



Finance and Resources

Portfolio Performance and Resources Mid-Year Report 2023/24



Date	10 November	Version	1.0 (Scrutiny)	Approved by	JJ
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FINANCE AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S INTRODUCTION



I am pleased to present the Quarter 2 Portfolio Performance and Resources Report (PPRR) for the Finance and Resources Portfolio, which is the first PPRR presented to the committee covering a period during which I was responsible for the portfolio.

The report sets out the latest position relating to our Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), the latest update of which was presented to Cabinet and our Scrutiny committees in September and October. We still face significant financial challenges and it is inevitable that any savings proposals we prepare will mean changes to how we deliver services. Alongside these, we have worked hard to develop service transformation plans and our Treasury Strategy and Reserves Policy to ensure we remain financially resilient, whilst continuing to deliver the services our residents expect and deserve.



In these challenging times, ensuring we maximise the Business Rates and Council Tax collection rates is more crucial than ever, so it is encouraging to see that collection rates are holding up well.

Businesses are all feeling the effects of the current challenging economic situation, so it is also encouraging to see that the proportion of invoices that we pay on time is increasing, though we aren't quite hitting the challenging targets we set ourselves, so there is still room for improvement.

It's also great to see that our Contact Centre response to calls and our responses to complaints are improving and on target. Freedom of information request response times are also improving, but still falling slightly short of the prescribed national 95% target.

In order to help residents who may be experiencing financial difficulties, we have established our Resident Advice and Support services, bringing key council teams and other key advice-giving agencies together to work as one alliance. Other initiatives that have helped our residents who might be struggling to make ends meet have included the Stockport School Meal Support Scheme, the Spend Well, Live Well campaign, Stockport Food Bank, a school uniform pop-up shop and our Household Support Fund Programme. We've also been educating colleagues about Illegal Money Lending and holding Money Maximising roadshows, that cover everything from maximising income to reducing household energy costs.

As well as the Jobs Fair in Stockport Town Hall in September, we ran a number of more targeted recruitment events, for example, aimed at School Crossing Patrols, Home Support Workers and a local jobs fair in Offerton. Our Jumpstart scheme launched in June and has already supported five work placements at the council and our Supported Intern scheme with Pure Innovations launched in September, with six very enthusiastic interns starting.

We have also introduced initiatives to support our existing workforce, such as a "Mind, Body, Bank Account" wellbeing event and our broad range of employee networks, ensuring underrepresented voices are heard. Results are currently being analysed from our 2023 Employee Survey and these will be presented to members in the coming weeks. One thing I can report now, however, is that the response rate was up on the 2022 survey, so results should be even more representative of our workforce.

Staff sickness over the first six months of the year is down 8% on the 2022/23 year-end figure – staff turnover has also reduced over the same period.

As for our work in the digital field, it is encouraging to see that we are currently on course to deliver all of the targets relating to the digital performance measures in the portfolio and I’m especially pleased see that our Digiknow and Digital Volunteers initiatives are helping more and more local people to acquire the skills and facilities they need to get online. At these events I’ve had a number of conversations with residents that really brought home the importance of this support – from Julie, at Cheadle Library who couldn’t hide her emotion as she described how Digiknow volunteers had changed her life, to Tony, who had lost all connectivity and who’s health monitor had been rendered useless, until he was helped with data and the information he needed to get back online.

**Councillor Jilly Julian,
Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources**

Revenue Budget (Forecast)		Capital Programme	
	£000		£000
Cash Limit	29,587	2023/24 Capital Budget	28,963
Outturn	31,106	2024/25 Capital Budget	22,889
(Surplus)/Deficit	1,519	2025/26 Capital Budget	4,703
<p><u>Reserves</u> Approved use of reserves balance aligned to the portfolio is £3.263m; the forecast outturn above includes a drawdown of £2.408m plus £3.214m net from reserve allocations reported in other portfolios and corporately.</p>			

FINANCE AND RESOURCES

1. DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES



This report is based on the **2023/24 Portfolio Agreement**, considered by the Corporate, Resource Management and Governance Scrutiny (CRMG) Committee on 13th June 2023 and approved by Cabinet on 27th September 2023. The link to the Agreement can be found by clicking [here](#).

This Quarter 2 (Mid-Year) report includes updates on all **delivery projects, programmes and other initiatives** set out in the portfolio agreement, up to the end of September 2023 where this is available.

Data is reported for all **performance measures** included in the agreement that have been updated since publication of the 2022/23 Annual Reports. These are categorised to reflect the council’s influence and responsibility as Council, Partnership or Contextual. These categories are used to determine the type of target used as numerical, comparator, direction of travel or if no target is set. Definitions for these categories and target types are included within the Agreement.

The updated Portfolio Performance Dashboards are published alongside these reports, and the new Finance and Resources Portfolio Dashboard can be [found here](#). This contains the latest data across the full set of portfolio measures, including historical trends and comparative data (where available).

The criteria for RAG ratings and direction of travel status are shown below. The rationale for any variations to this will be clearly highlighted within the commentary.

Key to symbols used in tables

	Red – indicator is performing significantly (>5%) below target.		Getting worse – the year-end position (forecast or actual) for this indicator is less favourable than the previous year-end.
	Amber – indicator is performing slightly (<5%) below target.		Stable – the year-end position (forecast or actual) for this indicator is within 1% either side of the previous year-end.
	Green – indicator is on track or performing above target.		Getting better – the year-end position (forecast or actual) for this indicator is more favourable than the previous year-end.

