

PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL

6 March 2020

RESERVES STRATEGY

Report by the Head of Finance (Report No. 20/59)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report recommends a strategy for managing the Council's Reserves (with the exception of the Housing Revenue Account balance) in the context of setting the Council's Final Revenue Budget for 2020/21 and Provisional Revenue Budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In accordance with the existing statutory and regulatory framework, the Head of Finance as Responsible Financial Officer (or "Proper Officer") is responsible for advising the Council on the level of Reserves it should hold. This report is intended to fulfil that remit except with regard to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) balance, which was considered in a separate report to the Housing and Communities Committee on 29 January 2020 (Report No. 20/29 refers).
- 1.2 CIPFA Local Authority Advisory Panel Bulletin (LAAP) 99 published in July 2014 provides guidance on the establishment and maintenance of Reserves and Balances and has informed the preparation of this report.
- 1.3 In determining medium term financial plans and preparing budgets the Council needs to consider the establishment and maintenance of Reserves in accordance with its statutory powers. Reserves can be held for three main purposes:
 - Working balances to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing – this forms part of General Reserves.
 - A contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies – this also forms part of General Reserves.
 - A means of building up funds often referred to as Earmarked Reserves, to meet known or predicted liabilities.
- 1.4 LAAP Bulletin 99 also provided guidance on the various categories of Earmarked Reserve that the Council is permitted to hold:

- Sums set aside for major schemes, such as capital developments or asset purchases, or to fund major reorganisations
- Insurance reserves
- Reserves for trading and business units
- Reserves retained for service use
- Reserves for unspent revenue grants
- School balances

1.5 The 2018/19 Annual Accounts which were presented to the Audit Committee on 18 September 2019 (Report No. 19/251 refers), give an overview of the Reserves position as at 31 March 2019 which is summarised in the table below.

<u>Summary of Council Reserves as at 31 March 2019</u>	
	£'000
General Fund	47,441
Housing Revenue Account	1,000
Capital Fund	30,366
Renewal and Repair Fund	20
Insurance Fund	3,193
Capital Statutory Funds	2,581
Capital Grants Unapplied	3,580
	88,181

- 1.6 The above summary excludes the Revaluation Reserve; Capital Adjustments Account; the Financial Instruments Adjustment Account; the Pensions Reserve and the Employee Statutory Adjustment Account. These Reserves reflect proper accounting practice, but are not resource-backed and are, therefore, of limited relevance in determining the Council's Reserves and budget strategies.
- 1.7 The General Fund figure included above merits further consideration and is analysed in detail at Appendix 1 to this report. To assist in effective financial management, Housing Revenue Account balances are considered separately from the rest of the General Fund although for accounting purposes they are part of the General Fund. With regard to Appendix 1 it is important to note that although the General Fund balance as at 31 March 2020 totalled £48,441,000, once HRA balances (£1,000,000) and commitments (£34,767,000) are excluded, there was an uncommitted General Fund balance of £12,674,000. This represented 3.6% of the Council's net budgeted expenditure for 2018/19 (per 2018/19 Revenue

Monitoring Report No.4 – considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 17 April 2019 (Report No. 19/10 refers)).

- 1.8 The projected position as at 31 March 2020 for each of the relevant Reserves will now be considered in turn and recommendations made regarding future strategy.
2. **GENERAL FUND (Excluding HRA): Proposals to earmark General Fund balances.**
 - 2.1 Revenue Monitoring Report Number 3, as presented to the meeting of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 29 January 2020 (Report No. 20/22 refers), detailed the projected outturn for the Council's 2019/20 General Fund Revenue Budget. The projections included in Revenue Monitoring Report Number 3 have been further refined to recognise a number of adjustments which are required in closing the Council's 2019/20 Annual Accounts.
 - 2.2 The impact of these projections on the level of balances is summarised at Appendix 2 to this report, which indicates a projected General Fund (excluding HRA) balance of £39,547,000 at 31 March 2020. Of the projected balance as at 31 March 2020, £29,689,000 is earmarked for the specific purposes set out in the table below with a projected uncommitted balance of £9,858,000.
 - 2.3 It should be understood that some areas of uncertainty remain about the projected level of balances at 31 March 2020. Significant issues which might impact on balances include expenditure in relation to any weather related events that occur during the remainder of the financial year.
 - 2.4 Based on the Council's existing financial and policy commitments and the work undertaken in updating the Provisional Revenue Budgets, it is advised that significant amounts will require to be earmarked against the projected General Fund balance as follows:

Projected Uncommitted General Fund Balance at 31 March 2020 (Excluding HRA)		
	£'000	£'000
Projected General Fund Balance at 31 March 2020 (Per Appendix 2)		39,547
<u>Less: Proposed Amounts Earmarked Against Balances:</u>		
Transformation Programme (including Workforce Management and Organisational Change)	(6,250)	
Affordable Housing	(4,909)	
Developer Contributions	(4,600)	
Revenue Grants	(2,752)	
Revenue Budget Flexibility 2019 & 2020	(2,407)	
Perth High School	(1,359)	
REACH project	(1,295)	
Car Parking	(1,154)	
Devolved School Management Balances	(670)	
Secondary Schools	(499)	
Perth & Kinross Offer	(462)	
Works Maintenance	(400)	
Culture	(398)	
PH2O	(350)	
Community Investment Fund	(292)	
Modern Apprentices / Graduate Trainees	(242)	
Communities	(225)	
Grounds maintenance	(225)	
Planning Appeals and Public Enquiries	(191)	
Health and Social Care	(180)	
Contaminated Land	(176)	
Financial Assistance	(156)	
Central Energy Efficiency Fund	(154)	
Events and Rural Communities	(120)	
North Inch Golf Course	(117)	
Elections	(106)	
		(29,689)
Revised Projected Uncommitted Balance at 31 March 2020		9,858

- 2.5 The Council is asked to endorse each of the proposals to earmark Reserves prior to agreeing an appropriate approach to determining the level of uncommitted Reserves held on the General Fund. Each of these proposals is, therefore, dealt with in more detail below.

Transformation Programme (including Workforce Management and Organisational Change) - £6,250,000

- 2.6 As outlined in the latest update to the Medium Term Financial Plan (Report No. 18/326 refers), the Council faces a number of risks over the medium term in relation to future levels of funding and demand for Council services.

- 2.7 In response to this continuing financial challenge the Council has put in place a significant and ambitious Transformation Programme which requires initial non-recurring contributions from this earmarked Reserve in order to generate significant recurring savings. This earmarked Reserve is also in place to fund further workforce management costs that the Council may incur as it prepares for the challenges ahead.
- 2.8 During the year the Reserve has been used to fund £2,681,000 of expenditure on transformation projects as approved by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.
- 2.9 Beyond the current financial year there are likely to be significant calls on this funding. To the extent these calls have not yet been committed they are inevitably very difficult to quantify on an objective basis and the amounts outlined below are a broad indication of the possible demands on this resource:
- Transformation Programme – there are currently further commitments of £2,491,000 in terms of the Council’s approved transformation programme.
 - Further workforce management measures for all groups of staff (which includes voluntary severance schemes) - £3,602,000. The 2020/21 to 2022/23 Provisional Revenue Budgets assume workforce reductions in each year. Further reductions are likely to be necessary beyond this period. This figure will be reviewed as part of the 2019/20 Unaudited Accounts process in light of the final outturn for the Council.
 - Further Transformation and Organisational Change - £157,000 – this includes provision for assisting in delivering a programme of cultural change and building capacity and capability across the organisation.
- 2.10 The total estimated cost of these further initiatives is £6,250,000 as summarised below:

	£'000
Transformation existing programme	2,491
Workforce management	3,602
Further Transformation and Organisational Change	157
TOTAL	6,250

