



Finance and Resources

Portfolio Performance and Resources Annual Report 2023/24



Date	3 June 2024	Version	1.0 (Scrutiny)	Approved by	JJ
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FINANCE AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S INTRODUCTION



I am pleased to present the Year-End Portfolio Performance and Resources Report (PPRR) for the Finance and Resources Portfolio.

The report explains how crucial the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), and the process of constantly reviewing and refining it, has been to our financial decision-making. The council's 2024/25 Budget and the MTFP were approved at Budget Council on 22 February 2024.

The council's financial position over the medium-term remains increasingly challenging. The council remains committed to its MTFP strategy to address the significant financial challenge ahead and frame the choices it needs to make about services it delivers and how they are delivered. These choices will continue to be shaped around the Borough Plan and Council Plan priorities and ambitions to design new ways of delivering services that are efficient and effective.



The cost-of-living crisis has affected all of us to some degree or other. The Resident Advice and Support (RAS) team has continued to evolve its cost-of-living response and network building to offer financial support to those it has affected most - for example, the Cost-of-Living Hub dealt with over 3,300 calls, showing that demand is increasing, and residents' situations are becoming more complex. Approximately 2,700 referrals have been made to around 40 services including Welfare Rights, Debt Advice, Foodbanks, Citizens Advice and Disability Stockport.

As well as supporting our residents, we recognise the role of our workforce in achieving the council's aims and ambitions. The 2023 All Colleagues Survey provided further evidence of how our values are embedded across the council, with 92% of colleagues saying they were aware of the values (compared to 90% in 2022) and 77% saying they could see those values applied by the people they work with (compared to 73% in 2022). Our committed efforts to enhance the colleague experience at every stage of their journey have been recognised nationally as we were awarded the best HR and OD Team and the best Diversity and Inclusion Programme at the Public Sector People Managers Association (PPMA) awards, along with being highly commended in three other categories in April 2024. This kind of recognition not only reinforces that the right approach is being taken within the People Plan, but it's also an important influence on our brand as an employer, when recruitment and retention are key.

Our work in the digital arena continues to develop, using digital technologies to improve people's experiences of communicating with the council, and a number of examples are set out in the report. In 2023-24 our Digiknow Partnership was shortlisted for the iNetwork Innovation Award for Outstanding Achievement in recognition of our achievements through the longstanding Digiknow partnership. The partnership was also shortlisted in the "Innovation in Partnerships" category of the 2024 MJ Achievement Awards (with the winner to be announced on 21st June 2024).

We have also continued our redesign of our www.stockport.gov.uk website with a focus on accessibility and usability to improve resident experience and ensure we are compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2.

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

Revenue Budget (Outturn)		Capital Programme	
	£000		£000
Cash Limit	37,367	2023/24 Capital Budget	25,980
Outturn	38,026	2024/25 Capital Budget	30,920
(Surplus)/Deficit	659	2025/26 Capital Budget	6,167
		2026/27 Capital Budget	2,609
<p><u>Reserves</u> Approved use of reserves balance aligned to the portfolio is £3.353m; the outturn above includes a drawdown of £2.098m plus £2.048m 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 4 (Year-End) report includes updates on all **delivery projects, programmes and other initiatives** set out in the portfolio agreement, up to the end of March 2024 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 MTFP and 2024/25 Revenue Budget were approved by the Budget Council meeting in February. This followed the announcement of the 2024/25 Final Local Government Finance Settlement by Government, the sixth annual (one-year) settlement received by the council. The settlement only confirms funding for 2024/25 with no certainty beyond this. This makes medium-term financial planning increasingly challenging. The balancing of the 2024/25 Budget included approved change (saving) proposals of £5.362m aligned to the council's transformation programme and MTFP Strategy. Prior to approval, proposals went through three rounds of member scrutiny and appropriate consultation and engagement.

The council's financial position over the medium-term is increasingly challenging with a significant savings requirement in 2025/26 to be addressed. Funding for local government is not keeping pace with increasing service costs and increasing need for support from residents and businesses. This is particularly acute in relation to services supporting vulnerable residents where significant budget pressures are being realised in-year.

The approved cumulative saving requirement is £26.438m in 2025/26 rising to £48.895m in 2027/28. Change (saving) proposals for 2025/26 and beyond are already under development as it is anticipated, in the absence of considerable additional funding announcements, that setting a balanced budget for 2025/26 will be a significant challenge. Regular updates to the MTFP retesting underpinning forecasts and assumptions will be completed during 2024/25 to mitigate the uncertainty, volatility, and risk.

The Government's Spring Budget was announced on 6th March. Government remains committed to 1% annual increase in public spending. However, this commitment is subject to the General Election and subsequent Government Spending Review. Furthermore, commentators continue to highlight risk for unprotected Government Departments such as Local Government that this may mean reductions in future funding (up to 3.8% cut in funding being modelled) to meet funding increases in other public spend areas such as Health and Education already announced and committed to.

The Government's Spring Budget also confirmed a continuing focus on public sector productivity. Councils have been asked to submit productivity plans to Government by the end of July, setting out how they will improve service performance, utilise data and technology, and reduce wasteful spend.

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 2025/26 budget-setting process. This will include the consideration of Government announcements affecting Local Government financing including the impact of the General Election and subsequent Government Spending Review.

Transformation-Led Approach

The council's financial position over the medium-term is increasingly challenging. Funding for local government funding is not keeping pace with increasing service costs and increasing need for support from residents and businesses. This is particularly acute in relation to services supporting our most vulnerable residents where the council has faced in-year budgetary pressures.

