

Report to	South Downs National Park Authority
Date	7 July 2020
By	Chief Finance Officer
Title of Report	Budget Monitoring Report 2019/20: Provisional Outturn Position

Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to

- 1. Note the provisional 2019/20 revenue outturn position of a net £305,000 below budget variance for the 2019/20 financial year.**
- 2. Approve the revenue budget carry forward requests from 2019/20 to 2020/21 of £1,011,000 as set out in Appendix 2.**
- 3. Approve the following Capital variations as detailed in paragraph 3.5;**
 - **(£93,000) reprofile to the 2020/21 financial year to fund completion of Phase 2 and future phases of the National Park Signage Project;**
 - **£26,000 for a new land cruiser to replace written off vehicles, funded from the Vehicle Repairs and Renewals Reserve.**
- 4. Note the use of the revenue below budget variance as a contribution to the Climate Change Fund Reserve and the Recovery Fund set out in section 3.6 and as approved by the Authority on 21 May 2020.**
- 5. Note the Treasury Management overview and position as at financial year-end 2019/20.**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The South Downs National Park Authority (the Authority) approved the revenue and capital budget for the 2019/20 financial year on the 28 March 2019. In accordance with financial procedures, reports on the Authority's projected income and expenditure compared with the budget shall be submitted at least quarterly to Policy & Resources Committee. This report sets out the Authority's provisional outturn position for the 2019/20 financial year.
- 1.2 The Treasury Management Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy were approved by the Authority on 28 March 2019, in accordance with financial procedures. This report gives an overview of the current economic and treasury management position of the Authority's provisional outturn position for the 2019/20 financial year.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The revenue and capital budgets are developed to align with the Partnership Management Plan and Corporate Plan priorities. The budget monitoring process reports on variances against approved budgets to identify changes and resource requirements at the earliest opportunity.

3. Issues for consideration.

Provisional 2019/20 Revenue Outturn

- 3.1 The provisional 2019/20 revenue outturn position is a net below budget variance of (£305,000), subject to the approval of carry forward requests detailed in this report. This represents approximately 3.5% of the revised service net budget.

2019/20 Month 9 Variance £'000	Service Area	2019/20 Outturn Budget £'000	2019/20 Outturn Actual £'000	2019/20 Outturn Variance £'000
42	Corporate Services	4,197	4,150	(47)
9	Countryside Policy and Management	3,089	3,042	(47)
(192)	Planning	1,195	913	(282)
0	Strategic Investment Fund	360	431	71
(141)	Total Budget	8,841	8,536	(305)

- 3.2 The provisional outturn position represents a movement of (£164,000) from the month 9 forecast variance of (£141,000) below budget reported to Policy & Resources Committee. The most significant movements are detailed at Appendix I to this report.
- 3.3 The main reasons for the net variance position for the full financial year are summarised below. There are a number of less significant variances and these are reported at Appendix I to this report.
- £173,000 less planning fee income than anticipated. It should be noted that the planning income budget was increased by £200,000 in 2019/20 to reflect previous years' income levels and an anticipated increase in applications following the adoption of the Local Plan, however the level and value of applications has been lower when compared to previous financial years.
 - The above is more than offset by delegated payments to planning host authorities being (£315,000) less than budgeted. This reflects the implementation of new payment by application contracts and a lower number of applications than anticipated.
 - The net salary expenditure across all services was (£103,000) below budget. The most significant below budget variance being within the Planning service mainly due to the recruitment lead time for specialist posts as well as vacancies being held where they related to the introduction of the Local Plan. As previously reported, the approved 2020/21 budget includes an appropriate turnover rate to reduce the extent of such variances and therefore below budget variances on salaries budgets should be less likely in the future.
 - There have been a number of contract efficiencies, savings on supplies/services budgets totalling a net (£40,000) on items including Audit Fees, Idox Development, IT and premises related costs as well as (£40,000) more interest receivable on investments than budgeted mainly due to increased cash balances from CIL and S106 reserves.
 - There has been additional expenditure on Strategic Projects in excess of funding totalling £71,000. This relates to unavoidable costs that cannot be funded from external sources.