- 2.11 Detailed monitoring information on the Transformation Programme will continue to be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
- 2.12 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Affordable Housing (Resources accrued from reduced Council Tax Discounts) - £4,909,000

- 2.13 It is anticipated that by the end of the current financial year there will be a balance of approximately £4,909,000 in Reserves which has been generated as a result of the Council's policy of varying the level of Council Tax charged for long term empty properties and second homes.
- 2.14 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Developer Contributions: Commuted Sums & Infrastructure and Affordable Housing - £4,600,000

- 2.15 The Enterprise & Infrastructure Committee approved supplementary guidance on 3 September 2014 for developer contributions covering community greenspace, primary education, Auchterarder A9 junction improvements, affordable housing and transport infrastructure (Report No. 14/370 refers).
- 2.16 Developer Contributions are held in the Council's Reserves until they are applied to relevant schemes. It is projected that approximately £2,078,000 of unapplied resources in relation to affordable housing will be held by the Council at 31 March 2020 and it is proposed to earmark the unapplied amount within General Fund Balances. Additionally, it is proposed to earmark accumulated balances of £1,224,000 for the provision of education infrastructure and £192,000 for transport infrastructure. Contributions are also provided by developers towards the cost of maintaining areas of ground. These contributions are used to fund relevant expenditure over a ten year period. It is projected that approximately £1,106,000 of unapplied resources for tree planting, play areas, community allotments and sports grounds will be held by the Council at 31 March 2020. In summary it is proposed to earmark the unapplied amount of developer contributions and commuted sums within General Fund Balances as follows:

	£000
Affordable Housing	2,078
Education Infrastructure	1,224
Transport Infrastructure	192
Environmental Infrastructure	1,106
TOTAL	4,600

- 2.17 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Revenue Grants - £2,752,000

- 2.18 These grants are being carried forward in Reserves in accordance with proper accounting practice as the grant conditions have been met but the relevant expenditure has not yet been fully incurred. It is possible that

further grants will be received in advance of the financial year end, which will augment the projected earmarked Reserve.

- 2.19 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Revenue Budget Flexibility 2019/20 & 2020/21 - £2,407,000

- 2.20 The Council operates a Revenue Budget Flexibility Scheme which, subject to approval, allows certain Service under and over spends from one financial year to be carried forward to future financial years to allow the management of the Revenue Budget over the medium term. Revenue Budget flexibility proposals are reviewed annually with the earmarked amount utilised for the purposes approved by Council. The amount shown is in line with the proposals to utilise budget flexibility contained within the Revenue Budget 2020/21, 2021/22 & 2022/23 report on the agenda for the special meeting of the Council (Report No. 20/57 refers). The assumption underlying this report is that all of the budget flexibility proposals contained within the Revenue Budget report are approved.

- 2.21 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Perth High School - £1,359,000

- 2.22 This is the remaining balance of £2,116,000 originally earmarked as part of 2016/17 Revenue Monitoring Report 1 to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Report No. 16/400 refers) for future maintenance works at Perth High School.

- 2.23 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

REACH project - £1,295,000

- 2.24 The Council meeting of 16 August 2017 approved the review and remodelling of residential care (children and young people) and the financial resources to fund this transformation project (Report No.17/262 refers). The Council approved £500,000 from transformation funding and £500,000 for uncommitted Reserves and £700,000 from the Education and Children Services budget. The balance of £1,295,000 from the total resources of £1,700,000 continues to be earmarked for this purpose.

- 2.25 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Car Parking - £1,154,000

- 2.26 The car parking balance is an estimate of the accumulated surpluses from car parking operations at 31 March 2020. These surpluses are restricted in

their application under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and any proposals to utilise these resources will require to be approved by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

- 2.27 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Devolved School Management (DSM) - £670,000

- 2.28 The earmarked amount shown above is an estimate of the accumulated sum available to be carried forward at 31 March 2020 under the approved scheme for managing these budgets. The purposes for which the earmarked amount can be used and the procedures for its management and control are detailed in the Council's approved DSM scheme (Report No. 15/507 refers).

