



Finance & Resources Select Committee Agenda

Date: Thursday 6 April 2023

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF

Membership:

R Bagge (Chairman), D Goss (Vice-Chairman), D Anthony, M Ayub, D Barnes, M Bracken, S Chhokar, T Dixon, M Fayyaz, G Harris, I Macpherson, R Newcombe, M Walsh, S Wilson and K Wood

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Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 Apologies for absence / Changes in membership		
2 Declarations of Interest		
3 Minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2023 to be confirmed as a correct record.		5 - 8

4 Public Questions

Public Questions is an opportunity for people who live, work or study in Buckinghamshire to put a question to a Select Committee.

The Committee will hear from members of the public who have submitted questions in advance relating to items on the agenda. The Cabinet Member, relevant key partners and responsible officers will be invited to respond.

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5 Budget Performance Monitoring Q3

14:10

9 - 48

To consider the Q3 report as presented to Cabinet on 21 March 2023.

Contributors:

Councillor John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing & Resources

David Skinner, Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer)

Paper:

Budget Performance Monitoring Q3

6 Buckinghamshire Council Management of Absence and Wellbeing

14:30

49 - 74

Members of the Committee had requested that a report be brought to the Committee regarding wellbeing and absence management.

Contributors:

Councillor John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing & Resources

Councillor Tim Butcher, Deputy Cabinet Member for Resources

Sarah Murphy-Brookman, Corporate Director for Resources

Sarah Keyes, Service Director for HR & OD

Papers:

Update Report

Appendix 1: Local Authority Benchmarking Data

Appendix 2: Historical Sickness Absence

Appendix 3: Further detail on sickness absence costings
Appendix 4: Together Survey Results for Wellbeing and Resilience Index and Engagement Index (April 2020 and November 2022)
Appendix 5: Absence Management Process Workflow

7 Work Programme 15:15

Members are asked to suggest potential items so that they can be considered for the next municipal year's work programme – these can be emailed to the Chairman and the scrutiny officer.

8 Date and time of the next meeting

The date is to be confirmed and will be circulated in due course.

If you would like to attend a meeting, but need extra help to do so, for example because of a disability, please contact us as early as possible, so that we can try to put the right support in place.

For further information please contact: Chris Ward democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
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Agenda Item 3
Buckinghamshire Council
Finance & Resources Select
Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2023 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 2.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 3.10 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

R Bagge, D Goss, D Barnes, M Bracken, S Chhokar, G Harris, I Macpherson, R Newcombe, M Walsh and S Wilson

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

N Al-Sabouni, T Butcher, J Chilver, S Murphy-Brookman, J Reed, D Skinner and C Ward

Agenda Item

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Councillors D Anthony, T Dixon, M Tett and K Wood.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 1 December 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

5 BUDGET INQUIRY 2022 RECOMMENDATIONS: 12-MONTH REVIEW

The Chairman welcomed Councillor J Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, and the officers to the meeting. The Cabinet Member advised that most of the actions had been completed and invited Members to ask questions.

The following points were noted during the Committee's discussion:

- A Member was interested in what lessons the Council had learnt from the Social Work Academy. The academy cohorts were managed by Children's Social Care so further information would be provided outside the meeting.

ACTION: S Murphy-Brookman

- Due to the success of the Social Worker Academy, the Talent Academy had been rolled out across the Council. The Social Worker Academy primarily attracted people at the start of their careers, whereas the Talent Academy included people returning to work, people wishing to become managers or subject experts.
- It was noted that the timetable of key strategies had not been shared with Members on a quarterly basis however it had been published on the website in March and updated quarterly. This commitment would be reviewed.
- In terms of contingencies, the emerging position was to improve from Q2. Based on the current forecast, not all contingencies were expected to be fully utilised.
- In response to a Member's request, data relating to the cost of preparing the local plan would be circulated to the Committee.

ACTION: D Skinner

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the 12-month update.

6 PERFORMANCE REPORT Q3

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, Councillor J Chilver, to introduce the report. In the Cabinet Member's presentation, the following points were highlighted:

- The report outlined the Q3 performance with national and regional benchmarking information. 67% of indicators were green and 22% were red. The proportion of green to red indicators had remained similar, though red indicators had slightly increased from 18 to 22.
- The average web chat response time was 59 seconds, slightly below the target of 50 seconds. The service had been suspended in the last quarter due to resources needing to be redeployed. The service had restarted this quarter, with additional staff being trained to support it.
- Two red indicators related to the average processing time for new housing benefit claims and housing benefit change claims. This was due to an 11-week system closure as a result of implementing a new countywide revenue and benefits system which was now in place. The service had brought in additional resources to clear the backlog and also improved automation to enable faster processing.
- The average phone call waiting time had improved significantly and was now at 2 minutes and 42 seconds against a target of three minutes. 97% of phone calls were answered against a target of 90%. Customer satisfaction was maintained at 80%.
- The investment portfolio continued to increase, currently being at 74% against a target of 64%.
- The percentage of staff who feel happy, motivated and valued at work was 74%; an increase since the last reporting period.

The following points were noted during the Committee's discussion:

- A Member noted that the unemployment measures did not distinguish between unemployment and economic inactivity. It was suggested that a more in-depth analysis could be carried out to compare figures with other authorities in a more meaningful way. The Cabinet Member noted the suggestion.
- A number of links on the Council's website were still being hosted on the former District pages. It was noted that the process of implementing a single planning system would take around two years. The content and material on the website had been brought up-to-date.
- Housing benefits had been partially replaced by Universal Credit. In limited circumstances, people could be eligible for housing benefit rather than universal credit. Information on

these criteria would be forwarded to the Committee for information. It was noted that processing times for housing benefit claims were still a useful KPI and was also monitored nationally.

ACTION: D Skinner

- The residual waste per household indicator referred to waste that had not been recycled. The figure represented an average across households per quarter.
- The number of planning appeals referred to valid appeals, meaning any appeal that met the criteria for appeals, not the number of lost appeals. This figure excluded enforcement appeals. It was suggested that the wording should be made clearer to avoid confusion.
- A Member highlighted the importance of scrutinising performance across portfolios. The Cabinet Member noted the suggestion and advised that each portfolio holder spoke in depth about red indicators at Cabinet meetings.
- It was noted that whilst revenue and capital variances were reported, financial performance was not. The Cabinet Member noted the suggestion.
- A granular review of sickness rates was planned for the Finance and Resources Select Committee Meeting in April 2023.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the report.

7 WORK SMART ESTATES STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, Councillor J Chilver, introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- The Work Smart Estates Strategy had been approved by Cabinet in January 2023. Flexible working arrangements were now embedded across the Council, with a standard of two days a week working in the office.
- The piloted office redesign on the second floor of the Gateway office provided a higher staff-to-desk ratio and more collaborative meeting spaces. The design was well-received and would be rolled out further.
- Four floors at the Walton Street Offices (Aylesbury) and one floor at King George V House (Amersham) were being closed to reduce occupancy costs. These offices would permanently close in the future, with an application for a certificate of immunity from listing for the Walton Street Offices being progressed. Relocation of the archives, emergency operations centre and registry office would need to be addressed as a result of the closure.
- Options for a smaller office in the town centre of Aylesbury and Amersham were being explored to ensure availability of a Council Access Point for face-to-face delivery of services for residents.
- The Gateway in Aylesbury was confirmed as the Council headquarters.
- Staff were also currently being relocated from the Library in High Wycombe into Queen Victoria Road Offices.
- Consultations were being held with staff, unions and members, and updates would be provided regularly throughout the process.

The following points were noted during the Committee's discussion:

- A number of Members commended the report, work of the teams delivering the strategy and the momentum of its implementation.
- A Member asked about detailed timeframes for the project to be completed. The Cabinet Member advised that an indicative timeline could be found in the report, though an exact timeframe was not set as of yet. The Committee would receive regular updates on the progress, which would outline the timeframes for completion in more detail.
- The impact of remote working on inductions for new staff were discussed. The induction

process had been redesigned due to the pandemic, taking into account what had worked well and what processes other organisations followed. The candidate experience prior to commencing employment was identified as important. An onboarding programme has been developed with managers, providing prospective staff with workbooks prior to commencing employment. New employees were provided with a local induction plan and were also required to attend a corporate induction by the Corporate Management Team. There was also a specific induction progress in place for people working on service desks. New managers were given a corporate induction to outline ways to support their teams. Inductions were a mix between digital and face-to-face meetings, though emphasis was on face-to-face contact with other departments to develop networks and relationships.

- The new ways of working were well-received by staff. The together survey revealed that 87% of staff within the Resources Directorate felt they had a good working relationship with their manager. All Corporate Directors focused heavily on staff engagement and satisfaction to ensure consistency. Meetings were also held regularly, which included Service Directors and Heads of Service to ensure these values were implemented across departments.
- The options regarding the sale of King George V house were still under consideration. An affordable or market housing scheme might receive support from the planning department. However, it was important for some staff to remain working in Amersham, though this might not be at the current office space. The residual need would be assessed through staff consultation and consultation with service and corporate directors. There was also a requirement for Community Boards, planning and licensing meetings to occur. One Member was mindful of delays potentially impacting capital receipts.
- A Member emphasised the importance of local authority buildings as statements of local pride should a new office space be created in the county. The Cabinet Member agreed that this was an important element and would be considered in any future plans, and consultations would be held with residents and Members.
- Staff occupancy data had been collected through ServiceNow, an online platform, and through manual counts for nearly a year. The general occupancy rate was 25 to 30% across offices, and monitoring would continue to ensure any decisions were based on robust data. The Cabinet Member agreed that an extension to the Gateway may not be necessary and cost effective.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the report.

8 WORK PROGRAMME

Members were asked to note the work programme and were asked to email the Chairman and the senior scrutiny officer with further suggestions.

9 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Thursday 6 April at 2pm.



Report to Cabinet

Date:	21 March 2023
Title:	Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring Report 2022-23 Budget Adjustments to the Approved Capital Programme
Relevant councillor(s):	Councillor John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources
Author and/or contact officer:	David Skinner, Finance Director & S151 Officer
Ward(s) affected:	none specific
Recommendations:	Cabinet is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- note the report and the risks and opportunities contained within it.- approve a drawdown from the Mitigating Future Financial Risks reserves to fund a further contribution of £150k to the Staff Hardship Fund as agreed by the Senior Appointments and Pay Committee (SAPC) on 1st February 2023
Reason for decision:	To understand the financial position of the Council in respect of 2022-23 Budgets.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the Revenue and Capital outturn position for Buckinghamshire Council for the financial year 2022/23 as at Quarter 3.
- 1.2 The Council is continuing to experience significant financial pressures due to the current economic situation and the high levels of inflation.
- 1.3 Although the rate of inflation has reduced recently from a peak of 11.1% in October 2022, it continues to be at one of the highest levels in 40 years, measuring 10.1% in January 2023. This is due to oil, gas and food prices which have been affected by the

Ukraine conflict, and also energy prices which have increased by around 70% from the budgeted position. The modest drop in CPI was driven mainly by a significant fall in petrol and diesel prices, but housing, energy and food costs were above the overall rate in January, continuing to put pressure on household finances.

- 1.4 In response to the high levels of inflation, the Bank of England increased interest rates to 4% in early February 2023, which will further impact on businesses and homeowners. The Bank commented however, that the first signs were emerging of inflation beginning to reduce, as gas wholesale prices have begun to fall and supply chain issues are easing. They estimate that inflation may return to around 4% by the end of 2023 calendar year.
- 1.5 Although this would be welcome news, the Council’s budgets continue to experience pressures, particularly in Adults and Children’s social care due to increased demand and complexity of demand. In addition, in Children’s Services the market has become sub-optimal with a lack of suitable placements driving up unit costs.
- 1.6 Buckinghamshire Council is well placed to contend with these challenges, as the Council has a culture of sustainable financial management, strong processes in place to manage risk and a healthy level of reserves. However, the Quarter 3 position does highlight ongoing pressures the Council is facing related to inflation, energy prices, increase in demand for social care, Home to School Transport and Temporary Accommodation.
- 1.7 The Revenue outturn position as of Quarter 3 is a balanced position, which is an improvement from the adverse variance of £1.8m reported at Quarter 2.
- 1.8 The key areas of movement in the forecast variance from the Quarter 2 position are as follows:

Forecast variance Quarter 2	£1.8m adverse
Health & Wellbeing – reduction of £2.1m in the adverse pressure to £2.7m (£4.8m last quarter). Although there have been increased demand pressures, corporate contingency budget of £3.3m has been released to mitigate pressures and additional government funding of £1m has been received from the Hospital Discharge fund.	(£2.1m)
Education and Children’s Services – reduction of £2.8m in the adverse variance from £9.5m to £6.7m. This reflects revised staffing forecasts and maximisation of grant funding to reduce pressures.	(£2.8m)
Homelessness & Regulatory Services – an increase of £3.1m from an adverse variance of £0.8m to £3.9m due to a significant increase in demand for Temporary Accommodation, particularly nightly accommodation. Temporary Accommodation has now been escalated to a Key Financial Risk. Although the	£3.1m

budget for 2023/24 has been increased to meet additional demand, work is progressing apace to develop a more sustainable solution.	
Transport – increase of £1.4m in the adverse variance related to Home to School Transport from £2m to £3.4m due to inflationary pressures on contractors.	£1.4m
Accessible Housing and Resources – improved position in Property and Assets due to revised forecasts for rental income.	(£0.7m)
Other – minor movements in Culture & Leisure, Planning and Regeneration and Leader.	(£0.3m)
Corporate and Funding – although the overall movement is an improvement of £0.4m, within this there are some significant movements in forecast due to £3.3m of contingency released into Health & Wellbeing budgets, a further £2.4m of contingencies forecast to be released to offset pressures, £0.7m of additional interest income due to increases in interest rates, and £0.5m surplus of income relating to the reversal of the 1.25% increase in National Insurance effective from November.	(£0.4m)
Forecast variance Quarter 3	£0.0m

1.9 Within the overall position the main variances are:

- a) An adverse variance on Portfolio spend of £14.3m (£15.7m forecast at Quarter 2) offset by £14.3m (£13.9m forecast at Quarter 2) of corporate mitigations.
- b) The £14.3m adverse variance in Portfolios includes:
 - i. £2.7m pressure (£4.7m last quarter) in Health and Wellbeing from demand pressures and fee uplifts in Adult Social Care.
 - ii. £6.7m pressure (£9.5m last quarter) in Children’s Services, including:
 - £3.6m in placement budgets due to the national lack of available placements and increased complexity of need driving up unit costs;
 - £1.1m in domiciliary care and direct payments, due to continued increases in seriousness and complexity of support needed for children with disabilities;
 - £1.1m in client costs in Children’s social care due to demand pressures;
 - £0.4m adoption and special guardianship allowances;
 - £0.2m care leavers’ accommodation and allowances due to increase volumes;

- £0.6m across Children’s Social Care including transport/mileage and operational costs for fostering and adoption.
 - £0.3m across Education budgets
 - £0.6m underspend against staffing budgets in Children’s Social Care
- iii. £1.3m in Accessible Housing and Resources (£2.0m last quarter), of which £1.1m is attributable to inflation on energy costs in Property & Assets due to the exceptional price increases in 2022/23, £1m is due to pressures in Legal and Democratic Services and Insurance, offset by increased rental income of £0.7m.
- iv. £3.4m adverse variance (£2m last quarter) in Transport Services due to increased contract costs and a 3% increase given to Home to School Contracts to mitigate rising fuel prices.
- v. A favourable variance of £3.3m (no change from last quarter) in Climate Change & Environment from additional income from the sale of electricity from the council’s Energy for Waste (EfW) site.
- c) The £14.3m of corporate mitigations (£13.9m last quarter) include:
- i. £4.4m contribution from earmarked reserves to support the Council’s overall bottom line. This is as a result of £4.4m of income received in the Climate Change and Environment portfolio contributed to reserves, following partial resolution of the legal dispute with the council’s EfW contractor.
 - ii. £2.7m increased favourable variance relating to Interest on Revenue Balances (£2.0m last quarter). This reflects a higher level of cash balances than budgeted, and the recent further increase in Bank of England base rate to 4% during February.
 - iii. £0.8m favourable variance on Interest Payable budgets. This forecast has arisen due to the Council’s ability to fund any new borrowing required in year from internal borrowing rather than external PWLB borrowing.
 - iv. A forecast surplus of £0.8m in grant income budgets (£0.3m last quarter) due to additional income from unringfenced grant income £0.3m, plus a surplus of income of £0.5m relating to the reversal of the 1.25% increase in National Insurance effective from November.
 - v. Corporate Contingencies: £3.3m of contingency has been released from corporate budgets to the Adult Social Care budget. A £5.5m favourable variance is forecast on remaining contingency budgets, as

shown below, helping to mitigate variances in Portfolios. A balance of £3.2m remains in Service Risk Contingencies for any further pressures that may arise during the final quarter of the year.

- vi. If the remaining £3.2m of Service Risk Contingencies is not required in year to offset pressures in Portfolios, this could be set aside in reserves in order to mitigate risks or to fund specific future policy purposes.
- vii. Available reserve balances: in addition to the Corporate Contingencies, the “Mitigating Future Financial Risks” reserve, which was set up following outturn 2021/22 as a result of unused contingencies and the overall favourable variance, contains £9.9m. After known commitments of £6.3m, a balance of £3.6m remains which could be called upon if required.