The council remains committed to its MTFP strategy to address the significant financial challenge ahead and frame the choices it needs to make about services it delivers and how they are delivered. These choices will continue to be shaped around the Borough Plan and Council Plan priorities and ambitions to design new ways of delivering services that are efficient and effective.

The transformation programme will focus on key areas that drive savings and investment impacting the MTFP. It aims to manage service demand, deliver services more efficiently ensuring value for money is achieved, support investment linked to economic growth and focus on delivering the desired outcomes for residents and businesses.

A stable financial platform to enable this transformation programme is fundamental to its delivery and address the medium-term financial challenge.

Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy

The council approved its Capital Strategy and three-year Capital Programme and 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy at the Budget Council meeting in February.

The Capital Strategy and Capital Programme continue to support the delivery of the council's ambitious capital investment plans that support the regeneration of the local economy, create jobs, and develop strong communities. Future capital investment plans are extensive and varied and will enable significant improvements to the council's infrastructure, deliver new housing and boost the local economy. The document demonstrates how the council complies with the CIPFA Prudential Code.

The Treasury Strategy continues to effectively manage the council's banking activities including borrowing, investments, and cash flows to control risks and optimise performance consistent with those risks. The council continues to operate within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Treasury Management Strategy. The Section 151 Officer envisages no difficulties complying with these indicators for current or future years. All treasury management operations continue to be conducted in full compliance with the council's Treasury Management Practices.

Reserves Policy

The Reserves Policy continues to be an important part of the council's financial management. Reserves are essential to the council's financial robustness and resilience over the medium-term. Increasing demand for services and inflationary costs require the MTFP to be underpinned by a robust reserves position. The Reserves Policy continues to give assurance that, if needed, resources held in reserves can be uncommitted to address the financial challenge. However significant and accelerated use of reserves to fund budget pressures will expose the council to resilience risk in terms of its ability to invest and absorb financial shocks. This needs to be managed over the medium-term to ensure a managed approach to the use of reserves and the impact this has on the council's continuing financial robustness and resilience.

The Reserves Policy will be updated for 2024/25 and submitted to Cabinet for approval in the September governance cycle.

Decision-making and governance

We continued with our programme of member training and the following All Member Briefings/ training sessions took place in the period between October 2023 and March 2024:

- Local Leadership and Telling Your Story (October): NW Employers (NWE) external training.
- Councillor Leadership Skills (October): NWE external training.
- Stress Management and Resilience (November): NWE external training.
- All Member Briefing: Healthwatch (November).
- Treasury Management Training (November): Link external training for CRMG and Cabinet.
- All Member Briefing: One Stockport One Future (December).
- Conflict Resolution (December): NWE external training.
- All Member Briefing: Bus Franchising/GM Clean Air Plan Proposals (January 2024).
- All Member Briefing: Local Plan Update (February – three 3 sessions).
- All Member Briefing: Elections Act (February).
- All Member Briefing: A555 (February) - for Members of the impacted wards only.
- Mental Health Training for Councillors (March): Centre for Mental Health external training (joint session with Manchester City Council).

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, which is led by our Chief Executive.

Financial systems and processes

Socitim produced a final business case identifying that a new financial system, with procurement as an additional option, would be beneficial to the council. However, their findings identified, from a financial position, this would be costly to the council. In addition, based on present local government financial pressures, and considering the SAP maintenance deadline is now expected to be extended, it was decided to put the project on hold, but in the meantime to work on in-house improvements to achieve efficiencies.

Procurement

A process map has been completed and signed off and is now embedded across all category management activity.

The Match My Project brokerage system was launched and has been fully operational since January 2024. The portal is working well in terms of both social value and corporate social responsibility (CSR) opportunities. The feedback has been positive from those organisations who have signed up and we have had some positive matches, aligned to the council’s corporate priorities. These include work shadowing arrangements for care leavers and monetary donations to support community projects. There have been four matches to date, 47 community groups and 28 business signed up and 126 hours of support committed. We are able to see at a glance what activity has been agreed and, through robust contract monitoring, understand the impact the social value is having. An update on Match My Project will be taken to the next STAR Joint Committee to share our work with other STAR councils.

In addition to this, we have also been approached by The Christie to develop work-based opportunities within the NHS. Stockport has agreed to be a test site for this project, which will focus on providing opportunities for our priority cohort groups: care leavers, young adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and veterans. The project focuses on both provision of the work opportunity and providing bespoke support for the individual, which we know is a crucial factor in the success of work-based opportunities within these vulnerable groups.

Links with the VCSFE sector continue to grow through the Stockport Social Value Round Table events. We have strong relationships with our Sector3 colleagues and are supporting them in their development of a volunteering hub, using Match My Project to facilitate this. We are active participants in events hosted by the sector, which are intended to build trust and community. The council's Neighbourhood and Inclusion Team continues to support the development of Match My Project (MMP) and there are strong links to the Stockport Local Fund (SLF), to ensure opportunities are not missed. On occasion, where the SLF has not been able to fund a community project, a solution has been identified on MMP, through a CSR offer. There is potential to develop this further.

The Social Value Engagement Toolkit continues to be reviewed on a regular basis, to ensure it reflects Stockport's strategic priorities. The information is 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. Feedback from our suppliers has been extremely positive.

Responsiveness to customers and residents

The Resident Advice and Support (RAS) team has continued to evolve its cost-of-living response and network building to offer financial support. The "tell us once" approach has been relayed to relevant VCFSE groups, charities, social prescribers, and partners, as well as to council teams and departments, meaning there is "no wrong front door" when a resident presents in financial crisis.

A network of Trusted Partners has been built around the delivery of Household Support Fund (HSF) 4, providing a targeted response as per government guidance.

The Cost-of-Living hub dealt with over 3,300 calls, showing that demand is increasing, and residents' situations are becoming more complex. Approximately 2,700 referrals have been made to around 40 services including Welfare Rights, Debt Advice, Foodbanks, Citizens Advice, Disability Stockport. They have also supported Family Support Vouchers and actively promoted the ECO4 Flex referral mechanism to support low-income and vulnerable residents through installation of insulation and heating measures.

A restructure of RAS was implemented in 2024/25 to align with anti-poverty objectives and to make the team more sustainable, achieved by sustainable funding and a refocussing of roles to bolster the responsiveness to crisis and income maximisation activities.

The tri-council renewal of the Citizens Advice commission was finalised during Quarter 4. This new specification provides a foundation to remap and reconfigure the delivery strategy for Stockport residents in line with the family hub locations and the wider anti-poverty objectives.

Income generation was bolstered with a six-month renewal of our NHS commission (via Pennine Care) to provide mental health patients with welfare rights services at locations in Stepping Hill Hospital. The aim is to assist patients maximise their benefits and income to enable them to leave hospital wards and to rejoin the community.

In Quarter 4, RAS began a re-procurement exercise to replace the existing council digital system for crisis payments; this will leverage cost and efficiency savings as well as being more user friendly for residents.

The Complaints Team continues to work with service managers to improve complaint handling across the council. Enhanced monitoring systems have been implemented to improve timelier responses and increase senior leadership oversight. Since its launch in Quarter 3, over 250 managers across the council have completed the complaints e-learning and take-up continues to be monitored. In Quarter 4, the Complaints Team transferred to a new service under the Head of Business Support and an end-to-end review of all the council complaints processes is currently underway to identify further improvements to improve effectiveness and efficiency. This review will also be linked to the new Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Joint complaints code in preparation for when this comes into force in April 2026. A new Quality Scorecard to aid learning has been introduced to improve consistency and communication with our residents. Regular reporting of complaints data and learning has been shared with SMTs and the Corporate Leadership Team.

Following a review of Business Support the Contact Centre transferred back into CSS from Place Directorate under the management of the Head of Business Support. Recruitment is underway to fill six vacant call handler posts and a full review of the service is being carried out. There was a 24% demand increase in calls received on the previous quarter, and a number of factors contributed to this, such as Open Portal, Council Tax Annual Bills and National Offer Day for School Admissions. The digital Chatbot AMI also ceased in December, possibly contributing to increased call volumes. Online forms continue to be developed – there are currently in excess of 70 forms for high volume service requests. In addition, due to improvements to the council's website and the Civic Portal (in November 2023), information has become more accessible which will impact positively on Contact Centre demand for general information.

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 1.1: Operational property costs (£/sqm)	Low (Council)	15.08 (£/sqm)	13.34 (£/sqm)	11.23 (£/sqm) (31/03/2024)		Maintain	G	↑
F&R 1.2: Property occupancy/ownership costs (£/sqm)	Low (Council)	42.99 (£/sqm)	53.5 (£/sqm)	55.04 (£/sqm) (31/03/2024)		Maintain	G	↑
F&R 1.3: Annual energy consumption (KWH/sqm)	Low (Council)	81.88 KW/h/sqm	79.91 KW/h/sqm	79.4 KW/h/sqm (31/03/2024)		Minimise	G	→
F&R 1.4: Percentage of Council Tax collected	High (Council)	97.46 %	97.47 %	97.48 % (31/03/2024)		97%	G	→
F&R 1.5: Percentage of Business Rates collected	High (Council)	95.6 %	96.48 %	97 % (31/03/2024)		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	5.4 days (31/03/2024)		7days	G	↑
F&R 1.7: Percentage of invoices paid in 30 days	High (Council)	94.1 %	89.72 %	90.6 % (31/03/2024) 34800 / 38392		95%	A	→
F&R 1.8: Percentage of invoices paid to local suppliers in 10 days	High (Council)	80.6 %	76.02 %	77.1 % (31/03/2024) 10610 / 13759		80%	A	↑
F&R 1.9i: Social Value: Controllable Local Spend	High (Council)		55.3	57 (31/03/2024)		Maximise	G	↑
f&R 1.10: Contact Centre Calls	High (Council)	85.59 %	82 %	83.3 % (31/03/2024) 168638 / 202444		82%	G	↑
F&R 1.11: Stage 1 complaints response	High (Council)	79.72 %	82.2 %	84.07 % (31/03/2024) 153 / 182		82%	G	↑
F&R 1.12: Stage 2 complaints response	High (Council)	72.88 %	90.3 %	93.75 % (31/03/2024) 45 / 48		86%	G	↑
F&R 1.13: FOI Response Time	High (Council)	89.8 %	88.1 %	90.9 % (31/03/2024) 726 / 799		95%	A	↑

Note that performance on measure F&R1.2 (relating to property ownership costs) is currently compared to the previous period. The figure in mid-year was £58.06 per sqm, where this measure was rated as 'red' and latest figure of £55.04 per sqm is an improvement on the mid-year property occupancy/ ownership costs.