- 2.29 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Secondary Schools - £499,000

- 2.30 There is £499,000 of resources remaining from the £1,799,000 originally earmarked to equip the new school at Bertha Park which opened in August 2019. (Report No 15/395 and 18/41 refer).

- 2.31 These resources will be utilised in future resources as the pupil intake increases.

- 2.32 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Perth & Kinross Offer - £462,000

- 2.33 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved the transfer of £262,000 from a budget of £350,000 as part of Revenue Monitoring Report 3 to fund future expenditure in Perth & Kinross Offer (Report No 20/22 refers). The Council has identified further under spends which will be included in Revenue Monitoring Report 4. It is proposed that this additional under spend augments the funding available to support the Perth & Kinross Offer.

- 2.34 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Works Maintenance - £400,000

- 2.35 It is proposed that the Council continues to earmark the balance of £400,000 for future works maintenance which remains from the £1,250,000 approved as part of the 2018/19 – 2020/21 Revenue Budget.

- 2.36 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Culture - £398,000

- 2.37 There is £398,000 earmarked for developing the cultural offer originally approved from an under spend in the 2018/19 Revenue Budget and transferred to a cultural reserve as part of 2018/19 Revenue Monitoring Report 2 to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 28 November 2018 (Report no. 18/384 refers).

- 2.38 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

PH2O (Perth Leisure Vision) - £350,000

- 2.39 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved the transfer of £350,000 from a budget of £500,000 as part of 2019-20 Revenue Monitoring Report 3 to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee to fund the future design and business operating model of the PH2O project (Report No 20/22 refers). This will be utilised in future years.

- 2.40 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Community Investment Fund - £292,000

- 2.41 It is proposed that the Council continues to earmark the remaining balance of £292,000 of the Community Investment Fund approved as part of the 2018/19 – 2020/21 Revenue Budget.

- 2.42 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Communities - £225,000

- 2.43 The amount shown is earmarked for Communities and is the balance of resources which were approved in 2017/18 Revenue Monitoring Report 3 by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee (Report No.18/41 refers).

- 2.44 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee

Grounds Maintenance - £225,000

- 2.45 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved the transfer of £225,000 as part of 2018/19 Revenue Monitoring Report 4 to fund road safety measures around the A9/A85 project. (Report No 19/110 refers). This will be utilised over the next 3 financial years.

- 2.46 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Modern Apprentices / Graduate Trainees - £242,000

- 2.47 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee originally approved the transfer of £150,000 during 2014/15 to fund future expenditure on modern apprentices and graduate trainees. The projected balance remaining at 31 March 2020 is £242,000 which includes current and previous year underspends.

- 2.48 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Planning Appeals and Public Inquiries - £191,000

- 2.49 The Council has previously earmarked resources for future planning appeals and public inquiries as they arise. As expenditure within this area is unpredictable these Reserves will be drawn down if and when they are required.

- 2.50 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Health and Social Care - £180,000

- 2.51 The Council approved as part of the 2019-20 revenue budget £250,000 towards investment in health and social care transformation. There is £180,000 of resources remaining to be earmarked. (Report 19/46 refers)

- 2.52 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Contaminated Land - £176,000

- 2.53 The Council has a statutory duty in relation to contaminated land to protect public health. In general terms, the Council has a duty to investigate the land in its area to determine whether any meets the statutory definition of contaminated land and, if so, to arrange for any necessary remediation work to be carried out. This remediation is done at the expense of the liable party or parties (under certain criteria). Where the source of the contamination cannot be traced, the Council may be required to fund the remediation work. There is a projected balance of £176,000 earmarked for this purpose.