Figure 1: Corporate Contingencies & Mitigating Future Financial Risks Reserve

2022-23 Revenue Contingencies	Budget	Released	Current Budget	Favourable Variance - Mitigating pressures in monitoring	Remaining to cover pressures that may arise in remainder of the year
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Pay & Pension Contingency					
Pay Inflation	4,245	(4,245)	-	-	-
Pay - c/fwd (non consolidated)	710	0	710	-	710
Redundancy (non unitary)	500	0	500	-	500
Total Budget Risk	5,455	(4,245)	1,210	-	1,210
Service Risk Contingency					
Inflationary Pressures (incl. NI)	2,950	0	2,950	1,500	1,450
National Living Wage	250	0	250	-	250
Adult Social Care Pressures / Demography	3,210	(2,300)	910	910	-
Adult Social Care Provider Market	1,700	(1,000)	700	700	-
Home to School Transport	1,000	0	1,000	1,000	-
Children's Services Demography	1,410	0	1,410	1,410	-
High Cost Children's Placements	500	0	500	-	500
General Contingency - Economic Uncertainty	1,000	0	1,000	-	1,000
Total Service Risk	12,020	(3,300)	8,720	5,520	3,200
Total Contingency	17,475	(7,545)	9,930	5,520	4,410
Total Variation on Contingencies				5,520	
Available balance from "Mitigating Future Financial Risks" reserve	9,900				
£1.5m recommended by SAPC to support pay award	(1,500)				
£0.15m approved by SAPC to support staff hardship fund	(150)				
Further £0.15m approved by SAPC to support staff hardship fund	(150)				
Additional £500 cost of living award paid January 2023	(2,540)				
Committed to Helping Hand scheme: £1m in 2023/24 and £1m in 2024/25	(2,000)				3,560
Total resources earmarked to mitigate further pressures					7,970

1.10 Appendix 1 provides further detail for each Portfolio and information about performance relating to overdue debts and late payments of commercial debt.

2. Revenue

- 2.1 The forecast revenue budget outturn is summarised in Figure 2. The key Portfolio variances are explained in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Overall a balanced position is forecast after allowing for £14.3m of corporate mitigations.

Figure 2: Revenue Budgets

	Budget	Y/E Outturn	Variance	Change in Variance (from Q2 Cab)
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Revenue				
Expenditure	7,700	7,200	(500)	
Income	(700)	(600)	100	
Leader	7,000	6,600	(400)	(400) ↓
Expenditure	172,000	173,900	1,900	
Income	(116,900)	(117,500)	(600)	
Accessible Housing & Resources	55,100	56,400	1,300	(700) ↓
Expenditure	41,100	57,400	16,300	
Income	(11,900)	(31,500)	(19,600)	
Climate Change & Environment	29,200	25,900	(3,300)	0
Expenditure	29,400	29,100	(300)	
Income	(21,800)	(21,500)	300	
Communities	7,600	7,600	0	0
Expenditure	8,800	8,700	(100)	
Income	(3,800)	(3,800)	0	
Culture & Leisure	5,000	4,900	(100)	(200) ↓
Expenditure	425,000	431,700	6,700	
Income	(335,200)	(335,200)	0	
Education & Childrens Services	89,800	96,500	6,700	(2,800) ↓
Expenditure	251,700	256,700	5,000	
Income	(83,700)	(86,000)	(2,300)	
Health & Wellbeing	168,000	170,700	2,700	(2,100) ↓
Expenditure	21,600	23,600	2,000	
Income	(14,600)	(12,700)	1,900	
Housing & Homelessness & Regulatory Serv	7,000	10,900	3,900	3,100 ↑
Expenditure	18,500	19,100	600	
Income	(11,000)	(11,500)	(500)	
Planning & Regeneration	7,500	7,600	100	300 ↑
Expenditure	74,000	78,300	4,300	
Income	(18,700)	(19,600)	(900)	
Transport	55,300	58,700	3,400	1,400 ↑
Portfolios	431,500	445,800	14,300	(1,400) ↓
Corporate	29,500	16,000	(13,500)	
Funding	(461,000)	(461,800)	(800)	
Corporate & Funding	(431,500)	(445,800)	(14,300)	(400) ↓
Revenue Total	0	0	0	(1,800) ↓

2.3 **Appendix 1** provides further detail on the revenue forecast outturn by Portfolio.

3. Achievement of Savings

3.1 £19.2m of savings were incorporated into the approved 2022-23 Revenue budgets. The table below shows performance against those targets.

Figure 3: Savings Targets by Portfolio

Portfolio	Target £k	Forecast £k	Shortfall £k
Accessible Housing & Resources Portfolio	2,520	2,314	206
Climate Change & Environment	2,916	2,916	0
Communities	1,900	1,900	0
Culture & Leisure	1,634	1,634	0
Education & Children's Services	713	306	407
Health & Wellbeing	3,258	3,260	-2
Housing & Homelessness & Regulatory Services	395	395	0
Leader	595	595	0
Transport	5,259	5,259	0
Total	19,190	18,579	611

3.2 Achievement of the £19.2m savings targets is summarised in the above table. Overall there is a shortfall of £0.6m as follows:

- a) Accessible Housing & Resources – a net shortfall of £206k is forecast. Delays in the Revenues and Benefits systems implementation will mean contract savings will also be delayed this year, and in recognition of this, a £206k one-off contribution from an earmarked reserve will meet the savings shortfall.
- b) Education & Children's Services – an adverse variance of £407k relating to elements of the Placement Sufficiency Strategy. The Placements budget is forecast to overspend and the Growth in Special Guardianship Orders cannot therefore be contained within the overall budget (£200k). Additionally the £250k Agency Staff saving has not been achieved. Trading with schools is now forecast to increase by £43k more than the target.

4. External Funding

4.1 The Council has been successful in obtaining additional funding during the financial year from external grant income. It is part of our financial strategy to maximise external funding through bidding for grants, provided these align with the Council's policies and priorities. Clear oversight and governance is in place to ensure that this process is effectively managed including:

- Agreed protocol for bidding for new grant funding;
- Regular reporting at Directorate and Corporate Management Team budget boards;

- Tracking of outcomes to ensure that maximum benefit is being derived from the funding;
- Agreed contributions to overheads to reflect the administration required and ensure recovery of overhead costs.

4.2 This financial year an additional £38m of grant funding has been received. This has been utilised to support the Council's essential front-line services and also to provide vital support to residents and those in need. The funding is predominantly ring-fenced for particular activities and must be spent in accordance with strict conditions of each grant.

A summary of the additional income can be found below.

Figure 4: Additional Grant Income

Type of grant	Purpose of grant	£'m
Ringfenced grants		
Homes for Ukraine	£14.73m of ringfenced funding to provide vital support for Ukrainian refugees.	14.73
Homes for Ukraine education and childcare grant	To support the provision of education and childcare for children who have entered the UK via the Homes for Ukraine visa route. The majority of the funding is allocated to Schools, with a small proportion allocated to Special Educational Needs and Home to School Transport.	4.61
Household Support Fund	To provide support to vulnerable households, particularly those with children and pensioners, to help with rising living costs including energy.	4.80
Rural England prosperity fund	Part of the levelling up agenda, with the aim of improving productivity and strengthening the rural economy and rural communities.	1.83
BOPS (Back-office Planning System) and RIPA (Reducing Invalid Planning Applications)	To fund improvements to the Planning function.	1.43
Hospital Discharge Fund	Ringfenced to support the discharge of patients from hospital settings over the winter months.	1.39
Asylum Seekers - Unaccompanied Children	Funding to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASCs) who are placed with the Council.	1.29
Rough Sleepers Initiative Round 5	To provide local support to eradicate rough sleeping.	1.17
England's Economic Heartland Business Plan Grant	To deliver the Economic Heartland Business Plan.	1.14
Shared Prosperity Fund	The aim of the funding is building pride in place and increasing life chances, with 3 key investment priorities: communities and place; supporting local business; and people and skills.	0.72
Children's Services - Adult learning Multiply	Funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) / levelling up, with the aim of improving adult numeracy.	0.66
Children's Services - DSG (Dedicated School Grant)	Top up of original DSG grant, based on updated financial information. Paid directly out to schools.	1.30
Various smaller grants	Various grants including £0.6m of Afghan resettlement funding, £0.4m towards the Health and Wellbeing portfolio, £0.3m top up to Homelessness Prevention Grant, and various smaller grants aligned to the climate change agenda.	2.63
Total Ringfenced		37.69
Unringfenced		
Extended Rights Home to School Travel	The amount awarded was higher than had been originally anticipated.	0.25
Redmond Review funding	New burdens grant reflecting additional audit costs as a result of the Redmond Review which recommended improvements to the local authority audit regime.	0.13
Total Unringfenced		0.38
Overall total		38.07

5. Capital

- 5.1 At Q3, the overall forecast capital outturn is £30.7m (21.0%) less than the capital cash limit for the year.
- 5.2 The position as reported is subject to approval of a number of in-year changes to the approved capital programme. These have been through the appropriate internal governance boards and are pending a Leader Decision

Figure 5: Q3 Budget and Outturn

Portfolio	Actuals To Date £000	Released Budget £000	Unreleased Budget £000	Total Budget £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Forecast Variance £000
Leader	10,733	7,205	10,492	17,697	16,326	(1,371)
Climate Change & Environment	6,550	4,396	7,281	11,678	12,596	918
Communities		50		50	50	(0)
Culture & Leisure	2,821	6,774	580	7,354	4,994	(2,360)
Health & Wellbeing		335		335		(335)
Transport	32,342	38,992	1,700	40,692	38,221	(2,471)
Homelessness & Regulatory Services	4,702	9,891	11	9,902	10,673	771
Education & Children's Services	18,185	37,861	1,157	39,018	24,412	(14,606)
Accessible Housing & Resources	1,986	5,497	620	6,117	4,704	(1,413)
Planning & Regeneration	1,854	14,094	2,580	16,675	6,833	(9,842)
Grand Total	79,172	125,096	24,422	149,518	118,808	(30,710)

- 5.3 This is an increase in net slippage of £17.7m compared with the Q2 position. The overall forecast variance of £30.7m includes:
- Slippage £33.2m: School Places (£3.0m), SEND projects (£3.0m), Culture, Sport and Leisure projects (£2.4m), Highways and Technical Services (£1.0m), Economic Growth and Regeneration (£9.3m) including Future High Streets (£7.9m), Housing and Regulatory Services (£1.2m) including S106 Affordable Housing schemes (£1.2m), Strategic Transport and Infrastructure (£11.0m) including HIF funded Aylesbury Electricity Grid (£7.9m).
 - Overspends £7.4m: School Places (£4.2m), Neighbourhood Services (£2.4m) including Biowaste Scheme (£1.4m), also £0.6m Waste Container costs, Housing and Regulatory Services Bridge Court (£0.6m) which is to be funded from S106.
 - Accelerated spends (£10.4m): Strategic Transport and Infrastructure (£9.0m) including South East Aylesbury Link Road (£6.8m); Eastern Link Road (£1.2m); DFG (£1.1m); A40 London Rd Wycombe NPIF (£0.6m) Highways and Technical Services (£0.3m).
 - Underspends (£14.6m): School Places (£12.4m) including Kingsbrook Secondary School (£6.7m), Strategic Transport and Infrastructure (£1.1m) including Taplow Station – project closed (£0.6m), ICT (£0.3m) Buckinghamshire Network project planned to be transferred to fund revenue reserve for software licences. Other projects (£4.2m).

5.4 Further details of the delivery of the capital programme for each portfolio may be found in **Appendix 1**.

6. Other options considered

6.1 None arising directly from this report.

7. Legal and financial implications

7.1 This is a Finance report and all the financial implications are included in the report.

7.2 There are no legal implications arising from the report.

8. Corporate implications

8.1 Actions resulting from consideration of this report may influence future expenditure in areas of concern / interest.

9. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

9.1 Not applicable.

10. Communication, engagement & further consultation

10.1 Not applicable.

11. Next steps and review

11.1 The 2022-23 Outturn position will be brought to Cabinet in June.

12. Background papers

12.1 Appendix 1 – Portfolio level summaries.

13. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by email [democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk].

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Appendix 1

Further detail by Portfolio, Outstanding Sundry Debt and Late Payment information

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Please note that the rounding of numbers gives rise to minor differences in the totals for each Portfolio between the covering report and this appendix.

1. Leader

1.1 Leader Revenue: Budget £7.0m, Forecast £6.6m, Var -£0.4m

	Budget	Y/E Outturn	Variance	Change in Variance (from Q2 Cab) £000
	£000	£000	£000	
Expenditure	500	420	(80)	
Income	0	0	0	
Chief Executives Office	500	420	(80)	(80) ↓
Expenditure	2,360	2,410	50	
Income	(120)	(100)	20	
Economic Growth & Regeneration	2,240	2,310	70	(50) ↓
Expenditure	4,460	4,220	(240)	
Income	(550)	(500)	50	
Policy & Communications	3,910	3,720	(190)	(90) ↓
Expenditure	360	180	(180)	
Income	0	0	0	
Strategic Infrastructure	360	180	(180)	(130) ↓
Leader	7,010	6,630	(380)	(350) ↓

- Leader Revenue is reporting a variance of £0.38m.
- Policy & Communications £0.19m underspend, primarily related to staffing underspends due to vacancies.
- Economic Growth £0.07m adverse variance due to £0.05m increase project work on economic growth and a small £0.02m drop off in markets income, Income generation strategies due to be reviewed as part of the markets strategy; offset by favourable variance in staffing in Regeneration, as budgets are managed flexibly within the Economic Growth and Regeneration team.
- Strategic Infrastructure £0.18m favourable variance due to staffing vacancies in the team.

1.2 **Leader Capital: Budget £17.7m, Forecast £17.9m Var +£0.2m**

Service/Project	Actuals to Date £000	Released Budget £000	Unreleased Budget £000	Budget £000	Released Forecast £000	Unreleased Forecast £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Forecast Variance £000
Economic Growth								
Rural Broadband	112	1,323		1,323	1,323		1,323	-
Economic Growth Total	112	1,323		1,323	1,323		1,323	-
Strategic Infrastructure (HIF)								
A355 Improvement Scheme (Wilton Park)	48	397		397	397		397	-
Abbey Barn - HIF / S106	134	50		50	50		50	-
Aylesbury Eastern Link Road	966	274		274	1,250		1,250	976
Creditor Reserve Payments		194		194	194		194	-
Cycle Infrastructure	8	840	336	1,176	805		805	(371)
Grid Reinforcement Works	2,043		9,976	9,976	2,061		2,061	(7,915)
Marginal Viability Works			181	181				(181)
Princes Risborough Relief Road	747	876		876	1,005		1,005	129
SEALR (South East Aylesbury Link Road)	5,435	2,000		2,000	9,815		9,815	7,815
Stoke Mandeville Relief Road / SEALR II	234	1,250		1,250	980		980	(270)
Strategic Infrastructure (HIF) Total	9,615	5,882	10,492	16,374	16,558		16,558	184
Grand Total	9,728	7,205	10,492	17,697	17,881		17,881	184

- a) There is £1.1m of accelerated spend reported: £1.0m on Eastern Link Road, as design and planning work continue apace; £0.1m on Princes Risborough HIF from expected early works and a prospective land acquisition aiming to be delivered before the end of the year.
- b) Slippage is reported on Cycle Infrastructure projects (£0.4m) due to ongoing discussions with landholders on the High Wycombe cycleway scheme; Marginal Viability Works (£0.2m) as funding is not yet committed; Grid Reinforcement Works reporting slippage (£7.9m) as land is identified for the works.
- c) The budgets for SEALR is due to be reprofiled once the funding reallocation from Homes England, and DfT grant is confirmed, in line with the HIF Link road paper agreed at Cabinet in December 2022.

2. Accessible Housing and Resources Portfolio

2.1 Accessible Housing and Resources Revenue: Budget £55.1m, Forecast £56.4m, Var +£1.3m

	Budget	Y/E Outturn	Variance	Change in Variance (from Q2 Cab) £000
	£000	£000	£000	
Expenditure	11,680	11,820	140	
Income	(370)	(510)	(140)	
Business Operations	11,310	11,310	0	0
Expenditure	640	640	0	
Digital	640	640	0	(10) ↓
Expenditure	98,690	98,810	120	
Income	(89,650)	(89,430)	220	
Finance	9,040	9,380	340	40 ↑
Expenditure	5,580	5,650	70	
Income	(830)	(900)	(70)	
Human Resources & Organisational Development	4,750	4,750	0	0
Expenditure	14,140	14,150	10	
Income	(100)	(110)	(10)	
ICT	14,040	14,040	0	0
Expenditure	16,200	17,420	1,220	
Income	(1,500)	(1,520)	(20)	
Legal & Democratic Services	14,700	15,900	1,200	80 ↑
Expenditure	20,960	22,020	1,060	
Income	(24,470)	(24,980)	(510)	
Property & Assets	(3,510)	(2,960)	550	(530) ↓
Expenditure	570	240	(330)	
Income	40	30	(10)	
Resources Director and Bus Mngmnt	610	270	(340)	(40) ↓
Expenditure	3,560	3,180	(380)	
Income	(60)	(70)	(10)	
Service Improvement	3,500	3,110	(390)	(240) ↓
Accessible Housing & Resources	55,080	56,440	1,360	(700) ↓

a) The main revenue variances are as follows:

- i. £0.3m adverse variance in Finance, being income shortfall on Council Tax/Business Rates Court costs recovered, pressure arising from optimistic legacy income budget plus reduction in caseloads processed during Phase 2 of the single Revenues & Benefits system implementation. Movement adverse £0.04m.
- ii. £1.2m adverse variance in Legal & Democratic Services. **Legal Services** £1.0m adverse variance mainly being increase in Disbursements commissioned across client directorates. **Business Assurance** £0.7m adverse variance due to increased insurance premiums, outsourced audit and fraud activity to cover vacant posts.

