

COUNCIL
26 NOVEMBER 2020

OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Resources Portfolio.

COVID funding

2. The Council has received a further £1.508m in Covid-19 funding from the Government bringing the total to £8.682m. We have also put the first claim in for the Local Government Income Compensation Scheme for lost sales, fees and charges which was announced in July. The scheme will compensate for the loss of sales, fees and charges income for 75 pence in every pound lost after the first 5 per cent of planned income. Our first claim covered the April – July 2020 period and we anticipate receiving £4.095m in 2020/21.
3. Our current estimated COVID-19 costs are £13.7m, so with the grant received to date and the anticipated income recompense funding, assuming nothing changes, there will be a shortfall in COVID-19 funding of £0.875m in 2020/21.
4. We will continue to closely monitor the position and lobby for funding to meet this deficit gap.

Revenue Budget Management 2020/21

5. Cabinet considered the Quarter 2 Revenue Budget Management report and the Council's projected revenue reserves at the end of 2020 are £20.506 million, £1.143m higher than the initial 2020-21 budget position and include a brought forward amount of £0.274 million from 2019-20 and the rebasing exercise of £0.897 million.
6. This in year positive position is despite the projected deficit on Covid-19 funding as detailed above and the improvement will be used to support the MTFP in future years.

Furlough

7. The furlough scheme has been extended until March 2021. The Council will be using the flexible furlough scheme which allows employees to work some hours where possible. The scheme will be used in the main for Leisure and Culture staff where the premises have closed under lockdown for instance the Dolphin Centre. Hippodrome employees however will no longer be furloughed as the Council was successful in its bid for Arts Council England funding to cover the costs of the Theatre until March 2021.

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act

8. Cabinet has received an update on the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, which enables the Authority to carry out certain types of surveillance activity as long as specified procedures have been followed.

Capital Projects and Design Services Management

9. The Investment and Funding, Capital Projects and Building Design teams all continue to operate on a working from home basis to support the delivery of the Councils extensive capital programme.
10. At Quarter 2 there were 39 live significant projects reported with an expected outturn at £126 million.
11. Impacts of Covid continue to be monitored with some limitations on larger schemes in terms of on-site surveys, but desktop work has been able to continue with minimal impact. We have not seen further delay costs from COVID-19 related effects since the last report, but this remains a risk to monitor on ongoing projects.

Acquisition of the Former Lime Cells at Hopetown Lane

12. Cabinet has agreed to the acquisition of the former lime cells at Hopetown Lane. The Lime cells are of significant local historic importance linked to the Darlington and Stockton Railway and the acquisition will enable the facilitation of the building to be used as part of the Stockton and Darlington Railway 2025 Celebrations.

Annual Procurement Plan - Update

9. An update report was presented to the November Cabinet meeting, which approved a number of additional contracts to be added to the Annual Procurement Plan.

Member Meetings

10. All of the Council democratic and member decision making and business has been functioning virtually. For the most part, remote meetings seem to be going well and has become part of the new normal in these times.

Annual Canvass (Electoral Registration) 2020

11. Work on the Annual Canvass is continuing. Annual Canvass Reminder Forms were issued in August to those properties which had not responded, but which were required to do so. Visiting Officers have subsequently undertaken a personal canvass of those properties that remained outstanding during October and November to encourage the completion of overdue Annual Canvass forms ahead of the publication of the new Electoral Register on 1 December 2020.

Elections

12. Preparatory work is underway preparing for elections which are due to be held on 6 May 2021. These will be the Tees Valley Combined Authority Mayoral, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the by-election in the Redhall and Lingfield Ward

(the vacancy created by the resignation of former Councillor Sam Howarth). The impacts of coronavirus are being planned for with polling stations and staffing levels being reviewed from the perspective of keeping people safe. Publicity is planned to encourage postal voting to reduce attendance at polling stations and to ensure that people are aware of other ways of voting.

Councillor Charles Johnson
Cabinet Member with Resources Portfolio