

**Chief Executive's Report to the SPCB
June 2021**

Introduction

This Report looks at activities across the organisation from the start of the session. It also incorporates the Quarter 4 financial report for 2020-21.

Items highlighted include:

- Election planning and the first meetings of the Parliament
- Bills expected to be introduced before the summer recess
- Ongoing work by Broadcasting Office to improve support of business in the chamber and committees and hybrid engagement
- Support being provided by HR to MSPs and their staff

David McGill

Clerk/Chief Executive

OVERVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES

Election Planning

A huge team effort from all offices across the Parliament delivered a successful session 6 election programme, with well in excess of 200 SPS staff being directly involved in delivering arrangements. This included support to Members standing down; Members who were not returned and arrangements for new and returning Members.

The First Days Programme was particularly challenging, with modifications and mitigations being required to ensure compliance with Covid-19 restrictions. This resulted in entirely new procedures and arrangements being necessary right across the board. Around 25 separate risk assessments were required, with testing and re-testing happening in April, in respect of registration; orientation; oath-taking; election of PO/DPOs and selection of FM arrangements. The final plan was only able to be signed off on the eve of the election.

Despite election results only being finalised on the Saturday evening, all new Members were registered on the Monday and Tuesday, with parliamentary orientation occurring on the Wednesday, before the First Day of parliamentary business happening on the Thursday. 126 Members were present – by far the most Members to have been in Holyrood for the past 15 months.

Overall, this was, necessarily, a very controlled programme but we have also been able to make it much more tailored to individual circumstances than before, with many 1-2-1 meetings being set up for new Members. We are now running an initial CPD Programme with engagement by new Members remaining very high.

Feedback on all aspects has been very positive from new and returning Members. A Programme closure report will be completed and presented to the SPCB in the autumn.

Parliamentary Business

Initial induction

Following the election all new Members took part in induction sessions on being a parliamentarian (led by the departing PO and the Clerk/Chief Executive) and on participating in hybrid/virtual proceedings. These sessions included discussions on how to be an effective contributor to parliamentary business and practical demonstrations of the digital voting system.

First meetings of the Parliament

The first meeting of the Parliament took place over two days. On the morning of the first day all Members took the oath or made a solemn affirmation (one Member doing so remotely for the first time) ensuring that all were then able to take part in subsequent proceedings. The afternoon was given over to the

election of a new Presiding Officer. The second day saw the election of the two Deputy Presiding Officers – 10 nominations for DPO were received which resulted in a lengthy session.

At subsequent meetings, Members successfully used the digital voting system to select the First Minister, to vote on the First Minister's ministerial appointments and to elect members of the SPCB.

A feature of the early part of Session 6 has been the number of urgent questions selected, reflecting the interest across the Parliament in holding the Government to account. A total of 10 urgent questions have been selected for answer so far this session compared to a total of 23 UQs selected from 2017 to the end of Session 5.

Subsequent activities

Opportunities for induction and development continue to be offered as the Parliament moves into a more familiar 'business as usual' cycle of debates, questions and anticipated legislative work. To support new Members (and/or their staff), an offer of 1-2-1 inductions has been made. These will be provided by staff of the Chamber Desk. So far, 15 Members have taken up the offer or have meetings pending.

Legislation

The start to this session sees a comparatively heavy legislative agenda for the Parliament – largely due to the response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Scottish Government indicated in early June that it would introduce a Bill relating to the duration of certain powers in the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 and the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Act 2020. The provisions in Part 1 of those Acts expired on 30 September 2020. Regulations have been made to extend some of the powers for two successive 6-month periods and to expire other provisions. The remaining powers therefore expire on 30 September 2021 and cannot be further extended by regulations. The Bill will allow for the further extension of some powers and expire others.

The Bill was introduced on 18 June and the Parliament was asked to designate it as an Emergency Bill and take all three Stages in week beginning 21 June. Compared to previous sessions, this is an early demand on new Members to familiarise themselves with the legislative process.

An introductory session on the legislative process was provided for all new MSPs and was attended by 40 Members. The clerks followed this up with a series of more detailed workshop sessions in week beginning 14 June. These were open to all new Members and were designed to provide a more informal opportunity for them to familiarise themselves with the practicalities of the timetable for Bills, amendments, the documents that support the legislative process and how committee and Chamber debate on amendments is structured.

Two further Bills are expected to be introduced by the Government before the summer recess, with scrutiny expected to take place in the autumn. The First

Minister is also expected to make the usual annual statement on the Government's legislative programme in the first week after the recess.

There has also been a significant amount of subordinate legislation laid before the Parliament since the start of the campaign recess in March 2021. This includes significant regulations modifying the coronavirus local levels regime and the international travel restrictions. In advance of committees being established, clerks and legal services staff have been working together to ensure the monitoring and analysis of these regulations, and to ensure that they are dealt with by the Chamber within appropriate timescales as required. Clerks are also preparing material for members of subject committees to ensure that they are briefed on their responsibilities in relation to scrutiny of subordinate legislation.

Non-Government Bills Unit

Since the start of the session there have been numerous requests for meetings with NGBU staff on Members Bill proposals, both from new and returning Members. The level of interest has been higher at the start of Session 6 than at the start of Session 5 (based on statistics from May/June 2016).

There are a number of Bills which did not progress through the full legislative process last session which Members may seek to pick up and pursue this session. There are more in this carry over category this session than there were in session 5. Procedures are in place to allow Members to pick up such proposals without the need to return to the beginning of the process if the consultation process from session 5 is deemed sufficient.

There have also been numerous indications by Members yet to approach the NGBU of their intention to take forward a Bill, for example raised during parliamentary proceedings or in the media. Media statements issued on a party-wide basis have also suggested an intention to pursue a series of non-government bills to fulfil manifesto commitments.

Broadcasting

The Broadcasting Office keeps under review how it can continue to improve service to Members and colleagues while also looking at opportunities that have come to light during the pandemic response.

It is in year three of a six-year infrastructure investment programme to replace older, obsolete technology throughout the building. To date this has included refitting cameras and control rooms for all six committee rooms, replacing older, standard definition systems with HD, and updating post production facilities.

Following on from the substantial installations made in committee rooms and chamber in 2020 to facilitate hybrid working needs, it is working with chamber and committee clerks and BIT colleagues to create a more dynamic and sustainable longer-term hybrid working system that will improve the overall experience for Members and other contributors.

In the latter part of 2020 the scottishparliament.tv webcasting service suffered multiple technical problems. To ensure resilience, the external service provider was changed, new hardware and software was installed and a separate back up broadband line into the building was added. Since the new website went live in May, it has had over 270,000 viewings, with audiences peaking at 42,000. In addition to live BSL coverage for key chamber business, Official Report text in closed captions is added to the video of chamber on committee proceedings.

Extensive work has been undertaken over the last two years on how best to replace the chamber conferencing system. The scope of the project has altered due to hybrid working needs and market changes. Acoustician surveys have identified an audio reinforcement requirement for the chamber floor and public galleries. The Sound and Voting Project Board will report with recommendations shortly.

The pandemic has encouraged further consideration of how existing and emerging technologies can be used to help the Parliament engage with audiences remotely. Plans are in hand to extend the 360 immersive video footage of the building to allow users to walk through the building virtually and to click on areas of interest for further details, for a range of specific audiences. Work is also underway with colleagues in the Engagement and Communications Group to test the feasibility of creating a TV studio space that could be used for live online interactive panel presentations for educational and information purposes to supplement the videos we already produce.

Official Report

The Editor of the Official Report has begun to distribute a presentation copy of new Members' first speeches. The opportunity is being taken to remind Members to send their speaking notes and respond to queries promptly, via electronic means, while the official report team continues to follow home working. Notwithstanding home working, publication targets are generally being met. The Official Report section of the new website is still going through final testing. Members should be aware that the full authoritative text remains available on our [old website](#).

Parliamentary Committees

The Scrutiny Group is currently preparing for the establishment of committees for Session 6.

SPICe has produced a range of material to inform the new Parliament including, [Key Issues for Session 6 publication](#) and [new interactive constituency dashboards](#). As well as these, researchers across all areas are publishing detailed subject profiles to help inform new committees and Members. The Enquiries and Collections Team worked to ensure all new Members' details were updated on the website as soon as possible following the election.

Working with colleagues in FM, and alongside the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, SPICe staff are offering climate change and sustainable development induction and training for new and returning Members. They are also trialling the latest version of our Sustainable Development Impact Assessment Tool on policy areas including food and international trade and investment.

Participation and Communities Team (PACT)

This session, for the first time, committees will be supported from the start by a team of participation specialists working to increase the diversity of views and experiences available to committees to inform scrutiny. PACT is currently building and refreshing key relationships with community partners, including running a wide-ranging digital public engagement over the summer to inform committee work programmes and highlight the role of committees to the public. A new feature for Session 6 is the use of Citizen Space, a very accessible and flexible digital platform for gathering written views for committees. They are also reviewing the successful pilot citizens' juries/panels from last session as we prepare to support the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee in its new role.

Standards, Procedure and Public Appointments Committee

The SPPA committee clerks have met all of the new Members and a number of returning Members to discuss their registers of interest and highlight key provisions in the Code of Conduct for MSPs. As of 11 June, over 100 register entries had been published so good progress is being made in meeting the statutory deadline of having all registers published by 8 July.

Parliamentary Services

Human Resources

Support for new MSPs

Following the election and the subsequent orientation session, the team met with all new MSPs to discuss their obligations as employers and to provide support in setting up office staffing structures. This has been well received.

Recruitment

The new careers site has hosted 36 adverts since the election. The services provided to support candidates through the full recruitment process will be developed over the coming months. This will include using the system to facilitate recruitment needs including CV sifting, setting up job interviews and collating references.

New job families/salary ranges

Since the election, the team supported the arrival of over 130 new starts. This has included drafting individual job descriptions based on the new job families and salary ranges. To support this work a new [intranet page for MSPs with](#)

[advice and support on all employment matters](#) has been created, and to date has seen almost 900 site visits.

The team continues to meet returning MSPs to discuss the mapping over of existing staff to the new job families and salary ranges and support on drafting job descriptions.

MSPs' staff support

A new [intranet page for MSP](#) staff has been very well received (with almost 800 site visits). These pages provide essential information, policies, guidance and support and will be an essential engagement tool in our work to support staff going forward.

MSPs' staff training and development

The ongoing programme is being rolled out. This includes online workshops from induction through to outplacement, and covering topics such as speechwriting, casework management, understanding social security benefits, mental health awareness as well as training for managers. The team is running 'Welcome' sessions for new staff every week in July. The monthly Q&A sessions will resume over the summer.

Support for MSPs not standing/not returned and their staff

The team continues to provide support and assistance to MSPs not standing/returned. This support has involved internal coaching sessions supported by external specialists. The team is currently supporting 12 MSPs through this process.

Support for MSPs' staff facing redundancy

The team continues to support MSPs' staff facing redundancy. This includes career coaching and bespoke workshops on CV writing, interview techniques and managing change and uncertainty. 245 bookings were made by staff to attend these sessions between April-June.

Engagement and Communications

General public access to Holyrood continues to be suspended and a number of staff from public facing services continue to be redeployed to other business areas to support delivery of essential parliamentary business and services. However, we reopened our onsite visitor reception and orientation services from 1 June for Members' meetings.

We are focussing on how and when we will reinstate wider public engagement activities. This will be done gradually, taking account of public health guidance and the need to prioritise Parliamentary business. We will take the opportunity to look at how we can deliver services in the future alongside a number of activities already being provided on virtual platforms. We are also currently reviewing the SPCB's public engagement strategy, taking into account our commitment to diversity and inclusion and to sustainability.

Two virtual events which took place in June were the Donald Dewar Memorial Debating Tournament Final and the Euroquiz 2021. The 2021 Donald Dewar Memorial Debating Tournament Final took place virtually on Thursday 10 June with a video welcome message from Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP. All Scottish secondary schools were invited to participate with four competing in the final. The winner was Peebles High School.

Euroquiz 2021 took place virtually on Monday 14 June with a welcome video message from Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP. Twenty-four teams from primary 6 classrooms across the country participated in the Final this year, each representing their local authority, and each having won their local heat. The winner was St Joseph's Primary School, Linlithgow.

The Select & Collection service for the Parliament Shop also reopened at the beginning of June.

International engagement

As we are seeing, despite the restrictions of covid-19 new routes of maintaining engagement activities have been employed. The International Relations Office supported the following international engagement activities:

- Supported Claire Baker MSP at the meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Regional Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians
- Supported the Presiding Officer at a virtual discussion with the Consul General of Ireland
- Participated in discussions with other organisations around potential Scottish Parliament activities during COP26

Procurement

The Procurement Office has been undertaking the following work:

- Updating conditions of contract to reflect the current position in respect of data protection and GDPR. Good progress has been made in the issue of contract variations where this is required.
- In order to maximise preparedness against identified Covid and Brexit related risks in our contracts, contingency plans have been developed.
- Our approach to assessing the cyber security of bidding suppliers has been enhanced to support a consistent and proportionate approach to minimise risk of cyber threat from our supply chain.
- We recently participated in a pilot exercise undertaken by Zero Waste Scotland to establish the carbon emission footprint of a small selection of office equipment. This was a useful first step in examining our Scope 3 emissions from purchased goods.

Facilities Management

The allocation of party accommodation in the MSP block is complete and we would like to thank the business managers and parties for their support in achieving this. There will be some works to complete in the coming months to put up or remove partitions between rooms in order to facilitate better meeting room spaces and access routes.

The lift modernisation programme is nearing completion with work to upgrade Lift 8 and 16 the final 2 lifts taking place during the summer recess.

Sustainability

City of Edinburgh Council are consulting on their 2030 Climate Strategy, which they launched last week. We will be responding to the consultation and are particularly interested in the establishment of a new City Heat and Energy Partnership with key public and private sector organisations. The partnership will be tasked with co-ordinating investments and supporting the delivery of flagship actions for the city. The partnership will develop a city-wide heat and energy masterplan which will incorporate a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy to align current and future grid development to the city's energy needs. We are keen to be involved with this Partnership to support us in our own plans to reduce heat from gas and to reach Net Zero.

Also, we have MSPs starting to sign up for the Climate Solutions Accelerator Programme, which is part of the MSP CDP training programme and is a joint initiative between the Resilience and Sustainability Team and SPICe. The [Climate Solutions Accelerator](#) is a 90-minute leadership package developed by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. It uses Scottish and global experts to introduce climate science, challenges and practical solutions. A further 30 minutes will be used to interactively introduce environmental management in the Parliament, and how we can use sustainable development to aid scrutiny, including an introduction to the Sustainable Development Impact Assessment Tool.

Security

Following the terrorist attacks in the UK in 2017 the SPCB called for a review of the Parliament's security arrangements. The review was undertaken by Police Scotland and, on receipt of their report and recommendations, the SPCB approved a major three-year programme of investment which has been managed by the security office. I am pleased to report that the security maturity programme will conclude in August 2021, delivering against the recommendations.

The service yard has required the most substantial financial investment by the SPCB in order to replace the chicane and concrete vehicle blockers with more robust vehicle mitigation measures whilst also improving the security of the perimeter by extending the fence line and creating a rejection lane. The works are progressing well and remain on target to be completed by the end of August. We will bring a final report to the SPCB at its meeting in October which will formally close down the security maturity programme.

Our main focus for session 6 will be on personnel security matters.

SPCB Finance Report – Q4 2020-21

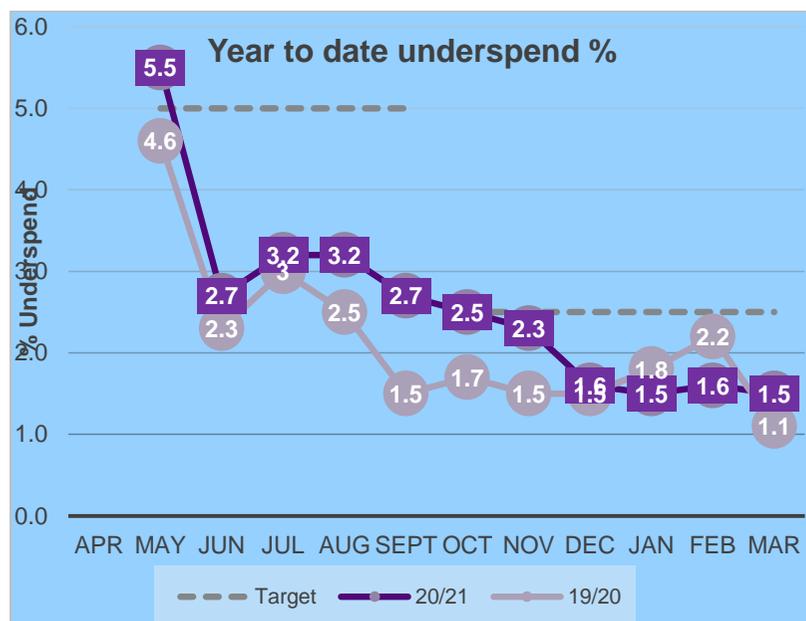
Purpose

This report is to inform the SPCB of the draft outturn for 2020-21. The final outturn figures remain subject to adjustment as part of the normal year end process. It is anticipated that the outturn below budget will be below £1m once these adjustments are processed in period 13.

Action to note

The budget underspend for 2020-21 is provisionally £1.4m or 1.5% of total annual budget. This has been achieved against a background of considerable uncertainties and budget pressures in 2020-21 due to the impact of COVID19.

Headlines



The Scottish Parliament's total revenue and capital budget for 2020-21 is £95.8m. At the end of period 12, expenditure was £94.4m representing an underspend against budget of £1.4m **(1.5%)**. The comparable 2019-20 position was an underspend against budget of £1.0m **(1.1%)**.

As at the end of Q4, SPCB had a £269k year to date overspend against PS Offices and projects. MSP costs were £1,102k under budget and Commissioners were £562k under budget.

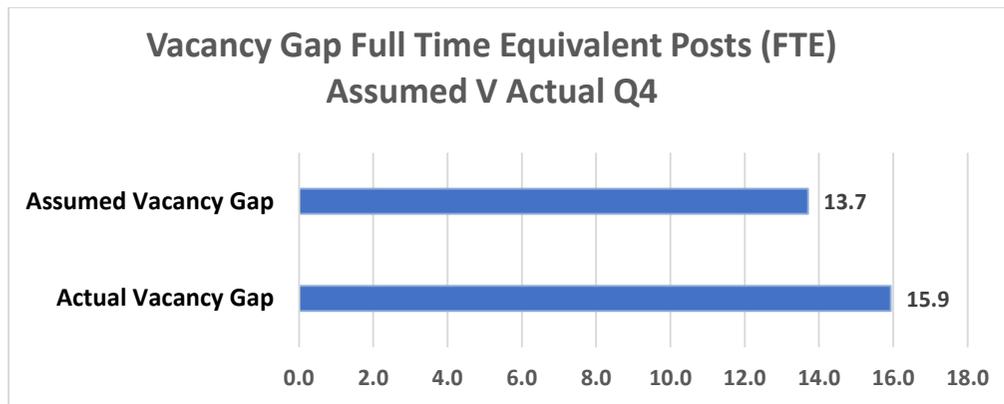
COVID19 has required additional expenditure on staff costs, catering services, cleaning, BIT and Broadcasting support for hybrid virtual Parliamentary Business and the creation of a digital voting system and the shop where there has been a reduction in income to cover associated staff costs. These

have been offset by reductions in T&E, training, advertising and corporate event expenditure.
SPCB Expenditure Summary Outturn – Q4:

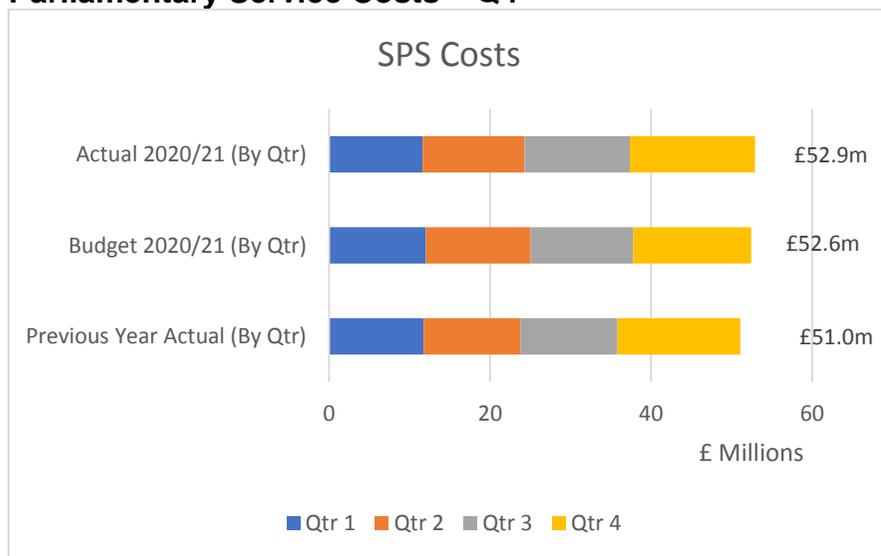
	Year to Date					Annual Forecast Outturn (at Feb 2021)	Current Annual Budget	Original Annual Budget
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Variance				
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%		£'000	£'000	£'000
Parliamentary Service Costs	52,902	52,633	(269)	(0.5)		52,842	52,633	51,321
Members Costs	30,175	31,277	1,102	3.5		30,677	31,277	31,277
Commissioners & Ombudsman Costs	11,321	11,883	562	4.7		11,583	11,883	11,013
Sub Total	94,397	95,794	1,396	1.5		95,102	95,793	93,611
Reserves – SPCB contingency							0	1,000
Total SPCB Expenditure	94,397	95,794	1,396	1.5		95,102	95,793	94,611

Staff Costs & FTE – Q4:

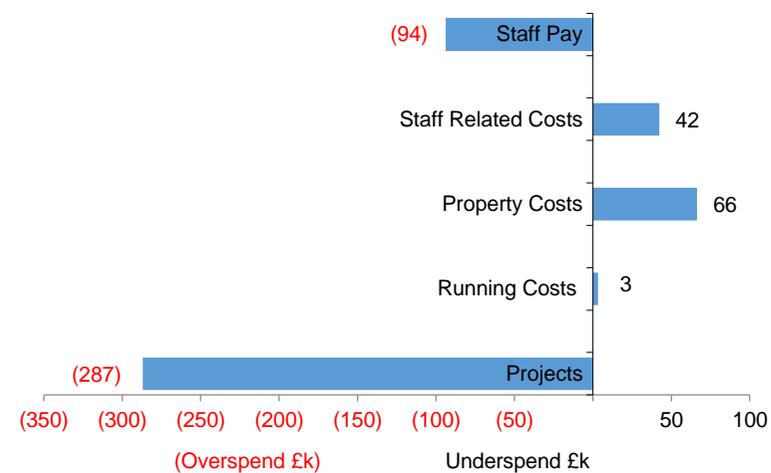
Staff Costs & Full Time Equivalents	Current Annual Budget £k	Actual Staff Outturn £k	Original Budget FTE	Current Q4 Budget FTE	Actual FTE
Total	31,339	31,432	541.4	548.7	532.7