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

Between April 2023 and March 2024, around £92,000 was spent providing crisis support. For the period 1 April 2023 to 31 January 2024, 2,988 awards were made (679 Discretionary Housing Payments and 2,309 crisis awards). The council has also continued to work with Trusted Partners to maximise the use of Household Support Fund in supporting vulnerable households.

Financial support and advice

Following further two phases of enrolment in February and April, the Stockport Meal Support Scheme is providing 1,296 children who requested support with a paid-for school/college meal each day of term during the 2023/24 academic year. The council is working with 194 schools and colleges, both in the borough and outside Stockport, to deliver the scheme. The scheme was approved for one academic year and will come to an end in July. Communication will be sent to schools/colleges and parents/carers to inform them of the scheme end date and signpost to other support where needed including applying for nationally funded free school meals if eligible.

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. Since October, activities have included:

- DWP Family Outreach Advisors now attending regular sessions at Family Hubs in Brinnington and Adswold.
- Promotion of financial support services at nine community-based events including a Reaching Communities event at Job Centre (October 2023), Carers Rights Day (November 2023), plus seven events delivered in libraries as part of warm space offer.
- Delivered five days of activities as part of national Talk Money Week (October 2023) with sessions held in Lancashire Hill, Edgeley, and Cheadle.
- Money Box family events held in seven libraries as part of Stockport Town of Culture.
- Supported Merseyway with the Giving Tree. Now in its fifth year, the Giving Tree raised over £85,000 worth of donated gifts, equating to more than 10,000 gifts (2022 achieved around £50,000 worth of donations). Gifts were distributed to 11 schools and local charities included OWLS, Chelwood Foodbank Plus and Emmie's Kitchen.
- Delivered a Money Max Roadshow alongside the Inclusive Jobs Fair in Offerton.
- The council's Cost of Living Hub webpage continues to provide a useful source of information. In 2023/24, it received 12,879 unique visitors.

At the Anti-Poverty Operational Group meeting on 14th May, it was reported that:

- From March 2023 to April 2024 the RAS Alliance (SMBC Resident Advice and Support Team incl. Support Funds, Welfare Rights & Debt Advice and Cost of Living Team; Citizens Advice; Stockport Support Hub; Stockport Homes) has brought residents over £21m.

- Since March 2023 over £2m debt has been written off.
- Since August 2023 on average £100,000 new income was generated every month. Since March 2023 various staff events and briefings have taken place to ensure council staff have access to financial support and advice.
- Undertaken weekly welfare rights sessions at the mental health wards at Stepping Hill hospital that support Delayed Transfer of Care (DTC) patients transition back into the community with targeted benefits and income maximisation activity

Understanding the impact of the crisis

In March 2024, Cabinet approved the Anti-Poverty 2024-27 objectives. As part of this, the council has established robust governance structures (Anti-Poverty Steering Group and Anti-Poverty Operational Group) to deliver the objectives, monitor progress and track data. Central to the data monitoring is the monthly situation report (SitRep) which tracks data across the variety of services that make up the Resident Advice and Support service (council's RAS Team, Stockport Support Hub, Citizens Advice and Stockport Homes). Alongside the GMCA Cost of Living Dashboard, the monthly SitRep is used to direct resources including the location of information, advice, and guidance.

Household Support Fund (HSF)

An estimated 30,000 households have been supported by the successful delivery of Household Support Fund (HSF) Phase 4 between April 2023 and March 2024. Highlights include:

- Immediate crisis support: Since April 2023, 796 households have been supported including discretionary food, energy and cash vouchers delivered by the council's Resident Advice and Support Team.
- A total of £2.723m was awarded in Family Support Vouchers which benefited over 8,000 families including 14,000 children.
- Direct grants: £92,000 awarded to care leavers and households with a Special Guardianship Order (SGO).
- A network of Trusted Partners was allocated £0.666m to target discretionary support at specific vulnerable cohorts including pensioners, those with a disability, unpaid carers, those living in and leaving temporary accommodation, those experiencing mental health issues and those living in or fleeing domestic abuse. Over 3,000 households have benefited from this approach, of which 48% are households with a disabled person. The approach has been recognised regionally and nationally as best practice by the GM Disabled Peoples Panel and the Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPO) England Forum.
- VCFSE investment: £17,500 allocated to support the Holiday Activity and Food Programme in May, October, and February half terms, benefiting 2,918 families. Christmas food hampers were provided to 716 families. £90,000 allocated to food banks which is estimated to have supported 3,257 households.

- Through the Stockport Local Fund (SLF), £0.234m was awarded to VCFSE organisations via three Spend Well Live Well (SWLW) grants launched in June and December 2023. This included: £0.141m awarded to organisations to deliver 49 projects that supported residents with cost of living via community activities which benefited an estimated 2,319 households; and 83 organisations received a share of £93,000 to deliver 96 warm spaces. It is estimated these warm space activities benefited 3,721 households.

Government announced the continuation of the Household Support Fund (HSF) in its Spring Budget. HSF Phase 5 will cover the period April to September (HSF4 covered 12 months April 2023 to March 2024). The council’s funding allocation for HSF5 is £2.163m.

Following engagement with key stakeholders and members, the delivery plan was submitted to DWP on 10th May. In addition, £0.500m of one-off council resources will be used to continue Household Support Fund activity beyond the grant period, to ensure that support is available to vulnerable households over the winter period.

