



Cabinet decision notice

The following decision(s) were taken by Cabinet at its meeting held on **14 February 2023**. Decisions will (unless called-in) become effective at 5pm on 21 February 2023.

Agenda item no. 7

Budget Scrutiny 2023 Report

(a) Decisions

Cabinet were asked to consider the recommendations of the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group which was formed to scrutinise the Draft Revenue Budget 2023/24 and Capital Programme for 2023/24 – 2026/27 that Cabinet approved on 5 January 2023.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group, as well as the supporting Officers, be thanked for their work and subsequent recommendations.**
- (2) That Cabinet's responses to the Budget Scrutiny report 2023 and recommendations, as detailed at the meeting, be agreed.**

Note: a complete breakdown of the scrutiny recommendations and Cabinet's responses can be found [here](#).

(b) Reasons for decisions

For Cabinet to consider the recommendations of the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group.

(c) Alternative options considered

None. Cabinet was asked to consider these recommendations and provided a response which can be found [here](#).

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 8

Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 and Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2026/27



(a) Decisions

Cabinet received a report on the revenue budget for 2023/24 and on the capital programme for Buckinghamshire Council covering the period to 2026/27. These proposals were based on the latest known funding position, service budget pressures and the key financial risks facing the Council both now and in the future. They also took account of the findings from the recent budget scrutiny inquiry.

The Council Tax Resolution report would be presented as a separate report as part of the budget to Council in February and would contain the final information from the other precepting authorities leading to the total Council Tax for the area, which Full Council would be required to approve.

The budget reflected the Council's desire to deliver its corporate objectives, maintain front-line services and support residents and businesses through the Cost of Living crisis. The budget had evolved and been updated during its development to reflect the changing economic environment, especially the exceptionally high levels of inflation and the increasing demand experienced within our services.

Whilst the Provisional Local Government Settlement had provided additional funding to the Council it remained insufficient to fund the level of inflation and growth forecast for 2023/24. The Final Local Government Finance Settlement was expected to be announced in February 2023 (after the report deadline for the meeting). There were not expected to be any changes from the figures published in the Provisional Settlement which form part of these budget proposals.

Changes from the draft revenue budget were minimal and largely reflect additional Government Grant announcements. Overall, the final revenue budget proposals include unavoidable growth of **£33.3m**, Inflation of **£30.0m**, savings of **£10.1m**, and income changes of **£20.3m** in 2023/24. The proposed budget was built on the proposed Council Tax base and included increasing Council Tax by the Referendum threshold limits of 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 required to maintain levels of service as much as possible in the current economic climate.

The budget continued to include the use of £1.36m of General Fund in 2023/24, as originally approved as part of the Medium-Term Plan approved at Council in February 2022.

The Capital Programme was balanced across its 4 years, as many schemes spanned multiple financial years. The Council currently had borrowing headroom of £100m. It was proposed that Council delegate to Cabinet the addition of schemes to the Capital Programme which have a financially viable business case, subject to due diligence and final Cabinet approval.

RECOMMENDED to Full Council to –

- (1) Approve the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme (Appendices 1-3).**
- (2) Approve the 'Special Expenses' budgets, precepts and associated services for**

**Aylesbury Town, High Wycombe Town and West Wycombe Church Yard
(Appendices 5 & 6).**

- (3) Support the proposal to delegate to Cabinet decisions to add up to £100m to the Capital Programme, to be funded by Prudential Borrowing, subject to a robust business case being approved.**
- (4) Approve the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Policy (Appendix 7).**
- (5) Note that a supplementary report, the formal Council Tax Resolution, will accompany the final budget to full Council.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

To set a robust and legal revenue budget and capital programme for Buckinghamshire Council within the prescribed timeframe.

To ensure the Council is able to make appropriate additions to the capital programme in a timely manner.

Please note: this decision has been forwarded to full Council on 22 February, 2023, and as such is not subject to call-in.

