



Cabinet decision notice

The following decision(s) were taken by Cabinet at its meeting held on **5 January 2023**. Decisions will (unless called-in) become effective at 5pm on 11 January 2023.

Agenda item no. 8

Council Tax Base 2023-24

(a) Decisions

Cabinet received a report on the Council Tax Base Setting 2023/24.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Buckinghamshire Council Tax Base of 228,997.95 for the year 2023/24 be APPROVED.**
- (2) That the Buckinghamshire Council estimated collection rate for the year 2023/24 of 98.3% be NOTED.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

On an annual basis, all local authorities are required to calculate a Council Tax Base which is used to set the level of Council Tax. The process is governed by the Local Authorities' (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992. It is a requirement to set the Council Tax Base as at 30th November and inform the other Preceptors.

(c) Alternative options considered

These are detailed at paragraph 3 of the Cabinet report. It explains that, as stated in paragraph 2.6 of the report, the Council has discretion over setting the collection rate. Setting a higher rate would increase revenue. Any potential deficit created by the collection rate falling below the rate could be managed in future years. Changing the assumption around the collection rate would also impact on the receipts of major preceptors.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.



Agenda item no. 9

Draft Revenue budget and Capital Programme

(a) Decisions

Cabinet received a report setting out the draft revenue budget for the financial year 2023/24. The decision had been taken to prepare a one-year budget due to the extremely high levels of volatility in the economic environment and the uncertainties surrounding future Local Government funding. The report also detailed a capital programme over 4 years as many schemes span across multiple financial years. The Council currently had borrowing headroom of £100m. Where schemes were brought forward with a financially viable business case these schemes could be added to the Capital Programmes subject to Cabinet approval.

Local Government funding remained very uncertain in the medium term due to proposed changes to the Local Government funding regime, potential reviews of Business Rates and Council Tax, and the implementation of key Government policies regarding Adult Social Care reform and the 'Levelling Up' agenda. The Autumn Statement had laid out the Government's funding totals and priorities for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28. Actual allocations to individual authorities had been confirmed through the Provisional Local Government Settlement on 19 December and only provide certainty for 2023/24. These are broadly in line with the draft budget and any implications would be considered in the new year / final budget.

Changes to the revenue budget were largely focussed on changes in costs as a result of the significant increase in inflation, service demand and income (both service and corporate), and the recognition of the ongoing risks relating to global economic conditions and the wider Local Government funding regime.

The draft budget proposed was built on the proposed Council Tax base and assumes a 2.99% increase in basic Council Tax and a 2% increase for the Adult Social Care Precept, giving a total increase of 4.99%. This was the maximum allowable without triggering a local referendum and is still significantly below the rate of inflation at 11.1% at the end of October.

The Council Tax Resolution report would be presented as a separate report as part of the final budget in February 2023 and would contain the final information from the other precepting authorities leading to the total Council Tax for the area, which full Council was required to approve. The Cabinet report did not include special expenses. Discussions were ongoing to agree special expenses budgets for 2023/24, and these would also be presented alongside the final budget. The level of precept charged in Special Expenses areas formed part of the Council tax referendum threshold calculation, so final Council Tax levels could not be finalised until this matter was agreed.

The Leader suggested an amendment to Appendix 2 (Transport Portfolio Capital Programme section) to include in 2026/27:-

- £4.425m on Plane and Patch
- £2.15m on Footway Structural Repairs.

In total, this provided an additional £6.575m on roads and pavements in 2026/27. This was agreed by Cabinet Members, as there was a political commitment to continue to improve roads in the County. On a vote being taken it was agreed unanimously and

RECOMMENDED to Full Council :-

- (1) That the outcome of the budget consultation (Appendix 4) be noted.
- (2) That the current risks associated with the draft budget proposals be noted.
- (3) That the draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2023/24 (Appendices 1-3) be approved, subject to an amendment to Appendix 2 (Transport Portfolio Capital Programme) to include in 2026/27: £4.425m on Plane and Patch and £2.15m on Footway Structural Repairs (page 93 of the agenda) which will provide an additional £6.575m on roads and pavements in 2026/27 to be funded either from Corporate resources or the Government’s pothole funding (if announced).
- (4) That the proposal to seek delegation from Council to Cabinet for up to £100m of new capital schemes to be added to the capital programme, through Prudential Borrowing, and where robust financial business cases have been made, be supported.
- (5) That the Schedule of Fees and Charges for 2023/24 be agreed.
- (6) That it be noted that a supplementary report, the formal Council Tax Resolution, will accompany the final budget submitted to full Council.