Democratic Services £0.5m favourable variance due to staff vacancies and reduction in Member costs and allowances.
Movement adverse £0.08m.

- iii. £0.5m adverse variance in Property & Assets. Previous adverse variance of £1.1m from projected increases in Energy Prices due to inflation has improved by £0.5m due to £0.3m of income increase from rent reviews in Qtr. 3 and Qtr. 4, and £0.2m drawdown on income from ESCROW account held for voids on Friar's Square.
- iv. £0.3m favourable variance within Resources Directorate & Business Management Supplies and Services, being savings currently used to offset income shortfall on Revenues & Benefits Council Tax/Business Rates Court costs recovered. These savings have been identified in advance of full-service reviews, and a further saving of £0.4m is to be set aside in a reserve to partly fund an ERP solution in future years.
Movement favourable £0.04m.
- v. Service Improvement £0.39m favourable variance, arising from staff vacancies and funding from Homes for Ukraine Visa Scheme.
Movement favourable £0.24m.

2.2 Accessible Housing and Resources Capital: Budget £6.1m, Var (£1.4m)

Service/Project	Actuals to Date £000	Released Budget £000	Unreleased Budget £000	Budget £000	Released Forecast £000	Unreleased Forecast £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Forecast Variance £000
ICT								
Buckinghamshire Network	434	2,026		2,026	1,749		1,749	(276)
Delivery of Technology Strategy	296	819	66	884	516	17	533	(351)
Device Refresh & Windows 10	294	57	250	307	174	250	424	117
Mobile Phone Refresh	171		200	200		200	200	-
Social Care Systems		200		200	145		145	(55)
ICT Total	1,194	3,101	516	3,617	2,584	467	3,051	(566)
Property & Assets								
Agricultural Estate	85	200		200	120		120	(80)
Conversion Old Wycombe Library	55	308		308	100		100	(208)
Corporate Investment Portfolio	229	639	79	718	370	269	639	(79)
Enhancement of Strategic Assets	5	200		200				(200)
Property Management Programme	407	1,048		1,048	768		768	(280)
Rowley Farm	11		25	25		25	25	-
Property & Assets Total	792	2,396	104	2,500	1,358	294	1,652	(847)
Grand Total	1,986	5,497	620	6,117	3,942	761	4,704	(1,413)

- a) ICT Capital programme main variances are as follows:
- i. Buckinghamshire Network project (£0.3m) of budget to be transferred to fund revenue reserve for software licences. Actuals are currently lower than forecast due to delay in delivery of computer components. Movement £0.
 - ii. Delivery of Technology Strategy attributed mainly (£0.2m) to underspend on EDRMS, based on the decision to continue with existing solution OTCS following discovery work; slippage on Datacentres (£0.05m) and on unreleased budgets (£0.05m). Movement £0.01m.
- b) Property & Assets capital projects are forecasting a variance of (£0.9m), of which (£0.5m) is from slippage on the following projects: construction project delays on roof works at Vale Retail Park (due to tender delays), the corporate maintenance programme, and the enhancement of Tilehouse (still in feasibility stage), Rowley Farm barn refurbishment (due to planning delays), and slippage on how much maintenance is required on Friar's Square this year (less than previously expected). The Agricultural Estate Maintenance budget has not needed to be fully utilised this year, giving (£0.1m) underspend which will roll forward into next year. A further (£0.2m) is a likely underspend on the final retention amounts due for Old Wycombe Library conversion project.

3. Climate Change and Environment

3.1 **Climate Change and Environment:** Revenue Budget £29.2m, Forecast £25.9m, Favourable Variance **£3.3m**

	Budget	Y/E Outturn	Variance	Change in Variance (from Q2 Cab) £000
	£000	£000	£000	
Expenditure	3,610	3,740	130	
Income	(1,740)	(1,900)	(160)	
Environment	1,870	1,840	(30)	(30) ↓
Expenditure	3,000	3,080	80	
Income	(380)	(350)	30	
Street Cleaning	2,620	2,730	110	0
Expenditure	34,460	50,540	16,080	
Income	(9,740)	(29,230)	(19,490)	
Waste	24,720	21,310	(3,410)	(10) ↓
Climate Change & Environment	29,210	25,880	(3,330)	(40) ↓

- a) EFW & Residual Waste - Budget -£0.1m, Var Favourable £4.1m
- i. £14.5m additional electricity income including the impact of electricity generator levy from 1st January 2023, 10 day unexpected plant outage in November and 7 days in January 23, and the impact of reduced market rates on forecast.
 - ii. £4.4m receipt related to legal dispute on third party EFW income for previous years.
 - iii. £15.4m transfers to reserves in excess of budgeted level (an adverse variance), comprising:
 - £4.4m related to the unbudgeted prior-year income referred to above.
 - £11.0m related to additional in-year EFW income. This figure is being used to balance the overall Council position and may move in future months
- b) Grounds Maintenance – Budget £0.8m, Var Adverse £0.1m
Overspend due to additional grant awards to voluntary organisations and unachievable budget income streams in relation to internal recharges and miscellaneous licenses offset with savings due to staff vacancies.
- c) Household Waste Recycling Centres - Budget £3.2m, Var Favourable £0.1m
Underspend due to savings achieved from the current 9 site contract as 10 site contract envisaged to commence in January 2023 and additional re-use income and commodities income.

- d) Waste Collection – Budget £16.6m, Var Adverse £0.9m
Pressure arising from dry mixed recycling market price volatility from October 2022 and additional contract operational costs from the paper sort facility back dated to April 2021. These additional identified pressures will be met from third party income waste received from previous year from EfW.
- e) Waste Disposal – Budget £2.7m, Var Adverse £0.1
Overspend due to inflationary pressures on current costs in Green Food Bulky Wood (GFBW) contract.
- f) Environment – Budget £1.8m, £0.03m Favourable variance
Income is £0.1m higher than budgeted which includes grants for Tree Planting (which are passported through to external organisations) and biomass boiler and feed in tariffs. This is offset by costs accordingly.

3.2 Climate Change & Environment Capital: Budget £11.7m, Var £1.0m

Service/Project	Actuals to Date £000	Released Budget £000	Unreleased Budget £000	Budget £000	Released Forecast £000	Unreleased Forecast £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Forecast Variance £000
Climate Change & Air Quality								
Climate Change Strategy		167		167	20		20	(147)
Climate Change & Air Quality Total		167		167	20		20	(147)
Flood Management								
Flood Defence Schemes	356	1,239	158	1,397	815		815	(582)
Strategic Flood Management		100		100				(100)
Flood Management Total	356	1,339	158	1,497	815		815	(682)
Waste								
Aylesbury Waste Vehicles Replacement	141		2,471	2,471	2,471		2,471	-
Biowaste Treatment	2,217	2,483		2,483	3,883		3,883	1,400
Buckingham HRC & Waste Transfer Station			275	275			0	(275)
Pembroke Rd Depot Welfare Facilities	11	111		111	111		111	-
Recycling Centre Welfare Facilities	218	254		254	254		254	-
Recycling Centres Drainage EA Compliance	8	224		224	224		224	-
Recycling Centres Vehicles & Plant			360	360		360	360	-
Recycling Initiatives & Waste Containers	1,040	343		343	965		965	622
Southern Waste Contract - Vehicles	2,339		4,018	4,018	3,418		3,418	(600)
Southern Waste Contract-Depot Improvmt	162	(525)		(525)	75		75	600
Waste Management Vehicles & Plant	57							-
Waste Total	6,193	2,890	7,124	10,014	11,401	360	11,761	1,747
Grand Total	6,550	4,396	7,281	11,678	12,236	360	12,596	918

- a) Biowaste Treatment project is expected to be over by £1.4m due to increased costs of fuel, steel and contaminated soil disposal. The build is anticipated to be completed this financial year. Also £0.6m cost increase in relation to additional waste containers within Southern Waste. Both these pressures will be funded from in-year revenue and reserves contributions. Slippage of (£0.3m) on unreleased Buckingham HRC project budget which is delayed due to the capital moratorium and will be determined further by CCIB for commencement date.
- b) (£0.6m) of slippage on Flood alleviation schemes; delays in the installation of culverts at Pednormead and Marlow.
- c) (£0.1m) of slippage on Climate Change strategy projects; plans are now in place and approved for Solar Panel installation on some Council buildings, which will start to show accelerated spend early next year.

4. Communities

4.1 Communities Revenue: Budget £7.7m, Forecast £7.7m, Var £0.04m

	Budget	Y/E Outturn	Variance	Change in Variance (from Q2 Cab) £000
	£000	£000	£000	
Expenditure	3,190	3,010	(180)	
Income	0	0	0	
Community Boards	3,190	3,010	(180)	(170) ↓
Expenditure	3,530	3,380	(150)	
Income	(1,530)	(1,400)	130	
Community Safety	2,000	1,980	(20)	170 ↑
Expenditure	20,550	20,600	50	
Income	(19,790)	(19,760)	30	
Community Support	760	840	80	(30) ↓
Expenditure	330	330	0	
Resilience Services	330	330	0	0
Expenditure	1,840	1,730	(110)	
Income	(470)	(370)	100	
Special Expenses	1,370	1,360	(10)	(10) ↓
Communities	7,650	7,520	(130)	(40) ↓

- Communities Revenue is reporting £0.02m underspend.
- Localities & Strategic Partnerships reporting £0.08m overspend due to 4th quarter Citizens Advice Bureau payment not accrued in FY22.
- Community Safety staffing related underspends offset by a shortfall in car park income and additional project spend.
- Community Boards £0.07m underspend and £0.06m favourable movement from Q2 as the Boards have declared an underspend due to 22/23 anticipated spend.

4.2 Communities Capital: Budget £0.05m, Var £0.0m

Service/Project	Actuals to Date £000	Released Budget £000	Unreleased Budget £000	Budget £000	Released Forecast £000	Unreleased Forecast £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Forecast Variance £000
Community Safety								
CCTV Projects		50		50	50		50	(0)
Community Safety Total		50		50	50		50	(0)
Grand Total		50		50	50		50	(0)

- On target

5. Culture and Leisure

5.1 Culture and Leisure Revenue: Budget £5.0m, Var £0.1m

	Budget	Y/E Outturn	Variance	Change in Variance (from Q2 Cab)
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure	8,790	8,720	(70)	
Income	(3,780)	(3,810)	(30)	
Culture & Leisure	5,010	4,910	(100)	(90) ↓
Culture & Leisure	5,010	4,910	(100)	(90) ↓

a) Arts & Culture - Budget £1.4m, Var Favourable £0.1m

Vacancies within Arts & Culture and reduced spend on project work within Culture & Learning.

5.2 Culture and Leisure Capital: Budget £7.4m, Var (£2.4m)

Service/Project	Actuals to Date £000	Released Budget £000	Unreleased Budget £000	Budget £000	Released Forecast £000	Unreleased Forecast £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Forecast Variance £000
Country Parks								
Country Parks Visitors Centre			100	100		20	20	(80)
South Bucks Country Pk Leisure Facility	(117)	500		500	500		500	-
Country Parks Total	(117)	500	100	600	500	20	520	(80)
Leisure Centres								
Chalfont & Chesham Leisure Centres	77	(60)		(60)	(65)		(65)	(5)
Chilterns Lifestyle Centre	1,078	1,453		1,453	1,453		1,453	-
Leisure Centres Maintenance	143	605		605	605		605	-
Leisure Centres Total	1,298	1,997		1,997	1,992		1,992	(5)
Libraries								
Libraries Enhanced Technology			100	100				(100)
Libraries Self-Service Replacement	12	124		124	124		124	-
Wendover Library Project		50	380	430				(430)
Libraries Total	12	174	480	654	124		124	(530)
Parks & Play Areas								
Parks & Play Areas	245	1,339		1,339	303		303	(1,036)
Parks & Play Areas Total	245	1,339		1,339	303		303	(1,036)
Sport & Leisure Projects								
S106 Funded Projects	1,383	2,764		2,764	2,055		2,055	(710)
Sport & Leisure Projects Total	1,383	2,764		2,764	2,055		2,055	(710)
Grand Total	2,821	6,774	580	7,354	4,974	20	4,994	(2,360)

Note: negative actuals relate to accruals and retentions – where the value of work done / completed has been charged to last year, but invoices not yet paid.

- a) Most projects are forecast to be mostly fully spent with risks being monitored closely through the Service Project Boards. Parks & Play area slippage of £1.03m for play area replacement projects due to long lead in times for equipment and a £0.06m underspend variance due to completion of projects planned for 23/24; slippage of £0.71m from S106 Funded projects mainly being the Secret Window project; slippage of £0.53m for Libraries due to delays in testing enhanced technology at the new Amersham Library and the Wendover Library project to be completed next financial year; and slippage of £0.1m in Country Parks due to accessing project support.

6. Education & Children's Services

6.1 Education & Children's Services Revenue: Budget £89.8m, Forecast £96.5m, Var +£6.7m

	Budget	Y/E Outturn	Variance	Change in Variance (from Q2 Cab) £000
	£000	£000	£000	
Expenditure	81,400	87,090	5,690	
Income	(6,510)	(5,850)	660	
Children's Social Care	74,890	81,240	6,350	(2,870) ↓
Expenditure	26,920	26,130	(790)	
Income	(12,040)	(10,910)	1,130	
Education	14,880	15,220	340	0
Expenditure	316,690	318,430	1,740	
Income	(316,690)	(318,430)	(1,740)	
Education - Dedicated Schools Grant	0	0	0	0
Education & Children's Services	89,770	96,460	6,690	(2,870) ↓

- An adverse variance of £6.7m is projected against the budget of £89.8m. This is a favourable movement of £2.9m compared with the previous quarter.
- An adverse variance of £6.4m is reported against the budgets for Children's Social Care and an adverse variance of £0.3m against budgets for Education
- The factors contributing to the significant overspend for Children's Social Care are:
 - Increase in demand experienced by front line social care teams leading to the requirement for additional staffing in order to manage caseloads. Due to difficulties in recruitment and a reduction in the numbers of agency staff forecast for the year there is a favourable variance of £0.6m against staffing budgets across Children's Social Care. This is a favourable movement of £2.8m compared with the previous quarter.
 - National position in relation to the sufficiency of placements for children looked after is leading to a shortage of available placements and very high unit costs of those placements that can be accessed. This is also resulting in the need to develop creative solutions to support young people with complex needs and manage risk. Placement budgets for children looked after are projected to overspend by £3.6m for the financial year, a reduction of £0.1m compared with the previous quarter. Budgets for adoption and Special Guardianship Order allowances are also projected to overspend by £0.4m and operational costs for foster care and adoption by £0.2m.

- f) The costs of accommodation and allowances for care leavers are forecast to exceed the budget by £0.2m.
- g) Continued increases in seriousness and complexity of support needed for children with disabilities. An adverse variance of £1.1m is projected against budgets for domiciliary care and direct payments.
- h) Client cost budgets, to support children in need, are projected to be £1.0m overspent, and client costs for children with disabilities are projected to exceed the budget by £0.1m. This forecast reflects the increase in demand for support experienced by front line teams.
- i) Other pressures of £0.4m across Children's Social Care.
- j) An adverse variance of £0.3m across Education budgets includes pressures against the premature retirement cost budget for schools and legal/mediation costs. These pressures are partially offset by an underspend against staffing budgets.