(c) Alternative options considered

Not applicable.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 9

Council Tax Support Fund

(a) Decisions

Central Government had provided funds to the Council under S31 of the Local Government Act 2003 with the proviso that all monies were paid strictly in accordance with S13a (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and in line with guidance issued on 23 December 2022. The fund, named by Central Government as the 'Council Tax Support Fund' was designed to meet the immediate needs of all taxpayers who were currently claiming Council Tax Reduction (CTR). The mandatory element was to award all recipients of Council Tax Reduction (both working age and pension age) with a further reduction in their annual council tax bill of up to £25. This reduction would apply to all Council Tax Reduction recipients who have an outstanding liability for the 2023-24 financial year.

It was proposed after applying the mandatory reduction in liability above, that the Council would continue to make similar discretionary payments to all applicants who became eligible for Council Tax Reduction for the first time after 1 April 2023.

The report proposed an additional policy framework that set out the Council's approach to

the award of the mandatory and discretionary elements of the Council Tax Support Fund from 1 April 2023, which was a new policy in addition to the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme Policy.

RECOMMENDED to Full Council –

To adopt the discretionary Council Tax Support Fund policy for Buckinghamshire local Council tax support claimants, as shown in Appendix A to the Cabinet report.

(b) Reasons for decisions

The recommended approach would ensure that all eligible Council Tax support claimants received the support they were entitled to automatically and in line with Government guidance.

Please note: this decision has been forwarded to full Council on 22 February, 2023, and as such is not subject to call-in.

(c) Alternative options considered

No other options have been considered as the timescales to implement this policy are extremely tight to be implemented with annual billing in April 23.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 10

Care Leaver Council Tax Disregard

(a) Decisions

Cabinet received a report proposing the introduction of a Discretionary Council Tax Discount scheme for Buckinghamshire Council Care Leavers. The scheme would work alongside the Local Offer to support young care leavers in taking on the responsibility of having their own property and being able to support themselves financially.

One of the key points of the Local Offer was for Buckinghamshire Council to meet the obligation of paying Council Tax for the Care Leaver up until the age of 21 where they continued to interact with the Leaving Care team.

The report proposed a policy framework that set out the Council's approach to the award of discretionary Council Tax discount for Care Leavers from April 2023.

RECOMMENDED to Full Council –

To adopt the Discretionary Council Tax Discount Scheme for Buckinghamshire Council Care Leavers, as shown in Appendix A to the Cabinet report.

(b) Reasons for decisions

The recommended approach would ensure that all eligible care leavers received the support they were entitled to and reduced the administration costs for both the Leaving Care team and the Council Tax team.

Please note: this decision has been forwarded to full Council on 22 February, 2023, and as such is not subject to call-in.

(c) Alternative options considered

The local offer could continue but this relies on the care leaver sending the council tax bills to the Leaving Care team for payment. Some care leavers fail to do this and therefore do not receive the discount on offer and unnecessary reminders and summonses are issued at a cost to the council.

With the proposed policy in place the Leaving Care team will notify the Council Tax team of any person leaving care and the appropriate council tax discount can be applied to their new address. As a result, the Leaving Care business support team will no longer need to process the bills for payment and the Council Tax team will issue fewer bills, and reminder letters.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 11

Council Tax Changes to the Second Home Discount

(a) Decisions

The report highlighted that currently there were 753 homes receiving a 10% discount for a second home. Assuming a 4.99% Council Tax increase, this was equivalent to £157k to the Council in 2023/24 (and £37k to other preceptors). The change proposed was to help encourage the active occupation of properties as a primary residence in Buckinghamshire.

RECOMMENDED to Full Council:-

That they remove the 10% Council Tax discount on second homes from 1st April 2023.

(b) Reasons for decisions

The removal of the 10% discount would encourage taxpayers to use premises as their main

residence or allow others to use the premises as a main residence and raise additional council tax revenue.

(c) Alternative options considered

The change proposed was to help encourage the active occupation of properties as a primary residence in Buckinghamshire. A decision could be made to not remove the discount on Second Homes.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None

Agenda item no. 12

Capital and Investment Strategy

(a) Decisions

The Council was required to approve its Capital & Investment Strategy on an annual basis. The Capital & Investment Strategy provided the framework within which to deliver its Corporate Plan objectives through the effective investment of its limited capital resources. As well as the Council's immediate statutory responsibilities, the strategy also reflected the important role that it had to play in the regeneration and growth, affordable housing and climate change agendas, especially in the context of a post-Covid recovery and the significant housing growth in the area.

