

## **DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2018/19**

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor David Watson

**Wards Affected:** All

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### **Recommendations**

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Note the draft budget proposals for 2018/19 and financial planning assumptions set out in this report;
2. Note that the draft budget for 2018/19 will be refined and updated for the Cabinet in February 2018, to be recommended for approval at Full Council meeting in February 2018 to set the Budget and Council Tax for 2018/19;
3. Note the 5 year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018/19 to 2022/23 will be presented to the Cabinet for review in February 2018; and
4. Note that the detailed proposals will be submitted to The Budget Task and Finish Group in December and provide feedback by 12<sup>th</sup> January as detailed in Appendix B.

### **Reason for Decision**

5. The Council has a statutory requirement to set a balanced budget for 2018/19 and this report forms a key part of the budget setting process by setting out the likely Revenue expenditure for that year.

### **Corporate Implications**

The financial implications are an integral part of this report.

Section 31A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires billing authorities to calculate their council tax requirements in accordance with the prescribed requirements of that section. This requires consideration of the authority's estimated revenue expenditure for the year in order to perform its functions, allowances for contingencies in accordance with proper practices, financial reserves and amounts required to be transferred from general fund to collection fund.

## **Executive Summary**

6. This is the first report which provides latest update for Members on the 2018/19 Budget and enables Cabinet to evaluate, develop and initiate budget proposals before Council finalise the budget and sets the Council Tax for 2018/19 in February 2018.
7. This report represents the output following a comprehensive refresh of the Council's 2018/19 draft budget. Further work needs to be done to identify savings of £0.130m to balance the remaining funding gap. This represents a significant achievement in light of continuing cuts to government funding for local government, alongside a growing population driving an ever increasing demand for locally provided services.
8. Savings have been developed under two broad themes: Service Transformation and Maximising Income.

## **Background**

9. The budget for 2018/19 is being prepared in line with the council's current Corporate Plan which was approved in December 2015. The vision of the Council is to be economically strong and the place to live, work and visit. This vision is supported by three key priorities as detailed below:
  - a. Place – Regeneration and Infrastructure
  - b. People – Cohesive Communities
  - c. Pound – Value for Money Services
10. During the budget preparation process, the Corporate Plan was being reviewed. Overall, any changes to the Corporate Plan should not have an immediate impact on the 2018/19 draft revenue budgets, however this will be reviewed and any material changes to the new Corporate Plan which has an impact on budgets will be incorporated in the final budget and MTFs presented to Cabinet in February 2018.
11. This is the first report to Cabinet on the budget for 2018/19, building upon the position outlined in the 2017/18 budget report to Council in February 2017. In February the funding gap for 2018/19 was estimated to be £0.273m, through detailed work, this has now been reduced to £0.130m as detailed in paragraphs 13 to 16.
12. The Council has already signed up to the 4 year multi-year settlement funding offer made by the Secretary of State for Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The purpose of this offer is to help local authorities prepare for the move to a more self-sufficient resource base by 2020 and the devolution of business rates. The multi-year settlement is intended to provide funding certainty and stability for the sector that will enable more proactive planning and support strategic collaboration with local partners. The draft 2018/19 budget assumes that the Council will receive the Revenue Support Grant and Business Rates Income in line with the agreed settlement

## Revenue Budget 2018/19

13. Development of the 2018/19 budget builds upon the 2017/18 budget and therefore the current monitoring position provides a useful context and manages many of the same challenges to be expected in the new financial year. In addition, progress towards delivery of existing savings targets is of vital importance in considering both the feasibility of future savings initiatives and the potential need to identify alternative measures where planned savings cannot be secured.
14. The movement from the 2017/18 baseline to the 2018/19 budget requirement is summarised in the following table, which reflects the current position and incorporating movements since the budget was agreed in February when the funding gap for 2018/19 was estimated to be £0.273m. Further savings of £0.130m needs to be identified to balance the budget. Explanation of the significant adjustments are detailed in paragraph 15.

Budget Requirement	Movement £m	2018/19 Budget Requirement £m
<b>Funding Sources</b>		
Council Tax	0.124	8.986
Collection Fund Surplus	0.017	0.260
Business Rates	0.016	3.225
Revenue Support Grant	-0.518	0.117
New Homes Bonus	0.000	0.875
<b>Total Resources</b>		<b>13.463</b>
<b>Budget Requirement</b>		
Budget Requirement 2017/18		13.824
Inflation Pay	0.282	
Inflation Price	0.262	
New Growth/Cost Pressures	2.832	
New Savings/Income	-2.540	
Savings to be identified	-0.130	
Corporate Items	-1.067	-0.361
<b>Budget Requirement 2018/19</b>		<b>13.463</b>
<b>Funding Gap</b>		<b>0.000</b>

15. Explanation of significant movements and main assumptions are detailed below:
- a. **Council Tax :**
- Band D:** The draft budget assumes nil increase in Council Tax band D of £131.99.
  - Council Tax Base:** As a result of new properties, the tax base is assumed to increase by 1.2%, by approximately 945 band D equivalent properties in both 2018/19 generating approximately £0.124m additional income in each year. A detailed explanation is included in a separate technical paper on this agenda.

