



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 27 November 2024

REPORT TITLE:	2024/25 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER TWO (THE PERIOD TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2024)
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out the financial monitoring information, revenue and capital position for the Children, Families and Education Committee as at Quarter 2 (30 September) of 2024/25. The report provides Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2024/25 saving programme and a summary of reserves and balances, to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers. Regular Member engagement, which this report forms part of, is considered essential in delivering effective governance and financial oversight.

At the end of Quarter 2, there is a forecast adverse position of £9.996m on the revenue budget of Children, Families and Education revised net revenue budget of £95.816m

The Council faces a severe financial challenge that demands immediate action. To achieve a balanced budget by the end of the financial year it is imperative to implement all possible measures to curtail spending and generate substantial cost savings. Without substantial action being taken, the Council will not be in a position to provide a balanced budget by financial year end. The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) have been made aware of the Council's financial position.

The source of the overspend reflects a further deterioration of the outturn position from 2023/24 for which an action plan has been developed and implemented. This action plan was designed to address the main issues generating the adverse position. However, the majority of this overspend is a consequence of increased demand and costs for social care services and will not be easily resolved.

This is not a key decision and affects all wards.

The report contributes to the Wirral Plan 2023-2027 in supporting the organisation in meeting all Council priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children, Families and Education Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the forecast adverse position of £9.996m presented at Quarter 2 and the urgent need to examine all available options to address the position.
2. Note that the Director of Finance has contacted the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) to make them aware of the Council's overall financial position.
3. Note the progress on delivery of the 2024/25 savings programme at Quarter 2.
4. Note the forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 2.
5. Note the capital position at the end of Quarter 2.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Regular monitoring and reporting of the revenue budgets and savings achievements enables decisions to be taken in a timely manner, which may produce revenue benefits and will improve financial control of Wirral Council.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Policy & Resources Committee has previously determined the budget monitoring process and this report details the agreed course of action.
- 2.2 In striving to manage budgets, available options have been evaluated to maintain a balance between service delivery and a balanced budget.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 At the meeting on 26 February 2024, the Council agreed a net revenue budget for 2024/25 of £399.6m to be met by government grants, council tax, and business rates. At Quarter 1, a serious financial position for the Council was reported which requires significant mitigation in-year through all available measures to reduce expenditure and generate cost savings. The source of the overspend reflected the outturn position from 2023/24, for which an action plan has been developed and implemented, and the continued increase in demand for children's and adults social care. In relation to the Council, as at the end of Quarter 2, there is a forecast adverse position of £21.563m on Directorate spend. The Children, Education and Families forecast contributes £9.996m of the adverse budget variance. After utilising the contingency budget and applying £2.88m of flexible use of capital receipts to fund transformational revenue spend, the adverse variance still to be mitigated at the Council level stands at £14.861m.
- 3.2 Addressing and mitigating the in-year adverse position will be incredibly challenging but several potential strategies are available, some of which are already in progress:
- Full utilisation of all contingency funds (fully utilised in current forecast),
 - Council wide spend freeze (implemented from 9 September 24),
 - Maximising the use of capital receipts to finance transformational revenue expenditure (£2.88m already included in current forecast),
 - Reallocating earmarked reserves,
 - Use of general fund balances.
 - Work with MHCLG to identify options for financial sustainability and potential short-term measures to address the issue within the current year. (initial contact has already been made)

These options may help alleviate the current financial pressure. However, this is not a sustainable position going forward and will adversely impact budget planning for 2025/26.