Parliamentary Service Costs – Q4



Parliamentary Service YTD (Over) & Underspends £k



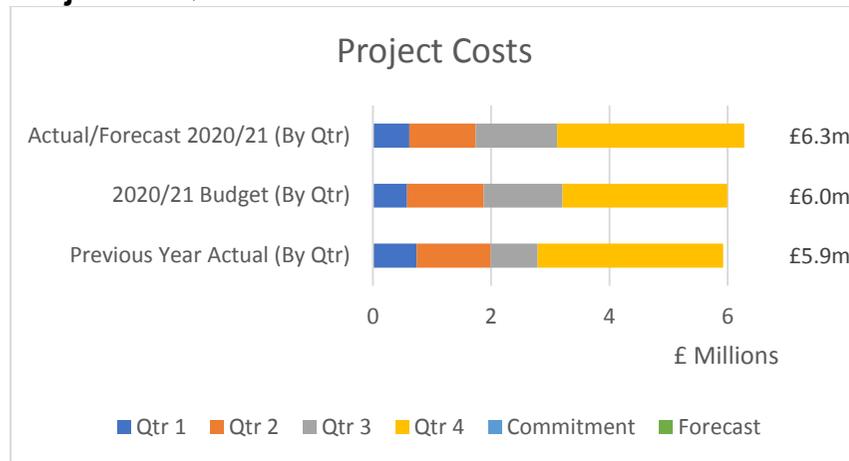
YTD Underspend / Overspend by Category £k:

- Parliamentary service (SPS) costs – The year to date expenditure of £52.9m is an overspend of £0.3m or 0.5% of

the annual budget of £52.6m. Parliamentary Service Costs incorporate both capital and revenue projects. The previous year's expenditure of £51.1m was £0.4m (0.8%) under budget. All COVID19 office pressures have been absorbed within the original PS office budgets.

- Staff Pay is reported as £94k over the year to date budget including Agency staff and contractors. Actual FTE is 532.7. Additional budget was allocated out to meet COVID19 pressures and there were additional pressures on the centrally managed pay budget (parental leave).
- Expenditure on Staff Related Costs is £313k. This is £42k (12%) below the much reduced annual budget of £355k and significantly below the original annual budget of £755k for 2020-21 and expenditure of £667k in 2019-20. Travel, expenses and training budget was transferred in year to contingency in 2020-21 and reallocated to support COVID19 pressures. Main underspends in 2020-21 against budget were for Expenses (£14k) and Corporate Training (£17k).
- Property Costs of £7.7m are £66k (0.9%) under the annual budget. The bulk of this is in Maintenance (£33k) and Utilities (£36k) budgets offset by small overspends in other property budgets.
- Running Costs (including Events and Income) of £7.2m are £3k under the annual budget. Main running cost underspends are in the IT Contract (£41k), Telephony (£30k) and Mail Services & Postage (£29k) offsetting overspends in Printing of £82k.

Projects – Q4



Projects

- Total project expenditure to Q4 2020-21 is £6.3m, £287k (4.8%) over the annual budget. Expenditure this year includes SRB authorisation to overspend against underspends elsewhere in the SPCB budget on some bring forward project spend from 2021-22.
- Capital Projects have spent £2,284k for the year, £424k (22.8%) higher than the annual budget of £1,861k.
- Revenue Projects show a total spend of £3,994k, £137k (3.3%) below the budget of £4,131k.

Central Contingency

The original central contingency of £1m was reduced to £0k at the end of the year. Main areas of movement include staffing costs, COVID 19 pressures and projects.

Members Costs

Members' show a £30.2m reported cost, £1.1m (3.5%) under the annual budget. This includes expenditure of £207k on support for additional staffing resources as a result of COVID19 impact on casework. The comparable position for 2019/20 was £1.2m (3.8%) under the annual budget. A number of year end accounting adjustments are still to be processed which will reduce the overall level of SPCB budget underspend

Commissioners and Ombudsman Costs

The SPCB's funding cost for Commissioners and Ombudsman (Officeholders) for 2020-21 was £11.3m, which is £562k (4.7%) under the annual budget. The corresponding figures for 2019-20 were £10.1m with an underspend of £316k (2.7%).