It is worth noting that the majority of projects have completed or commenced within approved budgets.

- (£33,000) below budget variances on various Countryside Policy & Management supplies and services budgets including learning, education and volunteer budgets.

Budget Carry Forward Requests

- 3.4 Budget carry forward approval is required for both unringfenced grant funded budgets and non-grant funded budgets in accordance with accounting requirements and Financial Regulations and Procedures. All carry forward requests have been reviewed by the Senior Management Team to ensure that they reflect approved commitments and are affordable in the context of the overall financial position. Budget carry forward requests total £1,011,000 and detailed explanations for these are given at Appendix 2.

Provisional 2019-20 Capital Outturn

- 3.5 There is a zero forecast variance on the capital programme at outturn, subject to a recommended variation to reflect the purchase of a replacement vehicle and reprofile of the National Park Signage Project. A summary of the capital programme, including this variation, is provided at Appendix 3 to this report.

Impact on Reserves and Implications for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

- 3.6 The Authority's approved MTFS sets out resource assumptions and projections over a 5 year term. The provisional below budget revenue position of (£305,000) will have a favourable impact on the Authority's reserves position. It was assumed as part of the budget proposals considered by the NPA in March 2020 that any below budget variance at the end of the financial year would be allocated to the new Climate Change Fund reserve. It is proposed to allocate (£141,000) of the below budget variance to the new Climate Change Fund reserve and the balance of £164,000 added to a new Recovery Fund subsequently approved by the Authority in May 2020. The Recovery Fund setup is due to the impact of Covid-19 and the implications in the 2020/21 financial year. The NPA approved a total Recovery Fund of £375,000 in order that SDNPA can support recovery in pursuit of the Partnership Management Plan Objectives. The balance of £211,000 for the Recovery Fund will be supplemented from the PMP Reserve.
- 3.7 It was also agreed at the Member Budget Workshop and approved at the NPA meeting in March 2020 to transfer of funds from the Planning Reserve (£150,000) and Estates Management Reserve (£150,000) to the Strategic Fund for the purpose of funding identified projects to meet PMP objectives.

Treasury Management Overview and Position

- 3.8 The main issue for the UK during 2019/20 was the agreement of the way forward over Brexit. The general election held in December 2019 provided a Conservative majority, which led to the UK leaving the EU on 31 January 2020. However, there still remains uncertainty as to whether a trade deal will be reached by the target date of 31 December 2020, particularly given that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken up much of the government's time since March 2020.
- 3.9 Economic growth in 2019 was volatile, with a stronger than expected growth of 0.50% in quarter 1, followed by a disappointing quarter 2 growth of 0.2%, and a jump back to 0.50% in quarter 3. Quarter 4 was flat at a growth rate of 0.0%. The 2019 year on year growth for the UK was 1.1%. 2020 started with optimistic business surveys pointing to an upswing in growth after the ending of political uncertainty as a result of the general election in December settling the Brexit issue. However, the three monthly GDP statistics in January were disappointing, remaining at 0.0% growth. Since then, the whole world has changed as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. It now looks likely that the closedown of whole sections of the economy will result in a fall in GDP of at least 15% in quarter two – some analysts believe that the fall will be as much as 25%. What is uncertain, however, is the extent of the damage that will be done to businesses by the end of the lock down period, when the end of the lock down will occur in full, whether there could be a second wave of the outbreak, how

soon a vaccine can be created and then how quickly it can be administered to the population. This leaves significant uncertainties as to how quickly the economy will recover. It is likely that the slower that the government implement steps to ease lockdown, the more likely a prolonged U shaped recovery will occur.