Economic Context

- 3.3 While geopolitical events continue to pose potential threats to price stability, the headline Consumer Price Index (CPI) has fallen to 1.7% in the year to September 2024, below the Bank’s target for inflation of 2% for the first time since April 2021.
- 3.4 In September, the Bank of England cut its Bank Rate by 0.25% to 5.00%, marking the first decrease in four years. Additional rate cuts are anticipated in the coming months, provided inflation remains low. However, the Bank emphasised that it was closely monitoring developments in the Middle East, particularly any changes in oil prices that could potentially drive-up inflation.
- 3.5 The next budget has been scheduled by the Chancellor for the 30 October 2024 (too late for inclusion in this report). This autumn a one-year spending review is expected, with a more comprehensive multi-year spending review planned for next spring. According to the Local Government Association (LGA) the results of the upcoming spending review will be crucial in determining the future sustainability of local services.
- 3.6 In this context, the Council must remain agile and ready to respond to emerging trends and unforeseen events. Regular reassessment of economic indicators and global developments will be key to navigating this calmer, yet still challenging, economic landscape.

Quarter 2 Forecast Revenue Outturn Position

- 3.7 Table 1 presents the forecast outturn as a net position, i.e. expenditure minus income. Favourable variances (underspends) are shown as negative values and adverse variances (overspends) are shown as a positive value.
- 3.8 At the end of Quarter 2, against the revised net revenue budget for the Children, Families and Education of £95.816m, there is a forecast adverse variance of £9.996m.

TABLE 1: 2024/25 CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION REVENUE BUDGET & FORECAST OUTTURN

	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance	
	£000	£000	(+ Adv / - Fav) £000	%
Children and Families	60,476	68,897	8,421	14%
Early Help, Prevention & Effectiveness	14,295	13,158	(1,137)	-8%
Education - Core	17,062	19,514	2,452	14%
SEND – Statutory	3,983	4,243	260	7%
Children Families and Education Net Expenditure	95,816	105,812	9,996	10%

Significant aspects of revenue variances by service area:

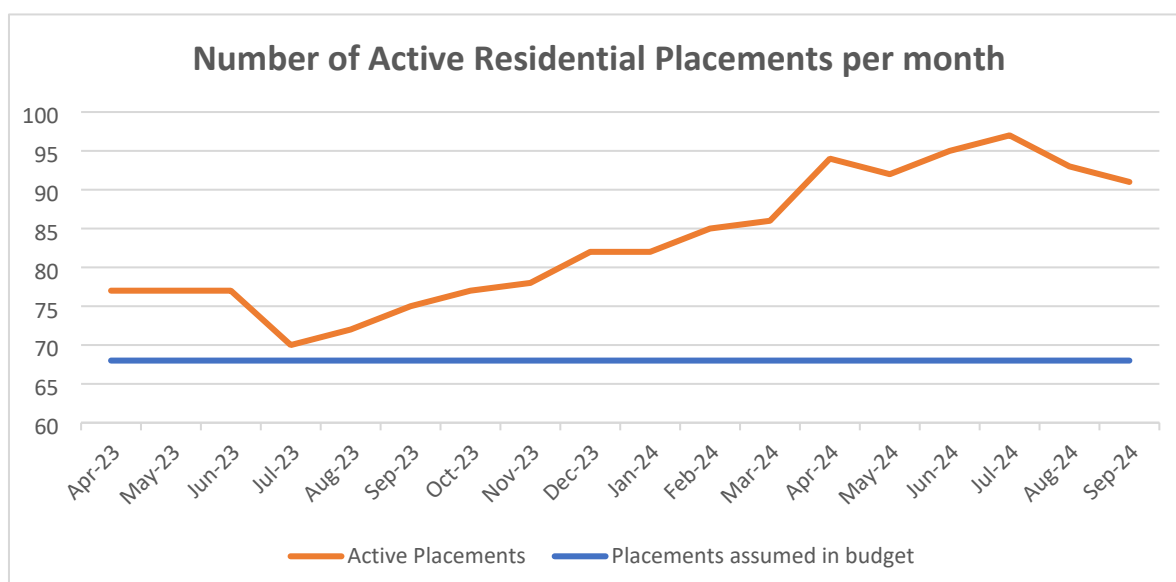
Children and Families adverse variance of £8.421m

3.9 Wirral has continued to see a reduction in the number of children who are looked after. There was a spike of 834 children in 2018 which reduced to 772 in 2023. As at the end of September 2024 the figure is 742.