- 2.54 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Financial Assistance - £156,000

- 2.55 At its meeting on 9 February 2006 the Council approved the creation of a recurring budget of £20,000 to fund a potential contribution to a future hosting of the Mod (Report No. 06/79 refers). It has now been confirmed that the Mod will take place in the Summer 2021. The projected accumulated balance available for this purpose at 31 March 2020 is £156,000. This will be utilised in 2021/22.
- 2.56 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Central Energy Efficiency Fund - £154,000

- 2.57 The Central Energy Efficiency Fund is a means of pooling grant received from the former Scottish Executive together with savings achieved from the implementation of energy conservation and efficiency schemes to fund expenditure on further schemes of the same type.
- 2.58 It is projected that the balance on the Fund at 31 March 2020 will be approximately £154,000 and this amount is shown as being earmarked within General Fund Reserves.
- 2.59 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Events and Rural Communities - £120,000

- 2.60 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved the transfer of £120,000 as part of 2019-20 Revenue Monitoring Report 1 to fund future expenditure on events and rural communities (Report No 19/246 refers). It is anticipated that this will be utilised in 2020/21.
- 2.61 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Investment in North Inch Golf Course - £117,000

- 2.62 The Strategic Policy & Resources Committee approved the transfer of £117,000 as part of Revenue Monitoring Report 2 to fund future investment in North Inch Golf Course (Report No 19/340 refers). This will be utilised in future years.
- 2.63 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Elections - £106,000

- 2.64 The Council's Revenue Budget contains a recurring contribution of £53,000 to fund local government elections. The projected balance at 31 March 2020 will be £106,000.
- 2.65 These resources will be monitored as part of the revenue monitoring process and reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

3. GENERAL FUND: Proposed Approach to Managing Uncommitted General Fund Balances

- 3.1 In order to assess the adequacy of unallocated general Reserves it is necessary to take account of the strategic, operational and financial risks facing the authority. The most significant risks are summarised below.

Capacity to Raise Balances

- 3.2 In determining the Council's Reserves Strategy it should be noted that there are likely to be constraints on the Council's capacity to increase uncommitted Reserves in the future.
- 3.3 These constraints arise firstly from the tight budgetary environment anticipated over the medium term, which means that there will be limited opportunities to raise Reserves through taxation or savings. Secondly, the successful operation of the Council's approved Revenue Budget Flexibility Scheme means that there is a limited prospect of uncommitted Reserves being built up through Service under spends.
- 3.4 The application of Reserves, therefore, requires to be undertaken on a sustainable basis and the overall level of Reserves requires to reflect the difficulty likely to be experienced in reinstating them as and when they are applied.

Political, Economic, Social and Other Risks Facing the Council

- 3.5 The Council faces significant challenges over the medium term. A more comprehensive list of the risks facing the Council in the next few years which may impact upon the budget is set out in the separate report on the Revenue Budget 2020/21 to 2022/23 which is on the agenda for this special meeting of the Council (Report No. 20/57 refers). These include –
- Uncertainty over Scottish Government funding levels beyond 2020/21
 - Pay award assumptions beyond 2020/21
 - Service need and demand pressures notably Health & Social Care
 - Inflation assumptions
 - Reliance on transformation across the Council to achieve significant budget reductions
 - Assumptions in relation to the continued growth in the number of Band D equivalent properties

- Voluntary Severance Schemes
- Implementation of Welfare Reform
- Current Economic Climate including the United Kingdom's future relationship with the European Union.

