

BUDGET 2020/21: SERVICE DASHBOARDS AND SERVICE CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (SCIAS)

People and Places Advisory Committee - 1 October 2019

Report of	Chief Officer Finance and Trading
Status	For comment
Also considered by	Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee - 3 October 2019 Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 8 October 2019 Development and Conservation Advisory Committee - 15 October 2019 Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee - 29 October 2019 Finance and Investment Advisory Committee - 21 November 2019
Key Decision	No

Executive Summary:

This report sets out updates to the 2020/21 budget within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and savings plan. The report presents growth and savings proposals that have been identified which need to be considered (if applicable to this Committee), and requests further suggestions from the Advisory Committees, before finalising the budget for 2020/21.

Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions with Cabinet, it is proposed that the Council continues to set a revenue budget that assumes no direct funding from Government through the Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus. This will result in the Council continuing to be financially self-sufficient.

To achieve this aim and to ensure a balanced budget position over the next 10-year period, whilst also increasing the Council's ability to be sustainable beyond that time, a net savings requirement of £93,000 in 2020/21 and £100,000 per annum in later years is included.

Other pressures may result in a requirement for further savings. Officers will continue to monitor these pressures and report the latest position to Cabinet in December.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Matthew Dickins

Contact Officers Adrian Rowbotham, Ext. 7153

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Recommendation to each Advisory Committee:

- (a) Advise Cabinet with views on the growth and savings proposals identified in Appendix D applicable to this Advisory Committee.
 - (b) Advise Cabinet with further suggestions for growth and savings applicable to this Advisory Committee.
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Reason for recommendation: It is important that the views of the Advisory Committees are taken into account in the budget process to ensure that the Council's resources are used in the most suitable manner.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Council's financial strategy over the past fifteen years has worked towards increasing financial sustainability and it has been successful through the use of a number of strategies including:
 - implementing efficiency initiatives;
 - significantly reducing the back-office function;
 - improved value for money;
 - maximising external income;
 - the movement of resources away from low priority services; and
 - an emphasis on statutory rather than non-statutory services.
- 2 Over this period, the Council has focused on delivering high quality services based on Members' priorities and consultation with residents and stakeholders. In financial terms, the adoption of this strategy has to date allowed the Council to move away from its reliance on general fund reserves.
- 3 Using the data sources available to the Council, this report sets out a budget over the 10-year period but recognises that it is likely that more accurate data will become available in future months and current assumptions may need to be updated.
- 4 In setting its budget for 2011/12 onwards, the Council recognised the need to address both the short-term reduction in Government funding as well as the longer-term need to reduce its reliance on reserves. The outcome was a 10-year budget, together with a four-year savings plan, that ensured the

Council's finances were placed on a stable footing but that also allowed for flexibility between budget years.

- 5 With the Revenue Support Grant provided by Government ceasing from 2017/18 it is important that the council remains financially self-sufficient by having a balanced economy and a financial strategy that is focused on local solutions. These solutions include:
 - continuing to deliver financial savings and service efficiencies;
 - growing the council tax and business rate base; and
 - generating more income.
- 6 The intention of this report is to provide Members of each Advisory Committee an opportunity to give their views on potential growth and savings items that could be included in the updated 10-year budget that will be presented to Council on 25 February 2020.
- 7 The 'Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2020/21 and Beyond' report has been presented to Cabinet to start the budget setting process for 2020/21.

Financial Self-Sufficiency

- 8 The Council's Corporate Plan 2013-2018 set out an ambition for the Council to become financially self-sufficient which was achieved in 2016/17. The current Council Plan aims to continue with this approach. This means that the Council no longer requires direct funding from Government, through Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus, to deliver its services.
- 9 This approach was adopted in response to the financial challenges the Country was faced with in bringing its public spending down to ensure it is able to live within its means. In practice this has seen Government funding to local authorities dramatically reduced since 2010/11 with Sevenoaks District Council receiving no Revenue Support Grant from 2017/18.
- 10 The decision to become financially self-sufficient is intended to give the Council greater control over its services, reducing the potential for decision making to be influenced by the level of funding provided by government to local authorities.
- 11 The Council's decision to seek to become financially self-sufficient was subject to scrutiny by the Local Government Associations Peer Challenge of the District Council during December 2013. In their closing letter to the Council they concluded that they 'fully support that aspiration and given the existing and anticipated squeeze upon public finances this makes much sense'.
- 12 With the Council receiving no Revenue Support Grant from 2017/18 and New Homes Bonus reducing from 2018/19, this approach remains appropriate. The attached 10-year budget assumes no Revenue Support Grant or New

Homes Bonus. Any funding received from these sources will be put into the Financial Plan Reserve which can be used to support the 10-year budget by funding invest to save initiatives and supporting the Property Investment Strategy. One of the aims of the Property Investment Strategy is to achieve an income yield of 3%+ above the Council's average treasury management return (currently 0.9%) when not borrowing or internally borrowing, and 3%+ above the borrowing rate (currently 1.9% for 30 years). Therefore, using funding for this purpose will result in additional year on year income that is not impacted by Government decisions.

- 13 Cabinet are keen to remain financially self-sufficient and be ahead of the game. This will include a new target to replace reliance on Business Rates income over the coming years. This will allow this Council to move ahead in the knowledge that this council has the financial resources to provide the services that the district's residents need into the future.