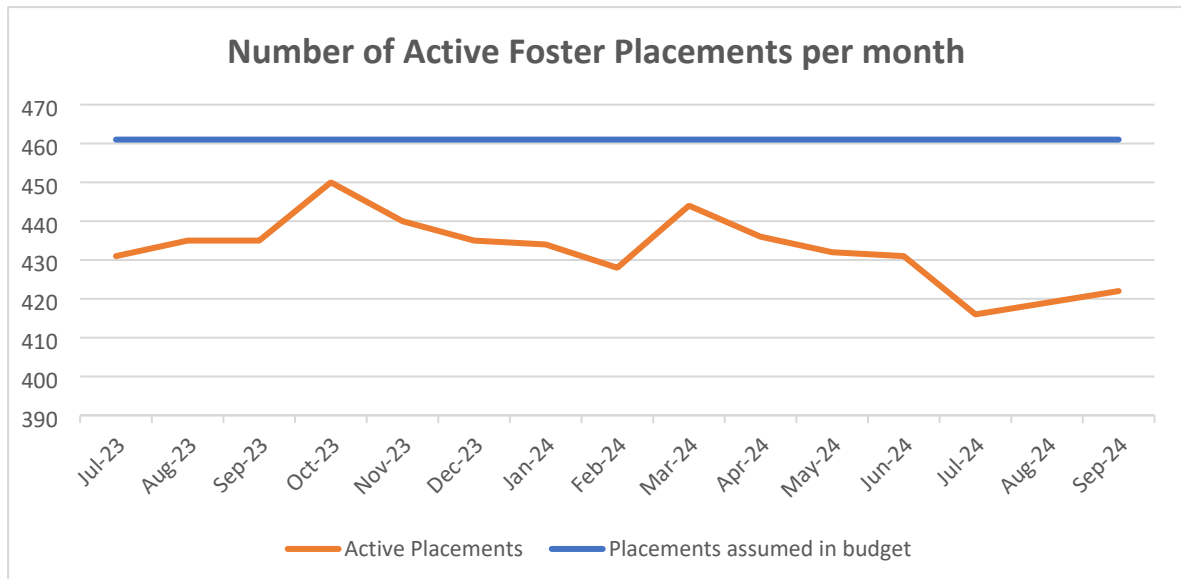
TABLE 2: NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE

Dec 22	Mar 23	Jun 23	Sep 23	Dec 23	Mar 24	Jun 24	Sep 24
804	766	769	780	772	767	764	742

Despite an overall reduction in the numbers of children looked after (CLA), there are still significant pressures from the CLA placement costs. £7.054m of the forecast overspend for the year is in relation to placements. Whilst the number of CLA has decreased, the number of residential placements has risen since July 23 as shown by the graph below:



3.10 The average cost of a residential placement is currently £5,045 per week. Whilst Wirral has continued to see a reduction of children becoming looked after (whereas the national trend from England has been one of an increase), children are presenting to services with more complex mental health needs, which has presented further challenges to families trying to care for their children. In addition, placements for children in foster care have been increasingly difficult to identify, this has led to more children and young people being placed in residential placements. The graph below shows the number of active foster placements since July 23:



- 3.11 The Children and Families budget has been predicated on the aspiration that more children within Wirral are to be supported in effective foster placements as opposed to residential care, however this is against the historic trend that has been experienced. £0.9m of the forecast overspend within Children’s and Families is in relation to the uplifting of the skills banding payments for foster carers from July 24, however this is considered a positive step to help to encourage more foster carers as Wirral has historically paid less than other local authorities. Increasing the banding rates has put Wirral foster care rates in line with other areas and should positively impact on recruitment and retention, thereby reducing reliance on significantly higher residential placement costs and is an invest to save approach.
- 3.12 At the Children, Young People and Education Committee on 23 September, the Committee endorsed the Care Programme, which is a proactive step to mitigate the forecast overspends within Children’s care. The aim of the Care Programme is to safely reduce our reliance on residential care placement by, wherever possible, enabling children and young people to be raised by their families, within their family network, or in a family environment. Foster carers play a pivotal role in the Care Programme, one of the objectives of the care programme is to ensure that when the best option for a child is foster care, there is a placement available. A requirement within the program is to retain and optimise the foster care resource we currently have and to attract new foster carers through improved foster care packages, in relation to finances, training, development and supervision.
- 3.13 The workstreams of the Care Programme will be co-ordinated by a Programme Leader and report to the Care Programme Board. Regular reports to the Council’s Senior Leadership Team and to the Children, Young People and Education Committee will ensure effective monitoring and oversight. The impact of the Programme can already be seen in the graphs above as a reduction in residential placements from July 2024 and a corresponding increase in foster care placements during the same time period. If this trend continues then there will be a positive impact on the budget this year and in future years. It is too early to project how material this impact will be at this stage.

Early Help, Prevention & Effectiveness: forecast favourable variance of £1.137m

- 3.14 The main reason for the favourable variance within this service area is additional in year contributions and grants, over and above what was assumed at initial budget setting, in relation to public health, supporting families, and the youth justice board grant. These temporarily increased contributions are being utilised to mitigate the known pressures with Children & Families in 24/25. The Early Help, Prevention & Effectiveness area are committed to working towards preventing escalation and delivering the care programme. Services have flexed to enable additional targeted wrap around for those children and young people on the edge of care or in crisis; and those planning on moving on from residential placements.

Education Core: forecast adverse variance of £2.452m

- 3.15 The pressure within the schools' core budget continues to be home to school transport which is forecasting a £3.147m overspend. This is based on the current activity levels within the service and factors in a 7% increase in activity from September 24, based on the number of additional school places for the new academic year and the number of children with an EHCP accessing transport services. This overspend is partly offset by favourable variances against teachers' retirement costs, the attendance service, and part release of some service related reserves. A report is being taken to the Children, Young People and Education Committee in November around the options around home to school transport.

SEND – Statutory: forecast adverse variance of £0.260m

- 3.16 The SEND service area includes two budget areas, Educational Psychological Services and the SEND Assessment Team. The increasing demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) continues and additional resources where required to progress further improvement in SEND support and services. At Quarter 1 the SEND Statutory Services budget was forecasting a £1.181m overspend. The Policy & Resources Committee on 11 September 2024 approved the virement from the Council's contingency budget of £1.100m in order to meet the service capacity requirements of the SEND Referral and Assessment Team and Educational Psychology Service in line with the restructure approved by the LASPB.

Pressures to be managed

- 3.17 It is financially imperative and legally required that the Council report a balanced position at the end of the financial year. Failure to do so results in the Council's Section 151 Officer having to produce a Section 114 report under the Local Government Act 1988.
- 3.18 A number of actions and projects have already been taken by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to try and address the overall position. In relation to Children's this ranges from the development of joint commissioning activities within Adults and Children's, panels reviewing high-cost placements, development of a strategy to increase foster care provision, implementation of the findings from the Home to School Transport review and endorsement of the Care Programme.

- 3.19 A robust vacancy management process has been agreed by SLT and implemented, consequently, any external recruitment will only be undertaken by exception.
- 3.20 From Monday 9th September, the Director of Finance also introduced a spending freeze. The aim of this freeze is to keep the 2024/25 costs to an absolute minimum to ensure the Council is in a better position to continue to fulfil its statutory duties and take the necessary steps to deliver a balanced budget.
- 3.21 However, despite all of these measures, the latest financial projections for this year, mean the Council is still confronted with a significant risk of an in-year overspend, meaning further options need to be explored.
- 3.22 Below is a summary of the options available to help mitigate the in-year position, some of which are already in progress:
- Full utilisation of all contingency funds (fully utilised in the Quarter 2 forecast),
 - Council wide spend freeze (implemented from Monday 9th September)
 - Maximising the use of capital receipts to finance transformational revenue expenditure
 - Reallocation of earmarked reserves
 - Use of general fund balances
 - Work with MHCLG to identify options for financial sustainability (initial contact has already been made)
- 3.23 The severity of the adverse financial position at Q2 will require implementing most of these proposed measures. Any additional decline in the financial situation would leave the council unable to achieve a balanced budget for 2024/25. Even if we could theoretically balance the budget using the aforementioned resources, it would place the Council in a precarious position at the start of the new financial year lacking both contingency and emergency funds. This situation is untenable which is why the Director of Finance has already initiated contact with MHCLG.