6.2 Education & Children's Services Capital: Budget £39.0m, Var (£14.6m)

Service/Project	Actuals to Date £000	Released Budget £000	Unreleased Budget £000	Budget £000	Released Forecast £000	Unreleased Forecast £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Forecast Variance £000
Children's Homes			499	499				(499)
Children's Social Care Total			499	499				(499)
Primary School Places	(58)	5,036	1,517	6,553	1,881		1,881	(4,672)
Provision for Early Years	0	83	101	183	10		10	(173)
Provision for Special Educational Need	772	2,261	2,131	4,391	1,286	50	1,336	(3,055)
School Access Adaptations	97	151		151	151		151	-
School Property Maintenance	4,246	5,625		5,625	5,625		5,625	(0)
School Toilets	156	217		217	217		217	-
Secondary School Places	12,972	24,489	(3,090)	21,399	15,293	(100)	15,193	(6,206)
Schools Total	18,185	37,861	658	38,519	24,462	(50)	24,412	(14,107)
Grand Total	18,185	37,861	1,157	39,018	24,462	(50)	24,412	(14,606)

- a) A favourable variance of £14.6m is forecast against the Education and Children's Services capital programme.
- b) Slippage on Children's services Capital programme is forecast to be £6.4m. slippage includes:
 - SEND Projects £3.0m, including slippage against the unallocated budget of £2.1m
 - Primary school projects slippage of £1.1m
 - Secondary school projects slippage of £1.8m
 - Children's Social Care residential provision £0.5m
- c) Underspends of £12.4m are forecast against the programme, these contingencies are to be returned to the programme. The most significant underspends are as follows:
 - Kingsbrook Primary School £1.7m underspend
 - Maids Moreton £0.6m
 - Kingsbrook Secondary School current forecast underspend £6.7m
 - Chiltern Hills Academy £0.9m
 - Other secondary school projects £0.7m
 - Unallocated primary school budget £1.5m underspend
 - SEND projects £0.1m
 - Early Years projects £0.1m
- d) Overspend £4.2m including £3.0m of budget phasing, £0.9m against Chesham Grammar School and £0.3m against Great Missenden.

7. Health & Wellbeing

7.1 Health & Wellbeing Revenue: Budget £168m, Forecast £171.1m Var **+£2.7m**

	Budget	Y/E Outturn	Variance	Change in Variance (from Q2 Cab)
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure	228,580	233,540	4,960	
Income	(60,560)	(62,820)	(2,260)	
Adult Social Care	168,020	170,720	2,700	(2,060) ↓
Expenditure	23,100	23,170	70	
Income	(23,100)	(23,170)	(70)	
Public Health	0	0	0	0
Health & Wellbeing	168,020	170,720	2,700	(2,060) ↓

- Adult Social Care shows an adverse variance of +£2.7m relating predominately to Residential +£1.9m Nursing +£0.1m and Supported Living +£2.8m, Day Care £0.8m and Dom Care £1.6m. This is partly offset by favourable variances on Direct Payments, employee costs and additional income. The release of £3.3m of contingency has been included in the budget. Further mitigations include -£1.6m remaining contingency, -£0.25m Direct Payment additional clawbacks, and the potential use of further contingency to cover inflation and National Living Wage pressures from providers.
- The growth pressure in Nursing has been partly offset by the use of £2.3m contingency. The number of clients coming into Nursing care from Discharge to Assess beds continues to increase, due to the pressures in the hospitals and is being carefully monitored.
- Residential, has shown significant increases in demand (+23 Full time equivalents) and unit cost (further 1%) in the last few months; so is now showing an adverse variance of +£1.9m.
- The adverse variance in Supported Living is +£2.8m, this relates to growth in client numbers this year (+16 Full time equivalents), 2% above inflation in terms of the growth in unit cost and existing clients receiving more care. £1m of contingency has been included in the budget since Q2 which has reduced the forecast overspend
- There are adverse variances of +£0.8m on external Day Care and £1.6m on Dom Care, these relate to an increase in clients and individual clients requiring more care.

- f) There are still a significant number of risks linked to the forecast in particular inflationary pressures from providers, the future funding of Discharge to Assess and the risk of additional growth in client numbers, complexity and one-off price rises.

7.2 **Health & Wellbeing Capital: Budget £0.34m, Var (£0.34m)**

Service/Project	Actuals to Date £000	Released Budget £000	Unreleased Budget £000	Budget £000	Released Forecast £000	Unreleased Forecast £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Forecast Variance £000
Adult Social Care								
Respite Care		335		335				(335)
Adult Social Care Total		335		335				(335)
Grand Total		335		335				(335)

- a) The approved budget for 2022-23 includes £1.3m of adult social care equipment funded from DFG. This is included within the overall Disabled Facility Grant budget line in the capital programme, currently reported under Housing & Homelessness.
- b) The budget of £335k for Respite Care relates to monies received from the NHS for the project which will need to be repaid. There is not expected to be any spend in the current year.

8. Housing & Homelessness & Regulatory Services

8.1 Housing & Homelessness & Regulatory Revenue: Budget £7.0m, Var £3.9m

	Budget	Y/E Outturn	Variance	Change in Variance (from Q2 Cab)
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure	10,940	12,590	1,650	
Income	(7,620)	(5,490)	2,130	
Housing & Homelessness	3,320	7,100	3,780	3,070 ↑
Expenditure	10,650	10,950	300	
Income	(6,990)	(7,170)	(180)	
Regulatory Services	3,660	3,780	120	30 ↑
Housing & Homelessness & Regulatory Serv	6,980	10,880	3,900	3,100 ↑

- a) Temporary Accommodation: The £0.8m adverse variance reported at Qtr 2 has increased to £3.8m for two reasons: the previous forecast did not include the unmet funding gap between Housing Benefit payments and Government Subsidy, and demand has increased from 145 households in nightly paid accommodation to 190 in November. December saw an increase to 230 due to the cold weather protocol being instigated; additional Homelessness Prevention Grant of £0.2m was received from Government in December to contribute to the winter pressures, and will be required to fund the numbers spike seen in December. Temporary Accommodation is now escalated as a Key Financial Risk, the budget is due to be increased via the MTFP, and work progresses apace to acquire additional cheaper Temporary Accommodation.
- b) £0.1m net adverse variance in Regulatory Services: £0.1m adverse variance in Trading Standards from staff pay award and reduction in primary authority income post-COVID (expected to recover by 2024); £0.4m staffing cost adverse variance in Coroners for additional administrative staff to work on caseload; £0.1m favourable variance in Registrars from increases in ceremony income; £0.1m adverse variance in Environmental Health from agency staff costs.

8.2 Housing & Homelessness & Regulatory Capital: Budget £9.9m, Var £0.8m

Service/Project	Actuals to Date £000	Released Budget £000	Unreleased Budget £000	Budget £000	Released Forecast £000	Unreleased Forecast £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Forecast Variance £000
Affordable Housing								
Affordable Housing - S106 Funded	7	2,103	42	2,145	2,310	(1,306)	1,004	(1,141)
Affordable Housing Total	7	2,103	42	2,145	2,310	(1,306)	1,004	(1,141)
Homelessness								
Temporary Accommodation	1,036	1,188		1,188	1,788		1,788	600
Homelessness Total	1,036	1,188		1,188	1,788		1,788	600
Housing								
Disabled Facility Grants	2,891	3,848		3,848	4,957		4,957	1,109
Enabling Schemes	(864)	31	(31)					-
Raynes Avenue Park Drainage Replacement		152		152	20		20	(132)
Housing Total	2,028	4,032	(31)	4,000	4,977		4,977	977
Cemeteries & Crematoria								
Cemeteries & Memorial Gardens	44	317		317	313		313	(3)
Chiltern & Bierton Crematoria	1,588	2,252		2,252	2,591		2,591	338
Cemeteries & Crematoria Total	1,632	2,569		2,569	2,904		2,904	335
Grand Total	4,702	9,891	11	9,902	11,979	(1,306)	10,673	771

- a) (£1.1m) of slippage reported on the allocation of affordable housing funding, pending member decision on the use of the funding.
- b) £1.1m accelerated spend reported on Disabled Facilities grant: £4.1m grant received in 22-23 to be fully utilised and carried forward funding from 21-22 to fund the remaining expenditure. Expenditure covers mandatory adaptations, adult social care equipment and healthy homes on prescription scheme, which have all had accelerated spend following a backlog during COVID.
- c) Cemeteries & Crematoria: £0.3m over budget for Crematory and Hampden Chapel refurbishment/cremator replacement and building projects due to historical building defects with increased costs for furniture and crematory equipment and staffing – to be funded from reserves.

9. Planning and Regeneration

9.1 Planning & Regeneration Revenue: Budget £7.53m, Outturn £7.65m, Var **£0.1m**

	Budget	Y/E Outturn	Variance	Change in Variance (from Q2 Cab)
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure	1,170	1,090	(80)	
Income	(250)	(250)	0	
Economic Growth & Regeneration	920	840	(80)	40 ↑
Expenditure	17,300	18,020	720	
Income	(10,690)	(11,210)	(520)	
Planning	6,610	6,810	200	200 ↑
Planning & Regeneration	7,530	7,650	120	240 ↑

- Regeneration are reporting £0.1m favourable variance on staffing vacancies as posts continue to be recruited to following the Service Review.
- Planning are reporting £0.2m adverse variance. Income from planning applications has dropped further than expected in January. If the trend continues, the unmitigated impact is estimated to be £0.4m. Planning SLT have already identified £0.2m of non-staffing mitigations (to give the current £0.2m projected loss). Another mitigation would be to reduce the number of agency staff but this would have an impact on the current cases. Planning SLT will monitor closely the trends and the impacts during Q4.

9.2 Planning & Regeneration Capital: Budget £16.7, Forecast £6.8m Var (£9.8m)

Service/Project	Actuals to Date £000	Released Budget £000	Unreleased Budget £000	Budget £000	Released Forecast £000	Unreleased Forecast £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Forecast Variance £000
LEP 3rd Party Schemes								
LEP 3rd Party Schemes	552							-
LEP 3rd Party Schemes Total	552							-
Regeneration								
Amersham Regeneration (St John's Build)			50	50		50	50	-
Ashwells	122	100		100	173		173	73
Aylesbury Town Centre	89	150	574	724		150	150	(574)
CIL Funded Regeneration		113	260	373	113		113	(260)
Employment & Regeneration Led Opportur	365	2,949		2,949	2,195		2,195	(754)
Environment Led Opportunities	23	349		349	50		50	(299)
Former WDC Third Party CIL Projects		125		125	20		20	(105)
Future High Street Funds	370	9,700	1,600	11,299	2,944	385	3,329	(7,971)
High Wycombe Town Centre	94	176	(3)	173	153	(3)	150	(22)
Retasking of Winslow Centre	157	326		326	296		296	(30)
Waterside North Development	36	81	100	181	81	100	181	-
Wycombe Air Park	46				100		100	100
Wycombe District Centres		25		25	25		25	-
Regeneration Total	1,302	14,094	2,580	16,675	6,151	682	6,833	(9,842)
Grand Total	1,854	14,094	2,580	16,675	6,151	682	6,833	(9,842)

- a) £8.0m reported slippage on Future High Streets Fund projects is reported as replacement projects (varying from the original business case, where opportunities have changed due to market conditions) need to be agreed with DLUHC before the grant can be committed. This amended profile matches the recent annual progress return reported to DLUHC in December. A pipeline of replacement projects is being progressed for future Cabinet decision.
- b) A further net £1.8m slippage on other projects, including; £0.5m Cressex Island Aldi 5m where work commences on site in February 2023; £0.4m Kingsbury Market Square where the detailed specification of the programme continues to be worked on; £0.3m on other Wycombe regeneration schemes mainly Handy X where landscaping and other works have not been completed; £0.3m slippage Cressex Transport Improvements; £0.3m slippage for Spade Oak Lake which will become part of a wider project for Little Marlow Lakes Country Park.

10.Transport

10.1 Transport Revenue: Budget £55.2m, Outturn £58.7m, Adverse Variance **£3.5m**

	Budget	Y/E Outturn	Variance	Change in Variance (from Q2 Cab) £000
	£000	£000	£000	
Expenditure	35,120	35,580	460	
Income	(14,770)	(15,080)	(310)	
Highways & Technical Services	20,350	20,500	150	(170) ↓
Expenditure	35,550	38,290	2,740	
Income	(2,430)	(1,930)	500	
Transport Services	33,120	36,360	3,240	1,570 ↑
Expenditure	1,630	1,990	360	
Income	(570)	(810)	(240)	
Transport Strategy	1,060	1,180	120	50 ↑
Expenditure	1,660	2,480	820	
Income	(960)	(1,780)	(820)	
Highways Infrastructure Projects and HS2	700	700	0	20 ↑
Transport	55,230	58,740	3,510	1,470 ↑

- a) Transport Services £3.2m adverse variance. The service is experiencing increasing numbers of contracts being handed back which require re-tendering or contract variations. Also, due to cost-of-living impacts on drivers and operators, there is a 3% uplift in place for the short term. Mitigations for these pressures include short term actions around rigour and transparency with suppliers to avoid prohibitively costly contracts and longer-term actions which include assessing and challenging the existing supply chain for value for money opportunities and alternative delivery options.
- b) Highways & Technical Services adverse variance £0.2m. Increased energy costs forecast (updated in December) affecting Highways and Parking after taking into account the recently announced energy price caps and a new energy contractor offset by increased income in Streetworks.
- c) HS2 (and EWR) team break even. The Council is due to be in receipt of an additional £0.5m more than budgeted on HS2 income, for staffing expenditure incurred in line with the Funding and Service Level Agreements in place with HS2.
- d) Transport Strategy £0.1m adverse variance on unachievable income and savings targets which have been resolved next year via the recent restructure, plus a temporary increase in agency staffing costs to fill vacant posts following the recent service review. These variances are being offset and managed across the whole Service Area, with headroom on staffing under Infrastructure Projects under the Leader Portfolio.

10.2 Transport Capital: Budget £40.7m, Var (£2.5m)

Service/Project	Actuals to Date £000	Released Budget £000	Unreleased Budget £000	Budget £000	Released Forecast £000	Unreleased Forecast £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Forecast Variance £000
Car Parks								
Car Parks	136	566		566	677		677	111
Car Parks Total	136	566		566	677		677	111
Highways & Cycleway Funded Schemes								
Active Travel Tranche II - Emerald Way	431	500		500	710		710	210
ADEPT Live Labs	543	925		925	675		675	(250)
Globe Park Access / Westhorpe Junction	73	50		50	78		78	28
Haydon Hill Cycle Way	32	42		42	32		32	(9)
Highways & Cycleway Funded Schemes	397	1,365		1,365	617		617	(748)
HS2 Funded Schemes	(25)	81		81	34		34	(46)
HS2 Road Safety Projects	9	383		383	584		584	202
NPIF Schemes	(181)	(372)		(372)	169		169	542
Taplow Cycle Way		607		607				(607)
Highways & Cycleway Funded Schemes Total	1,279	3,579		3,579	2,900		2,900	(678)
Other Transport & Infrastructure								
East West Rail	1,537	2,425		2,425	2,417		2,417	(8)
Electric Vehicle Charging Points		200		200	10		10	(190)
Other Highway & Technical	20	1,020		1,020	151		151	(869)
Wycombe Parking Review		50		50	50		50	-
Other Transport & Infrastructure Total	1,557	3,696		3,696	2,629		2,629	(1,067)
Rights of Way								
Berryhill Footbridge Repair	109					109	109	109
Denham Bridleway Bridge Replacement	(17)	213		213	75		75	(138)
Improvements to Rights Way	174	167		167	144		144	(23)
Rights of Way Total	266	380		380	219	109	328	(52)
Strategic Highway Maintenance								
Abbey Way Flyover High Wycombe	81	(70)	300	230	200		200	(30)
Bridge Maintenance	653	998		998	822		822	(176)
Failed Roads Haunching & Reconstruction	1,586	3,000		3,000	3,010		3,010	10
Footway Structural Repairs	1,814	2,065		2,065	2,006		2,006	(60)
Maintenance Principal Rds - Drainage	1,661	2,041		2,041	2,006		2,006	(35)
Marlow Suspension Bridge	259	(1,107)	1,400	293	293		293	-
Plane & Patch	4,238	4,369		4,369	4,287		4,287	(83)
Replacement Traffic Signals	591	438		438	333		333	(104)
Road Safety - Casualty Reduction	754	856		856	856		856	-
Safety Fences	166	236		236	289		289	53
Strategic Highway Maintenance Program	16,293	15,973		15,973	15,748		15,748	(226)
Street Lighting	878	1,600		1,600	1,466		1,466	(134)
Strategic Highway Maintenance Total	28,974	30,400	1,700	32,100	31,316		31,316	(785)
Transport Services								
Public Transport	23	131		131	131		131	-
Purchase of Fleet Vehicles	108	240		240	240		240	-
Transport Services Total	130	371		371	371		371	-
Grand Total	32,342	38,992	1,700	40,692	38,112	109	38,221	(2,471)

- Strategic Highway Maintenance – Budget £32.1m, (£0.8m) variance -.
Slippage within: Structures of £0.2m due to mitigations no longer required, Street Lighting of £0.1m due to resource shortage, and £0.2m due to refunds for over charging by RJ Contract following data entry errors.
Underspends within: Footway schemes of £0.1m due to completion under budget, and Plane and Patch of £0.1m where completion of programme has come in less than anticipated. These are offset by higher costs within Safety fences of £0.1m due to inflation and increased cost of materials.
- Car Parks – Budget £0.6m, £0.1m variance. Accelerated spend for cashless machines replacement.
- Rights of Way – Budget £0.4m, £0.1m variance
Slippage relates to Denham Bridleway due to main construction now to commence in Spring 2023/24 to accommodate other works within the

vicinity and allow for site access. This slippage is offset by accelerated spend for Berryhill Footbridge due to un-foreseen design and cradle costs for removal and storage of the bridge.

d) Highways & Cycleway Funded Schemes – Budget £3.6m, var (£0.7m)

Slippage for Highways and Cycle schemes including the High Wycombe Cycleway (£0.5m) due to the National Trust stalling the project.