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 2.1: Percentage of children living in low income families	Low (contextual)	14.6 %	15.7 %	17.6 % (31/03/2023)		N/A	N/A	↓
F&R 2.2: Number of children in receipt of Free School Meals	Low (contextual)	8278	8622	9,067 (31/03/2024)		N/A	N/A	↓
F&R 2.3: Percentage of households experiencing food insecurity	Low (contextual)		27 %	30 % (31/03/2021)		N/A	N/A	↓
F&R 2.4: Percentage of households in fuel poverty	Low (contextual)	11.9 %	12.2 %	12.1 % (31/12/2022)		N/A	N/A	→
F&R 2.5: Volume of unsecured personal loans	Low (Partnership)		151	148 (30/06/2021)		Minimise	G	↑

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 Recruitment Team have now filled the majority Home Support Worker vacancies (over 30 vacancies) after two successful recruitment events in Offerton and Marple Library in March 2024.

The team also held two children's social worker events (a coffee morning and open evening) in February and March at Stopford House, which resulted in an increased number of successful and applicants. There is a further event being held on Monday 29th April.

In addition, two adult's social worker events resulted in 15 vacancies being filled, which means the majority of their vacancies have been recruited to, reducing our need for expensive agency staff.

Our Jumpstart and Supported Intern scheme continue to support a range of colleagues from the local area.

Grow and Thrive

Our last Leadership Forum took place in November 2023. At the forum, Rene Barratt, a local leadership speaker, spoke to almost 500 in-person attendees on the subject of motivating your teams whilst also ensuring their wellbeing. Our next forum will be in July 2024 on the subject of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

"My Conversation," our new approach to Personal Development Reviews (PDRs), went live in March 2024. This has been led by the Chief Executive, who piloted "My Conversation" with our Corporate Leadership Team. "My Conversation" will support colleagues and managers to have an open, free flowing conversation, during which they will be able to establish a set of professional objectives linked to the Council Plan and a personal development plan for the employee. The approach will now be used by all colleagues when they reach the anniversary of their last PDR.

Feel Supported

Access to coaching has continued to increase, with 534 hours completed by our internal coaching pool in 2023/24 (compared to 355 the previous year). We have continued to grow our internal coaching pool using the Apprenticeship Levy.

A further 'Mind, Body, Bank Account' took place on 13th March 2024. This event included stalls from Life Leisure, Credit Union, and Greater Manchester Pension Fund, as well as the provision of free basic wills for employees from a local legal firm and information on electric vehicles available through our salary sacrifice scheme.

Belong Here

To further develop our work as part of the Belong Here pillar an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion survey was designed in conjunction with our employee networks during Quarter 4 2023/24 and will take place during April 2024. This, combined with a further roll-out of our Reverse Mentoring scheme, will give us further insight into the experiences of all of our colleagues and help us to continue to develop our work in this area.

Live our Values

The 2023 All Colleagues Survey provided further evidence of how our values are embedded across the council, with 92% of colleagues saying they were aware of the values (compared to 90% in 2022) and 77% saying they could see those values applied by the people they work with (compared to 73% in 2022).

In addition, a remarkable 95% of colleagues stated that they understood how their work benefits Stockport residents, up from 94% in 2022.

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 3.1: Employee satisfaction with working for Stockport Council	High (Council)		80	82 (30/09/2023)		80	G	↑
F&R 3.2: Employee engagement - overall score on 'engage to success' model	High (Council)		70	73 (31/12/2023)		70	G	↑
F&R 3.4 : % of eligible Stockport Council employees for whom a performance development review has been undertaken within the last..	High (Council)		69 %	69 % (31/03/2024)		80%	R	→
F&R 3.5: Average working days lost due to sickness absence per employee	Low (Council)	10.77 days	9.86 days	8.67 days (31/03/2024)		9.5days	G	↑
F&R 3.6: Staff turnover	Low (contextual)		14.97	9.97 (31/03/2024)		N/A	N/A	↑
F&R3.3: Apprenticeships - SMBC	High (Council)	175	172	218 (31/03/2024)		Maximise	G	↑

Commentary on performance

F&R 3.4 % of employees for whom a Performance Development Review (PDR) took place

Though short of the target for the year, the percentage of colleagues who reported a PDR in the last 12 months had risen from 63% in May 2022 to 69% in September 2023. The PDR process has now been replaced by “My Conversation”, which will allow more accurate reporting of this measure in future reports. Year-end performance was affected by a number of managers and their direct reports agreeing to postpone their PDR meetings until “My Conversation” was in place – it went live in March 2024.

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

In 2023-24 our Digital Inclusion priorities focussed on:

- Improving our reach.
- Joining up digital and financial inclusion support.
- Joining up digital inclusion and health and wellbeing support.

The Digiknow Partnership supported our residents to be more digitally included as follows:

DigiKnow Service	Figures to Date
Residents helped with digital skills	56,055
Device loan	10,974
Databank sims	1,330
Calls/texts to helpline	18,244
Donated devices	4,444
Group and 1-2-1 sessions	5,844
Total number of partners	82
Digital Friends and Champions	376
Low-cost devices sold	567

Key achievements for our VCFSE Digiknow partners to support our digital inclusion priorities to support people to access digital devices, data, and skills, include:

Age UK/Sky Digital Hub launch: in June 2023 we launched the Age UK/Sky Digital Hub in Edgeley. The hub is resourced through investment from Sky, SMBC Cabinet Digital Reserves and UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) grant funding allocated through Greater Manchester Combined Authority. The hub is one of only 10 in the country. It is open five days a week and is supporting all of Edgeley’s residents to be more digitally included.