Role of Policy and Service Committee

- 3.24 As per the 'Budget Monitoring and Budget Setting Processes Report', the Committees will be responsible for containing net expenditure within their overall budget envelope and not overspending. Where an adverse variance is forecast, each committee will be required to take remedial action, with detailed plans and timeframes, to bring the budget back in line and ensure that overspends are mitigated.
- 3.25 Where a Committee has taken all possible steps for remedial action and is unable to fully mitigate an overspend, this must be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee who will then take an organisational-wide view of how this adverse variance will be managed. There must be immediate action agreed to ensure a deliverable, balanced forecast position can be reported, and this will be monitored on a monthly basis by the Policy and Resources Committee Finance Working group.
- 3.26 The upcoming Policy and Service committee meetings will receive reports detailing the current financial position for their respective areas. These reports will be

accompanied by proposed measures aimed at limiting and reducing the adverse financial forecasts for the Committees consideration.

Role of the Policy and Resources Committee

- 3.27 The Policy and Resources Committee has ultimate responsibility for taking any necessary steps required to ensure a balanced budget position is delivered. The Section 151 Officer will be responsible for ensuring that any budget actions, proposals and mitigations are achievable and legal.
- 3.28 The quarter 2 position highlights £21.563m of forecast adverse variances across Directorates. This position carries a significant risk that the Council will be unable to manage in year from the available resources. Committees and the relevant Chief Officers need to urgently identify and agree remedial action to address this adverse variance, noting that the Section 151 Officer has already engaged with SLT around deferring all non-essential spend.
- 3.29 This is a critical financial position for the Council. Considering the present levels of earmarked reserves and general fund balances, any further deterioration of this position during the year will necessitate action from the Section 151 Officer. Specifically, the requirement to issue a Section 114 notice. This Page 99 notice is a mandatory obligation for a Section 151 Officer if the budget is, or is likely to become, unbalanced. Before issuing such a notice, the Section 151 Officer must consult with The Head of the Paid Service (in this case, the Chief Executive) and The Monitoring Officer (Director of Law and Corporate Services). This process underscores the severity of the financial challenges facing the Council and the potential legal implications if the situation worsens.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

- 3.30 As at Quarter 2, the schools budget is forecast to overspend by £12.798m which is mainly due to pressures within the High Needs Block. Table 3, below summaries the forecast outturn position by funding block.

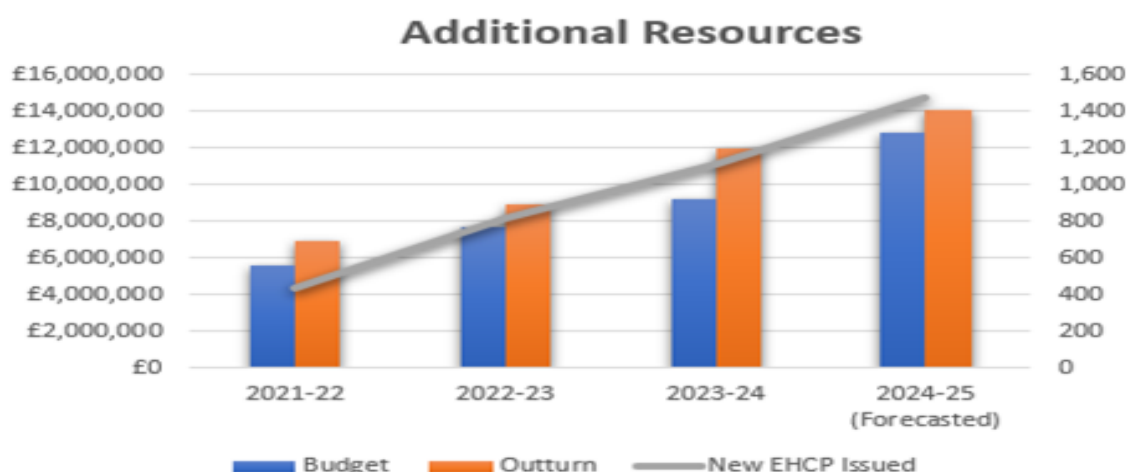
TABLE 3: 2024/25 CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION – DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG)