Severe Weather

- 3.6 The Provisional Revenue Budgets for 2020/21 to 2022/23 for winter maintenance include provision for the cost of an average winter. However a worse than average winter may have a significant adverse impact on the Reserves position.
- 3.7 The variable costs of service provision can increase substantially as a result of prolonged spells of colder than average weather or particularly severe winter weather. In the past there have been significant over spends on this activity, which were funded from Reserves.
- 3.8 The Council also has extensive experience of flood events in recent years and the potential for incurring unbudgeted costs as a result of these is significant. Once again, scenarios in which the Council could incur costs of several million pounds from one or more major events can be envisaged.
- 3.9 The Council's practice in respect of unbudgeted severe weather costs in recent years has been to fund them through savings against other (particularly maintenance) budgets as well as Reserves. It is anticipated that alternative savings would be sought where possible in the event of severe weather. Notwithstanding this, the probability and potential financial impact of severe weather is such that this risk must be a major consideration in developing the Reserves Strategy. The following table sets out final outturns on Winter Maintenance over the last ten years.

Winter Maintenance Final Over / Underspend	
2019/20 (Projected)	On budget
2018/19	Underspend £143,000
2017/18	Over spend of £1,350,000
2016/17	Underspend £540,000
2015/16	Over spend £59,000
2014/15	Over spend £260,000
2013/14	Under spend £531,000
2012/13	Over spend £1,411,000
2011/12	Over spend £785,000
2010/11	Over spend £3,160,000
2009/10	Over spend £2,044,000
2008/09	Over spend £656,000

Bellwin Scheme

- 3.10 The Bellwin Scheme operates under Section 155(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. It allows Scottish Ministers to make

additional revenue support available to local authorities to assist with the immediate and unforeseen costs of dealing with the aftermath of emergency incidents.

- 3.11 Currently Councils are expected to retain the equivalent of 0.2% of their annual Net Revenue Budget to deal with unforeseen emergencies (£690,708 in 2019/20 for Perth & Kinross Council).

Comparison with other authorities

- 3.12 Audit Scotland's Financial Overview report for 2018/19, published in December 2019 makes a number of observations in terms of Council's useable Reserves. Their main observation was that there was a net draw in reserves of £45 million during 2018/19 with 16 Councils ending the year with lower reserves than at the start of the financial year.
- 3.13 The report makes reference to signs that Councils are under financial pressure and have been turning to reserves to address funding gaps which is not a sustainable solution.
- 3.14 It is probable that a number of authorities are holding levels of uncommitted Reserves significantly below the levels that would normally be considered desirable as a result of pressures on their expenditure. Additionally, for reasons of geography many authorities do not face the same risks in relation to severe weather as Perth & Kinross Council.

Proposed Level of Uncommitted General Fund Reserves

- 3.15 Taking account of all of the above factors and historical experience in Perth & Kinross since 1996, it is recommended that the targeted level of uncommitted non-HRA General Fund Reserves continues to be in the range of 2% to 4% of the Council's net revenue expenditure in the medium term. Based on the Net Provisional Revenue Budget for 2020/21 of £374,145,000 (including the application of unallocated resources) this would imply a level of uncommitted Reserves of between approximately £7,483,000 and £14,966,000 for 2020/21.
- 3.16 It has been recommended that the targeted level of uncommitted Reserves be maintained in the 2% to 4% range for a number of years. Whilst this range is still considered to be appropriate it should be noted that the level of risk involved in managing the Council's Revenue Budget is likely to remain significant. This reflects the fact that the local government settlements for the last few years have seen real terms reductions in funding and that future settlements are expected to be challenging; that there is currently no information from the Scottish Government on the level of settlement beyond 2020/21 and that many of the savings options included in the Revenue Budget Executive Summaries will be challenging to deliver.
- 3.17 In these circumstances it would be prudent to maintain the level of uncommitted Reserves towards the upper end of the range if this is at all

possible. Inevitably determining the exact level of uncommitted Reserves within the recommended range will involve judgements in relation to the profile of risks faced by the Council and the options available in managing the Revenue Budget. Due to the continuing uncertainties and risks beyond 2020/21 it would not be imprudent to maintain uncommitted Reserves above 4% in the medium term.