- 3.10 After the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) raised Bank Rate from 0.5% to 0.75% in August 2018, Brexit uncertainty resulted in the MPC in making no changes until March 2020; at this point it was abundantly clear that the coronavirus outbreak posed a significant threat to the economy of the UK. Two emergency cuts in Bank Rate from 0.75% occurred in March, first to 0.25% and then to 0.10%. These cuts were accompanied by an increase in quantitative easing (QE), essentially the purchases of gilts (mainly) by the Bank of England of £200bn. The Government and the Bank were also very concerned to stop people losing their jobs during this lock down period. Accordingly, the Government introduced various schemes to subsidise both employed and self-employed jobs while the country is locked down. It also put in place a raft of other measures to help businesses access loans from their banks, (with the Government providing guarantees to the banks against losses), to tide them over the lock down period when some firms may have little or no income.
- 3.11 The Treasury Management team are monitoring the situation closely, and particularly mindful of the impact on the security of the Authority's portfolio at this time. Whilst the economic fallout from the pandemic is not a "credit event", it is likely that there will be some credit defaults in the coming months – so counterparty security is key.
- 3.12 The Authority's investments at 31 March 2020 are made up of the following:
 - £2.0m fixed deposits held with Lloyds Bank plc (held as two separate deposits of £0.5m and £1.5m);
 - £3.5m fixed deposits held with Santander (UK) plc (held as two separate deposits of £1.5m and £2.0m);
 - The remaining cash balance is invested via Brighton & Hove City Council (£6.4m at 31 March 2020).
- 3.13 The table at Appendix 5 summarises the performance of these investments over 2019/20. The actual average interest rate earned in quarter 4 was 1.09% (no change from quarter 3), and the average interest rate earned for the year was 1.11% (0.88% in 2018/19). The average rate of the investment portfolio increased as a result of new deposits being re-invested at higher rates than maturities. The average rate is expected to reduce from 2020/21 as a result of the MPC reducing the official Bank Rate to 0.10% in March 2020. The Authority's Treasury Advisors are expecting Base Rate to be suppressed throughout 2020/21.
- 3.14 A regular deposit cycle has been introduced with deposits to optimise return whilst maintaining liquidity. Officers regularly review cash flow forecasts to ensure sufficient liquidity remains within the portfolio; the deposit cycle has been scheduled to ensure adequate cash is available when required.

4. Options & cost implications

- 4.1 It is proposed that the provisional below budget variance will be transferred to reserves as set out in this report, therefore increasing the resources available in future years to support priorities. The proposed transfer to reserves is considered to be the best use of available funding following a review of reserves and expected future commitments.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 The final outturn position will be reflected in the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts.

6. Other Implications

Implication	Yes/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	Yes. The provisional budget variance will result in contributions to the Authority's financial reserves. This has implications for the Medium Term Financial Strategy of the Authority as it impacts on the future resource assumptions and financial projections. The resource implications have been covered within the main body of the report.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	The proposed carry forwards ensure delivery of initiatives already approved and committed. Internal controls and governance are in place to ensure the economical, efficient and effective use of resources.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	No
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	There are no implications arising directly from this report. The Authority's equality duty shall be taken into account in respect to all expenditure and programmes undertaken by the National Park Authority.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	Not directly applicable to decisions in this report, however, Human Right implications relating to all expenditure and programmes undertaken by the Authority should be considered.
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Data Protection implications?	No
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy?	No

7. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 7.1 There are no risks associated with this report as the recommendations are for noting or are within approved budgets.

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Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 2019/20 Provisional Revenue Outturn by Service Area2. 2019/20 Budget Carry Forward Request3. 2019/20 Provisional Capital Outturn4. 2019/20 Treasury Management Position5. 2019/20 Reserves Position
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services, Business Services Manager
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	This report is presented in accordance with the Authority's Financial Regulations and Standard Financial Procedures.