An amendment was made to the Strategy relating to the Green Belt Estate owned by the Council. Alongside the Agricultural Estates Management Policy the Green Belt Estate owned by the Council under pre-war legislation needed to be considered as well. Where considering any proposals which involved or impacted upon the Agricultural Estate or Green Belt Estate, the Property Board would ensure that environmental policies and protection of the Green Belt were fully considered as part of any recommendations to Cabinet, and also that any recommendations have the agreement of the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment.

RECOMMENDED to Full Council :-

To approve the Capital and Investment Strategy attached at Appendix 1 of the report including reference to the amendment above.

(b) Reasons for decisions

The Council was required to approve its Capital & Investment Strategy on an annual basis.

(c) Alternative options considered

N/A

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

Other

Agenda item no. 13

Buckinghamshire Place Based Growth Model

(a) Decisions

The Levelling Up White Paper and supporting draft legislation provided Buckinghamshire with the opportunity to take control and address levelling up, regeneration and innovation priorities. Ideally Buckinghamshire was seeking a case for a 'Level 2 plus' County Deal that could result in devolution of both capital funds and powers through the award of new local flexibilities and freedoms. However, whether or not the Government continued to proceed with county deals, or indeed allow Level 2 plus deals, the Council were collectively agreed that there was a need to synthesise current work in this space into a better aligned governance structure.

The Leader made a distinction between economic development and economic regeneration as opposed to housing and that it was important to focus on economic development as a separate issue. Therefore the terms of reference would be amended with reference to the Housing and Regeneration Board to focus on economic regeneration and not housing and regeneration. It was agreed that the Cabinet would delegate to the Leader authority to make minor changes to the terms of reference as required.

RESOLVED:-

- 1. That the Council will aim to transition to a 'No Deal' partnership model of strategic governance with effect from April 2023, as outlined in Appendix 1, and to establish a 'Pooled Investment Fund' to exclusively fund inclusive economic growth.**
- 2. That a new Place Based Growth Board be established to strengthen alignment, generate and focus funds, and oversee the effective allocation of resources to support agreed principles.**
- 3. That a further 4 Supporting Boards be established reporting into the Growth Board. The Supporting Boards will be responsible for the development and management of a number of strands of supporting work including an Enterprise and Investment Board; a Skills Board; a Place, Housing and Regeneration Board (with amendment referenced above to focus on economic regeneration); and an Opportunity Bucks Board. As above, the Cabinet delegated authority to the Leader to make minor changes to the terms of reference of the Supporting Boards**

as required.

4. That it be agreed that the Buckinghamshire LEP will fulfil the Enterprise and Investment Board remit. As such, in this initial phase the Council will seek to integrate activity rather than incorporate the legal entity and will not pursue TUPE transfer and the dissolution of the LEP Company.
5. That Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) will lead on the business support and integrated skills programme support whilst maintaining its status as the primary Buckinghamshire business representation organisation. As such, BBF will manage both the Growth Hub and the Skills Hub, subject to the core funders (Buckinghamshire Council and the Buckinghamshire LEP) agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding with BBF, to include agreed metrics, to clarify expectations around the funding provided.
6. That the management of the Enterprise Zone programme (currently managed by the EZ Board (in line with the current approved MoU) and the Connected Counties Gainshare income) be transferred into the 'Pooled Investment Fund'. The gainshare from contracts 1 and 2 (as detailed in the Cabinet report) will be managed by the Enterprise and Investment Board who will assess business cases against criteria set by the Place Based Board in order to help catalyse investment linked to agreed priorities.
7. That as a condition of transferring resources into the proposed 'Pooled Investment Fund' the Council will require:
 - i. A majority on the Place Based Growth Board.
 - ii. that all 3 Cabinet Members on the Enterprise and Investment Board must agree to the release of any funding from the 'Pooled Investment Fund'.
 - iii. formal Council approval for any additional funding, in line with financial procedures.
8. That the objectives of place based growth will include:
 - i. better utilising and aligning existing support services including IT, HR and finance.
 - ii. improving relationship management with the most significant Buckinghamshire businesses.
 - iii. increasing the Inward Investment capacity in conjunction with the Department for International Trade (DIT).
 - iv. maximising external funding and grant bidding capacity.