11. Corporate & Funding

11.1 Corporate & Funding Revenue: Budget -£431.5m, Outturn -£445.8m, Var -£14.3m

	Budget	Y/E Out- turn	Forecast Variance	%	Change in Forecast Variance
	£m	£m	£m		£m
Capital Financing	27.1	26.3	(0.8)	(3%)	-
Corporate Costs	11.8	6.2	(5.6)	(47%)	0.7
Reserves	(6.2)	(10.6)	(4.4)	71%	0.1
Treasury Management	(3.2)	(5.9)	(2.7)	84%	(0.7)
Corporate Total	29.5	16.0	(13.5)	(46%)	0.1
Business Rates	(58.2)	(58.2)	-	-	-
Council Tax	(377.4)	(377.4)	-	-	-
New Homes Bonus	(5.8)	(5.8)	-	-	-
Unringfenced Grants	(19.6)	(20.4)	(0.8)	4%	(0.5)
Funding Total	(461.0)	(461.8)	(0.8)	0%	(0.5)
Total	(431.5)	(445.8)	(14.3)	3%	(0.4)

- a) The £14.3m favourable variance (£13.9m last quarter) forecast comprises:
- b) £4.4m contribution from earmarked reserves to support the Council's overall forecast position. This is as a result of £4.4m of non-recurring income received in the Climate Change and Environment portfolio contributed to reserves, following partial resolution of the legal dispute with the Council's EfW contractor.
- c) £2.7m favourable variance relating to Interest on Revenue Balances, an increase of £0.7m from last quarter. This reflects the further increase in Bank of England base rate to 4.0% in February.
- d) £0.8m favourable variance on Interest Payable budgets. This forecast has arisen due to the Council's ability to fund any new borrowing required in year from internal borrowing rather than external PWLB borrowing.
- e) A forecast surplus of £0.8m in grant income budgets (£0.3m last quarter) due to additional income from unringfenced grant income £0.3m, plus a surplus of income of £0.5m relating to the reversal of the 1.25% increase in National Insurance effective from November.
- f) Corporate Contingencies: £3.3m of contingency has been released from corporate budgets to the Health & Wellbeing budget for Adult Social Care. A £5.5m favourable variance is forecast on remaining contingencies, helping to mitigate variances in Portfolios, as shown below. A balance of £3.2m remains in Service Risk Contingencies for any further pressures that may arise during the final quarter of the year.

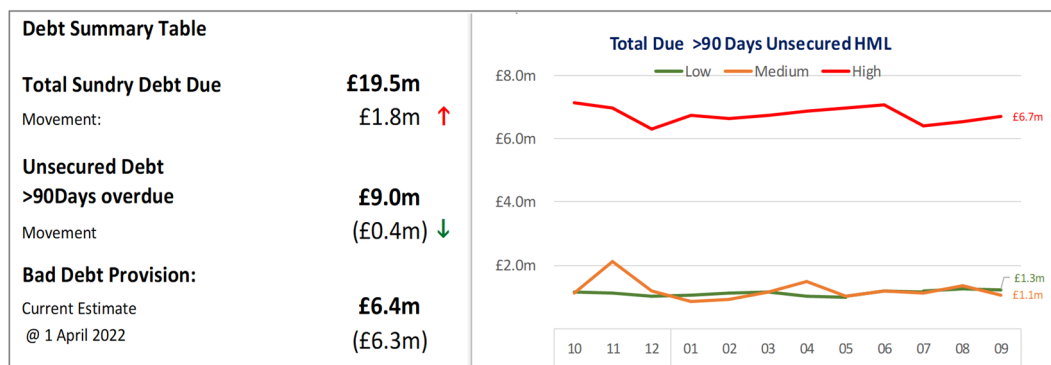
- g) If the remaining £3.2m of Service Risk Contingencies is not required in year to offset pressures in Portfolios, this could be set aside in reserves in order to mitigate risks or to fund specific future policy purposes.
- h) Available reserve balances: in addition to the Corporate Contingencies, the “Mitigating Future Financial Risks” reserve, which was set up following outturn 2021/22 as a result of unused contingencies and the overall favourable variance, contains £9.9m. After known commitments of £6.3m, a balance of £3.6m remains which could be called upon if required.

Figure 1 Corporate Contingencies & Mitigating Future Financial Risks Reserve

2022-23 Revenue Contingencies	Budget	Released	Current Budget	Favourable Variance - Mitigating pressures in monitoring	Remaining to cover pressures that may arise in remainder of the year
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Pay & Pension Contingency					
Pay Inflation	4,245	(4,245)	-	-	-
Pay - c/fwd (non consolidated)	710	0	710	-	710
Redundancy (non unitary)	500	0	500	-	500
Total Budget Risk	5,455	(4,245)	1,210	-	1,210
Service Risk Contingency					
Inflationary Pressures (incl. NI)	2,950	0	2,950	1,500	1,450
National Living Wage	250	0	250	-	250
Adult Social Care Pressures / Demography	3,210	(2,300)	910	910	-
Adult Social Care Provider Market	1,700	(1,000)	700	700	-
Home to School Transport	1,000	0	1,000	1,000	-
Children's Services Demography	1,410	0	1,410	1,410	-
High Cost Children's Placements	500	0	500	-	500
General Contingency - Economic Uncertainty	1,000	0	1,000	-	1,000
Total Service Risk	12,020	(3,300)	8,720	5,520	3,200
Total Contingency	17,475	(7,545)	9,930	5,520	4,410
Total Variation on Contingencies				5,520	
Available balance from "Mitigating Future Financial Risks" reserve	9,900				
£1.5m recommended by SAPC to support pay award	(1,500)				
£0.15m approved by SAPC to support staff hardship fund	(150)				
Further £0.15m approved by SAPC to support staff hardship fund	(150)				
Additional £500 cost of living award paid January 2023	(2,540)				
Committed to Helping Hand scheme: £1m in 2023/24 and £1m in 2024/25	(2,000)				3,560
Total resources earmarked to mitigate further pressures					7,970

12.Outstanding Sundry Debts

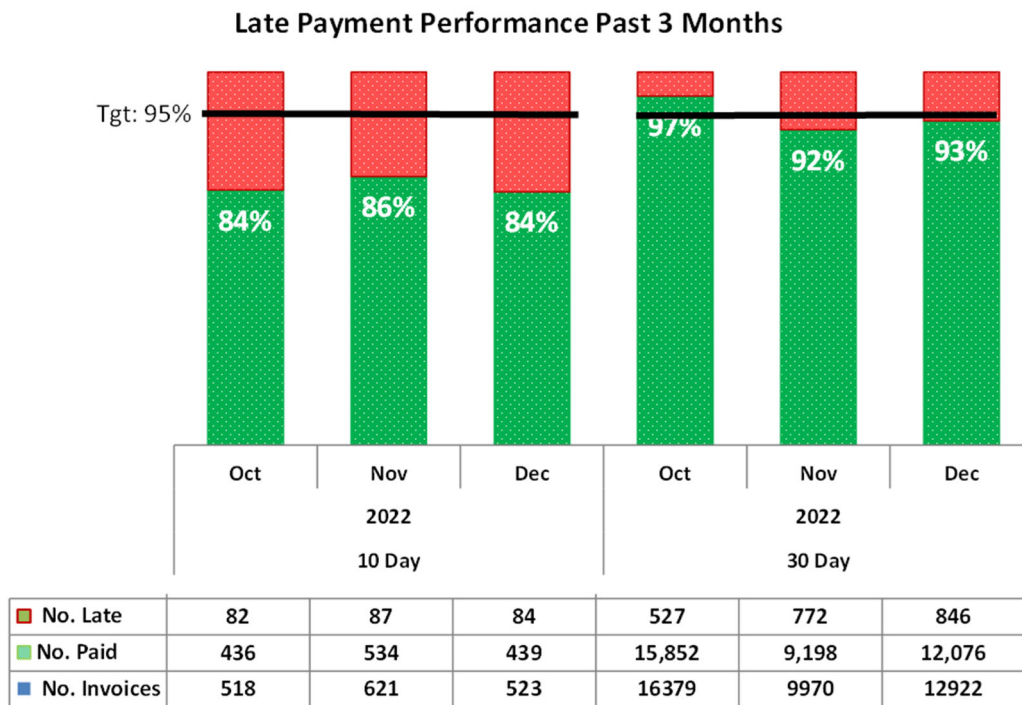
Figure 2: Sundry Debts Table



- 12.1 Total sundry debt sits at £19.5m at the end of Q3, an increase of £1.8m from Q2. Of the £19.5m, £15.1m is unsecured with an age profile of: less than 30 days £4.9m (32%); 31-90 days £1.2m (8%) and over 90 days £9.0m (60%).
- 12.2 Unsecured debt over 90 days has seen a £0.4m reduction between Q2 and Q3 from £9.4m down to £9m. This reduction has been within the medium and high-risk categories, with the improvement keeping us well below the £10m KPI.
- 12.3 During the quarter we have seen an increase in our billing, with a 15% increase in invoices sent out to customers compared to Q2. This increase is reflected in our debt aged less than 30 days, but we are continuing to chase invoices as soon as they become overdue.

13.Late Payments

Figure 3: Late Payments Table



- 13.1 For Q3 our overall invoice payment performance is 93.9% paid “on-time” compared with 90.8% achieved in Q2 and 94.1% over the last 12 months.
- 13.2 Q3 performance for invoices with 10-day payment terms is 85.4%, up 0.6% from Q2, and our rolling 12 month performance is 86.4%.
- 13.3 Our performance against the 10-day payment terms generally tends to fall below the expected 95%, and we find that the reasons for this vary and are rarely consistent. When issues arise, we are working alongside our services to resolve them, but any delays with a small number of vendors can have a large impact on our performance. We are continuing to remind Services of the expectations around payment performance.
 - a) Our 30-day payment performance for Q3 is 94.2%, up 3.1% from Q2, and our rolling 12 month performance is 94.4%.
 - b) Our performance for 30-day payment is generally good, but we are still working to address any issues that arise and put in place effective solutions to increase our payment performance. We have identified improvements that could be made regarding our utility’s payments, so we are introducing paying by Direct Debit to ensure that our payments are not delayed. Regular meetings have also been held with Client Transport to better

understand challenges that are being faced, and further guidance has been developed & provided by Finance to improve query resolutions.

13.4 Improvement Actions:

- a) As part of the AURA workstream we are currently reviewing our Accounts Payable functions and looking in more details at our vendors and our payment channels. As part of this process, we are reviewing our existing methods of making a payment and as we move in to phase 3 of the AURA workstream we hope to see some developments across our processes that improve our 10-day and 30-day payment performance.
- b) Client Transport have managed to reduce the number of invoices they have in workflow by 80%, and we would hope to see improvements to the payment performance of these invoices now that the backlog has been cleared.



Report to Finance & Resources Select Committee

Date: F&R Select Committee 6 April 2023

Title: **Update on Buckinghamshire Council (BC) management of absence and wellbeing**

Relevant councillor(s): Cllr John Chilver and Cllr Tim Butcher

Author and /or contact officer: Sarah Murphy Brookman

Ward(s) affected: **None specific**

Recommendations:

To note: plans in place to manage employee absence, attendance and wellbeing in line with Buckinghamshire Council policy and best practice.

1 Executive summary

1.1 This report presents a comprehensive analysis covering:

- a) *Data and trends relating to absence in the workplace and absence management*
- b) *The long-term impacts of ill health on cost and productivity.*
- c) *The financial cost to the business of ill health and sickness absence.*
- d) *Training and Support available for managers to reduce sickness absence*
- e) *How our Sickness Absence policy fits with our health and wellbeing workplan to support absence management and return to work*
- f) *Plans in place to manage absence in line with our sickness absence policies and processes*
- g) *Best practice examples and comparisons*

2. **Part one - Introduction**

- 2.1 A deep dive report was taken to CMT in November 2022 on sickness absence trends in the council.
- 2.2 At that point, based on data for the end of August 2022, the Council's sickness absence rate was 9.78 days per FTE. The nearest available local authority data for comparison is an average is 9.36 days per FTE across several authorities, for rolling year ending March 2022 (appendix 1).
- 2.3 Since August 2022, our absence rates have started to go down and in January 2023 our rate was 9.12 days per FTE against our internal target of 9.0 days per FTE.
- 2.4 COVID, colds and flu are the main cause of short-term absence, (accounting for 20.7% of absence in the year to January 23). The biggest underlying cause of long-term absence is for Mental Health (25.44%) followed by Other Muscular skeletal (7.22%) and Surgery related absence (6.49%).
- 2.5 Based on assumptions set out in appendix 3, we estimate the **overall cost of absence** before on costs to be in the region of **£4.54m per annum** or 3.02% of the pay bill.

National picture and the covid backdrop

- 2.6 The covid pandemic changed responses to absence management and employee wellbeing across all sectors. The pandemic was also the backdrop for our new council and our focus on employee wellbeing during that period was a significant contributor to our excellent Together Survey scores – see appendix 4. This pattern was repeated nationally as employers across all sectors focused much more heavily on all aspects of employee health and wellbeing. Following the pandemic our scores have remained consistent both for wellbeing and engagement.
- 2.7 Consolidated sickness absence data has only been available since April 2020 however, legacy council absence rates can be seen at appendix 2.
- 2.8 Most organisations, our own included, saw a sharp fall in reported sickness absence during the pandemic. As lockdown was lifted, we experienced an increase in short terms absence for colds, flu and covid itself. Front line workers and services have shown higher rates of viral infection than hybrid workers and when testing was still a requirement, they were unable to return to work until their test status changed (hybrid workers were able to work from home if they felt well enough).
- 2.9 The other significant trend across all sectors has been the sharp increase in reported absence relating to mental health (particularly impacting on longer term health).

- 2.10 Deloitte issued a report in March 2022 showing an overall increase in mental health and cost to employers. They highlighted four categories of worker at particular risk (across all sectors). These are young people, keyworkers, workers with caring responsibilities and ethnic minority staff. A link to this report is available at section 9 of this paper.
- 2.11 Since the pandemic, most organisations offering best practice now look at employee health and wellbeing as an integral part of their absence management arrangements. This includes a greater awareness of mental health and strategies to support mental health.

Part two – Buckinghamshire Council sickness data and trends

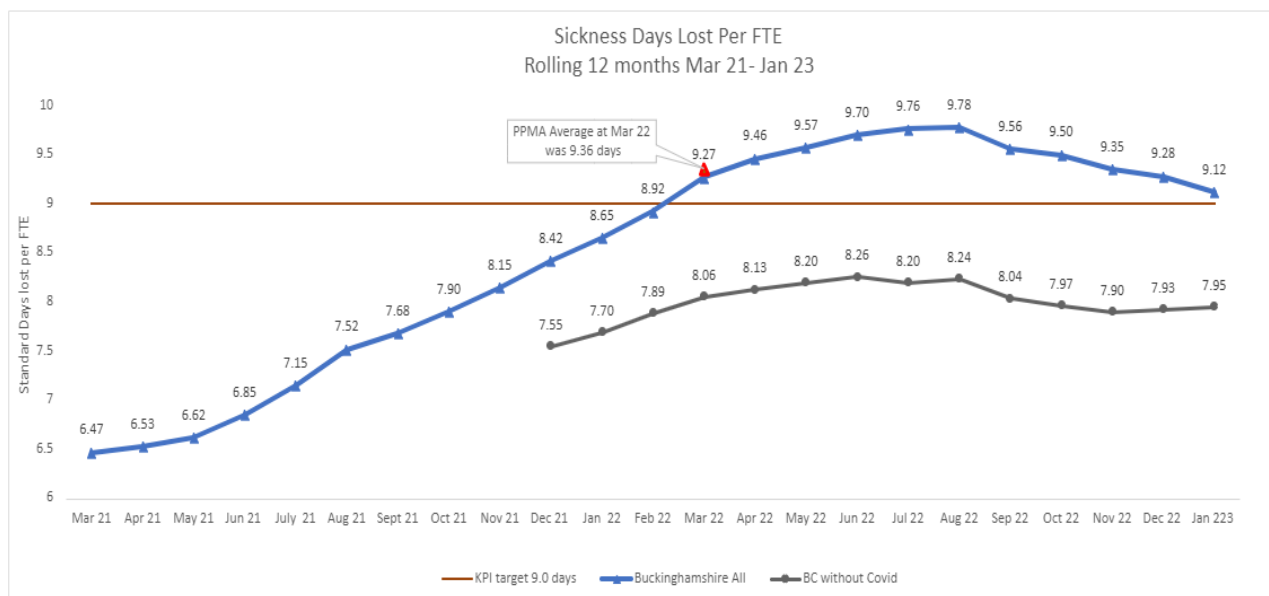
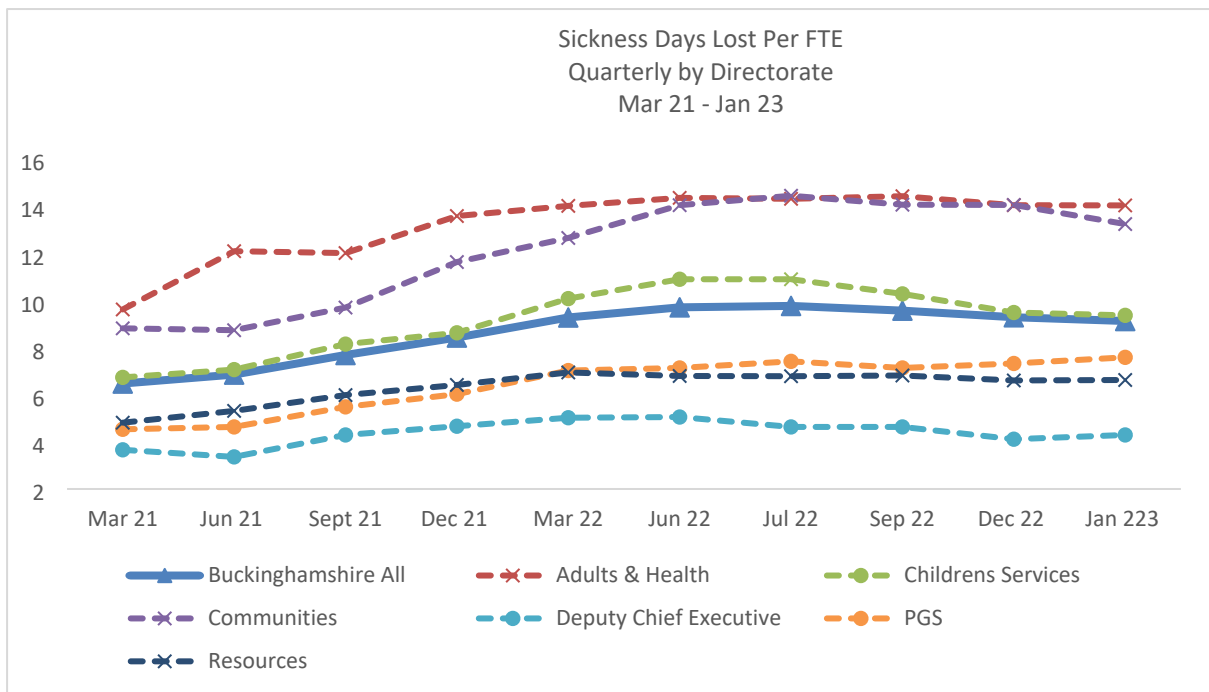
- 2.12 Buckinghamshire Council sickness absence reached a peak of 9.78 days per FTE in the rolling 12 months to Aug 22 (with 1.54 days per FTE being attributable to Covid). Since then, overall sickness levels have started to fall slowly to 9.12 days per FTE in the 12 months to January 23. See data tables below.