	Budget £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Variance (+ Adv / - Fav)		Adverse/ Favourable
			£000	%	
DSG Expenditure:					
Schools Block	114,816	114,816	0	0%	Favourable
Schools Block De-delegated	1,947	1,938	(9)	0%	Favourable
Central School Services Block	2,022	1,993	(28)	-1%	Favourable
High Needs	72,276	74,119	1,844	3%	Adverse
Early Years	36,821	36,821	0	0%	Balanced
Total Gross Surplus / (Deficit)	227,882	229,687	1,806	1%	Adverse

DSG Income:	(216,965)	(216,889)	76	0%	Adverse
Movement in DSG Reserve	(10,917)	(12,798)	(1,882)		
Total Net (Surplus) / Deficit	0	0	0	0%	Balanced

High Needs adverse variance of £1.844m

3.31 Within the High Needs Block, £1.279m of the adverse variance is in relation to additional resources. Demand on this budget grows in line with the requests for EHCP assessments. Requests increased by 15% in the period to July 2024 compared to last year. Not all requests result in a financial outcome, but a significant portion result in Units of Resource being awarded. The forecasted expenditure for the Units of Resources in 2024/25 has increased by 20% compared with the 2023/24 outturn. The graph below is the comparison of the budget and outturn/forecasted outturn for the Unit of Resources and the number of new EHCP's issued/forecasted to be issued.



The position will be monitored closely, and the forecast position re-assessed as more up to date information becomes available.

- 3.32 Within the High Needs Block there is also a £0.247m adverse variance against the Independent Special Schools budget. Demand continues to increase more than anticipated and is forecast to overspend, despite the budget being increased in 2024/25 by £3.73m
- 3.33 The 2023/24 financial year closed with a Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserve cumulative deficit position of £12.989m. The current financial year outturn position would contribute a further £12.798m to the deficit reserve, thus delivering a cumulative £25.787m deficit position as at the end of 2024/25.

Progress on delivery of the 2024/25 savings programme.

- 3.34 Table 3 presents the progress on the delivery of the 2024/25 approved savings. For savings rated as Amber, an equal amount of temporary in-year mitigation has been identified to cover any shortfalls which may occur. For savings rated as red, the contingency fund set up for non-achieved savings will need to be utilised.
- 3.35 In terms of savings, £1.330m of the £2.980m savings targets are either delivered or on track to be delivered, representing 45% of the total savings target with a further 55% or £1.650m with a high risk of not being achieved within this financial year. The table below summarises the progress by saving:

TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF PROGRESS ON DELIVERY OF 2024/25 SAVINGS

Savings Description	Approved Saving £m	Green £m	Amber £m	Red £m	Mitigation £m
Reduction in children looked after (CLA) numbers	-0.330	-0.330	0.000	0.000	0.000
Reducing High Cost Residential Care	-1.100	0.000	0.000	-1.100	0.000
Reduction in teachers pension liabilities	-0.200	-0.200	0.000	0.000	0.000
Re-organisation of Early Help	-0.550	0.000	-0.550	0.000	-0.550
Promoting Independence	-0.300	0.000	0.000	-0.300	0.000
Kingsway buy out	-0.500	0.000	-0.250	0.000	-0.250
TOTAL	-2.980	-0.530	-0.800	-1.650	-0.800

- 3.36 £1.1m of the Children, Families and Education savings is in relation to reducing high-cost residential care and £0.3m associated with home to school transport are unlikely to be achieved in year given the extreme pressures on the social care and home to school transport budgets. £0.250m of the PFI saving is now not expected to be achieved until 25/26.

