
FINANCE, MODERNISATION & PERFORMANCE STATEMENT

Financial Update

On 20 October 2022, the Cabinet approved a paper which provided updated information on the scale of the estimated budget gap that we face in the next financial year. The calculation shows that the real terms cut we can expect based on current assumptions around funding, rising inflation and increased demand for services, which has significantly increased the calculation made previously in July 2022 – rising from a predicted gap of approximately £29 million in the summer to £53 million now.

This is driven heavily by spiralling inflationary pressures, particularly in regard to energy costs, fuel, food, and the expected national pay award, and continued growing demand for key services, like Children’s Services. As an example of the increasing costs we face, our energy costs are currently estimated to be around £15 million higher than at present. This is a crisis in public services that is being faced across the UK.

At the time of writing this statement, the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer is Jeremy Hunt, and he has stated that there will be a fiscal statement in Parliament on 31 October 2022 that may set out important indications of the UK Government’s public spending plans. The impact of any decisions taken there could lead to financial consequential for the Welsh Government, which has indicated that Local Authorities will receive the Provisional Settlement in mid-December 2022.

This is a period of significant uncertainty and volatility and I will seek to update Members as appropriate in the weeks ahead. The scale of the budget gap, if no further support is available to deal with the large increase in costs we face, is larger than we have faced in recent years and comes on top of more than a decade of savings. Work is ongoing now to identify a range of savings to help present a balanced budget next spring, with public consultation on proposals in the coming months.

Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy

I’m pleased to report that the Council’s Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy 2022-2027 was well received by the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 18 October 2022, describing it as “excellent and exciting”, and was approved subsequently by Cabinet on 20 October 2022. The Council spends over £560 million purchasing goods, services and works from over 8,000 organisations. As a Council, we recognise that procurement is a key tool for the Council to deliver our wider policy objectives including being carbon neutral by 2030, promoting the

foundational economy, improving fair work, and increasing the delivery of community benefits. This is a corporate strategy and is supported by a detailed delivery plan, which will be updated annually, together with the publication of an annual Procurement Report. The successful delivery of the strategy will require all parts of the Council and partners to play their part, and I look forward to the Council developing and deepening this work in the years ahead.

Anti-Slavery Day

Anti-Slavery Day is marked on 18 October every year and provides an opportunity to raise awareness of human trafficking and modern slavery. It is also a chance to encourage government, local authorities, companies, charities and individuals to do what they can to address the problem. The Council is committed to ensuring that modern slavery and human trafficking have no place in its business and supply chains and every year, publishes its annual modern slavery statement, which can be found at: <https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Business/Tenders-commissioning-and-procurement/social-responsibility/Modern-Slavery/Pages/default.aspx>

Website

www.cardiff.gov.uk had an increased number of visitors last month (240,000 visits; 833,000 pages viewed) compared to the previous month (201,000; 681,000 pages viewed). In September, 69% of website visitors used a mobile device, up 3% compared to last year, and 23,100 online payments were made via the website totalling £2.6million. 84% of Penalty Charge Notice appeals and 82.6% of street cleansing reports were completed online. The website has also achieved 95% AA level accessibility compliance and is now in joint second place among the 22 council websites in Wales as rated by SOCITM's accessibility partner, SilkTide.

CardiffGov Mobile App

At the end of September 2022, the total number of downloads for the CardiffGov mobile app had passed 65,000 since it was launched. Last month, an update was also released, which made improvements to the user interface and usability of the app, including information on how personal data is managed and stored within the device. The team has also finalised technical updates for waste management emergency scenarios for cancelled waste streams in readiness for any severe winter weather. This will ensure that the mobile app shows the correct information for the waste collection calendar and on missed collection services in the event of any disruption.

BOBi Chatbot

The Council's chatbot, BOBi, had 6,516 conversations last month, continuing to provide a useful opportunity for residents to get key information from the Council. The team is working to deliver new content on the cost-of-living support available for customers and work has also taken place to redesign content to help access information on Council Tax refunds. Feedback from chatbot users is also good, with 85% rating the service as very good, good or ok.

Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS)

The Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) continues to see month-on-month increases in demand for linguistic support, with a 5% increase in September 2022 compared to August 2022. When comparing to the same period last year, there has been a 42% increase compared to September 2021. Ukrainian continues to be among the top five interpretation and translation languages requested, with high demand throughout Wales. WITS has funded training with Cardiff University for Ukrainian Interpreters, some of whom are Ukraine nationals who have moved to Wales since the conflict and started a new career in professional interpreting.

Councillor Chris Weaver

Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance

21 October 2022