Sickness Days lost per FTE (rolling 12 month) By Directorate	28-Feb	28-Mar	30-Apr	31-May	30 June	31-Jul	31-Aug	30-Sep	31-Oct	30-Nov	31-Dec	31-Jan
Buckinghamshire All	8.92	9.27	9.46	9.57	9.70	9.76	9.78	9.56	9.50	9.35	9.28	9.12
Adults & Health	13.62	14.00	13.97	14.05	14.34	14.30	14.40	14.41	14.05	14.25	14.03	14.02
Childrens Services	9.73	10.07	10.50	10.76	10.89	10.89	10.83	10.27	10.00	9.62	9.48	9.36
Communities	12.20	12.64	13.06	13.51	14.03	14.43	14.44	14.05	14.38	14.10	14.04	13.23
Deputy Chief Executive	4.75	5.02	5.17	5.28	5.05	4.63	4.79	4.63	4.41	4.26	4.11	4.29
PGS	6.51	7.02	7.13	6.94	7.13	7.41	7.34	7.13	7.17	7.26	7.32	7.58
Resources	6.65	6.94	6.85	6.87	6.79	6.78	6.84	6.81	6.86	6.63	6.60	6.62

Sickness Days Lost per FTE is calculated on a 12-month basis up to the last day of the previous month. The target FTE is 9.0 days per FTE

- 2.13 Whilst the average sickness days lost per FTE as at 31 Jan 2023 was 9.12 days there is considerable variation across directorates and this needs to be considered in relation to the types of roles and nature of the work carried out in each directorate:

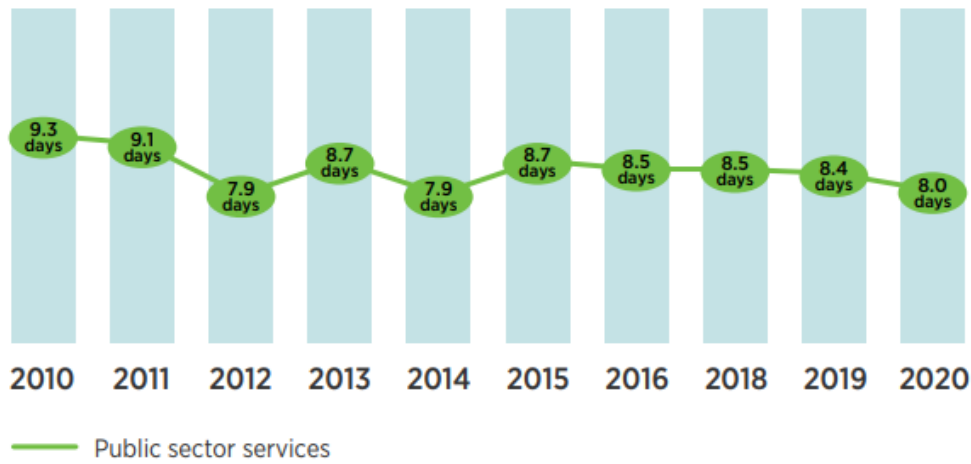
Directorate	Nature of work
Adults and Health	Social work; Social care; occupational therapy; Seeley's day centre
Children's Services	Social work; Adult Learning; Children's Homes;
Communities	Depot; Street Scene; Country Parks; Parking Enforcement; Libraries
DCE	Mainly office-based officer support
PG&S	Mainly office-based officer support
Resources	Mainly office-based officer support



- 2.14 Sector comparisons are hard to gather and do not always offer a like for like comparison – but the following data on the next page is based on trends up to 2020 for public and private sector organisations amalgamated.
- 2.15 There is also a table to show how Buckinghamshire Council absence rates and reasons compare to other councils in appendix 1.

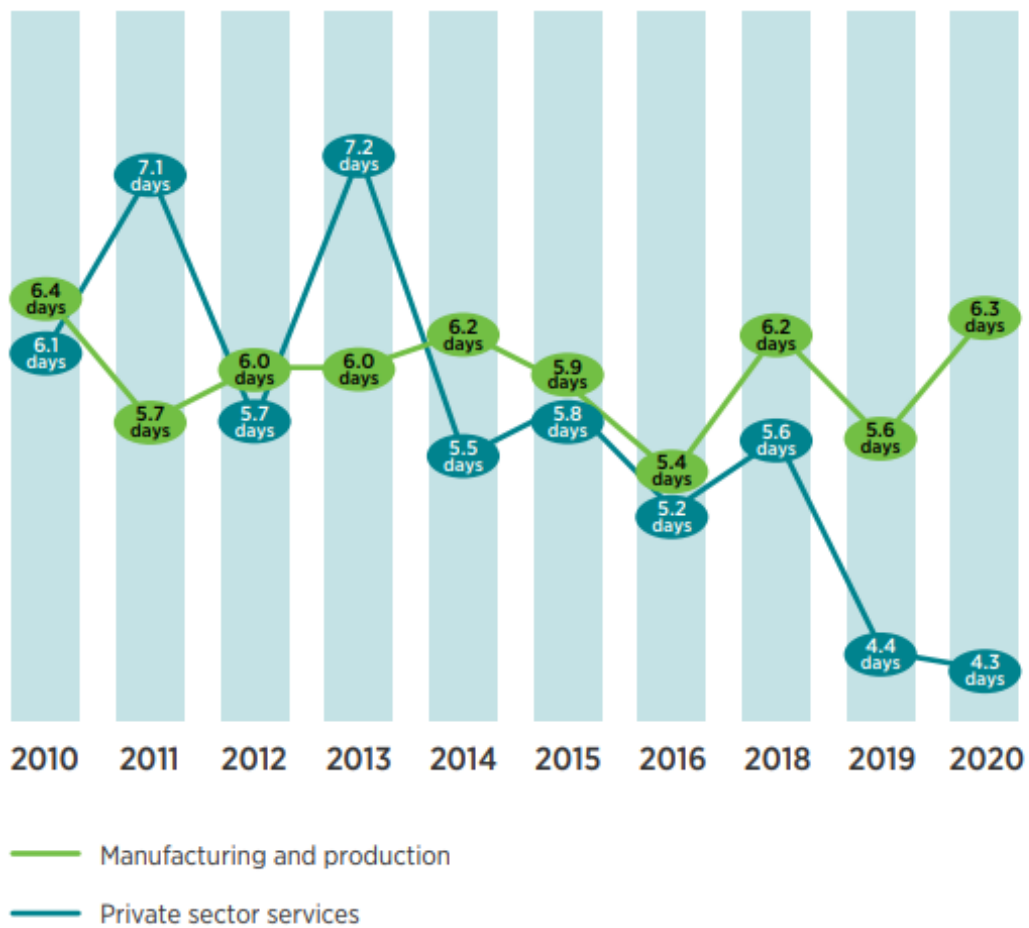
2.16 *CIPD data between 2010 -2020 – sector averages*

Figure 6: Average number of days lost per employee per year, by sector (5% trimmed mean)



Base: 100 (2020); 109 (2019); 107 (2018); 194 (2016); 105 (2015); 88 (2014); 106 (2013); 145 (2012); 138 (2011); 119 (2010)

Figure 2: Average number of days lost per employee per year, by sector (5% trimmed mean)



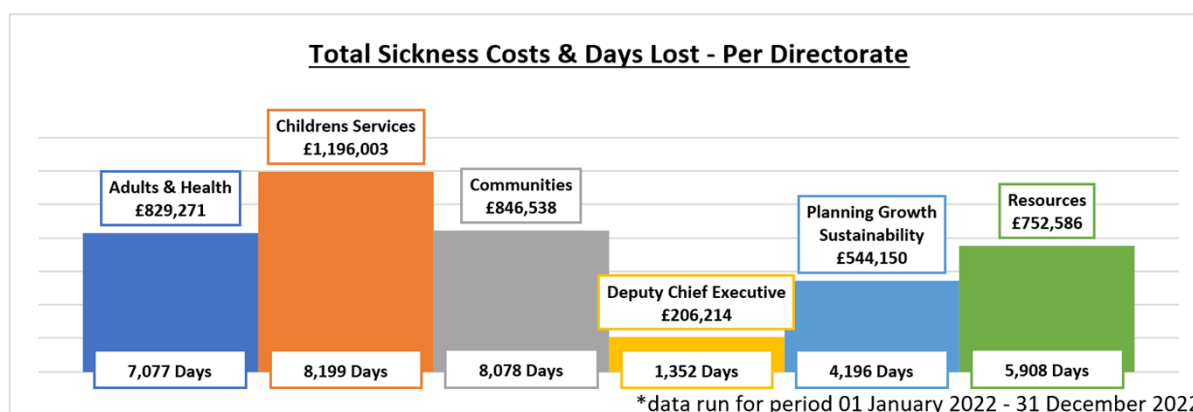
Base: 204 (2020); 262 (2019); 278 (2018); 436 (2016); 222 (2015); 188 (2014); 212 (2013); 281 (2012); 196 (2011); 249 (2010)

ONS Data

- 2.17 The latest Office of National Statistics (ONS) sickness absence in the Labour Market 2021 report showed national levels were at a record low in 2020, followed by a record high in 2021 when COVID 19 accounted for nearly 1 in 4 occurrences of sickness absence. Buckinghamshire Council sickness has followed a similar trend, albeit our curve followed a sustained upward trajectory until August 2022.
- 2.18 The ONS report also states that sickness absence rates for the public sector have been consistently higher than private sector workers for every year on record - contributory factors include a combination of employment of the groups with the highest rates of absence (women, older workers, those with long term health conditions, part time staff, and people working in the caring, leisure, and service occupations) as well as differences in sick pay entitlements. They also suggest that the switch to intensive homeworking (which may encourage presenteeism) and social distancing, and then back to office working – where people were newly exposed to germs, has also led to the 2021 increase in sickness absence levels.

Cost of absence

- 2.19 Based on our total sickness data across all directorates, between 1 January - 31 December 2022, the workforce data team have produced some indicative sickness absence costs for the council. These are based on the employee's day rate from their FTE salary and the assumption that all staff are eligible for our full sick pay entitlement of 6 months full pay and 6 months half pay. Please note the total costs provided exclude on-costs of 38%.
- 2.20 The results indicate that the total annual cost of sickness for the 12-month period was £4.54 million (equivalent to 3.02% of the annual pay bill for the same period). A further breakdown of these costs can be seen at appendix 3.



Note: Costs based on a calculation of FTE day rate per person x sick days (according to BC sickness policy entitlements). Actual entitlements to sick pay vary with Terms and Conditions.

2.21 Analysis of the sickness absence cost per day compared against the average daily salary, shows that the daily cost of sickness is at or below the average daily Directorate salary. This suggests that junior members of staff are over-represented within the sickness absence data.

Directorate	Number of employees as at 31 Jan 2023	Number of days lost in 12 months to 31 Jan 2023	sickness days lost per FTE	Estimated sickness Absence Cost exc on costs £	Avg cost of sickness absence per day £	Avg mid point salary exc on costs £	Avg mid point salary per working day exc on costs £
A&H	578	7077	14.02	892,271	126	37,710	145
CS	979	8199	9.36	1,196,003	146	37,889	146
Comm	723	8078	13.23	846,538	105	32,472	125
DCE	360	1352	4.29	206,214	153	46,372	178
PG&S	677	4196	7.58	544,150	130	40,825	157
Resources	939	5908	6.62	752,586	127	35,261	136

2.22 Resources Directorate has separately undertaken a deep dive into sickness absence looking at various employment characteristics e.g gender, length of service, age, and grade to identify any possible correlations. The only employment characteristic that appeared as an indicator of sickness absence was Grade, and specifically Grades 2-4. This supports the finding that junior members of staff are more highly represented in sickness data, in the table above.

2.23 Following this piece of work Resources has invested more time in manager training to ensure that they have the capability to proactively manage sickness absence.

Short and Long-term Absence

2.24 Long term absence - days lost to top 3 reasons (rolling year to Jan 23)

Directorate	Employees with more than 28 days absence	Reason 1	Days lost	Reason 2	Days lost	Reason 3	Days lost
Buckinghamshire Council	289	Mental Health	9338	Musc. Skel	3439	Critical Illness	1305
Adults & Health	62	Mental Health	1949	Musc. Skel	1351	Surgery	659
Children's Services	76	Mental Health	2362	Surgery	751	Musc. Skel	694
Communities	68	Mental Health	1645	Musc. Skel	1534	Critical Illness	694
Deputy Chief Executive	9	Mental Health	257	Neurological	158	Critical Illness	92
Planning Growth Sustainability	37	Mental Health	1657	Musc. Skel	554	Critical Illness	519
Resources	37	Mental Health	1648	Surgery	439	Migraine	429

2.25 The table on the previous page, sets out the number of employees across the 12 months to 31 January 2023 who have had a long-term absence (>28 days). Of the 289 employees, the majority will now be back in work; some may have left, and others may have had a subsequent period of long-term absence.

2.26 **Long term absence snapshot for January 2023**

Directorate	Total no. of employees	Reason 1	No. of employees	Reason 2	No. of employees	Reason 3	No. of employees
Buckinghamshire Council	53	Mental Health	26	Surgery Related abs.	6	Critical Illness	3
Adults & Health	9	Mental Health	7	Surgery Related abs.	1	Other Muscular Skel Disorder	1
Children's Services	12	Mental Health	9	Surgery Related abs.	2	Critical Illness	1
Communities	8	Mental Health	4	Surgery Related abs.	2	Critical Illness	2
Deputy Chief Executive	3	Mental Health	1	Critical Illness	1	Heart, Blood Pressure	1
Planning Growth Sustainability	3	Mental Health	2	Stomach, Bowel, Organs	1	NA	
Resources	5	Mental Health	3	Surgery Related abs.	1	Neurological illness	1

2.27 Looking at January 2023, the long-term cases that are currently 'live' provides a snapshot of the number of people with long term absence per directorates and top 3 reasons during January 2023.

2.28 **Short term absence – days lost to top 3 reasons (rolling year to Jan 23)**

Directorate	Employees with less than 28 days absence	Reason 1	Days lost	Reason 2	Days lost	Reason 3	Days lost
Buckinghamshire Council	2280	Covid, Cold & Flu	8057	Mental Health	2162	Stomach, Bowel, Organs	471
Adults & Health	353	Covid, Cold & Flu	1551	Stomach, Bowel, Organs	385	Surgery	659
Children's Services	478	Covid, Cold & Flu	1645	Mental Health	1448	Chest, Respiratory	431
Communities	439	Covid, Cold & Flu	1758	Uncoded	699	Musc. Skel	405
Deputy Chief Executive	166	Covid, Cold & Flu	473	Mental Health	194	Stomach, Bowel, Organs	156
Planning Growth Sustainability	321	Covid, Cold & Flu	980	Mental Health	520	Stomach, Bowel, Organs	315
Resources	523	Covid, Cold & Flu	1650	Stomach, Bowel, Organs	498	Mental Health	489

Mental Health reasons include Anxiety, Depression, Stress, work related stress, & Other mental health reason; Muscular Skeletal includes Other Muscular Skeletal and Back problems.