(b) Reasons for decisions

To approve a draft budget and capital programme that can then undergo scrutiny and challenge prior to the final budget for Buckinghamshire Council being approved by the Council on the 22 February 2023.

(c) Alternative options considered

There were no other options. The Council is required to set a balanced budget before 11 March in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 10

Buckinghamshire Education Strategy 2022 - 2027

(a) Decisions

A strategy for Education and Skills for Buckinghamshire had been developed in 2018

through collaboration and consultation with key stakeholders, with the purpose of implementing continuous improvement in educational provision across Buckinghamshire until 2022.

Following further collaboration and engagement with a wide range of partners, the Strategy had been refreshed to show the progress made and to highlight the priority areas we need to focus on in the future. The review of the Strategy was timely given the unprecedented period of change and uncertainty that had been experienced due to the Pandemic and wider economic and social events. The refreshed Strategy provided the opportunity to review and reformulate the vision for education for children and young people in Buckinghamshire.

RESOLVED –

That the updated Buckinghamshire Education Strategy 2022-27 be APPROVED for publication and launch.

(b) Reasons for decisions

The Education and Skills Strategy that was approved in 2018 had been reviewed and refreshed following a consultation process in response to the changing landscape of education.

(c) Alternative options considered

None.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 11

Work Smart Estates Strategy

(a) Decisions

Cabinet considered the Work Smart Estates Strategy which contained a range of Officer recommendations to consolidate the Council's office accommodation to meeting the £2.4m per annum revenue savings in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

RESOLVED –

Council Offices at Wycombe Old Library, Wycombe

- (1) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to make necessary arrangements to move staff from the Wycombe Old Library to the main**

Council Offices in Wycombe at Queen Victoria Road.

- (2) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants, agree heads of terms, and terms for a leasehold contract, exchange and complete on the letting of all or part of the Council Offices at Wycombe Old Library, in accordance with the financial implications and proposed revenue savings set out in the appendices to the Cabinet report.**

Council Offices at Queen Victoria Road, Wycombe

- (3) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to reduce operational accommodation as needed to reduce operational overhead in accordance with the provisions set out in the appendices to the Cabinet report.**
- (4) That the property will be kept in the existing use for the interim period pending the conclusion of the series of actions set out in this report and the appendices and known as phase 1. At the conclusion of Phase 1 a further review of the accommodation need at the Wycombe Offices will be undertaken.**

Council Offices at King George V House, Amersham

- (5) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants to masterplan the site for re development, realising the opportunity for much needed housing in the Town Centre including affordable housing. As part of the re development, consideration will be given for a future Council presence in the town to facilitate Officer operational desk space, ancillary space, meeting space including space for Planning committee meetings, Environmental Health meetings, Community Board meetings and community access where they are not undertaken online or virtually.**
- (6) That it be NOTED that for a period of time it might be the case that operations will need to be re located and temporary accommodation arranged for Council meetings and potentially interim office space for staff members. Alternatively, and where there is no obvious local need, Officers would be asked to re locate temporarily to either Wycombe or Aylesbury. The Service Director of Property and Assets is authorised to make such operational changes and agree associated costs. It is further NOTED that the disposal is at least 18 months into the future and the project will involve staff consultation regarding continued operations and potential impact on staff that are based at the Amersham office.**
- (7) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants to progress the masterplan of the site and make an application for Planning if needed and subsequently agree terms for disposal, agree contracts, exchange contracts subject to conditions and complete on the transaction subject to a further report to Cabinet on the final business case.**

Council Offices at the Gateway, Gatehouse Way, Aylesbury

- (8) That the Council offices that have been the interim headquarters for the organisation since Unitary be APPROVED as the longer term headquarters for the**

Council.

- (9) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants to consider master planning and preliminary budgeting for a potential extension and this will be considered against the options set out elsewhere in this report regarding the Council's current legacy headquarters building in Walton Street.**
- (10) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants and contractors to bring forward the workspace accommodation strategy more widely at the Gateway following the recent successful pilot, in accordance with the financial implications set out in the appendices to the Cabinet report.**

Council Offices at Walton Street, Aylesbury known as Walton Street Offices

- (11) The Walton Street offices are only partially occupied. The Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants to bring forward the site for master planning, regeneration, development and possible sale.**
- (12) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants and if required make a Planning Application, agree terms for a potential disposal, agree contracts exchange contracts and complete on a disposal, The disposal would be subject if required to conditions and subject to alternative accommodation being provided for the staff currently based in Walton Street Offices.**

Potential Council Offices at Aylesbury

- (13) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants to review alternative opportunities for a smaller office in Aylesbury town centre as set out in the appendices to the Cabinet report.**

The Council Offices at Denham

- (14) That it be AGREED that the Council offices at Denham that have been closed for operational use for some time will not be re-opened.**
- (15) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to seek to surrender the lease with the Landlord or underlet the premises to reduce operational costs for the remainder of the term of the Lease.**

General

- (16) That the Service Director of Property and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, will bring back a periodic report to Cabinet with an update on the strategy set out in this report and the appendices not less than every 6 months for the next two years.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

Data on operational usage of the Councils main buildings had been collected over a significant period of time post Covid. The data identified the opportunity to reduce the Council's office accommodation, and the report considered a strategy which achieved a reduction in operational footprint based on organisational need, a reduction in carbon footprint, and achieved both a potential capital receipt and a revenue budget saving and income. Savings from the operational estate formed part of the Unitary Council's preliminary financial strategy. The Cabinet report and recommendations sought to meet that initial vision.

(c) Alternative options considered

Do nothing – This was not the recommended option. The Council had set out an ambition in the Unitary Business Case to achieve operational savings from its estate. The estate was under-utilised and not undertaking the review and delivering on the strategy would continue to see space being provided that was not needed to assist in the organisation.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 12

Adoption of Local Heritage List

(a) Decisions

Cabinet considered a report that provided a summary of Buckinghamshire's new Local Heritage List and sets it in its national and regional context. The report described the methodology and criteria behind the list's creation and listed those sites that were ready for adoption in Phase 1.

Whilst the Local Heritage List would never be fully comprehensive, and sites would continue to be discovered and added to the list over time, the aim was to achieve formal adoption of Phase 1 sites in December 2022, and Phase 2 sites in 2023. The Cabinet report set out a proposed mechanism for accepting future amendments to the Local Heritage List.

RESOLVED –

That the Local Heritage List (Phase 1) be ADOPTED.

(b) Reasons for decisions

To adopt the first county-wide Local Heritage List to provide clarity on Non-designated Heritage Assets and to assist the development process.

(c) Alternative options considered

Regarding the adoption of the Phase 1 Local List, the alternative option was to not adopt as there was no legal requirement to provide a Local List. However, it was best practice to adopt one and Local Lists are being advocated by government (DLUHC) and Historic England.

Not adopting the list would continue the status quo, that was not satisfactory as heritage assets were currently being lost to neglect, damage or decay where they had not been formally identified as a Non-designated heritage asset. The Local List would be a useful tool for the planning teams and would raise awareness of any heritage issues early on in the process, rather than during it.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 13

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Project recommendations and governance

(a) Decisions

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund gave Councils a fixed funding allocation for Levelling Up themed activity between 2022/23 and 2024/25. Following the submission of the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan in Summer 2022, and receipt of Department for Levelling-Up, Housing, and Communities' approval of the Plan in early December, the Council now needed to decide how money would be allocated to specific delivery projects.