GMS – measure is included in the Greater Manchester Strategy outcomes framework.

Priority 1: A council founded on strong governance and financial sustainability

Progress with each of the delivery projects aligned to this priority in the 2023/24 Portfolio Agreement is summarised below.

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

The council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) update and Cabinet response was presented to Cabinet in September and Scrutiny in October. The update retested the underpinning MTFP forecasts and assumptions in the context of the challenging financial landscape including ongoing recovery from financial scarring impacts of the pandemic over the medium-term period; adverse national economic forecasts particularly in relation to price inflation, pay inflation and interest rates; and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on Stockport residents and businesses increasing demand for services.

Following the update, the council's cumulative saving requirement has been revised to £10.861m in 2024/25 rising to £44.059m in 2027/28. Saving proposals totalling £5.363m were presented to Scrutiny Committees in October for consideration as part of the Cabinet's response to balancing the 2024/25 Budget and ensuring the robustness of the MTFP. Although in early stages, some of these proposals will mean changes to the way the council delivers services. As proposals are developed, the impact that any change will have on residents, services users and our workforce as well as how this may affect our partners and suppliers will be considered.

The financial challenge facing the council over the medium-term period remains significant. Officers will continue to monitor the MTFP and report the requirement for further adjustments to forecasts and assumptions to ensure the council has a robust and resilient MTFP as part of the 2024/25 budget-setting process. This will include the consideration of local taxation and use of one-off resources to balance the 2024/25 budget. In addition, Government announcements affecting Local Government financing in the Autumn Statement in November and the Local Government Finance Settlement in December will be considered in future MTFP updates.

Transformation-Led Approach

The council remains committed to its MTFP strategy to address the financial challenge and frame the choices it needs to make about services it delivers and how they are delivered. Service transformation aims to manage service demand, deliver services more efficiently ensuring value for money is achieved and focus on delivering the desired outcomes for residents and businesses.

The transformation plans are aligned to the Borough Plan and Council Plan priorities and ambitions to support the achievement of these through the services we deliver and how they are delivered.

A stable financial platform to enable this transformation programme is fundamental to the delivery of these priorities. As well as delivering better outcomes for residents and reshaping services so they are fit for the future, the transformation is linked to the delivery of the MTFP and the provision of services within the resources available.

Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy

The Capital Strategy optimises the availability and effective use of resources to support capital projects. To support the delivery of the Capital Strategy and provide greater governance of the Capital Programme, a Capital Board consisting of key managers meets to consider existing and new proposed capital projects using a capital gateway process, ensuring appropriate budget provision that considers borrowing costs implications, risks and overall council affordability, whilst directing resources towards high priority areas to support the council's policies, strategies and plans. The importance of this has been stressed by the increasing borrowing costs, as interest rates of around 5.0% to 5.3% are increasing the council's existing and future borrowing costs. Details of capital programmes can be found in the seven PPRRs presented to the November Scrutiny Committees.

It is a statutory duty of the council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. The council operates within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2023/24. The Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with these indicators. All treasury management operations have also been conducted in full compliance with the council's Treasury Management Practices. The Treasury Strategy aims to use short-term borrowing and internal balances to finance capital expenditure to avoid expensive long-term debt. Details can be found in the "*Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2023/24 – Quarter 2 Mid-Year Update*" report presented at the November CRMG Scrutiny Committee.

Reserves Policy

This supports the MTFP and with ensuring the council's financial robustness. The policy has been updated for 2023/24 and was approved by Cabinet in September. It seeks to ensure that earmarked reserves remain aligned to priority areas supporting the council's ambitions for the borough whilst providing assurance that any impact of unplanned expenditure or funding gaps can be mitigated. The Reserves Policy is key to the council's financial resilience and robustness, ensuring the impact of financial risks can be smoothed and mitigated. The policy continues to support recovery from the financial scarring impact of the pandemic and mitigates the financial impact of the adverse national economic conditions and costs of living crisis. Reserves also enable us to invest in transformation to deliver budget efficiencies and support investment to deliver the council's ambitions and priorities.

Decision-making and governance

We have continued with our programme of Member Training during July, August and September and have provided the following sessions to Members:

- Introduction to Licensing, Environment & Safety Committee 4 July 2023 – bespoke induction session.
- All Members Briefing: Working as part of Greater Manchester – Introduction to the GMCA and GM Integrated Care Board – 11 July 2023.
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion – 12 July 2023 & 18 July 2023 - Induction Session (in person).
- Introduction to Internal Audit and Risk Management – 17 July 2023 – bespoke induction session.
- Climate Action Now – 20 July 2023 – induction session.
- Introduction to Employment Appeals – 24 July 2023 – bespoke induction session.
- Effective Chairing – 25 July 2023 – North West Employers (NWE) external training.
- Effective Scrutiny and Questioning Skills – 7 August 2023 – NWE external training.
- Members Enquiry Tracker & Online Reporting – 9 August 2023 – induction session (re-run).
- Speech Writing and Public Speaking – 10 August 2023 – NWE external training.
- Principles of Public Office – 14 August 2023 – NWE external training.
- Care Quality Commission Regulation of Adult Social Care – 15 August 2023 – all-member briefing.
- Councillors' Guide to Understanding your Council's Financial Reporting Requirements – CIPFA Webinar – 6 September – Members of Audit Committee and CRMG only.
- Political Awareness – 26 September 2023 – NWE external training.

For officers, we have continued with our programme of Back to Basics training on Governance and Decision making and have also launched new training on report writing and combined this with the existing training on how to use the report writing system mod.gov and decision making. We have also launched Political Awareness training for all senior colleagues, is led by our Chief Executive.