2.29 This table sets out the number of employees across the calendar across the 12 months to 31 January 2023 who have had a short-term term absence (<28 days). Of the 2280 employees, the majority will now be back in work; some may have left and other may have had further short-term absences.

2.30 *Short term absence snapshot for January 2023*

Directorate	Total no. of employees	Reason 1	No. of employees	Reason 2	No. of employees	Reason 3	No. of employees
Buckinghamshire Council	470	Covid, Cold & Flu	175	Stomach, Bowel, Organs	57	Mental Health	34
Adults & Health	57	Covid, Cold & Flu	30	Stomach, Bowel, Organs	17	Mental Health	10
Children’s Services	68	Covid, Cold & Flu	45	Viral Infection	12	Mental Health	11
Communities	40	Covid, Cold & Flu	19	Stomach, Bowel, Organs	11	Viral Infection	10
Deputy Chief Executive	23	Covid, Cold & Flu	14	Stomach, Bowel, Organs	7	Chest, Respiratory	2
Planning Growth Sustainability	42	Covid, Cold & Flu	24	Migraine / Headache	10	Stomach, Bowel, Organs	8
Resources	78	Covid, Cold & Flu	43	Stomach, Bowel, Organs	22	Mental Health	13

2.31 Looking at January 2023, the short-term cases that are currently ‘live’ provides a snapshot of the number of people with short term absence per directorates and top 3 reasons during January 2023.

Reasons for absence

2.32 An analysis of long term and short-term absence (greater or less than 28 days absence in the rolling 12 months to Jan 23) shows that covid, colds and flu are the top reason for short term absence across the council. After this, mental health becomes the next most common reason for short term absence in many directorates.

2.33 Aggregated **mental health reasons are the top cause of long-term absence for all directorates** followed mostly by muscular skeletal issues. Absence and productivity concerns relating to mental health is a growing area for most organisations and emphasises the need to look at and invest in wellbeing strategies to support absence management at work – see section 2.56-2.62.

Summary

2.34 This data on reason and cost demonstrates the need for a tailored approach to managing sickness absence – one size will not fit all, however care also needs to be taken to join up the learning of effective interventions.

Part three – activity to support absence management

Our Approach to Sickness Absence Management and Pay Policy

- 2.35 The Council has a Health and Attendance Policy to support managers to appropriately manage both short and long-term sickness absence.
- 2.36 While it is understood that there will inevitably be some sickness absence among employees, this must be balanced by due regard to operational needs and the impact this can have on efficiency and productivity if the absence is persistent.
- 2.37 A flow chart is included within the policy and is included in appendix 4, which usefully summaries the council's process for the management of sickness absence.
- 2.38 Payments for certified sickness absences are made as follows:

Years of Continuous Service	Pay Entitlement
During the first year of service	One month's full pay and (after completing four months' service) two months' half pay
During the second year of service	Two months' full pay and two months' half pay
During the third year of service	Four months' full pay and four months' half pay
During the fourth and fifth years of service	Five months' full pay and five months' half pay
After five years' service	Six months' full pay and six months' half pay

Note: There are no waiting days before sick pay is operated (occupational sick pay is paid from day 1 and statutory sick pay from day 4) and as a large employer the Council cannot reclaim any sick pay costs from HMRC.

Directorate Activity

- 2.39 **The Adults and Health directorate** are exploring with the Councils new Occupational Health provider additional support and training to be put in place as a proactive measure to tackle Muscular skeletal issues which is their top reason for absence (16%). These sessions will be prioritised in the teams with the highest absence levels in the first instance
- 2.40 **Planning, Growth & Sustainability directorate** have delivered specific mental health management training delivered in Planning & Environment and are working with colleagues in OD extend this across the whole directorate.

2.41 Resources and DCE directorates

Both Directorates have a similar workforce profile and the approaches have been consistent:

- a) **Managers** are provided with monthly sickness data showing overall sickness absence and a list of those hitting short term and long-term triggers. Managers are encouraged to take appropriate action through the Health and Attendance policy and regularly seek support and on-going advice from their HRBP.
- b) **DCE Management Board and Resources SLT** regularly reviews sickness absence data to be alert to trends and to ensure health and well-being resources are promoted and in place to support staff. Health and attendance training for managers has been well attended by managers in Resources and DCE.

2.42 **Children's Services** are taking a more proactive role in managing sickness absence and ensuring support is in place to enable staff to return to work as soon as possible. Heads of Service are provided with monthly sickness absence data for those on long term sickness absence and those who are about to trigger to ensure conversation are taking place with the manager and the employee. HR surgeries have been offered to ensure managers are confident in managing sickness absence

2.43 **Communities** have been concentrating on high sickness rates, particularly around muscular skeletal at the Depot. On site Physio appointments have been taking place over the past 9 months to act as a preventative measure. Health assessments run by Public Health have been offered to all staff measuring blood pressure, weight, BMI etc to ensure staff are managing their personal health and well being

HR Consultancy and advice

2.44 The HR Consultancy and Advisory team works with service managers to support the management of sickness absence cases in line with the Health and Attendance (H&A) Policy. HR Business Partners and HR Consultants receive a monthly sickness report that identifies those staff who are hitting sickness triggers and work together with the relevant manager to ensure they are aware, providing support, as required, in line with the H&A Policy. Learning and Development and the HR Consultancy Team have recently launched H&A workshops which have been well received and are looking to run more due to demand (see section 2.47-2.52).

2.45 HR works proactively with services to provide the necessary tools, to help managers effectively manage their sickness absence cases such as through training, on-line resources, drop-in surgeries and promoting the services of our new occupational provider.

- 2.46 Following BMJ research relating to absenteeism for common mental disorders and the evidence that more targeted and early ‘work directed interventions’, can improve return to work success. The team encourage weekly line management conversations with employees and early referrals for occupational health support – see summary and link to report in section 9. This approach includes early support for people showing signs of reduced resilience and mental ill health (avoiding the presenteeism risk and helping an early recovery). Organisational experience shows that once contact starts to lapse the return to work can become more protracted.

Management training and support

- 2.47 Our learning and development offer has evolved in response to local and national events. Our initial focus during lockdown was around bereavement, supporting front line employees particularly affected with resilience team reflective sessions and those working from home with dealing with isolation and keeping active. As we returned to the office, we ran webinars to support employees and managers with the new normal, as well as sessions on.
- 2.48 We have developed Wellness Action Plans for both staff and managers, these specifically target holding conversations about health and wellbeing as part of regular coaching and performance conversations at work and before any sickness absence occurs and are included in the action plan in section 5 of this report.
- 2.49 This year we ran a programme with our Occupational Health provider to support managers on hybrid working with mental health as a particular area of focus. The training is delivered by qualified psychotherapists and psychologists who have extensive experience of dealing with mental health and wellbeing in the workplace and consists of a series of 4 x 90-minute modules.
- 2.50 Health & Attendance Workshops are new and run by the Consultancy & Advisory Team. The 45-minute sessions will provide bite sized basic messages about managing absence followed by the opportunity to connect with advisors and ask questions. Managers engagement with these workshops has been extremely positive with all dates being oversubscribed. As a result, further dates are being offered.
- 2.51 The Managing Sickness Absence Workshop is a longer and more detailed workshop aimed at new managers or managers who require more in-depth training. They help managers understand the impact of sickness absence and the need to manage fairly, consistently, and appropriately within the BC policy. Participants can practice their skills by applying the policy to case studies.

2.52 Attendance on Health and Wellbeing/Sickness Absence related courses

Course Name	No courses	Attended April 22 - March 2023
Being a Buckinghamshire Manager	10	323
PAM Management Development Programme		
Mental Health Awareness	6	80
Having Supportive Conversations	6	90
Building a Positive Culture	6	77
Conflict Resolution	6	71
Managing Sickness Absence	10	89
HR consultancy Health & Attendance Workshop	3	56
Coping with Change (Employees)	7	134
Managing Change (Managers)	4	68
Building personal resilience and stress management	2	15

New Occupational Health Contract

- 2.53 The new Occupational Health contract with TP Health t/a Optima Health goes live on 1st April 2023, delivering a more pro-active and holistic service including a new management helpline providing advice on OH/EAP issues. The service also provides employees with 6 counselling sessions rather than 4, access to the Hello Fresh recipe libraries and provides enhanced accessibility for users with a disability.
- 2.54 Early Intervention - protecting the health and well-being of our employees is a key priority for Buckinghamshire Council and we will be working with TP Health Limited/Optima Health to adopt a healthy leadership culture, ensuring that our employees receive early support in the event of illness or injury. There is significant evidence to show that early intervention is essential to prevent acute mental health and musculoskeletal health problems from developing into chronic health problems. Long periods out of work can also be detrimental to health and well-being.
- 2.55 TP Health Limited/Optima Health will ensure that employees have prompt access to advice and support, through telephone and video consultations, with an appropriate qualified Occupational Health specialist (e.g., Mental Health Nurse or Occupational Health Advisor). The focus will be on successfully rehabilitating employees back to work. In addition, a management phone line is available to support managers through the process.

Organisational action plan for Health and Wellbeing

- 2.56 As part of our holistic and preventative approach to employee Health & Wellbeing, we have a robust Health & Wellbeing framework that is underpinned by a detailed action plan. Both the Health & Wellbeing framework and action plan have been revised this year in line with the current national picture and trends across all sectors as well as feedback from our networks and staff survey results.
- 2.57 The latest staff Together Survey in November 2022 (see Appendix 4) showed that Wellbeing and Resilience is our most positive index with 75% of respondents agreeing that they feel supported, 3% ahead of the external benchmark. Almost 9 in 10 respondents said they have a positive working relationship with their manager, and 84% feel trusted and enabled to get on their job. However, underneath this, only 67% felt the pressures of their role are manageable and only 68% felt Buckinghamshire Council cares about employee wellbeing. Although this has increased by 5% since the May 2022 survey, this is still slightly below the external benchmark of 69%
- 2.58 There is continued focus on mental health including upskilling managers; campaign work to destigmatise talking about mental health and the launch of a new Wellbeing app for staff (from our EAP provider).
- 2.59 The Buckinghamshire local mental health anti-stigma campaign, Champion the Change (previously known as Time to Change) aims to help end mental health stigma and create hope for those affected by mental illness. In April 2022, the Corporate Management Team signed the Champion the Change Employer Pledge, showing our commitment to delivering a framework of agreed actions to help:
- raise awareness of mental health
 - provide guidance for line managers
 - provide staff with information on where and how to get support for their mental health
- 2.60 Of current concern is the potential impact that rising inflation and cost of living pressures may have on our staff and their families. The Council carried out a recent financial staff survey in which 61% of respondents said that they were quite or very anxious about money, with 36% saying they were concerned about paying for household bills.
- 2.61 A Financial Hardship Task and Finish Group (Cost of Living Board) has been in operation since March 2022, monitoring the national economic climate and responding to the need for additional support and advice for colleagues. Working in partnership with HR and Communications colleagues, they have been cascading information on available financial support sign-posting support, including the Helping Hands Scheme, keeping the conversation going through promotion across corporate channels, as well as checking in with staff through a dedicated financial support staff

survey. A financial support toolkit has been produced and this is regularly updated based on the evolving financial climate, responding to emerging issues and concerns [financial support and information](#)

- 2.62 Mental Health is one of the top causes for staff sickness absence and given the link between financial wellbeing and mental health, as part of our preventative approach we are piloting some Financial Wellbeing workshops in May-June of this year. These workshops will focus on the building resilience, coping strategies, and reducing stigma. These workshops will be available for managers, employees and there is also a specific workshop being run for Young People.

Part four - best practice and how we compare to other organisations

- 2.63 CIPD's Health & Wellbeing at Work report found that Public Sector organisations are most active in promoting wellbeing and attendance in comparison to private sector organisations and not for profits.
- 2.64 The report found that public sector organisations had a stronger approach to risk assessments, methods to monitor and deter absence, employee support schemes and health promotion benefits.
- 2.65 The report also found that public sector organisations provide more support for people with a disability and/or long-term health condition.
- 2.66 The CIPD report shows that organisations in the public sector are most likely to experience challenges in managing people with disabilities or long-term health conditions. The biggest challenge (for organisations in all sectors) is developing line manager knowledge and confidence.
- 2.67 We recently conducted a benchmarking exercise through Public Services People Management Association (PPMA), to see how our financial wellbeing offering for staff compares to that offered by other local authorities. Our findings concluded that compared to the other local authorities who responded to our questions, our offering is robust and well communicated to staff. We also have more mechanisms in place to continuously engage with and collate feedback from staff, such as the Cost-of-Living Staff Network and a survey that will take place at the end of February to evaluate support offered.
- 2.68 Buckinghamshire Council have been shortlisted in the PPMA Excellence in People's Management Awards for the Best Health & Wellbeing Initiative. Our nomination focuses specifically on the financial wellbeing support we have in place for staff.
- 2.69 In a study by CIPD around Health & Wellbeing in public sector organisations, three-fifths of public sector respondents agree that their organisation actively promotes good mental well-being and is effective at supporting people with mental ill health.

However, just a third agree that senior leaders encourage a focus on mental well-being through their actions and behaviour, and less than a fifth that managers have the skills to spot the early warning signs of mental ill health.

2.70 The Deloitte cross-sector study in March 2022 identified that young people, key workers, carers, and ethnic minority groups are most at risk of being affected by mental health. We have several mechanisms in place to support these highlighted demographics such as staff networks, signposting to specific resources available, guidance and training for managers on health and wellbeing and specific interventions led by services within the Council as outlined in the table below. Many of these interventions match the best practice recommendations for employers made by Deloitte.

Buckinghamshire Council				
Interventions to support mental health of high priority groups				
	Staff Network	Training and Resources for Employees	Resources/Training for Managers	Other
Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Careers Staff Network • Mental Health Staff Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face induction training • Face to face networks • EAP Provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness Action Plans • Manager's Essentials Workbook • Being a Bucks Manager training • Manager's Wellbeing workshops with EAP Provider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular comms campaigns to signpost to resources and guidance around mental health • Dedicated financial wellbeing/mental health workshops for young people taking place in May
Key Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Staff Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources for support on intranet • You Matters newsletters and resources circulated • EAP Provision • Signposting to Our Frontline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness Action Plans • Manager's Essentials Workbook • Being a Bucks Manager training • Manager's Wellbeing workshops with EAP Provider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness Weeks in Children's Services • Regular Supervision • Regular comms campaigns to signpost to resources and guidance around mental health
Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carer's Staff Network • Mental Health Staff Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources for support on intranet • Carer's Bucks • EAP Provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness Action Plans • Manager's Essentials Workbook • Being a Bucks Manager training • Manager's Wellbeing workshops with EAP Provider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular comms campaigns to signpost to resources and guidance around mental health
Ethnic Minority Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race Equality Staff Network • Mental Health Staff Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAP Provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness Action Plans • Manager's Essentials Workbook • Being a Bucks Manager training • Manager's Wellbeing workshops with EAP Provider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular comms campaigns to signpost to resources and guidance around mental health

Part five – conclusions next steps and plans for future

- 2.71 We want a fit and healthy, productive workforce but recognise that ill health is a part of life and when it happens employees need the right support.
- 2.72 We will use our data to develop plans that fit with our organisational need.
- 2.73 We will continue to place emphasis on accurate and timely sickness absence reporting both to and better understand costs and to manage the wellbeing of staff to best effect for both the organisation and individuals.
- 2.74 Based on the data we are developing a robust approach led by HRBPs and supported by HR consultancy to systemically review sickness cases. This will include the development of an early intervention approach to sickness absence using the support of our occupational health provider and aligning with our health and wellbeing framework. This will also help to improve the accuracy of our reporting and data as we will be able to correlate actual cases against records more meaningfully.
- 2.75 A continued programme of training will help to scale up the confidence and capability of line managers and help them to spot signs early where staff need help. It will also include effective return-to-work conversations and plans.
- 2.76 Our short-term deliverables to support absence management are set out in the table below but we need to recognise that it will take time to see change and in managing cases proactively we may see data that suggests things are getting worse in order to get better.
- 2.77 The table below highlights the key action plan we intend to work to for the next financial year

Topic	Action	By whom	Timescale
Review of sickness absence cases	HR Consultants, in liaison with HRBPs, to work with managers to review all sickness cases hitting triggers and agree an action plan	HRBPs, HR Consultants, Managers	All cases reviewed by end of Q1 30 June 2023
Prevention	Using the health and wellbeing action plan and resources to support health and wellbeing plus manager training – help employees and managers to spot signs early and for both to take measures to avoid ill health and maintain good health – includes taking breaks during	OD and Learning and HR advisory	In place now

	<p>the day making use of the staff networks and understanding own health needs</p> <p>Continue to offer the training and workshops for managers throughout the year</p>		<p>Training plan in place for next year</p>
<p>Early Intervention of sickness absence cases</p>	<p>Work with TP our new OH provider to develop and embed an early intervention approach to sickness absence creating a culture whereby health matters impacting work are discussed at an early stage before triggers are hit, with any adjustments being made as appropriate, and then proactively reviewing sickness absences where triggers have been hit.</p>	<p>HR to develop approach/ guide</p> <p>Occupational health to provide specialist support</p> <p>Managers to embed</p>	<p>By end of May 23</p>
<p>Tailored approach in Directorates focusing on interventions for top reasons for absence</p>	<p>HRBPs to work with service managers to develop tailored approach based on data and understanding of the needs of services (ie difference between front line and back office workers, muscular skeletal versus mental health patterns of absence)</p> <p>Continue to promote resources available to support mental health and muscular skeletal cases</p>	<p>HRBPs/Service Managers</p>	<p>Plans in place by end of May 23</p>

3. Other options considered

Risks and potential impact of not addressing sickness absence will impact on productivity, performance, wellbeing, engagement, and retention.