- 3.18 A comparison with the forecast position set out above indicates that the Council's projected uncommitted reserves will be approximately £9,858,000 (prior to any budget decisions which have an effect on the Reserves position). This equates to 2.6% of the Net Provisional Revenue Budget for 2020/21.
- 3.19 For the avoidance of doubt, the level of uncommitted Reserves has reduced from 3.6% at 31 March 2019 to the projected level of 2.6% at 31 March 2020. This equates to a reduction in the level of uncommitted Reserves of approximately £3m which is not sustainable.
- 3.20 In view of the above, it is recommended that the uncommitted General Fund Reserves be maintained at a level of at least 2% of the Net Provisional Revenue Budget (approximately £7,483,000) in determining the 2020/21 Final Revenue Budget. In the event that any use of General Fund Reserves is made in determining the 2020/21 Revenue Budget this should only be done on the basis of a sustainable strategy, which ensures that future years' Revenue Budgets are not dependent on the continuing use of Reserves.
- 3.21 Appendix 3 illustrates the contributions to and from Reserves recommended in setting the Provisional Revenue Budget for 2020/21 and anticipated in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

4. CAPITAL RECEIPTS RESERVE

- 4.1 The Capital Receipts Reserve holds capital receipts from the disposal of assets, which have not yet been used to finance replacement assets or to redeem debt. At the end of the financial year it is anticipated that there will be £2,664,000 of capital receipts carried forward to 2020/21. The forecasts for unapplied capital receipts all relate to the Commercial Property Investment Programme and recommendations for utilising these resources will be reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

5. RENEWAL AND REPAIR FUND

- 5.1 The Council has previously operated a Renewal and Repair Fund in accordance with the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975. The position of the Fund is monitored in the capital monitoring reports submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
- 5.2 The projected balance on the Fund at 31 March 2020 will be nil.

6. INSURANCE FUND

- 6.1 The Council operates an Insurance Fund in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994. The Council's actuaries, Arthur J Gallagher undertook the triennial review of the Fund as at 31 March 2017 and concluded, in summary, that the balance of £2,844,000 excluding prepayments and provisions on the Fund was adequate and provides flexibility should the Council look to increase insurance excess levels. Any increase in excess levels would be balanced by premium savings relative to the additional risk.
- 6.2 The balance on the Fund at 31 March 2019 was £3,193,000 (excluding provisions for outstanding liabilities) and it is anticipated that the balance may reduce to approximately £3,154,000 by 31 March 2020 assuming no significant change in claims.
- 6.3 The 2020/21 Provisional Revenue Budget assumes that a budgeted contribution of £200,000 from the General Fund and £50,000 from the Housing Revenue Account is made to the Insurance Fund.
- 6.4 The current level of the Fund should provide both a degree of resilience in relation to self-insured risks and provide some capacity for flexibility in the future management of the Council's insurance arrangements. The most significant of these self-insured risks are in relation to property claims for which the excess per claim is £100,000, flooding claims for which the excess is £1,000,000 and the potential for claims in relation to the Limitation (Child Abuse) Act passed by the Scottish Parliament. For each insurance type e.g. public liability, there is a "stop loss" in place which limits the exposure to the Council in any one year e.g. property (excluding floods). The maximum loss to the Council is £800,000.

7. CAPITAL FUND

- 7.1 The Council operates a Capital Fund in accordance with the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975. The Fund can be used to meet the principal element of loan repayments or to defray capital expenditure. It is anticipated that the balance on the Fund at 31 March 2020 will be £31,516,000. The strategy for managing these resources will be considered as part of the future Capital Budget, which it is anticipated the Council will consider in June 2020.

