

Item 6 (d) - Budget & Council Tax Setting 2023/24

The attached report was considered by the Cabinet, and the relevant minute extract is below:

Cabinet (9 February 2023, Minute 94)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Investment presented the report which set out the proposed budget for 2023/24. He advised that this was the final stage of the budget process which had seen significant member involvement. If approved, the net expenditure budget for 2023/24 would be £18.5m with the Council's Tax increasing by 2.98% resulting in Band D Council Tax being £236.70, an increase of £6.84. He was pleased to announce that the report would once again leave the council with a fully funded self-sufficient budget over the next 10 years.

The Council Tax and Recovery Manager set out the proposed changes to Council Tax premium charges which proposed to shorten the premium on long term empty dwellings from the current 2 years empty to 1 year from 1 April 2024; and 100% premium on all second homes from 1 April 2024, should the Regeneration & Levelling Up Bill receive Royal Assent. The Bill stated that to apply the changes, approval to do so must be given at least 12 months before the implementation date to ensure the required 12 month leading period.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading advised Members that it had once been again a challenging budget process with a number of changes made at each stage, and were listed in Appendix E. The position had improved since the report to Cabinet in January as the annual budget gap had reduced from £126,000 to £104,000 due to this council's share of the Collection Fund surplus. This gap would be funded from the Budget Stabilisation Reserve.

The Final Local Government Finance Settlement was announced earlier this week and there were no significant changes from the provisional settlement affecting this council. He advised that appendices P to S were not included within the Cabinet papers but would be included in the Council version of the report after the other preceptors have set their Council Tax.

The report included his opinion, as the Statutory Finance Officer, on the robustness of the budget estimates and adequacy of reserves. The flexibility of the 10-year budget approach assisted in these uncertain times but it should be recognised that when there was greater certainty it was highly likely that additional savings and income would be required in the next budget process.

Members discussed the report.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members note that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that

- (a) the Summary of Council Expenditure and Council Tax for 2023/24 set out in Appendix F, be approved;
- (b) the 10-year budget 2023/24 to 2032/33 which was the guiding framework for the detailed approval of future years' budgets set out in Appendix C(i) to the report, including the budget changes set out in Appendix E to the report, and that where possible any variations during and between years be met from the Budget Stabilisation Reserve, be agreed;
- (c) the Capital Programme 2023/26 and funding method set out in Appendix J(i) and Capital Strategy 2023/24 set out in Appendix J(iii), be approved;
- (d) the changes to reserves and provisions set out in Appendix K, be approved;
- (e) the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022/23, be rolled forward to 2023/24, with effect from 1 April 2023 (Appendix M), be approved;
- (f) the Council Tax premium on long term empty dwellings, be shortened from the current 2 years (empty) to 1 year from 1 April 2024 (Appendix N), be agreed in principle for implementation following Royal Assent to the relevant Act of Parliament;
- (g) the 100% Council Tax premium on all second homes from 1 April 2024 (Appendix N), be agreed in principle for implementation following Royal Assent to the relevant Act of Parliament; and
- (h) SCIA 18 be reviewed by Officers with the intention of the retention of the Out of Hours service during the peak months of the year.