- b. **Business Rates and Revenue Support Grant (RSG):** The movement reflects the four year settlement which Council has signed up to. Due to the overall government funding cuts, there is a significant reduction in RSG of 82% resulting in a decrease of £0.518m.
- c. **New Homes Bonus:** 2018/19 will see changes proposed by CLG in calculating the New Homes Bonus due to the Authority. Two major changes are: introduction of a national baseline for housing growth of 0.4% and moving to 4 year payments for both existing and future Bonus allocations. The estimated funding position based on the average bonus same as 2017/18 for WDC for 2018/19 is £1.325m (£2.313m 2017/18) which is a reduction of £0.988m. Within the 2018/19 budget, a sum of £875k of the New Homes Bonus Grant is allocated to support the General Fund.
- d. **Pay Inflation:** This is assumed at 2.2% (National pay rise and some scale point movement).
- e. **Price Inflation:** Overall price inflation has not been allocated to budgets and services are expected to manage any increase through general efficiency. However, the following items were inflated as detailed below:
- i. Utilities 5%
  - ii. Business Rates as per the 2017 valuations
  - iii. Major contract inflation as per the contract agreement
- f. **New Growth and Cost Pressures:** The total new growth is £2.832M. The significant items are summarised below:-
- i. Youth Peer Monitoring Project - £0.060m.
  - ii. Rental Income - £0.400m, resulting from cyclical rent reviews of the investment portfolio and potential loss of temporary 'windfall' income due to redevelopment.
  - iii. Economic Development - new post to deliver the strategy £0.065m.
  - iv. Car Parks – Increase in repairs, maintenance and security cost of £0.213m due to vandalism and rough sleepers.
  - v. Waste Recycling Credits – this is expected to decrease by £0.065m due to decrease in tonnage resulting from light weight packaging and increasing digital media.
  - vi. HMO Licencing pilot – increase in staffing cost of £0.100m to carry out additional pilot area pending new legislation.
  - vii. Homelessness prevention work funded from grant £0.273m.
  - viii. Information Technology – Increase in software costs due to upgrade and IT support costs totalling to £0.150m.
  - ix. Cleaning Contract – The cost of £0.096m is offset by compensating savings
  - x. The cost of the planning transformation project and delivery of local plan approved by June 2017 Cabinet of £0.588m to deliver the Local plan and 'Fit for Competition'.
  - xi. Temporary Accommodation housing subsidy – Reduction of subsidy amounting to £0.130m
  - xii. Members allowances and ward budget £0.045m

- g. **New Savings/Income:** The total new savings/income is £2.540m. The significant items are summarised below:-
- i. Grounds Maintenance winter works - £0.060m
  - ii. Rental income of £0.573, this includes Sword House rental income of £0.420m of realigning from balance sheet to income and expenditure.
  - iii. Car park income – Although there is no increase in car parking charges, however the income is expected to grow by £0.170m due to increase usage.
  - iv. HMO Licence fees – new income from the pilot scheme of £0.050m
  - v. Cleaning Contract – Savings of £0.099m from Staffing and supplies and services cost following outsource of cleaning services.
  - vi. Planning Fees – A total increase in fees of £0.320m due to increase in activity/in fees.
  - vii. Insurance Premium savings of £0.050m
  - viii. Additional legal income from recovery of costs £0.091m.
  - ix. Recharges to capital projects £0.120m.
  - x. Management Fee income from the leisure contract £0.239
  - xi. Partnership working savings of £0.079m
  - xii. **Government Grants**
    - Homelessness Prevention: The Council has been awarded £0.273m ring fenced grant for Homelessness Prevention. This will be used for the prevention work which will assist in managing the demand on the service and the associated cost of Bed and Breakfast.
    - Government Capacity Funding: The Council has been awarded £0.161m for 2018/19. There will be match funding of £0.066m from the council. These funds will be used to deliver the Local plan in relation to Princes Risborough.
- h. **Corporate Items:** Net saving of £1.067m, resulting mainly from realigning Treasury Income and Capital Financing budgets from balance sheet to revenue and reduction in contingency from £0.650m to £0.200m.

16. Draft 2018/19 budget summary is shown in the table below. Further analysis of movement by portfolio holder is attached at appendix A.