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2019/20 Provisional Revenue Outturn by Service Area

Explanation of Main Movements

Service Area	2019/20 Month 9 Variance £'000	2019/20 Outturn Variance £'000	2019/20 Movement Variance £'000	Explanation of Main Movements
Corporate Services	42	(47)	(89)	Various contract efficiencies and supplies and services underspends such as IT Costs, software and Premises Costs and improved return on investments.
Countryside Policy and Management	9	(47)	(56)	(£33,000) movement in on various supplies and services budgets including learning and education, volunteers; (£12,000) for Health and Wellbeing Projects as external funding income received from Public Health England.
Planning	(192)	(282)	(90)	Lower number of planning applications in the final quarter to the value of £23,000 is net of increased income from Planning Performance Agreements; Payments to host authorities in the final quarter being lower than anticipated by (£65,000), in part due to the onset of Covid-19; (£27,000) additional income received due to the recharge costs to other authorities regarding the Wealden Local Plan; (£15,000) underspend on Direct Action Costs within Planning Recovery Services.
Strategic Projects	0	71	71	A combination of additional project costs and costs incurred earlier than expected to be met from the outturn position as opposed to seeking additional funding from reserves. Details of specific projects variances are provided in the table below.
Total	(141)	(305)	(164)	

Explanation of Main Variances

Service Area	2019/20 Month 9 Variance £'000	2019/20 Outturn Variance £'000	Explanation of Main Variances
Chief Executive's Service	7	4	Minor net Variance.
Business Services	26	(61)	£21,000 variance due to salaries, (a Development Management Technician support within the Idox team, and a HR Administrator within HR team); £30,000 of staff advertising partly offset by underspend of (£10,000) in staff training; Variances within supplies and services budgets such as furniture/equipment of £14,000 due to office moves and replacement equipment stolen from

			Land Rovers; and £10,000 costs for National Parks Subscription are offset by other net contract and supplies efficiencies of (£64,000) including Audit Fees, Idox Development , IT costs and premises Costs;; interest received on investments was (£40,000) greater than budgeted mainly due to increased CIL reserves; various minor underspends.
Marketing and Income Generation	24	29	£20,000 approved as a budget variance by the NPA to secure 10th anniversary of the Park celebrations where £5,000 has been spent to date and £15,000 is included as an carry forward request; £13,000 additional contributions from Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF) following identification of new projects at a recent SCF Panel; (£8,000) net variance relating to salaries.
Governance and Support Services	(15)	(19)	Variance due to employee turnover across admin support.
Total Corporate Services	42	(47)	
Director of Countryside Policy and Management	(3)	19	Variance due to salaries and additional costs in Supplies and Services.
Countryside and Policy Central Area	(28)	(33)	(27,000) variance was to due Lead Ranger and Assistant Ranger post been vacant. Both posts now filled and minor underspends on supplies and services.
Countryside and Policy Wealden Heath Area	14	(14)	£7,000 variance due to a new post having been agreed that is not in the original budgeted establishment (Transport Analyst role within Environment and Infrastructure team) to provide support to the wider organisation and to the NPA Chair in their role on the Transport for the South East; Various minor underspends on supplies and service budgets.
Countryside and Policy Eastern Area	(15)	(42)	(13,000) variance was due to a vacant post within Ranger services now filled; and (£10,000) under spend in Education for School Grants mainly due to less visits towards the end of the financial year due to Covid-19; underspend across various supplies and services in Volunteer services.
Countryside and Policy Western Area	(7)	(22)	Variance due to Salaries and minor various across supplies and services.
Research and Performance	48	45	£44,000 variance is due to two new posts having been agreed that were not in the original budgeted establishment (Health and Wellbeing officer post and Assistant Project Management Officer within Research and Performance team).
Total Countryside Policy and Management	9	(47)	
Director of Planning	2	5	Minor net variance
Planning Development Management	(65)	(102)	(£75,000) variance is due to vacancies in senior roles and employee turnover across the service; (£17,000) income for planning performance applications; (£15,000) below budget for Direct Action Costs.
Performance and Technical Management	(114)	(135)	£173,000 lower planning fee income than forecast due to lower number of planning applications but income from Planning Performance Agreements has increased

