

**COUNCIL**  
**18 JULY 2024**

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**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

**Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Outturn 2022/23**

2. We received an update on current projects and information on the delivery of the Council's Capital Programme, the financial outturn position as at 31 March 2023 and proposed financing of the 2022/23 capital expenditure as delivered by Assistant Director – Transport and Capital Projects.
3. We were updated that there had been significant enhancements made to the Council's assets in three major programme areas of schools, housing and transport which used mainly external funding as well as several other largescale schemes in the Borough. The investments delivered a wide range of improvements to the Council's assets and most importantly to Council services. This included refurbishments of Council homes, improved learning environments in schools, better traffic flows and opportunities for sustainable travel.
4. We were advised that the total capital expenditure for 2023/24 was £60.084m. The report included that the Council currently had 27 live projects with an overall project outturn value of £158.405m. Most projects have been running to time, cost and quality expectations with no foreseeable issues.
5. We discussed the Skinnergate project and the delay in demolition, we wanted clarification whether the demolition had started yet. Conversation merged into Darlington Station Demolitions, whether the compensation amount has been agreed yet and if this will affect the programme itself. The report stated that the Railway Heritage Quarter had a significant amount of money still in dispute, we wanted to understand if this would be resolved at the end of the contract.
6. We wanted officers to expand on the risks and disputes as detailed in the report for the Railway Heritage Quarter, whether the risks were unusual for this type of construction project.
7. We questioned why cost inflation is not reflected in Appendix 6 for the Library, officers confirmed it is factored in and will be reflected next time. Members also questioned if the replacement of electric/old gas Boilers scheme is part of the heat scheme that is used amongst other Councils.

**Revenue Budget Outturn 2022/23**

8. It was reported to us that the Councils General Fund reserves position at the 31 March 2024 is £17.667m, which is an improvement of £0.545m on the planned balances in the 2023-27 MTFP. This improvement related to the £0.484m underspend in the Councils 2022/23 financial results, £1059m projected Group overspends in the 2023/24 financial year and a £1.119m improvement in corporate resources. The report included a number of carry forward requests which will assist in the projected slippage and pressure of the coming year.
9. We discussed the improvements going forward and how this affects the financial situation. Members scrutinised the overspend on agency staff and how we will be able to cease this.
10. The report stated that the Concessionary Fares and Sustainable Transport, concessionary fare scheme by TVCA was refunded £0.103m, we wanted clarification around what the refund will be used on. We scrutinised the decrease on income from the crematorium and wanted to understand what has been put into effect to increase the income.
11. Discussion continued around the Council being subject to Artificial Intelligence, we wanted to understand what this meant and how it will be used. We wanted clarification around the Under Collection of Rent and Bad Debt Provision, is this normal and how this can be resolved.

### **Work Programme**

12. We have agreed our work programme for the Municipal Year 2024/25 and will continue to monitor and adapt this.
13. We proposed the following items be added to the Work Programme, Market Asset Management, Office Demand Study, Agile Working, Cost of Living Support, Artificial Intelligence and The Use of This, Section 106 Funding, Railway Heritage Quarter, Hopetown, Usage of the Council Building, and Procurement.

**Councillor Rebecca Baker**  
**Chair Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee**