheads within revenue schemes plus shared savings now agreed with both contractors resulting in lower costs to the HRA.

7.6.3 Supervision and Management

Column B of Appendix A demonstrates that based upon expenditure and commitment to date, total expenditure is forecast to outturn at £19.072m, a forecast overall under spend of £993k.

The main reason for the variation is lower than expected staff turnover including delays in implementing the review of structures across a number of teams. This is reduced by an additional contribution to the Furnished Homes reserve due to additional income as more clients use the scheme (see paragraph 7.7.3).

7.6.4 Cost of Capital Charge

This latest forecast cost of capital charge is £200k less than budgeted due to lower than anticipated interest rates.

7.6.5 Rents, Rates and Taxes

There is a forecast overspend of £40k due to the increase in number of void properties.

7.6.6 Provision for Bad debts

The latest forecast is to increase the provision for bad debts by £51k to reflect the increase in number of current and former tenant arrears during the year and outstanding income from rechargeable repairs.

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 £80.013m, an increase of £1.109m above the approved budget of £78.904m.

7.7.2 Dwelling rental income is projected to over recover by £274k, after allowing for 2% loss of income. However, Non-dwelling rents is forecast to slightly under recover against budget of £51k due to a review and reclassification of a small number of properties to general fund resulting in less income due to the HRA.

7.7.3 Income from charges for services and facilities are forecasting an outturn of £4.342m, an over recovery of income of £740k. This is mainly due to additional income on Furnished Homes (£650k) resulting from an increase in number of clients, additional fee income from Right to Buy sales (-£13k) plus one off income from prior year charges for District Heating (-£92k). However, there is a forecast under recovery of income from clients using Sheltered Neighbourhood Centres services (+£15k) as tenant's opt out of the laundry charge due to having their own facilities.

7.7.4 Other fees and charges is forecasting an over recovery of income of £147k against budget, which includes additional income in respect of the sale of Tenants contents insurance, recovery of court costs, income from sale of second hand furniture and income from utility companies for the use of solar panels.

7.8 Summary

In summary it can be seen in foregoing paragraphs 7.6 and 7.7 that the variance to budget of -£2.968m when comparing the forecast net cost of service against the budget of -£5.813m is due mainly to variances within housing repairs, supervision and management and cost of capital together with an over recovery of 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, there will be a forecast transfer to balances of £0.369m. This compares with a budgeted transfer from balances of £2.599m, a variation of -£2.968m.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Inflation – Non Contractual –The 2013/14 Budget was formulated around an inflation assumption of nil (except on utilities); 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 2.6 % 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 1,500 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.

- **Impairment of Fixed Assets**

HRA Self Financing legislation has resulted in the costs of impairment/revaluation of non-dwellings becoming a real charge to be met by the HRA. This figure cannot be calculated until year end after the asset register has been fully updated. In 2012-13 the impairment charge was £646k.

Mitigation: Action is being taken to review the management of expenditure on non-dwellings assets to minimise the risk of impairment charges to the HRA. Advice is also being obtained via CIPFA as this is a real issue affecting many other local authorities.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

10.1 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.

10.2 The HRA is supported by a 30 year Business plan in line with the requirements set out in the Self Financing Initiative introduced from April 2012. Any savings or additional costs are assessed to determine the impact over the whole 30 years.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Budget and Council Tax Setting Report (2013/14) to Cabinet February 2013
- Director of Finance and Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services have been consulted on the preparation of this report.

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