			significantly from last year; delegated agreements payments being (£315,000) less than budgeted due to a combination of Q4 2018/19 costs being less than anticipated and a lower number of applications in the current year and the impact of Covid-19; (£4,000) net salary variance from vacancies and new posts being agreed that was not in the original budgeted establishment (Transport Infrastructure post within Major Planning Projects and Performance team);
Planning Policy	(15)	(50)	(£24,000) variance is mainly due to Planning Policy post been deliberately held vacant to assess the impact on workload due to the Local Plan.
Total Planning	(192)	(282)	
Strategic Projects	0	71	Centurion Way - £19,000 the extra costs are due to the changes in the route, which required plans to be resigned and additional studies completed before planning was approved; Egrets Way - £26,000 additional costs that are not eligible for LEADER funding and required to be underwritten to finish the phase 4 of the project. Seven Sisters - £21,000 due to surveys being carried in the year. These costs have been assumed in the overall project budget, and the variance represents a timing reprofile funded from the outturn position, as opposed to increased project costs.
Total Strategic Projects	0	71	
Total Revenue Budget	(141)	(305)	

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2019/20 Budget Carry Forward Requests

Carry Forward Requests £'000	Service Area	Type	Description
9	Marketing & Communications	Contractual	One Project still to be funded from SCF in 19/20
10	Marketing & Communications	Contractual	IT System for Grants system (PSD) including the potential to develop the CIL module further.
93	Marketing & Communications	Contractual	Capital Funding for Signage Project - Project in phase 2 and not finished until 20/21 so balance of budget needs to be carried forward
15	Marketing & Communications	Project	In 19/20 there was agreed overspend of £20,000 that was added for the 10 th anniversary event, due to shutdown £15,000 budget needs to be carried forward.
24	Marketing & Communications	Project	New Website - Work on Phase 2 not due to be completed until summer 2021 due to Covid-19 delays.
10	Marketing & Communications	Project	VR Wildlife Films commissioned - Filming has begun but has been delayed due to Covid-19 Restrictions.
5	Marketing & Communications	Project	NEO - Filming for your National Park and Custodian Campaigns - Filming it nearly complete but has been delayed due to Covid-19 Restrictions.
5	Marketing & Communications	Project	St Hubert's Church - Work has begun but has been delayed due to Covid-19.
30	Property Services	Project	The carry forward is for Property maintenance and repairs as work not completed in 19/20
201	Total Corporate Services Carry forwards		
15	Research & Performance	Project	Landscape Character Assessment Project started but not completed by year end
38	Research & Performance	Project	Viticulture Study Project started but not completed by year end
12	Research & Performance	Project	Earth Observation Development Project started but not completed by year end
58	Countryside Western Area	Contractual	Farm officer Post and contribution from the Rural Payment Agency, Defra for Farm Clusters to be carried forward to 20/21
8	Countryside Western Area	Grant	Carry forward contribution received for the Channel Payments for Ecosystem Services Project (CPES) income will be spent in 19/20
26	Countryside Western Area	Grant	Budget allocated from Marketing as income received from Gatwick Airport for Miles without Stiles
2	Countryside Western Area	Contractual	Outstanding work for bat surveys on disused Chichester to Midhurst railway line as part of development of Centurion Way