Draft 2018/19 Budget Summary	Approved Budget	Movement	Draft Budget
	2017/18 £m	£m	2018/19 £m
Funded by:			
Council Tax	8.862	0.124	8.986
Collection Fund Adjustment Account	0.243	0.017	0.260
Business Rates	3.209	0.016	3.225
Revenue Support Grant	0.635	-0.518	0.117
New Homes Bonus	0.875	0.000	0.875
<b>Total available Funding</b>	<b>13.824</b>	<b>-0.361</b>	<b>13.463</b>
<b>Service Income</b>			
Government Grants	-1.546	-0.575	-2.121
Fees & Charges	-5.586	-0.361	-5.947
Planning Income	-1.254	-0.319	-1.573
Car Parking Income	-2.976	-0.169	-3.145
Rental Income	-6.370	0.231	-6.139
Net Internal Recharges	-0.398	0.004	-0.394
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-18.130</b>	<b>-1.189</b>	<b>-19.319</b>
<b>Service Expenditure</b>			
Employees	14.466	-0.536	13.930
Premises Related Expenses	4.014	0.345	4.359
Supplies & Services	14.763	0.543	15.306
Depreciation	2.923	0.000	2.923
Savings to be identified	0.000	-0.130	-0.130
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>36.166</b>	<b>0.222</b>	<b>36.388</b>
<b>Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>18.036</b>	<b>-0.967</b>	<b>17.069</b>
<b>Corporate Items</b>			
Interest Receipt	0.000	-0.563	-0.563
Capital Financing Charges	-2.383	0.190	-2.193
Net movement to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	-1.938	0.994	-0.944
Payment to Parishes	0.109	-0.015	0.094
<b>Budget Requirement</b>	<b>13.824</b>	<b>-0.361</b>	<b>13.463</b>

### Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities – Implications

17. The approval of the Council's budget is key to the delivery of the Council's Vision and Priorities.

## **Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)**

18. During December and January, further work will be carried out to address the funding and demand led pressures going forward. As reported to February 2017 Cabinet the funding gap for the 5 year period to 2023/24 was approximately £5.915m.
19. In addition to this, the government funding announcement will enable the officers to review the impact of Revenue Support Grant, Business Rates and New Homes Bonus on the MTFP.
20. The Heads of Services will work with Finance to identify efficiency savings and opportunities to maximise income to address the funding gap going forward and this will be reported to the Cabinet in February 2018 as part of the Council Tax setting process.

## **Financial Risks**

21. The key financial risks relating to the 2018/19 budget are set out below

- Business Rates Income – The Council's funding from central government includes £3.225m from retained business rates (Funding Baseline). Since April 2013 the Council carries 40% of the financial risk associated with the level of net income that is actually achieved in the year. If the total income received is less than the funding baseline then the amount of funding the Council can retain can be reduced by 7.5% (£0.242m).
- Council Tax Support - The Council set a discount scheme in 2013/14 designed to mitigate the projected shortfall in Council Tax Support grant it received from government. The Council together with other precepting bodies is responsible for the financial costs of any increase in take up for this discount and uncollected payments.
- Homelessness – Demand both nationally and locally for assistance is expected to continue to remain at high levels during 2018/19. Various prevention measures are put in place and increased levels of temporary accommodation which is more affordable. The impact of the welfare changes will also become increasingly more challenging for those at risk.
- HMO Licensing – New Legislation is expected during which it is anticipated will increase the number of properties that the Council will need to license, with 2 story buildings likely to be included in addition to 3 story plus. The financial implications cannot be assessed yet until more detail is published.
- Volatility of income streams from Car Parks, Planning and Commercial Rents.

## Consultation

22. The Improvement and Review Commission's Budget Task and Finish Group have met during September and October to consider the 2017/18 forecast outturn position and the impact on 2018/19 budgets. The group will be consulted again during December on the 2018/19 budgets.

## Options

23. The Council has 6 options in relation to Council Tax for 2018/19 as follows:

- **0% Increase in Council Tax** as assumed in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and the basis of how the proposed budget for 2018/19 has been compiled.
- **Increase Council Tax by £5 per Band D Property (3.77%)** as assumed by Central Government's spending power reduction. This would increase the amount of Council Tax raised by £0.341m.
- **Increase Council Tax by £2.62 per Band D Property (1.99%)** which would generate an additional amount of Council Tax of £0.179.
- **Increase Council Tax by an amount between £0 and £5 per Band D Property.**
- **Increase Council Tax by above £5 per Band D Property (3.77%)** and seek a referendum – this is not recommended.
- **Reduce the current level of Council Tax charge** – this is not recommended in light of the projected deficit position of £5.915m for the 5 year period to 2023/24 on the MTFP reported to 06 February 2017 Cabinet and known financial risks that the Council continues to face in the short term.

24. The Council has one of the lowest levels of Council Tax in England for a District Authority at £131.99pa (£2.54 per week) for a Band D property, which is also the lowest in Buckinghamshire.

## Conclusions

25. The funding gap has reduced from £0.273m to £0.130m. The management and the members will work together to ensure a balanced budget for 2018/19 has been achieved to enable Council to set the Council Tax in February 2018.

26. As the level of financial risk that the Council faces continues to increase, particularly given the changes to local government finance further saving programmes will need to be identified and the option of increasing the Council Tax needs to be considered to ensure that a balanced budget can be achieved over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan going forward.

## Next Steps

27. The budget and Council Tax proposals along with the Medium Term Financial Plan will be presented to February Cabinet on 05 February 2018.

## Background Papers

28. 2017/18 Revenue Budget and Council Tax Setting report to Cabinet on 6 February 2017.