Continued investment in Starting Point: In 2023-24 the council agreed to continue to invest in Starting Point as one of our key Digiknow partners. The investment totalled £50,000 from Cabinet Digital Reserves

Starting Point securing Big Lottery Funding: In January 2024, Starting Point was successful in their application to Big Lottery to develop a Digital Volunteer Hub. Starting Point will receive £240,000 over three years to support better training and co-ordination of our Digiknow volunteers.

Digifest and Town of Culture: Digiknow secured £20,000 of investment through Town of Culture small grants, to support all of Stockport’s residents and communities to access cultural activities with a digital focus.

Grants of up to £2,000 were made available to DigiKnow Alliance members to run events to inspire more people to get online through digital makes, sounds, moves and tastes, as part of Town of Culture. The grants attracted 23 applications, with 14 projects being awarded funds.

Stockport Digifest took place throughout February 2024 as part of Stockport's Town of Culture year. Activities included:

- Stockport Veterans were held a 'digital treasure hunt' using QR codes with young people as part of their Normandy Anniversary celebrations.
- VCFSE partners PIE ran a Future Digital day with the LISTEN Youth group, including a Digital Careers Speed dating event.
- The Goodness Collective ran a series of digital skills workshops for local women.
- Autisk ran sessions using virtual headsets for people who cannot usually get out of the house to experience virtual trips, to the beach, countryside etc.
- This culminated on 26th February 2024, with our Digifest Conference, which brought together more than 100 statutory, VCFSE and private sector partners from our One Stockport Partnership, to celebrate all things digital inclusion and to discuss the challenges and opportunities to work more collaboratively in 2024/25 to support better health, wellbeing and resilience in our communities through digital inclusion.

In 2023-24 our Digiknow Partnership was shortlisted for **the iNetwork Innovation Award for Outstanding Achievement** in recognition of our achievements through the longstanding Digiknow partnership. The partnership was also shortlisted in the "Innovation in Partnerships" category of the 2024 MJ Achievement Awards (with the winner to be announced on 21st June 2024).

We have continued our redesign of our www.stockport.gov.uk website with a focus on accessibility and usability to improve resident experience and ensure we are compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2. So far, we have looked the Homepage, Topics and Articles which are different components of the website. The work concludes over the summer with work on Profiles, Showcases and our remaining page templates. This work spans across over 5,000 pages of content that support residents to self-serve or signpost to further support.

We have improved the user experience for parents /carers and professionals in the release of our EHCP portal. The portal allows schools, parents, and carers to request an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and track its progress. The service can then communicate with the requester through the portal, improving experience and streamlining business processes.

The first releases of our single directory solution are live [Directory of Family Hubs](#) and [Directory of Libraries](#) a good example of how information is being reused for two different purposes, removing duplication and being easier to maintain. This product will continue to include SEND, Communities, Adults, Childrens, Public Health and Health Services throughout the summer.

In collaboration with Totally Local Company (TLC) we revolutionised service operations in our Environmental Service Teams by releasing our new In-Cab technology Whitespace. The technology enables our waste vehicle drivers to seamlessly record collection data throughout their route. This project was complex and included a system installation, data migration and business process reengineering to transform the service to better serve the community.

Family Context Tool

Youth offending information has now been added to the live system. Work with the NHS remains ongoing to collect GP and Health visitor information.

Single views of properties

Development is on-going. Considerable effort has been spent in completing full address matching processes for data feeding into the Mass Data Management system (the part of the data warehouse that matches bits of data to individual residents). These processes have helped handle poor-quality adult and children's social care and Youth Offending Data. This is essential to support the Supporting Families Children Social Care project which has unfortunately required full Business Intelligence development support.

Discussions have taken place with the Elections team to extract a full electoral roll monthly – this will go live after the May elections and feed into the person-matching process.

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 4.1: Digital Contacts	High (Council)	84.87 %	85.95 %	85.11 % (31/03/2024) 1059576/ 1244928		86%	A	➔
F&R 4.2: DigiKnow - individuals	High (Council)	23101	38364	56,055 (31/03/2024)		55364	G	⬆
F&R 4.3: Number of active digital volunteers	High (Council)	55	281	400 (31/03/2024)		350	G	⬆
F&R 4.4 GMS: Download speeds (areas below 30Mbps access target)	High (contextual)	2.62	2.09	2.09 (30/09/2023) 4 / 191		N/A	N/A	➔

FINANCE AND RESOURCES

2. FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MONITORING



2.1 Revenue – Cash limit

Budget at Q4 (Outturn):

	Previously Reported (Q3) £000	Increase (Reduction) £000	Budget at Q4 Outturn £000
Cash Limit Budget	32,784	4,583	37,367

Budget Changes since previously reported at Quarter 3

The portfolio's cash limit allocation was previously reported to CRMG Scrutiny Committee on 27 February 2024. Since then, the allocation has increased by £4.583m:

- A temporary adjustment of £4.336m of Covid-19 scarring from corporate contingencies to address net rent deficiencies in the Investment and Development account.
- A temporary allocation of £0.247m from corporate contingencies to fund redundancy costs and related severance payments.

Outturn:

Net Cash Limit Budget	Net Expenditure	Net Appropriations (from) Reserves	Outturn (Surplus) / Deficit Q4
£000	£000	£000	£000
37,367	42,172	(4,146)	659

The outturn position is a deficit of £0.659m, an improvement of £0.284m on the Quarter 3 forecast £0.943m deficit outturn. The deficit represents 1.8% of the revised and final £37.367m cash limit budget.