53	Countryside Eastern Area	Contractual	Stanmer Contribution Project agreed by P&P to come out of reserves but due to underspends in 18/19 it was agreed to come out of the underspends
2	Countryside Eastern Area	Contractual	Purchase order raised for Scrub clearance, but not completed to April - Foxhills
1	Countryside Eastern Area	Contractual	Purchase order raised to WL West and Sons raised on 3.3.20 for an interpretation panel, work will not be completed until April
43	Countryside Central	Grant	Carry forward of contribution received towards Forestry Partnership
58	Countryside Central	Grant	Carry forward of Partners contribution for Heathlands Reunited project - which has not yet been spent
11	Countryside Wealden Heath	Project	Final Report for the Winchester Study will not be completed until 20/21, Draft report received.
18	Countryside Central	Contractual	Carry forward budget is for the ongoing costs for the Rural Sussex Partnership scheme.
345	Total Countryside and Policy Carry forwards		
45	Planning Policy	Grant	Income received from DCLG not spend in 18/19 Custom Build grants £30k and £15k income received in 19/20, so budget needs to be carried forward 20/21
207	Planning Policy	Grant	Grant Income received in previous years and in 19/20 for Neighbourhood Planning but Grant not yet spent so needs to be Carry Forward.
13	Planning Policy	Grant	Balance of Defra income received in 16/17 (50K) cost centre ring fenced for income to be spent on this project
37	Planning Policy	Contractual	Minerals and Waste - West Sussex Soft Sand Single Issue Review
8	Planning Policy	Contractual	West Sussex and Greater Brighton Partnership for LSS3 agreed by Trevor
3	Planning Policy	Project	Hampshire County Council to pay for our development monitoring (£2,500).
10	Planning Policy	Project	Air Quality Monitoring Study
2	Planning Policy	Project	West Sussex for parking guidance Project
50	Performance & Technical Mgr.	Project	Shoreham Cement Works. A scope for transport work has been agreed with West Sussex County Council and Highways England but we can't yet give the go ahead for the work given the current pandemic and the profound impact that this has had on traffic levels.
90	Performance & Technical Mgr.	Contractual	CIL administration income received but relevant expenditure not yet incurred.
465	Total Planning Carry Forwards		
1,011	Total Carry forwards for 19/20		

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2019/20 Provisional Capital Outturn

Capital Project	2019/20 Month 9 Budget £'000	2019/20 Outturn Variation £'000	2019/20 Outturn Adjust' Budget £'000	2019/20 Outturn Actual £'000	2019/20 Outturn Variance £'000	2019/20 Outturn Variance %
National Park Signage Project	168	(93)*	75	75	0	0.0%
New Vehicle	21	29	50	50	0	0.0%
Total Capital Budget	189	(64)	125	125	0	0.0%

Details of variation requests and explanation of significant variances

Capital Project	Variation Type	Value	Description
National Park Signage Project	Reprofile (Approved by the NPA)	(93)	The original capital budget was approved before the full tender exercise had been concluded and therefore represented an estimated cost. The variation value represents a combination of actual cost being lower than originally budgeted, and one of the originally planned signs being withdrawn from the programme due to planning issues. As previously reported to the NPA, it is intended that this variation value will be earmarked for Phase 2 of the signage project, to be included in the 2020/21 Capital Strategy.
New Vehicle	New	29	New land cruiser to replace written off vehicles; funded from Vehicle Repairs and Renewals reserve as money recovered from insurance.
Total Variations		(64)	