8. CAPITAL GRANTS UNAPPLIED

- 8.1 The Capital Grants Unapplied Reserve holds capital grants which have been received by the Council for which the capital works have not yet been undertaken or completed. The current balance is £3,580,000 and this will be applied to the relevant projects as the works are completed which is mainly the capital projects for 1140 hours nursery expansion.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 This report sets out the proposed strategy for managing the Council's Reserves and Balances with the exception of the Housing Revenue Account Balance.
- 9.2 A number of proposals for earmarking General Fund Balances are outlined in section 2 above. In financial terms the most significant of these relate to the Transformation Programme (including Workforce Management), Developer Contributions, Affordable Housing, Revenue Budget Flexibility, Perth High School and Secondary Schools.
- 9.3 After taking account of the proposals for earmarking Reserves and based on an assessment of financial risks over the medium term, it is recommended that the Council retain a level of uncommitted General Fund Reserves in the range of 2% to 4% of the Net Revenue Budget in the medium term.
- 9.4 The level of uncommitted General Fund Reserves has reduced from 3.6% at 31 March 2019 to the projected level of 2.6% at 31 March 2020 which represents a reduction of approximately £3million.
- 9.5 In view of this it is recommended that the Council's uncommitted General Fund Reserves be maintained at a level of at least 2% of the Net Provisional Revenue Budget or approximately £7,483,000 in determining the Final Revenue Budget for 2020/21. In the event that any use of General Fund Reserves is made in determining the 2020/21 Final Revenue Budget and the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Provisional Revenue Budget, this should only be done on the basis of a sustainable strategy, which ensures that future years' Revenue Budgets are not dependent on the continuing use of Reserves.
- 9.6 Recommendations for managing the Capital Statutory Funds; the Renewal and Repair Fund; the Insurance Fund; the Capital Fund and Capital Grants Unapplied are also outlined. In essence these Reserves are either committed or require to be maintained at broadly current levels in view of the proposed budget strategies and the risks facing the Council.
- 9.7 Based upon the recommendations of this report, as part of preparing the Council's Unaudited 2019/20 Annual Accounts the Head of Finance will review the earmarked Reserves in light of the Council's actual financial performance. This will form part of the Unaudited Accounts which will be considered by the Audit Committee in June 2020.
- 9.8 It is recommended that the Council approves:
 - 9.8.1 The proposals to earmark General Fund Reserves as set out in Section 2.
 - 9.8.2 The proposed approach to managing uncommitted General Fund Reserves as set out in Section 3.

9.8.3 The proposed approaches to managing the Capital Receipts Reserve; Renewal and Repair Fund; Insurance Fund, Capital Fund and Capital Grants Unapplied Reserve as set out in Sections 4 to 8.

Author(s)

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Name	Designation	Date
Stewart Mackenzie	Head of Finance	28 February 2020
Jim Valentine	Depute Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer	28 February 2020

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ANNEX

1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	None
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	Yes
Workforce	Yes
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	Yes
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes
Strategic Environmental Assessment	Yes
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	Yes
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	None
Communication	
Communications Plan	None

1. Strategic Implications

1.1. Corporate Plan

1.1.1. The Council's Corporate Plan 2018 – 2023 lays out five outcome focussed strategic objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. They are as follows:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

2. Resource Implications

2.1. Financial

2.1.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report other than those reported within the body of the main report.

2.2. Workforce

2.2.1. There are no direct workforce implications arising from this report other than those reported within the body of the main report.

2.3. Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3.1. There are no direct asset management implications arising from this report other than those reported within the body of the main report.

3. Assessments

3.1. Equality Impact Assessment

3.1.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

3.1.2. The information contained within this report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) and has been assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA.

3.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.2.1 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

3.2.2 The information contained within this report has been considered under the Act. However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report.

3.3 Sustainability

3.3.1 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of the Climate Change Act, the Council has a general duty to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community, environmental and economic impacts of its actions.

3.3.2 The information contained within this report has been considered under the Act. However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report.

4. Consultation

4.1 Internal

- 4.1.1 The Chief Executive and Executive Officer Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2.1 No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

3. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Summary of General Fund Balances at 31 March 2019

Appendix 2 – Projected General Fund Balance at 31 March 2020 (excluding the Housing Revenue Account)

Appendix 3 – Summary of the Projected Use of General Fund Revenue Balances 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23