Financial systems and processes

Responding to end of the current financial system (SAP) maintenance agreement in 2027, a series of discovery workshops supported by the Society For Innovation Technology and Modernisation (Socitm) were held that aided to get a detailed understanding of the financial system (and wider system) 'as-is' position and identify system solutions available to meet future needs/requirements aligned to the council's radically digital transformation priority. Recently, Soctim developed an Outline Business Case, which identifies options for the council to develop and assess further.

Procurement

We have process-mapped procurement activity from end-to-end to identify decision points where social value can be raised a key consideration. This work will be presented to the Strategic Commissioning Group and will be adopted across all category management activity.

We are in the final stages of the procurement of an on-line brokerage system. The product name is "Match My Project". We have an implementation plan and anticipate launching the portal by November 2023. We have identified a number of projects which will be used to test the site. We have multi-agency stakeholder engagement groups to support the implementation.

The Match My Project implementation plan outlines roles and responsibilities of the Commissioning and Contract Team and Neighbourhoods and Prevention Team working together. The portal will support businesses by enabling them to upload their offers of social value onto the portal. It will also support the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector, enabling organisations to search for, and express an interest in, the posted offers, as well as make specific requests for the type of support they need that could be offered through social value. Businesses can then match themselves to VCFSE providers to work through the finer detail of what is needed, by when and what success would look like.

We want the portal to be used not just by those businesses we commission, but also businesses in our local communities that want to offer support to their local communities, which we term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). CSR describes how companies can be more responsible for their impact on society and the environment and can involve different kinds of actions, such as reducing waste, emissions; supporting diversity, equal opportunities, and health and wellbeing of employees; giving back to the community through volunteering, donations, or social projects. This benefits the company by improving their reputation and brand image and contributing to social and environmental goals. This is an area the teams are keen to maximise for the benefit of Stockport.

The Social Value Engagement Toolkit is now sent to suppliers who express an interest in the contracts that the council puts out for procurement. The toolkit contains information, ideas and contact details for Stockport's agreed social value priority cohort areas. This has been seen as a model of good practice and is being shared with other STAR Authorities as well as the GM Integrated Care system leads for social value.

Responsiveness to customers and residents

The Complaints Team has been working closely with service managers who deal with complaints to reinforce council values and lessons learnt activity. New e-learning for managers was released in Quarter 2 and more briefing and training sessions are planned for Quarter 3. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the council's Complaints Annual report for 2022/23 was drafted and set out improvements to complaints handling across the organisation.

The Contact Centre continues to provide residents with timely advice by phone and digitally. Collaborative working with the Public Realm and IT have seen digital innovations with trees, grass and verges and bulky waste. This means residents can now fill in an online form rather than phoning

the contact centre for these service requests. It is hoped that this will result in a reduction of call demand at the contact centre. Quarter 2 did see a moderate increase in demand but this is attributed to the open portal registration.

The council continues to improve its Cost of Living (COL) offer with the formation of Resident Advice and Support (RAS) team in Quarter 1. This brought together not only some of our existing council teams but also created a new advice-giving cost of living phonenumber. It also enabled stakeholders to better work together as one alliance. These improvements were further made by the introduction of the RAS Board and a monthly situation report that looks at demand and priority activity across the RAS ecosystem. The core pillars to RAS are: sustainable help; being accessible; one front door; warm handovers; proactive outreach; benefit uptake campaigns; digital inclusion; and early intervention with people who are heading into debt. The COL crisis line in particular, is a complimentary service focusing on helping residents: to navigate the broader support channels for residents in financial hardship; to seamlessly connect (warm handovers) to partners, the wider RAS team, Citizens Advice and wider council services. The COL line handled approximately 2,500 calls during Quarters 1 and 2, and also supported various voucher/scheme processing such as the school uniform vouchers scheme.

Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

Latest available performance on all measures relating to this priority is summarised in the table below. Commentary on any measures that have a “Red” RAG rating, as well as those rated “Amber” with a deteriorating trend, is set out beneath the table.

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	Zyr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
F&R 1.1: Operational property costs (£/sqm)	Low (Council)	15.08 (£/sqm)	13.34 (£/sqm)	11.29 (£/sqm) (30/09/2023)		Maintain	G	↑
F&R 1.2: Property occupancy/ownership costs (£/sqm)	Low (Council)	42.99 (£/sqm)	53.5 (£/sqm)	58.06 (£/sqm) (30/09/2023)		Maintain	R	↓
F&R 1.3: Annual energy consumption (KWH/sqm)	Low (Council)	81.88 KW/h/sqm	79.91 KW/h/sqm	80.61 KW/h/sqm (30/09/2023)		Minimise	A	→
F&R 1.4: Percentage of Council Tax collected	High (Council)	97.46 %	97.47 %	53.25 % (30/09/2023)	97%	97%	G	→
F&R 1.5: Percentage of Business Rates collected	High (Council)	95.6 %	96.48 %	57.09 % (30/09/2023)	96%	96%	G	↑
F&R 1.6: Average time taken to process new Housing Benefit claims and changes (days)	Low (Council)	4.6 days	5.6 days	8 days (30/09/2023)	7days	7days	G	↓
F&R 1.7: Percentage of invoices paid in 30 days	High (Council)	94.1 %	89.72 %	91.01 % (30/09/2023) 16919 / 18590		95%	A	↑
F&R 1.8: Percentage of invoices paid to local suppliers in 10 days	High (Council)	80.6 %	76.02 %	76.23 % (30/09/2023) 5083 / 6668		80%	A	→
F&R 1.9i: Social Value: Controllable Local Spend	High (Council)		58.9	65.5 (30/06/2023) 61249861 / 93511238		Maximise	N/A	↑
f&R 1.10: Contact Centre Calls	High (Council)	85.59 %	82 %	86.38 % (30/09/2023) 77341 / 89531	86%	82%	G	↑
F&R 1.11: Stage 1 complaints response	High (Council)	79.72 %	82.2 %	84.21 % (30/09/2023) 80 / 95	86%	82%	G	↑
F&R 1.12: Stage 2 complaints response	High (Council)	72.88 %	90.3 %	93.94 % (30/09/2023) 31 / 33	96%	86%	G	↑
F&R 1.13: FOI Response Time	High (Council)	89.8 %	88.1 %	91.4 % (30/09/2023) 613 / 671		95%	A	↑