Most of the service areas have reduced their predicted spending following the implementation of the financial recovery action plan outlined in section 2.7 the previous [Q3 Budget Update Report](#) presented to CRMG on 27 February; particularly in respect of additional vacancy management and recruitment controls.

Legal Services, however, is in a significant deficit position of over £0.700m and an outlier in the general pattern of savings or cost mitigation in services. The causes include increased demand and complexity of childcare casework (often leading to court representation with Kings Counsels), and a competitive labour market for professional staff. This has been the case throughout the year.

The Investment and Development Account required additional support from the Income, Risk and Mitigation Reserve; and Covid-19 scarring contingency to balance out per the current strategy. Though this amounted to £6.251m in total, it is better by £1.142m compared with previous projections due to a range of factors including improvements to the Merseyway account; management and void costs on Stockport Exchange; and favourable bad debt provision adjustments.

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 any approved revised balances in reserves, aligned to the 2023/24 reserves policy, approved by the Cabinet on the 19th of September 2023.

Reserve Category	Reserve Narration	To be used for	Approved Earmarked Balance	Use & Change 2023/24	Year-end Balance
			£000	£000	£000
Strategic Priority	Contain Outbreak Management	Investment Plan Post-Covid	672	306	366
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	19	10
Strategic Priority	Cabinet Positive Investments	Armed Forces Engagement and Development	90	21	69
Directorate	Directorate Flexibility - CSS	Staff Surveys	21	0	21
Directorate	Directorate Flexibility - CSS	Social Value Brokerage online portal	25	10	15
Directorate	Directorate Flexibility - CSS	Temporary post Finance Transaction Team	49	0	49
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	72	72
Linked to Budget	Workforce Investment/Change	One Team People Plan Implementation	348	232	116
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	12	24
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	0	87
Corporate	Legislative and Statutory Requirements	Elections (Conducting of)	150	278	(128)
Corporate	Legislative and Statutory Requirements	Bentax Extended Enterprise License costs	176	17	159
Corporate	Revenue Grants	Local Digital Fund; DWP New Burden Housing Management Information; Finance Apprentices; GMCA Interns.	350	103	247
		Total	3,353	2,146	1,207

Approved use of the Reserves balances classed as within the F&R portfolio is £3.353m and the net appropriations from in 2023/24 is £2.146m. This included funding £0.048m of expenditure in another portfolio. In addition to £2.098m being appropriated from reserve balances in the table above, a further £2.048m use of reserves was used to bring about the outturn position described above in section 2.1. The other main balance used was £1.915m from the Income and Interest Rate Risk Mitigation reserve.

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

Scheme	2023/24 Outturn £000	2024/25 Programme £000	2025/26 Programme £000	2026/27 Programme £000
Non Education Capital Schemes				
Asset Management Plan	3,483	4,701	2,521	2,521
Disposals	45	0	0	0
Town Centre Asset Review	935	0	0	0
IT - Nutanix	48	0	0	0
TLC Fleet Vehicle Loan Facility	1,000	0	0	0
Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)	(58)	0	0	0
Adswood Depot Purchase	4,288	0	0	0
Children's Homes - External Placements	946	854	0	0
Leisure CIC - Loan Facility	810	0	0	0
Adswood Depot Redevelopment	299	2,967	3,646	88
Sub-total	11,796	8,522	6,167	2,609
Education - Schools Capital Programme				
Early Years	(8)	21	0	0
Primary Sector	4,960	1,899	0	0
Secondary Sector	3,218	6,092	0	0
Special Sector	3,774	4,562	0	0
Other Schemes	477	54	0	0
Funding to be allocated	0	9,356	0	0
Individual School Schemes	1,763	414	0	0
Sub-total	14,184	22,398	0	0
TOTAL	25,980	30,920	6,167	2,609

Resources

Resources	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
Capital Grants	10,574	19,172	0	0
Directly Funded Borrowing	8,147	3,841	3,646	88
Unsupported Borrowing	4,155	7,665	2,521	2,521
External Contributions	2,567	85	0	0
Commuted Sums	0	121	0	0
Revenue Contributions (RCCO)	537	36	0	0
TOTAL	25,980	30,920	6,167	2,609

Programme Amendments – Rephasing						
Scheme	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	Funding Source	Reason
<u>Non Education Schemes</u>						
Asset Management Plan	(1)	0	0	0	USB	Scheme funding reduction
Asset Management Plan	(304)	304	0	0	USB	Scheme rephasing
Asset Management Plan	0	(310)	671	847	USB	2024/25 AMP budget setting
Asset Management Plan	0	(227)	0	0	USB	Romiley Life Leisure Decarbonisation Grant funding adjustment
Asset Management Plan	0	227	0	0	Capital Grants	Romiley Life Leisure Decarbonisation Grant funding adjustment
Asset Management Plan	(100)	100	0	0	Capital Grants	Rephased to 2024/25
Asset Management Plan	(121)	121	0	0	Commutated Sums	Rephased to 2024/25
Asset Management Plan	(36)	36	0	0	RCCO	Rephased to 2024/25
Asset Management Plan	(42)	0	0	0	USB	Allocation to Disposals
Disposals	42	0	0	0	USB	Allocation from AMP
Town Centre Asset Review	273	0	0	0	DFB	Additional funding
TLC Fleet Vehicle Loan Facility	240	(240)	0	0	DFB	Rephased to 2023/24
TLC Fleet Vehicle Loan Facility	0	(1,160)	0	0	DFB	Loan facility expired 31/03/24
Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)	(99)	0	0	0	Capital Grants	Scheme complete
Adswood Depot Purchase	(101)	0	0	0	DFB	Scheme costs transfer to Redevelopment
Children's Homes - External Placements	(54)	54	0	0	DFB	Rephased to 2024/25
Adswood Depot Redevelopment	299	2,967	3,646	88	DFB	New scheme
<u>Education Schemes</u>						
Early Years	(21)	21	0	0	Various	Rephase
Primary	406	(406)	0	0	Various	Rephase
Secondary	(2,190)	2,190	0	0	Various	Rephase
Special	586	(586)	0	0	Various	Rephase
Other Schemes - Solar Schemes	(50)	50	0	0	Various	Rephase
Funding to be allocated	828	(828)	0	0	Various	Rephase
Individual School Schemes	(414)	414	0	0	Various	Rephase