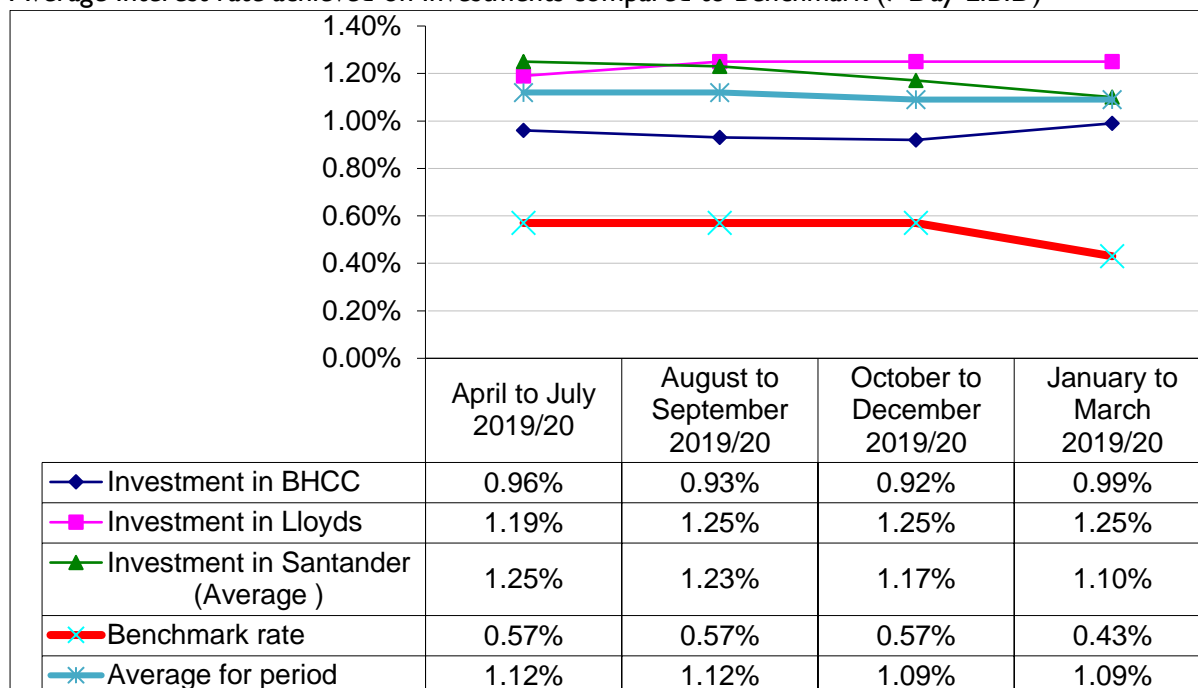
2019/20 Reserves Position

Reserve Type and Title	Purpose of Reserve	2019/20 Month 9 £'000	Move- ment Between Reserves £'000	Contrib- utions to/from Reserves £'000	2019/20 Provisional Outturn £'000
General Reserves:					
Working Balance	Working Balance	595	0	0	595
General Reserve	General Reserve representing the 2019/20 approved budget surplus	136	0	0	136
Earmarked Reserves:					
Partnership Management Plan Reserve	To fund outcomes identified in the Partnership Management Plan	512	0	0	512
Planning Reserve	To fund unforeseen planning inquiries, changes to future delegation arrangements, significant income falls and support for neighbourhood plans	708	0	0	708
Strategic Fund	Reserve to hold unspent Strategic Fund allocations.	363	0	307	670
Affordable Housing	Funds to implement an Affordable Housing Strategy within the National Park	85	0	61	146
South Downs Way	Funding transferred from South Downs Joint Committee	20	0	0	20
Section 106 Receipts Reserve	Receipts primarily used to develop infrastructure within the National Park	722	0	(139)	583
Section 106 Interest on Statutory Receipts		101	0	45	146
Community Infrastructure Levy Reserve*	Receipts to fund infrastructure in development areas	1,978	0	2,631	4,609
Capital Reserves:					
Capital Receipts	Proceeds from disposal of assets available for use on capital expenditure	23	0	0	23
Estates Management Reserve	To support refurbishment of area offices.	1,178	0	0	1,178
Vehicle Repairs and Renewals	To fund purchase of replacement vehicles	82	0	(50)	32
Total Reserves Balance		6,503	0	2,855	9,358

*The value of the Community Infrastructure Levy reserve represents amounts receivable in accordance with Financial Regulations and the Town and County Planning Act 1990. The reserve value may not represent the value of actual income received due to agreed payment terms and profile of payments for some developments.

2019/20 Treasury Management Performance

Average Interest rate achieved on Investments compared to Benchmark (7 Day-LIBID)



Average amount invested (weighted by amount per day)