Service Dashboards

- 14 The intention of service dashboards is to provide Members with improved information during the budget setting process to provide context and inform any growth and savings ideas that Members may put forward.
- 15 The Service Dashboards cover a summary of the services provided, objectives, achievements and opportunities, challenges and risks and performance.
- 16 **Appendix A** contains the Service Dashboard for this Advisory Committee and **Appendix B** contains the budget for those services.

Savings Plan

- 17 **Appendix C** to this report sets out a summary of the savings and growth items approved by Council since the 10-year budget strategy was first used in 2011/12, which have allowed the Council to deliver a 10-year balanced budget.
- 18 The savings plan requires a total of over £7 million to be saved between 2011/12 and 2019/20 which is an average saving of over £800,000 per annum.
- 19 The 10-year budget attached shows a net saving or additional income requirement of £93,000 in 2020/21 and £100,000 per annum in later years to deliver a long-term sustainable budget.
- 20 Other pressures may result in a requirement for further savings. Officers will continue to monitor these pressures and report the latest position to Cabinet in December.

Proposed Growth and Savings Items

- 21 Growth items are items that are in addition to non-service issues and risks, such as grant settlements, impacts of economic change and other pressures highlighted in the 'Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2020/21 and Beyond' report considered by Cabinet on 12 September 2019.
- 22 A number of growth and savings items will be proposed at the Advisory Committees with the aim of achieving the £93,000 net savings mentioned above. The £93,000 does not necessarily have to all be achieved in 2020/21 but the impact is required to be £930,000 (i.e. £93,000 x 10 years) over the 10-year budget period.
- 23 The proposed growth and savings items relating to this Advisory Committee are listed in **Appendix D** (if applicable).
- 24 Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) contain further details for all proposed growth and savings items. SCIAs applicable to this Advisory Committee can be found in **Appendix E** (if applicable).
- 25 During the budget process last year, each Advisory Committee was asked to provide further growth and savings suggestions to Cabinet. Some suggestions were approved as part of the 2019/20 budget, but Cabinet indicated that some other suggestions would be worth keeping on a list for future investigation. The suggestions for future investigation relating to this Advisory Committee are included in **Appendix F** and Members may wish to consider these ideas when proposing growth and savings suggestions.

Financial Summary

- 26 The assumptions currently included take into account the latest information available, but a number of assumptions may change before the final budget meeting in February 2019.
- 27 The 10-year budget attached at **Appendix G** includes the changes that were included in the 'Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2020/21 and Beyond' report.

Role of the Advisory Committees

- 28 A training session on the budget process have been provided to Members on 24 September 2019. If Members require any further training or require any additional details on the content of this report and appendices, please contact Adrian Rowbotham or Alan Mitchell prior to the meeting.
- 29 Views of the Advisory Committees on the growth and savings items proposed together with any additional suggestions will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 5 December 2019.

Process and Timetable

- 30 This report is the second stage of the budget process as shown in the Budget Setting Timetable (**Appendix H**).
- 31 It is possible that Advisory Committees may have to re-address service budgets in January if significant changes have taken place leading to a large and unmanageable deficit.

Key Implications

Financial

All financial implications are covered elsewhere in this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal implications.

For the effective management of our resources and in order to achieve a sustainable budget it is essential that all service cost changes and risks are identified and considered.

Challenges and risks are included in the Service Dashboards and each Service Change Impact Assessment (SCIA) includes the likely impacts including a risk analysis.

Financial risks will be reviewed again when the Cabinet publishes its proposals for the annual budget.

Equality Assessment

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups.

Individual equality impact assessments have been completed for all Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) to ensure the decision making process is fair and transparent.

Conclusions

The Strategic Financial and Business Planning process has ensured that the Council follows a logical and well considered process and approach in dealing with the many difficult financial challenges that it has faced. The 10-year budget has

further improved this process and helped to ensure that the Council is well placed in dealing with more immediate and longer-term financial challenges.

By becoming financially self-sufficient at an early stage, this Council has become much more in control of its own destiny.

The attached 10-year budget shows that this Council can continue to be financially stable going into the future with a level of assurance that any council would aspire to.

This budget process will once again be a major financial challenge for a Council that already provides value for money services to a high standard. In making any budget proposals, Members will need to consider the impact on service quality and staff well-being, to ensure that these proposals lead to an achievable 10-year budget that supports the Council's aspirations for customer-focused services.

Members' consideration and scrutiny of the relevant services is an essential and key element in the business and financial planning process. If the net total of growth and savings proposals identified by the Advisory Committees and approved by Cabinet does not reach the £93,000 savings target, additional savings will be required that may result in service changes, to ensure a balanced budget position.

Appendices

Appendix A - Service Dashboards relating to this Advisory Committee.

Appendix B - 2019/20 Budget by Service relating to this Advisory Committee.

Appendix C - Summary of the Council's agreed savings plan and growth items.

Appendix D - New growth and savings items proposed relating to this Advisory Committee (if applicable).

Appendix E - Service Change Impact Assessment forms (SCIAs) for the new growth and savings items relating to this Advisory Committee (if applicable).

Appendix F - Growth and savings suggestions made last year that were agreed by Cabinet to be kept on the list for possible future investigation - relating to this Advisory Committee (if applicable)

Appendix G - 10-year budget

Appendix H - Budget Setting Timetable

Background Papers

Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2020/21
and Beyond - Cabinet 12 September 2019

Adrian Rowbotham

Chief Officer Finance and Trading