4. Legal and financial implications

Budget for this work is part of existing HR&OD operating costs. There are no other direct legal or financial implications

5. Corporate implications

- a) Property - none
- b) HR - none
- c) Climate change - none

- d) Sustainability - none
- e) Equality – an EQIA was completed as part of unitary planning on this topic
- f) Data – no DPIA required
- g) Value for money – this work will add value by improving employee health and wellbeing and reducing turnover costs; also by improving health and wellbeing benefits – impacting on improved productivity/motivation and reduced absence

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

Not applicable

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

Ongoing internal management and employee communications are in place to support this work

8. Next steps and review

As outlined in paper section 5

9. Background papers

[Preventing sickness absence among employees with common mental disorders or stress-related symptoms at work: a cluster randomised controlled trial of a problem-solving-based intervention conducted by the Occupational Health Services | Occupational & Environmental Medicine \(bmj.com\)](#)

[deloitte-uk-mental-health-report-2022.pdf](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1

Local Authority benchmarking data (rolling year to end of March 2022)

PPMA sickness absence rates at 31/3/22	Average Absence (days per FTE)	Top Reason	%	Reason 2	%	Reason 3	%
Cumbria County Council	15.3	Covid	10.0%	Stress (non-work related)	9.0%	Mental health (excluding stress)	8.0%
Devon County Council	11.98	Covid	20.0%	Cough/cold/flu	18.0%	Gastro- intestinal	11.0%
Leicestershire County Council	9.91	Stress Mental health /depression	28.4%	Covid	14.7%	Muscular Skeletal	8.8%
Buckinghamshire Council	9.27	all mental health absence	25.3%	Covid	13.1%	Other Muscular Skeletal	9.3%
Central Bedfordshire Council	8.8	Anxiety Stress/ depression/mental health	26.8%	Covid	12.8%	Injury/ Fracture	8.5%
Walsall Council	8.78	Mental Health	35.7%	Muscular skeletal	14.4%	Covid	10.1%
Lincolnshire County Council	8.74	Covid	16.6%	Cold/ flu symptom	16.0%	Stomach/Liver/Digestion	6.8%
North Yorkshire County Council	8.35	Stress Depression anxiety and related	32.0%	Other Muscular Skeletal	17.0%	Infections	10.0%
Somerset County Council	7.97	Anxiety Stress/ Psy	31.0%	Other	13.0%	Covid	10.0%
Warwickshire County Council	7.95	Stress and Mental Health	28.0%	Muscular skeletal	15.0%	Covid	12.0%
Worcestershire County Council	7.95	Musculoskeletal	17.0%	Stress	13.0%	Psychological	13.0%
Kent County Council	7.39	Mental Health	20.0%	Muscular skeletal	13.4%	Covid	12.0%

Covid
All mental Health

Note

All other Councils are County Councils other than Buckinghamshire, Central Bedfordshire and Walsall
The local authority average is **9.36 days per FTE** (based on this data)

Appendix 2

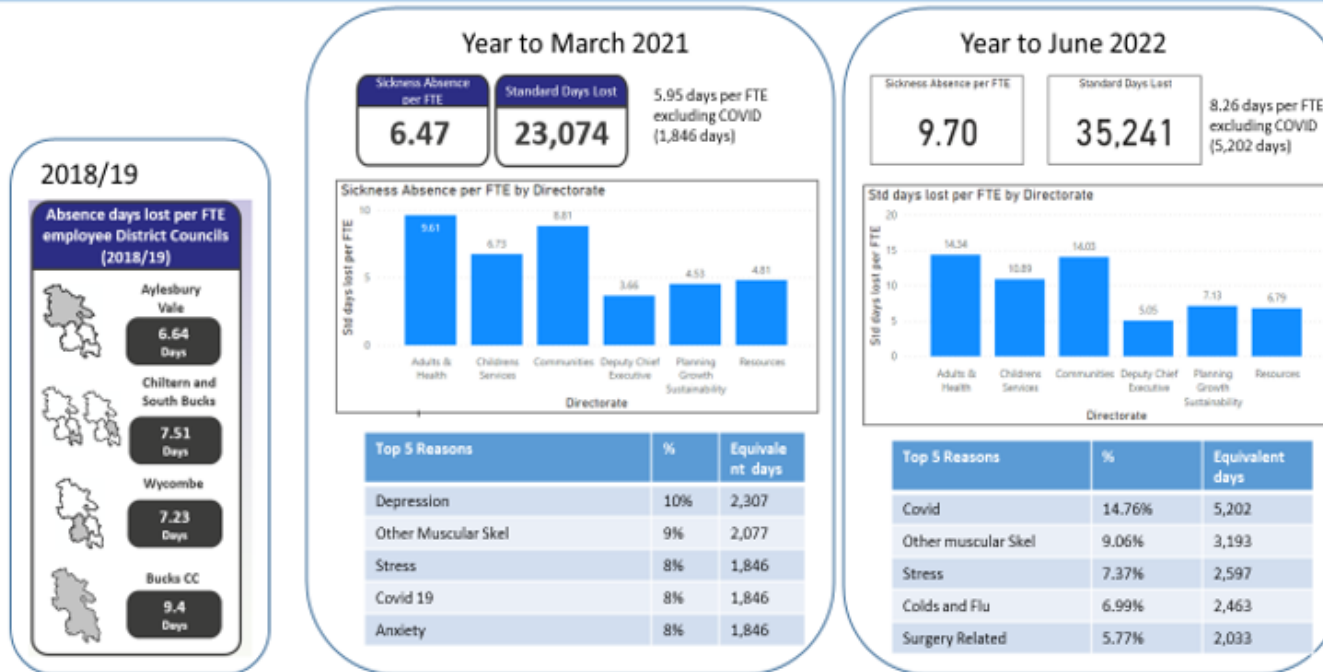
Historical sickness absence

Comparison with historical sickness data (from BI deep dive March 2021)

In March 2021 BI team carried out a deep dive analysis of sickness absence which pointed out that there was no reliable historical data to create a combined sickness absence rate for BC prior to March 2020. The first full years data as the combined authority was collected in the year to March 2021 and has been monitored monthly since. The top level results in March 2021 showed an FTE sickness absence rate of 6.47 days per FTE (5.95 days excluding COVID absence) – lower than all the legacy councils recorded in 2018/19 and compared to June 22 where absence rates are 9.7 days per FTE (8.26 excluding COVID) . In March 2021 32% of all absence was for mental health reasons compared to 25% in June 22.

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Conversely accepting covid is here to stay what extra resilience strategies should services employ to minimise impact of expected continuing COVID absence??



Appendix 3 - Further detail on sickness absence costings

Assumptions for sickness absence costings

These are indicative costs and are based on an employee's day rate from their full time salary.

The sickness absence costing assumes all staff have the full sickness entitlement of 6 months full and 6 months half pay.

Long term sickness absence at full pay

Directorate	Sum of Cal.days	Sum of Total Sick Cost
Adults & Health	4,927	£428,459.89
Children's Services	5,572	£591,089.76
Communities	5,807	£419,281.45
Deputy Chief Executive	704	£77,487.14
Planning Growth Sustainability	2,731	£255,507.46
Resources	3,684	£352,022.35
Grand Total	23,425	£2,123,848.06

Long term sickness absence at half pay

Directorate	Sum of Cal.days	Sum of Half Pay
Adults & Health	1,352	£55,739.41
Children's Services	576	£14,698.98
Communities	1,255	£41,769.32
Deputy Chief Executive	NA	NA
Planning Growth Sustainability	1,047	£39,504.73
Resources	NA	NA
Grand Total	4,230	£151,712.44

Short term sickness absence at full pay

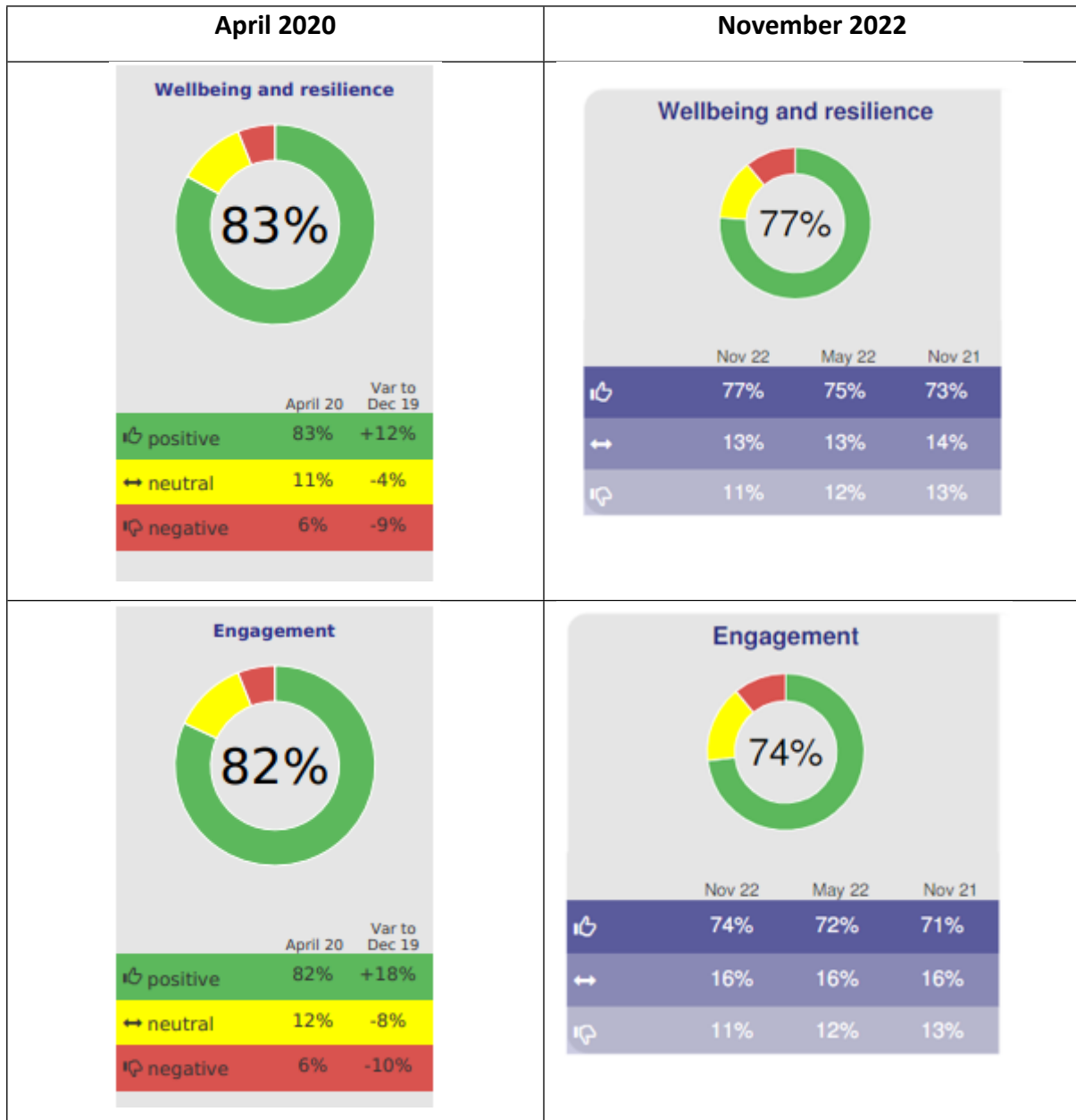
Directorate	Sum of Cal.days	Sum of Total Sick Cost
Adults & Health	4,227	£345,072.13
Children's Services	6,169	£590,214.30
Communities	5,556	£385,487.55
Deputy Chief Executive	1,254	£128,726.41
Planning Growth Sustainability	2,993	£249,138.08
Resources	4,817	£400,563.81
Grand Total	25,016	£2,099,202.27

Total cost of sickness absence (both short and long term)

Directorate	Total Sickness Days	Total Sickness Costs
Adults & Health	10,506	£829,271.44
Children's Services	12,317	£1,196,003.04
Communities	12,618	£846,538.33
Deputy Chief Executive	1,958	£206,213.56
Planning Growth Sustainability	6,771	£544,150.26
Resources	8,501	£752,586.15
Grand Total	52,671	£4,374,762.78

Appendix 4

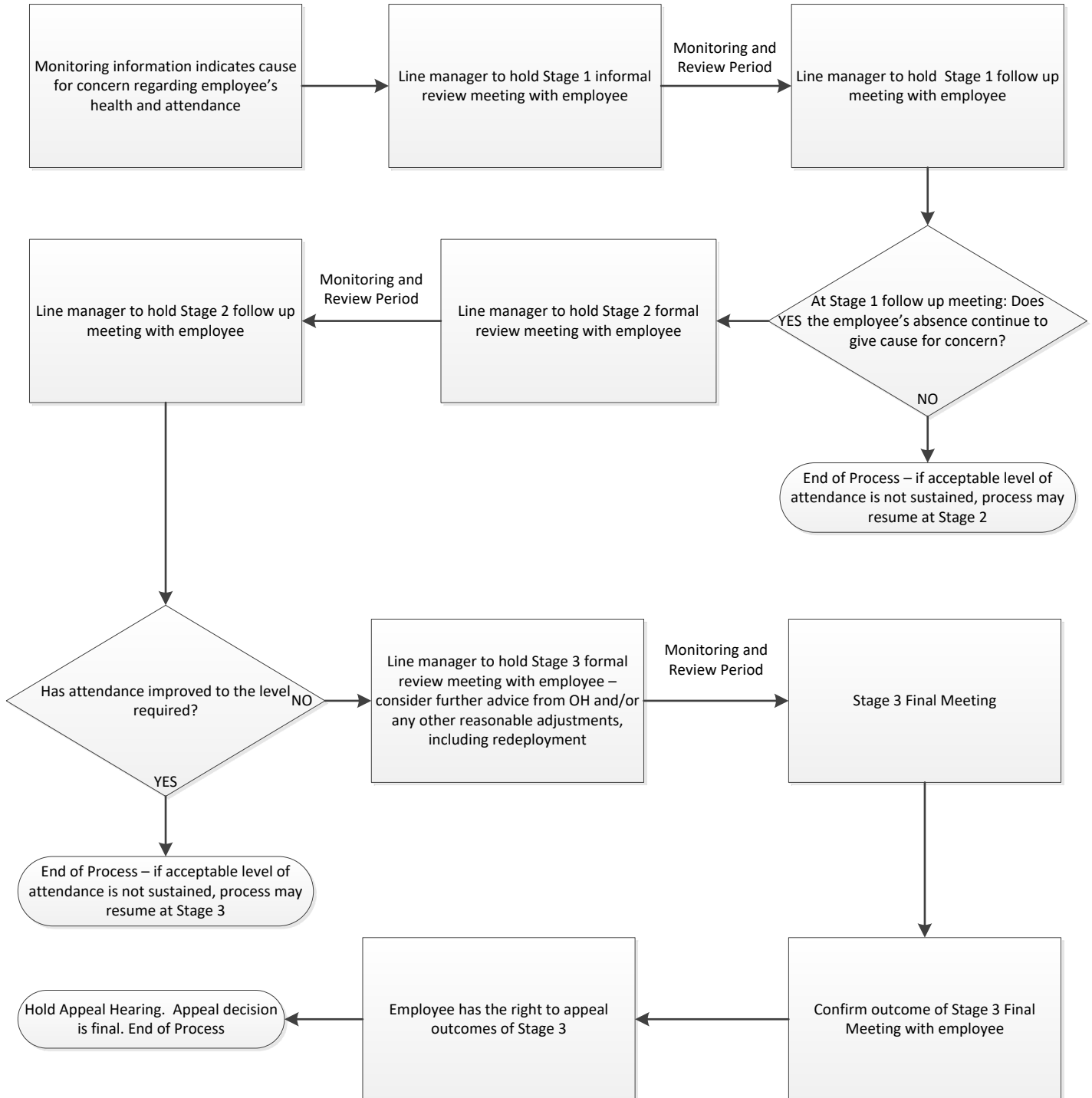
Together Survey Results for Wellbeing and Resilience index and Engagement index, April 2020, and November 2022



Appendix 5 - ABSENCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS WORKFLOW

BC Absence Management Procedure

Always refer to the policy and guidance documents when using this workflow to ensure the details of each stage of the process are understood and followed.



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