Primary	1,147	0	0	0	RAAC / Ext Cont	Additional budget
Secondary	924	0	0	0	RAAC / Ext Cont	Additional budget
Individual School Schemes	454	0	0	0	RCCO	Additional budget
Individual School Schemes	16	0	0	0	DFB - Sch Cont	Additional budget
Oakgrove boiler - Special Primary	(81) (19)	0 0	0 0	0 0	Ext Cont various	Project abandoned Year-end adjustment
TOTAL	1,582	2,727	4,317	935		

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>During 2023/24 a significant number of projects have been completed including refurbishment works to Hatworks and Gatley Hill House, and condition works in Community Centres and Libraries. Works have also been concluded at Hazel Grove Live Leisure to replace the pool plant equipment, lighting, and ventilation, which forms part of a £1.300m investment at this site.</p> <p>As part of the estate rationalisation programme, demolition works have been completed at the White House along with other surplus buildings within parks and green spaces.</p> <p>During 2024/25 further significant investment is planned to be funded from within the AMP including redevelopment and refurbishment works at Hollins House, linked to the Marple Community Hub Project, to optimise this asset and allow GMP to relocate its services into this building.</p> <p>Three schemes are planned as part of the Project Landmark programme, which sees TLC services being relocated from Bird Hall Lane to Bruntwood Park, Enterprise House and Hollywood Park.</p> <p>Further investment is planned in the Leisure estate to deal with ongoing maintenance issues, as well as supporting operational cost reduction. This pipeline of work is being developed alongside the Life Leisure CIC.</p> <p>Major works are planned at Bramall Hall, thanks to Arts Council MEND funding, allowing a comprehensive roof refurbishment works to take place.</p>

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. The overall programme remains on track to deliver its business case.</p>
IT – Nutanix	The final component of this project has been procured and installed and the scheme can therefore be regarded as complete.
TLC Fleet Vehicle Loan Facility	<p>During Quarter 4, TLC has drawn down £1.000m of the fleet vehicle replacement loan facility for the purchase of seven vehicles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 x street sweepers, required for the street cleaning service; - 2 x tippers, required for the civils divisions; - 1 x RCV, to be used in the refuse and recycling service. <p>The loan facility expired at the end of March 2024. TLC own circa 130 service vehicles with a value of £12-15m and currently 65% of the fleet is fully depreciated. Officers are working with TLC to prepare a paper to request an extension of the vehicle loan, to enable TLC to replace the current stock of vehicles as and when a replacement is operationally required for the services that TLC deliver for the council.</p>
Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)	<p>The PSDS project is a 100% grant funded scheme encompassing projects funding energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation schemes on 10 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. Delayed final retention payments are included in financial year 2023/24.</p>
Adswood Depot Purchase	The purchase of the 8 acres of land from Landcare which had previously been leased by the council was agreed and completed on 12th May 2023. The acquisition at £4.288m allows the council to have permanent full control over the land and allow the accommodation of additional services.

<p>Children's Homes - External Placements</p>	<p>The council has begun a programme to expand its in house children's homes from two homes, to up to five homes. This will help reduce the high costs the council is facing for external placement.</p> <p>During 2023/24 the council completed its first purchase, and this home is due to open in Quarter 1 of 2024/25. Work is now ongoing to identify and purchase two further properties.</p> <p>Minor rephasing has taken place to reflect less spend being incurred on the first home, with the balances moved into 2024/25.</p>
<p>Leisure CIC - Loan Facility</p>	<p>The Leisure CIC have drawn down against the facility to invest in gym equipment at Hazel Grove and Romiley and astroturf carpets at Stockport Sport Village.</p>
<p>Adswood Depot Redevelopment</p>	<p>The Adswood Depot Redevelopment involves the comprehensive redevelopment of the Adswood site to serve as the council's main operational base for TLC and SMBC highways.</p> <p>The scheme is linked to the delivery of the Cheadle Eco Park development at the Bird Hall Lane site, with services relocating from Bird Hall Lane to Adswood as part of this scheme.</p> <p>Planning has recently been submitted for the Adswood site with a decision to be made in Summer 2024. Works are due to commence on site in January 2025 and complete during Summer 2025.</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 £14.184m spend in 2023/24.</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>The LA has been working closely with the DfE closely on two local schools who were identified as having Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) issues. The estate management team and DfE colleagues are coordinating all works and both schools are now fully operational via additional temporary buildings where required. All capital costs incurred by the LA will be reimbursed by the DfE.</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 new scheme details / commitments / updates to be reported in the future corporate scrutiny cycle.</p>