Commentary on performance

F&R1.2 Total property occupancy / ownership costs (revenue) per square metre

The ownership cost is up as there is some forecast for future increase on energy costs and some increased borrowing (prudential borrowing) costs negatively impacting the Single Property Budget (SPB). The Town Centre Asset review (refurbishment of Stopford House) business case has the capital funding being repaid from the SPB. This is to be offset by further lettings of surplus space in Fred Perry House which should improve the picture in future.

Priority 2: Cost of living crisis

Progress with each of the delivery projects aligned to this priority in the 2023/24 Portfolio Agreement is summarised below.

Immediate crisis needs

Since April, 728 items of support has been provided including discretionary food, energy and cash vouchers totalling £0.073m via Support Funds.

Financial support and advice

(The Resident Advice and Support (RAS) is reported in Priority 1 above).

Following the council's decision to extend Free School Meals in Stockport for the 2023/24 academic year, colleagues have been working to develop the Stockport School Meal Support Scheme. The scheme went live in September with the council working with over 150 schools and colleges both in the borough and outside Stockport to provide paid-for school/college meals to Stockport children requesting support. From September, over 900 children were benefiting from the scheme. A further 180 children have been enrolled on to the scheme from the first day of school after the October/November half-term. These children were identified as either becoming eligible following the first phase of the scheme or children identified during the first phase whose parents/carers had not requested support. The council has committed to ensuring all eligible children can benefit from the scheme over the academic year and will enrol eligible children requesting support on a rolling basis during the year.

The Spend Well Live Well campaign continues to deliver activities and events across the borough to raise awareness of support available informed by local intelligence and targeted to suit community needs. Activities include:

- Brokering the attendance of services at a number of community-led drop-in sessions based on the needs of clients including Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Family Outreach Advisors now attending regular sessions in Edgeley, Lancashire Hill, Brinnington and Romiley.
- Monthly financial inclusion sessions alongside a community café in Heaton Norris.
- Five financial support pop-up sessions held alongside community-led events across the borough including attendance at Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme funded activities and Brinnington Fun Day.
- Three Money Max Roadshows held in Cheadle, Bramhall and Central Stockport.

The council continues to work in partnership with VCFSE organisations to respond to the cost of living crisis and provide support to households. Activities include:

- The council supported Stockport Food Bank to deliver their Summer Holiday Help Scheme which supported school-referred families to access food for the summer holiday as well as provide discretionary vouchers for school uniforms.
- The council supported Merseyway shopping centre to deliver their second School Uniform Pop-Up Shop in Merseyway Shopping Centre. During August, 800 families were supported with pre-loved school uniforms and £1.2k was raised in donations to support Chelwood Foodbank Plus and Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Understanding the impact of the crisis

The council continues to contribute to the GM Combined Authority [Cost of Living Dashboard](#). Alongside this, the council’s RAS Board collates a monthly report on demand across a range of services. The intelligence is used to direct resources including the location of information, advice and guidance.

Household Support Fund (HSF)

Our HSF Phase 4 support programme is delivered across five pillars: 1) Immediate crisis support; 2) Support to households with children; 3) Trusted Partner; 4) VCFSE investment and 5) Scheme administration. Since April, £1.873m has been spent on supporting households with the cost of living. Highlights for the period include:

- **Immediate crisis support:** Since April, 728 items of support of be provided including discretionary food, energy and cash vouchers totalling £0.073m via Support Funds.
- **Support to households with children:** A Family Support Voucher worth £97.50 was distributed to eligible families in July. In all, 13,927 families redeemed vouchers (94% redemption rate) equating to a total spend of £1.358m. A second voucher (also worth £97.50) will be distributed in early December to support households with energy costs over the winter period. £0.051m was spent delivering May HAF as part of the Department for Education funded programme. In total 17 providers delivered activities across 22 sites; 586 places available each day, equating to a total of 2,264 places across the week. Of places provided, 130 were for specifically for those with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- **Trusted Partners:** £0.084m has been distributed by the council’s network of Trusted Partner organisations providing targeted discretionary support to specific households including disabled people, pensioners and unpaid carers.
- **VCFSE investment:** The Spend Well Live Well grant was launched in May and allowed VCFSE organisations to apply for grants between £5,000 and £20,000 to deliver projects over the 12 month grant period. A total of 58 bids were received requesting over £0.500m – 13 of these were approved, totalling £0.106m.

A second grant was launched in September providing up to £1,000 to deliver cost of living projects; 28 applications have been successful, equating to £0.029m.