(b) Reasons for decisions

To provide a more streamlined and integrated place based growth approach where thematic activity including health, economy and physical environment may be coordinated to best effect.

(c) Alternative options considered

The other option was to keep the governance arrangements as they currently existed until any devolution deal with government was agreed. This was not recommended as it represented an organisational approach to economic development rather than a more holistic and streamlined approach and it also resulted in duplication in terms of both discussions and membership of boards. The proposed new approach aligned with current government thinking and demonstrates the Council's readiness and ambition for securing a 'County Deal'.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

Cllrs Broadbent, Cranmer, Strachan, Tett and Williams declared a personal interest at Members of the Buckinghamshire Growth Board

Agenda item no. 14

Q3 Performance Report 2022-23

(a) Decisions

Cabinet received a performance report which detailed the key performance measures reported through the Corporate Performance Framework for 2022/23. Cabinet also received the performance scorecard, which provided information on four key elements of performance for the Council covering Finance, Customer Service, Performance and Human Resources indicators. Within the performance report and performance scorecard, outturns which were performing at or better than target were classified as Green, those which were within 5% of the target were Amber and those which were more than 5% of the target were Red. At the end of Quarter 3, 98 indicators had outturns reported with a Red, Amber or Green status. Of these, 66 are Green (67%), 10 are Amber (10%) and 22 are Red (22%).

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the Council's performance for the Quarter 2 period 2022-23 be NOTED.**
- 2) That the actions being taken to improve performance, where required, be NOTED.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

The Corporate Performance Framework was reported on a quarterly basis to Cabinet to ensure there was understanding, ownership and accountability for performance outturns, including actions to improve performance where appropriate.

(c) Alternative options considered

N/A

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None

Agenda item no. 15

Highways Service - Frameworks 1 & 2 Contract Award

(a) Decisions

Cabinet agreed the new Highways service contracts operating model and the associated procurement strategy for the new contracts on 2nd March 2021. On 29th June 2021 Cabinet agreed the evaluation and quality criteria that would be used to determine the selection process and outcome of the procurement exercise as well as the criteria and process for determining any potential future extensions of the Term Maintenance and Term Consultancy contracts. These Framework Contracts would be for a maximum 4-year contract period. The procurement process was carried out in three parts for the Term Maintenance Contract, Term Consultancy Contract and finally Two Frameworks; the first framework comprising 3 lots, one for Conventional Surfacing, one for Surface Dressing and Micro Surfacing and one for Minor works up to £500k. The second framework was for larger projects and works in excess of £500k.

RESOLVED:-

- 1. That the progress made to date on the procurement of the new Highways Services Contracts be NOTED.**
- 3. That Framework 1, Lot 1, Lot 2 and Lot 3 and the Framework 2 Highways contract be awarded to the preferred bidders, as detailed within confidential Appendix 1.**
- 4. That the proposed management, use and commissioning of works via the Framework and the Term Maintenance and Consultancy contracts be NOTED.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

- i. The contracts required for the future delivery of this key service are ranked as 'Platinum Plus', requiring a council Key Decision by Cabinet.
- ii. There are three elements/contracts, with the procurement of each undertaken in a phased approach to manage workload.
- iii. The recommendation for the award of the first of these contracts, the Term Maintenance Contract (TMC) was agreed by Cabinet on 12th July 2022, the second the Term Consultancy Contract (TCC) was agreed by Cabinet on 22nd September 2022, and this report details the outcome of the procurement exercise for the third element, Frameworks 1 and 2, with Framework 1 having 3 separate lots. This paper makes recommendations for a decision to award in accordance with the previously agreed procurement process.

(c) Alternative options considered

None

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None

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

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