Reserves and Balances

- 3.37 Earmarked reserves represent the money that has been set aside for a clearly defined purpose, and which is available to meet future expenditure in that area. On 1 April 24, earmarked reserves in relation to Children, Young People and Education totalled £1.951m. Of the total earmarked reserves, 57% will be spent in 2024/25. Table 4 below details the reserves which are available.

TABLE 5: SUMMARY OF EARMARKED RESERVES

Reserve	Opening Balance £'000	Forecast Use of Reserve £'000	Contribution to Reserves £'000	Closing Balance £'000
School Improvement	795	(150)	0	645
Schools Causing Concern	294	(225)	0	69
SEND OFSTED Inspection Improvement Action Plan	376	(301)	0	75
Children's Centre – Outdoor Play	51	(51)	0	0
Looked After Children Education Services	111	(111)	0	0
Local Safeguarding Children's Board	23	0	0	23
SEND - High Needs	110	(110)	0	0
YOS - Remand & Mobile Youth Centre	121	(121)	0	0
DRIVE Safelives & Domestic Abuse Hub	50	(50)	0	0
Mersey & Cheshire ICS Pilot	20	0	0	20
Total	1,951	(1,119)	0	832

3.38 The Committee is currently forecast to have £0.832m of earmarked reserves at the end of the financial year 2024/25. Of this 0.688m can be considered ringfenced, with specific conditions limiting their use, £0.144m is non ring fenced but already committed for specific purposes. Details are contained in table 5 below:

TABLE 6: ANALYSIS OF FORECAST CLOSING RESERVES BALANCES

Reserve	Ringfenced £'000	Non Ringfenced £'000	Closing Balance £'000
School Improvement	645	0	645
Schools Causing Concern	0	69	69
SEND OFSTED Inspection Improvement Action Plan	0	75	75
Local Safeguarding Children's Board	23	0	23
Mersey & Cheshire ICS Pilot	20	0	20
Total	688	144	832

3.39 If the Council's current forecast financial position materialises at the end of the year, it will be necessary to redirect earmarked reserves to address the overall financial position. A final decision on the reallocation will be made at the conclusion of the financial year, once the actual final figures are available.

Capital Monitoring

3.40 The capital programme remains broadly on target as at Quarter 2, table 5 below shows the breakdown by scheme. There has been some forecast slippage against Basic Needs and High Needs Provision schemes.

TABLE 7: 2024/25 CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION COMMITTEE CAPITAL BUDGETS

Scheme	Budget 2024/25 £'000	Spend to Qtr 2 £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000
Basic Needs	727	246	346	(381)
Childcare Capital Expansion Fund	604	0	604	0
Children's System Development	703	662	703	0
Condition/modernisation (SCA)	7,011	1,350	7,082	71
Family Hub Transformation Fund	85	0	85	0
Family Support	157	0	57	(100)
High Needs Provision Capital	8,561	857	5,695	(2,866)
School Works – Department for Education Ringfenced Receipts	721	10	721	0
Transforming Care – Therapeutic Short Breaks	317	201	317	0
TOTAL	18,886	3,326	15,610	(3,276)

3.41 **School Condition Allocation (SCA)** – to be used to keep school buildings safe and in good working order by addressing poor building condition, building compliance, energy efficiency, and health and safety issues. The allocation includes £1.642m for roofing works at various schools, £0.804m for boiler installation works and £0.5m Fire Risk Assessments. Major schemes in 2024/25 include Raeburn Primary and Devonshire Park Primary.