In late September, the Warm Spaces grant programme was launched allowing organisations to submit bids on a rolling basis until 31 December 2023. As of 24 October, 62 applications had been received.

Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

Latest available performance on all measures relating to this priority is summarised in the table below.

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target
F&R 2.2: Number of children in receipt of Free School Meals	Low (contextual)		8622	8,913 (30/09/2023)		N/A

Priority 3: Supporting our workforce

We will support our workforce by delivering against the five priorities within our One Team People Plan, set out below.

Join Us

The latest Stockport Jobs Fair took place on the 19th September in the Town Hall Ballroom. At the event, a combination of council teams and our partners, including Life Leisure, TfGM and Stockport Jobs Match, ran 45 tables outlining current vacancies and career options. The event was attended by 550 people, a record attendance at the event, and feedback was excellent from both attendees and exhibitors. At the time of writing our next Jobs Fairs are:

- A School Crossing Patrol recruitment event in Bramhall Library on 17th October.
- An Offerton Inclusive Jobs Fair in Offerton Community Centre on 31st October.
- A Home Support Worker recruitment open day in Central Library on 13th November.

Our Jumpstart scheme, which launched in June, has already supported five work placements at the council. One of the first individuals who joined the scheme, a young care leaver who is just about to move into his first rented apartment, has done so well during his placement that the team he is working with have offered him an 18-month apprenticeship opportunity with a chance to start a long-term career with the team, in a role the council normally finds hard to recruit to.

Our Supported Intern scheme launched on 6 September, with an event attended by Cllr Julian and representatives from Pure Innovations and local partners. Our first six interns started during September, with the council providing accommodation in the Town Hall to support the scheme.

Grow and Thrive

We have continued to expand the range of courses and qualifications available as part of our Leading Stockport programme that was launched in January 2023. Participation in the programme has continued to grow, including in the masterclasses, apprenticeships and the foundation module. At our latest Leadership Forum, in June 2023, we heard from Professor Damian Hughes as a keynote speaker talking about creating values-based leadership, the event had 500 in-person attendees.

In response to feedback from the 2022 All Colleague Survey, we have designed 'My Conversation', a new values based approach to Personal Development Reviews. This is currently being piloted and will go live across the council in April 2024.

Feel Supported

We continue to offer one-to-one coaching sessions to all colleagues within the council, as a way of supported both their wellbeing and their professional development. In the last nine months we have completed 180 hours of coaching. This coaching is undertaken by an internal pool of colleagues who, using funding from the Apprenticeship Levy, have completed a Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) approved coaching qualification.

On 6 September we ran a 'Mind, Body, Bank Account' event – supporting colleagues wellbeing including their financial wellbeing. At the event, a number of our partners, including Life Leisure and the Credit Union, provided information, advice and guidance on a range of topics.

Belong Here

Our range of employee networks continues to grow. We now have the following groups that meet regularly:

- Palettes of Colour - a group representing Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic colleagues.
- LGBTQ+ Network.
- Staff Dis-Ability Network.
- The Carers' Network.
- Menopause Support Group.
- Neurodivergent Support Group.

All of these groups now have a sponsor from the council's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), acting as a champion for the group and making sure that they have a direct link to senior management. Members of the groups are also involved in a reverse mentoring scheme, where individuals meet with members of CLT to share their lived experiences.





Live Our Values

Over the last six months we have made changes to our internal communications and engagement activity, responding to feedback from the 2022 All Colleague Survey. These changes include:

- Introducing Lunch and Learn sessions on subjects from artificial intelligence underpinning chat bots to complaints.
- Revamped our All Colleague communications by introducing a weekly newsletter, fronted by different members of the Senior Leadership Group, and based around themes of Your News, Your Team and Your Community.
- Introduced support for each directorate to help them include key council messages in directorate communications

Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

Latest available performance on all measures relating to this priority is summarised in the table below.

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
F&R 3.5: Average working days lost due to sickness absence per employee	Low (Council)	10.77 days	9.86 days	9.08 days (30/09/2023)		9.5days		
F&R 3.6: Staff turnover	Low (contextual)		14.97	13.02 (30/09/2023)		N/A		

Priority 4: Radically Digital Stockport

Progress with each of the delivery projects aligned to this priority in the 2023/24 Portfolio Agreement is summarised below.

Delivery of our Digital Strategy

Quarter 2 saw the launch of the Age UK/Sky Flagship in Edgeley, which was supported by investment from Stockport Council Digital Cabinet reserves. The flagship is one of only 10 in the UK and will see more opportunities for local residents to build their digital skills. The hub is already supporting older people to get online and also offers support to local jobseekers and young people leaving care. We have also agreed a further year's funding for Digiknow Partner Starting Point, who are supporting local people across Stockport to access digital skills, devices and data. Starting Point have strengthened their relationships with our libraries to offer more free learning support through Digiknow Champions and are also working closely with food network partners to support people on a low income to improve their digital skills to be more financially resilient and reduce financial exclusion.

We have also recently released our much improved [SEND Local Offer](#) and our new [Virtual Family Hub](#). The focus of this work is the start of a wider programme of work to improve access to support online. This first release improves the navigation and quality of content we own as a council. Phase 2 will look at our wider network of support for both residents and professionals and how we influence our partners as well as provide links to the local community.

In Quarter 3 we hope to release our redesigned homepage of www.stockport.gov.uk. This is the start of a phased and iterative approach to redesigning of the whole website. The redesign is the first major change since the new website was released over five years ago and is designed to bring in the council's new branding whilst also meeting user needs around usability and accessibility.