It was recommended that a programme of quick wins for the first year of UKSPF funding due to the short timeframe between receiving the year 1 UKSPF funds by DLUHC and the end of the financial year. Recommendations were also set out for a project selection approach for 2023-24 and 2024-25 (the second and final years of UKSPF funding, for which there are far larger amounts of funding to allocate).

RESOLVED –

- 1. That the proposed funding for the projects identified for the 2022-23 allocation of UKSPF, as detailed in confidential Appendix A, be AGREED.**
- 2. That the Energy Doctor programme be established, to be delivered by the Council's Climate Change and Environment team.**
- 3. That the governance of the Bucks SPF programme, including the funding decisions for 2023-24 and 2024-25 allocations of UKSPF and as detailed in confidential Appendix A be APPROVED.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

Buckinghamshire's UKSPF funding allocation has been confirmed and therefore the Council needs to ensure plans are in place to provide effective delivery of the UKSPF fund, including spend in the current financial year.

(c) Alternative options considered

Other options considered are detailed in Section 3 of the Cabinet report.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 14

High Wycombe Asset Disposal Strategy

(a) Decisions

Under its existing legal contract with WFS, the Council had to shortly decide whether to exercise the Option Agreement ("the agreement") for the Put and Call on the film studio site ("Site A") adjoining Wycombe Air Park. If no decision was made, the P & C would fall away. Since the existing legal contract was signed in April 2022, WFS had requested a variation in the terms of the P&C to ensure delivery of the overall business plan for developing a major film studio complex on Site A.

Negotiations were ongoing between the Council and WFS and revised terms were close to being agreed. These terms would result in a greater capital receipt, in accordance with the terms set out in the confidential appendices. As currently worded, the agreement needed to be signed off by the Council no later than January 2023. Otherwise, the agreement would fall away. If the Council decided to serve notice, then it could secure a capital receipt that was greater than the value of the income stream under the current agreement.

Recommendation 1 was whether the Council would agree an extension to this sign off date of the Put and Call option. On the basis that the P&C did not go live until a planning permission was granted for a permanent consent for film studios on the site, that was likely to be in March 2023, this request for an extension was not a commercially sensitive point and WFS had confirmed that they were ready to progress the extension of time.

Recommendation 2 was whether the Council accepted the variations currently being asked for by WFS. The key changes sought enabled WFS to acquire the effective freehold for Site A anytime after the agreement was served; in contrast, the Council could not demand a sale until a later date but in the meantime were entitled to a higher rent than currently entitled to.

Recommendation 3 was whether the Council wished to trigger the agreement in either its existing or revised form. Officers had recommended all three actions as they were all financially advantageous to the Council and optimised the prospects for the film studio to be developed over the short to medium term.

RESOLVED –

- 1. That an extension to the date by when the Council must declare the existing Put and Call Notice (“P&C”) live be authorised.**
- 2. That the variation of the terms of the existing Put and Call Notice as set out in the confidential annex be authorised, including:**
 - (a) Delaying the date that the Council can service its Put option; and**
 - (b) Permitting Wycombe Film Studio (“WFS”) to serve its Call option as soon as the P&C is live, providing the Council’s revised financial position is no worse than that of November 2022.**
- 3. That the P&C be declared live, once in its final form, thus enabling the Council to receive the capital receipt from WFS as detailed in the confidential annex.**
- 4. That authority to take the actions to implement recommendations 1-3 above be delegated to the Service Director for Property and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources and the Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer), it being noted that the capital receipt will be retained for income generation – initially from the interest received on the capital.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

Exercising the Put and Call in a revised form presents the best overall outcome for the Council in terms of securing a long-term income stream and a capital receipt.

(c) Alternative options considered

None.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

For further information please contact: Ian Hunt on email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

You can view upcoming decisions to be made and all decisions taken on the Council’s website [here](#).