3.42 **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/High Needs Provision Capital** – To deliver additional classroom provision for SEND pupils across several special schools. The planned schemes cover Joseph Paxton, Foxfield School and Stanley School. The profile of spend against the high needs provision has been rephased to reflect the spending profile

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This is the Quarter 2 budget monitoring report that provides information on the forecast outturn for the Children, Young People and Education Committee for 2024/25. The Council has robust methods for reporting and forecasting budgets in

place and alongside formal Quarterly reporting to Policy & Resources Committee, the financial position is routinely reported at Directorate Management Team meetings and corporately at the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT).

- 4.2 The Council currently faces a critical financial position, as detailed within the body of the report, which requires immediate action. MHCLG have been made aware of the situation. At present, there is a significant risk of Section 114.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council must set the budget in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and approval of a balanced budget each year is a statutory responsibility of the Council. Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it sets and monitors its budget. These provisions require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly monitor its finances during the year. The legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.

- 5.2 The provisions of section 25, Local Government Act 2003 require that, when the Council is making the calculation of its budget requirement, it must have regard to the report of the chief finance (s.151) officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.

- 5.3 It is essential, as a matter of prudence that the financial position continues to be closely monitored. In particular, Members must satisfy themselves that sufficient mechanisms are in place to ensure that both savings are delivered, and that new expenditure is contained within the available resources. Accordingly, any proposals put forward must identify the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce those savings.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 At this time, there are no additional resource implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there will be resource implications, and these will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Council's ability to maintain a balanced budget for 2024/25 is dependent on a stable financial position. That said, the delivery of the budget is subject to ongoing variables both positive and adverse which imply a level of challenge in achieving this outcome.
- 7.2 In any budget year, there is a risk that operation will not be constrained within relevant budget limits. Under specific circumstances the Section 151 Officer may issue a Section 114 notice. For the current year this remains a significant risk.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation has been carried out with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in arriving at the governance process for the 2024/25 budget monitoring process and budget setting process.
- 8.2 Since the budget was agreed at Full Council on 26 February, some proposals may have been the subject of further consultation with Members, Customer and Residents. The details of these are included within the individual business cases or are the subject of separate reports to the Committee.
- 8.3 Due to the current position, engagement with MHCLG has been initiated. Further updates will be provided when available and at future meetings.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 At this time, there are no further equality implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there may be equality implications associated with these, and these will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 This report has no direct environmental implications; however due regard is given as appropriate in respect of procurement and expenditure decision-making processes that contribute to the outturn position.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 In year activity will have incorporated community wealth implications. Consideration would have taken account of related matters across headings such as the following:
- **Progressive Procurement and Social Value**
How we commission and procure goods and services. Encouraging contractors to deliver more benefits for the local area, such as good jobs, apprenticeship, training & skills opportunities, real living wage, minimising their environmental impact, and greater wellbeing.
 - **More local & community ownership of the economy**
Supporting more cooperatives and community businesses.
Enabling greater opportunities for local businesses.
Building on the experience of partnership working with voluntary, community and faith groups during the pandemic to further develop this sector.
 - **Decent and Fair Employment**

Paying all employees a fair and reasonable wage.

- **Making wealth work for local places**

REPORT AUTHOR: **Jess Whitley**
(Head of Finance - People)
email: jessicawhitley@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Children, Young People & Education Committee Report 23 Jul 24: Budget Monitoring and Budget Setting Processes Report.
CIPFA's Financial Management Code

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children, Young People & Education Committee	23 July 2024
Children, Young People & Education Committee	6 March 2024
Children, Young People & Education Committee	1 February 2024
Children, Young People & Education Committee	29 November 2023
Children, Young People & Education Committee	25 September 2023
Children, Young People & Education Committee	19 July 2023
Children, Young People & Education Committee	21 June 2023
Children, Young People & Education Committee	7 March 2023
Children, Young People & Education Committee	24 January 2023
Children, Young People & Education Committee	6 December 2022

Children, Young People & Education Committee	12 October 2022
Children, Young People & Education Committee	21 June 2022
Children, Young People & Education Committee	10 March 2022