Family Context Tool

Additional education data including attendance and exclusions as well as school nurse information is now in the live system as requested by social workers.

Our youth offending data has been added to our train site with the actual data in the live system. This is just waiting to be implemented within the front-end so it is visible and searchable.

We are currently working closely with the NHS to implement GP and Health visitor information as already mentioned. The difficulties with this so far have been information governance implications and the processes and policies which the NHS must adhere to. This, however, has moved on since the last report and we are hoping to start developing its implementation. More importantly though, the data needs to be fit for purpose, cleansed and accurate in order for the system to be worthwhile and valuable.

Single views of properties

We have successfully completed a single property view of Child Social Care, Child Education and Adult Social Care.

Unique Property Reference Numbers (UPRN), unique identifiers for every addressable location in the country, have now been brought into the test Civica Revenues and Benefits system and will now be pushed into the live system. We are currently reviewing data exports coming out of the Civica System containing property based Council Tax data and Council Tax debt data. The intention is to join this data to the single property view by December 2023.

The election data already has the UPRN attached and a parallel workstream is taking place to join the election data to the single property view. Competent persons datasets from the Idox planning and land charge system detailing home renovations, such as double glazing, re-wiring, new windows etc., will also be attached to the property data to help build a view of a properties standard, efficiency, and potential financial stability of the homeowner.

A review of Adult Social Care related debt data from the ContrOCC system going into the Business Intelligence Data Warehouse is taking place to help build the Single View Debt. (ContrOCC is a tool for managing social care finance contracts, payments, assessments, and billing).

Discussions to explore the front-end technology of the family context tool to provide a secure and simple front end for the sharing of this single view data to specific teams across the council are ongoing.

Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

Latest available performance on all measures relating to this priority is summarised in the table below. Commentary on any measures that have a “Red” RAG rating, as well as those rated “Amber” with a deteriorating trend, is set out beneath the table.

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
F&R 4.1: Digital Contacts	High (Council)	84.87 %	85.95 %	86.44 % (30/09/2023) 99766 / 115411		86%		
F&R 4.2: DigiKnow - individuals	High (Council)	23101	38364	47,107 (30/09/2023)	56000	55364		
F&R 4.3: Number of active digital volunteers	High (Council)		281	348 (30/09/2023)		N/A		
F&R 4.4 GMS: Download speeds (areas below 30Mbps access target)	-(contextual)		2.1	1 (30/09/2023)		N/A		



FINANCE AND RESOURCES

2. FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MONITORING

2.1 Revenue – Cash limit

Budget at Q2:

	Previously Reported (Q1+) £000	Increase (Reduction) £000	Budget at Q2 £000
Cash Limit Budget	29,464	123	29,587

Budget Changes since previously reported at Quarter 1+

The portfolio's cash limit allocation has increased by £0.123m from the figure reported in the previous reporting cycle. This provides funding for additional legal capacity, and PA support to the council's senior management.

Forecast:

Net Cash Limit Budget	Net Expenditure	Covid-19 Scarring Allocation	Net Appropriations (from) Reserves	Outturn (Surplus) / Deficit Q4
£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
29,587	41,064	(4,336)	(5,622)	1,519

The Quarter 2 forecast position for the Finance and Resources portfolio is a deficit of £1.519m, an increase of £0.140m from Quarter One, and represents 5.1% of the cash limit budget. This is after the funding of £9.958m of expenditure from earmarked reserves and, in the case of the Investment and Development Account (I&D), Covid-19 scarring contingency.

Pressure areas include Human Resources (£0.100m); Data and Technology (£0.350m); Legal Services (£0.500m) and Estates and Asset Management (£0.500m), with more minor variations in other support activities.

The main change to the forecast has been in Legal Services who continue to have difficulties recruiting and retaining experienced staff, in concert with an increase in cases including complex child brief and commercial work. This is leading, among other things, to the increased use of locums and external professional support necessary to provide service continuity.

The Investment and Development Account (I&D) is brought to a balanced position by an anticipated use of reserves – mainly the corporately held Income and Interest Rate Mitigation Reserve; and support from the Covid-19 scarring contingency although the use of the reserve and contingency has increased by a combined £0.677m due to higher than previously anticipated borrowing repayments across the I&D schemes.

2.2 Earmarked Reserves

Most earmarked reserves are held at a corporate level and services produce a business case to drawdown funds, which is approved through Corporate Leadership Team and Members. This strategic approach is designed to provide financial resilience for the council and to ensure that council reserves are used on an invest-to-save basis and to support council priorities. The exceptions to this are ringfenced reserves and the Directorate Flexibility Reserve.

The table below reflects planned use of reserves at Q2 and is after the review of the council's reserve policy which was presented to Cabinet on the 19th of September 2023 (Agenda item 9)

[Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 19th September 2023, 6.00 pm - Stockport Council](#)

Reserve Category	Reserve Narration	To be used for	Approved Earmarked Balance £000	Forecast Use 2023/24 £000	Forecast Year-end Balance £000
Strategic Priority	Contain Outbreak Management	Investment Plan Post-Covid	672	337	335
Strategic Priority	Digital By Design/Radical Digital Authority	Finance Systems Replacement Project	147	147	0
Strategic Priority	Equipment Refresh	To Fund Capital element of Nutanix/Virtual Servers & data backup scheme.	29	29	0
Directorate	Directorate Flexibility - CSS	Staff Surveys	21	21	0
Directorate	Directorate Flexibility - CSS	Social Value Brokerage online portal	25	0	25
Directorate	Directorate Flexibility - CSS	Temporary post Finance Transaction Team	49	24	25
Directorate	Directorate Flexibility - CSS	Temporary Data records manager, Information and Governance	89	56	33
Linked to Budget	Workforce Investment/Change	The All-Age Programme	127	127	0
Linked to Budget	Workforce Investment/Change	Adult Social Care Transformation & MTFP Project Manager	144	73	71
Linked to Budget	Workforce Investment/Change	One Team People Plan Implementation	348	257	91
Linked to Budget	Workforce Investment/Change	Citizen Focus Transformation	141	141	0
Linked to Budget	Transformation – Invest to Save	Additional support in Contracts and commissioning to support savings programme	125	58	67
Linked to Budget	Transformation – Invest to Save	Legal Services Time Recording	36	36	0
Linked to Budget	Transformation - Double Running	To Support 2023/24 phased savings – Robust Corporate Governance	472	472	0

Linked to Budget	Transformation - Double Running	To Support 2023/24 phased savings - Radically Digital	75	75	0
Linked to Budget	Workforce Investment/Change	ASC Business Intelligence Service Cover	87	60	27
Corporate	Legislative and Statutory Requirements	Elections (Conducting of)	150	300	(150)
Corporate	Legislative and Statutory Requirements	Bentax Extended Enterprise License costs	176	171	5
Corporate	Revenue Grants	Local Digital Fund; DWP New Burden Housing Management Information; Finance Apprentices	350	100	250
		Total	3,263	2,484	779

Approved use of the Reserves balance is £3.263m and the forecast draw down from them is £2.484m, of which £2.408m is funding revenue expenditure in this portfolio, and £0.076m revenue spending in other portfolios plus capital.

The portfolio is also forecast to draw down £3.214m from reserve balances held corporately and in other portfolios. Of this, £3.002m will be from the corporately held Income and Interest Rate Mitigation Reserve to part support the I & D Account.

2.3 Portfolio Savings Programme

MTFP Transformational Lens	Savings Programme	Value £000	RAG Rating
Robust Corporate Governance	Corporate Asset Review	1,650	Green
Robust Corporate Governance	Increasing Income, various services	240	Green
Robust Corporate Governance	Service Efficiencies/Review	738	Green
Value for Money	Procurement & Commissioning Efficiencies, various services	80	Green
Radically Digital	Digital Solutions, various departments	251	Green
	Total	2,959	

There are over forty separate proposals underpinning the three MTFP transformational lens strands in this portfolio (no Demand Management items). Support from the Transformation Double Running reserve of £0.547m has been assumed to be required in 2023/24 to provide temporary support as the proposals fully realise (i.e., more than one year to realise fully the saving).

Risk rating

Green – good confidence (90% plus) the saving is/will be delivered or minor variances (<£0.050m) that will be contained within the portfolio.

Amber – progressing at a reasonable pace, action plan being pursued, may be some slippage across years and/or the final position may also be a little unclear.

Red – Significant issues arising, or further detailed consultation required which may be complex/contentious.

2.4 Capital Finance Update and Outlook

Programme

*Expenditure as at 30 Sep 2023 £000	Scheme	2023/24 Programme £000	2024/25 Programme £000	2025/26 Programme £000
	Non Education Capital Schemes			
925	Asset Management Plan	4,087	4,450	1,850
0	Reprovision of Dialstone Facility	10	140	2,853
0	Borough Care	0	150	0
3	Disposals	3	0	0
514	Town Centre Asset Review	662	0	0
48	IT - Nutanix	48	0	0
0	TLC Fleet Vehicle Loan Facility	760	1,400	0
3	Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)	41	0	0
4,283	Adswood Depot Purchase	4,283	0	0
5,776	Sub-total	9,894	6,140	4,703
	Education - Schools Capital Programme			
0	Early Years	13	0	0
1,149	Primary Sector	5,425	1,784	0
252	Secondary Sector	7,185	537	0
1,872	Special Sector	4,214	5,252	0
480	Other Schemes	531	0	0
0	Funding to be allocated	0	9,176	0
757	Individual School Schemes	1,701	0	0
4,510	Sub-total	19,069	16,749	0
10,286	TOTAL	28,963	22,889	4,703

* This relates to expenditure on SAP and accruals for goods received or work performed up to the period end.

Resources

Resources	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Capital Grants	18,013	13,301	0
Directly Funded Borrowing	5,578	1,550	0
Unsupported Borrowing	4,581	7,898	1,850
Capital Receipts	10	140	2,853
External Contributions	662	0	0
Revenue Contributions (RCCO)	119	0	0
TOTAL	28,963	22,889	4,703

Programme Amendments – Rephasing

Scheme	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	Funding Source	Reason
<u>Non education Schemes</u>					
Asset Management Plan	100	0	0	Capital Grant	£0.1m Family Hub grant funding allocation
Asset Management Plan	(1)	0	0	USB	Allocation to Disposals
Re-provision of Dialstone Facility	(40)	40	0	Capital Receipts	Scheme rephasing
Borough Care	(50)	50	0	DFB	Scheme rephasing
Disposals	1	0	0	USB	Allocation from AMP
TLC Fleet Vehicle Loan Facility	760	(3,700)	0	DFB	Rephasing in line with vehicle orders
Adwood Depot Purchase	4,283	0	0	DFB	New scheme
<u>Education Schemes</u>					
Primary Sector	(1,196)	1,196	0	Various	Rephase
Primary Sector	76	0	0	Sch Cont	School contributions
Primary Sector	33	0	0	DFB	School contributions
Secondary Sector	(4)	4	0	Various	Rephase
Secondary Sector	7	0	0	Sch Cont	School contributions
Special Sector	(1,000)	1,000	0	Various	Rephase
Special Sector	13	0	0	Sch Cont	School contributions
Sch conditions / CM projects	0	(14,590)	0	Various	Removed - see note below*
Funding to be allocated	(74)	74	0	Various	Rephase
TOTAL	2,908	(15,926)	0		

Progress against individual schemes

Scheme	Description
Asset Management Plan (AMP)	<p>A programme of work aimed at ensuring that the council's asset base is fit for purpose and in alignment with the council's strategic objectives and service delivery needs. It includes Health & Safety, roof and fabrics, Civic Complex works, Office Rationalisation and Energy and Carbon Reduction schemes.</p> <p>Significant numbers of projects have been completed during the first two quarters of the year including refurbishment works to Hatworks and Gately Hill House and condition works in Community Centres and Libraries.</p> <p>Works are now on site at Hazel Grove Life Leisure to replace the pool plant equipment, lighting and ventilation, which forms part of a £1.3m investment at this site. Demolition works continue at White House - however this project has been delayed slightly due to ecology issues found during demolition.</p> <p>Planning is now taking place to deliver the next phase of projects later this year including the movement of the heritage collection to a new site and planning for further investment in the Leisure estate.</p>

Reprovision of Dialstone Facility	Reprovision of a Community Building following the sale of the Dialstone Centre for housing redevelopment. Early work on this project has continued, however this was conducted by internal council resources, so no costs were attributed to the project at feasibility stage.
Borough Care	Proposed delivery of a new Care Home facility on the Booth Street site in Edgeley. The project was placed on hold during the pandemic but during the financial year 2022/23 design feasibility works and review of potential operating models have been undertaken to determine the viability of the project. Early work on this project has commenced, however this was conducted by internal council resources, so no costs were attributed to the project at feasibility stage.
Disposal of assets	Programme for enabling costs for the disposal/development of council assets/sites.
Town Centre Asset Review	<p>This review focuses on meeting the current and future business needs of the council, ensuring future resilience to the office estate provision being fit for purpose, agile and an efficient workplace whilst also having a positive impact on the council's CAN objectives.</p> <p>As part of the Asset Review the council has secured its first external letting of Fred Perry House; the Probation service have now opened their new facilities within the building and are now operating fully. Work is ongoing to secure lettings for the other floors of the building in line with the business case for the Town Centre Asset Review.</p>
IT – Nutanix	The final component of this project has been procured and installed - there will be no further spend on this scheme.
TLC Fleet Vehicle Loan Facility	<p>There has been a three year pause in the fleet vehicle replacement programme, however TLC have an ageing RCV fleet that requires investment and are currently working on a process to replace a small number of vehicles.</p> <p>A number of RCVs and sweepers have been ordered. The delivery times range from 12 weeks to 32 weeks and as a result, £0.760m has been brought forward into the 2023/24 capital programme and £1.400m remains in the 2024/25 capital programme.</p> <p>Due to the long lead time to delivery of vehicles from order, the remaining £2.940m fleet vehicle loan facility has been rephased out of the current three-year capital programme.</p> <p>Funding will be brought back into the Programme once replacement is fully approved and lead time established.</p>

<p>Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)</p>	<p>The PSDS project is a 100% grant funded scheme encompassing projects funding energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation schemes on ten buildings across council buildings, leisure and schools: Stockport Town Hall, Stopford House, Fred Perry House, Grand Central Life Leisure, the new Lisburne Special School and Westmorland, Dial Park, High Lane, Hazel Grove and Cheadle Hulme Primary Schools.</p> <p>The work has covered fabric improvement (Windows), LED lighting and installation of Air Source Heat Pumps on five of the buildings.</p> <p>The project has been led by the Estates Team and represents a total investment of £4.500m. The investment is forecast to save 7,900 tonnes of CO₂ over the lifetime of the projects.</p> <p>The project is now substantially complete. An allowance is made for commissioning, retention payments and minor snagging as agreed with GMCA.</p>
<p>Adswood Depot Purchase</p>	<p>Adswood Depot is of strategic importance to the council offering approximately 7.5 acres supporting TLC's storage and recycling and the Highways Department storage compound and the borough's only gritting salt store depot.</p> <p>The council's future at the depot was uncertain as the lease was due to expire in October 2022 and there was a significant risk that the site could be lost to housing redevelopment.</p> <p>The council's purchase of the land will secure permanent control of the depot, will remove a significant outgoing lease rent liability, and facilitate any major capital projects the council may wish to undertake on the land including supporting the redevelopment opportunity of the Bird Hall Site.</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p>A collection of school schemes across all sectors relating to both maintenance/condition works and basic need provision of school places provide for the £19.069m spend in 2023/24.</p> <p>*The previously agreed additional repairs and maintenance program budget of c.£15m approved by Cabinet, has been removed from the quarterly figures, whilst the transition of schools converting to academy status is assessed alongside the future central government capital allocations to ensure no financial risk is applied to the council through over commitment of schemes.</p> <p>The council continues to review and assess school projects for the future linked to the latest asset management plan reviews of all school buildings, funding available and deploy according to priority/needs (i.e., health and safety requirements, etc.).</p> <p>A number of schemes will continue into 2024/25 until completion alongside any new schemes identified and approved for capital investment, with any further scheme details/commitments/updates to be reported in the future corporate scrutiny cycle.</p>