

2023/24 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR SERVICES WITHIN THE REMIT OF THE PROPERTY, HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

Committee name	Property, Highways & Transport Select Committee
Officer reporting	Iain Watters, Director – Strategic & Operational Finance
Papers with report	N/A
Ward	All

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee notes the budget projections contained in the report and comments as appropriate on the combined budget proposals affecting the relevant service areas within the Property, Highways and Transport Cabinet Portfolio, within the context of the corporate budgetary position.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. To comply with the Budget and Policy Framework procedure rules as part of the agreed consultation process for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets, alongside the Council's Capital Programme, this report sets out the draft revenue budget and Capital Programme for the services within the remit of the Properties, Highways & Transport Select Committee. Following consideration by Cabinet on 15 December 2022, these proposals are now under consultation, and the relevant proposals being discussed at the January cycle of the Select Committees.
2. Cabinet will next consider the budget proposals on 16 February 2023, and the report will include comments received from Select Committees. At the meeting on 16 February 2023 Cabinet will make recommendations to full Council regarding the budget and Council Tax levels for 2023/24. Subsequently, Council will then meet to agree the budgets and Council Tax for 2023/24 on 23 February 2023.
3. The Committee needs to consider the budget proposals as they relate to the relevant service areas within the Property, Highways & Transport Cabinet Portfolios, but within the corporate context and the constraints applying as a result of the aggregate financial position of the authority.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

4. It is recommended that the Committee notes the budget projections contained in the report and comments as appropriate on the combined budget proposals affecting the relevant service areas within the Properties, Highways & Transport Cabinet Portfolios, within the context of the corporate budgetary position.

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General Fund Budget

Budget Strategy

5. Budget proposals for 2023/24 have been prepared in the context of a wider strategy addressing the five-year MTFF period through which service expenditure is to be managed within available resources in the context of a challenging economic environment both in terms of an exceptional inflationary pressures and legacy COVID-19 impacts, with further impacts resulting from the cost-of-living crisis and the impact on residents' financial standing. This balanced budget is to be achieved through a combination of delivering efficiency savings, increases in the Council Tax, and Fees and Charges, while maintaining General Balances at forecast 2022/23 levels.
6. This budget strategy is based upon the principle of sound financial management set against the backdrop of these challenging economic conditions, with the latest monitoring position for the 2022/23 financial year reporting a net underspend of £61k which will leave uncommitted General Balances at £26,780k entering the 2023/24 financial year. However, included in the 2022/23 position is a significant use of Earmarked Reserves to fund £5,307k of exceptional inflationary pressures on service budgets experienced to date, with much of this reserve created from favourable movements during outturn 2021/22. Furthermore, the Council budgeted to drawdown £5,913k to fund COVID-19 pressures included in the February 2022 budget strategy with a further £3,431k being drawn down above this and the inflation drawdown to fund pressures within service operating budgets, the majority of which are covering new and emerging COVID-19 pressures.
7. The Month 7 monitoring position for the services within this select committee present a net variance of £138k as presented in the table below:

Table 1: Service Operating Budgets

Cabinet Member Portfolio		Approved Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance (As at Month 7)	Variance (As at Month 6)	Movement from Month 6
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Property, Highways & Transport	Expenditure	19,948	19,845	(103)	(192)	89
	Income	(8,951)	(8,986)	(35)	104	(139)
	Sub-Total	10,997	10,859	(138)	(88)	(50)

8. With the following narrative setting out the variances and movement from Month 6 on an exception basis:
 - a. **Property, Highways & Transport** – A net underspend of £138k is forecast for the portfolio, with the variance being driven by staffing underspends from a number of vacant posts across the Operational Assets and Planning & Regeneration services,

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with income forecasting a £35k favourable position. The £50k favourable movement is being driven by an increase in expenditure which is offset by these costs being covered by recharges, with an additional favourable movement from Section 106 income supporting the Council's Affordable Housing workstream.

9. Of the £13,346k savings within the 2022/23 budget, 92% are banked or on track for delivery in full, with potential risks on 7% (£986k) - relating to the Leisure Centre management fee and reflects the particular impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this sector and the ongoing challenges facing this service. Further information on this position is set out in the budget monitoring report also presented to Cabinet on this agenda, but it is expected that all 2022/23 savings will ultimately be banked in full.
10. The position on the savings included in the 2022/23 budget within the remit of this Select Committee is as follows:

Table 2: Savings Tracker

Cabinet Member Portfolio	Blue Banked £'000	Green Delivery in progress £'000	Amber I Early stages of delivery £'000	Amber II Potential problems in delivery £'000	Red Serious problems in delivery £'000	Total £'000
Cabinet Member for Property, Highways & Transport	(187)	(96)	(330)	0	0	(613)

11. Based on 2.99% per annum increases in the core Council Tax and 2% per annum increases in the Social Care Precept, funding available to support service expenditure is projected to grow by £39,475k to £290,522k between 2022/23 and 2027/28. A combination of inflation and demand-led pressures (including legacy impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic), together with capital investment plans is projected to generate a £49,017k uplift in service expenditure. In order to address this differential, to date, a savings programme of £45,683k has been developed, leaving a residual budget gap of £9,542k in later years of the MTF period.

Table 3: Budget Strategy

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000
Total Resources	251,047	264,763	271,475	277,868	284,082	290,522
Total Service Expenditure	251,047	264,763	271,475	281,886	290,046	300,064
Cumulative Budget Gap	0	0	0	(4,018)	(5,964)	(9,542)
<u>Of which, Service Expenditure in the remit of this committee:</u>						
Property, Highways & Transport	10,997	10,798	10,314	10,736	11,281	11,846

12. As is the case for the vast majority of local authorities, the Council has experienced exceptional economic factors that are driving a material inflationary requirement, which is having a significant impact on the cost of providing services to residents. The generally

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accepted measure of inflation, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) reached 10.1% in September 2022 and has yielded a forecast inflationary requirement of £21,877k in 2023/24, rising to £62,047k by 2027/28. This compares to a forecast of £6,430k for 2023/24 when the Council set out the previous iteration of the budget strategy in February 2022, with this latest refresh presenting a three-and-a-half-fold increase from these projections. Inflation, along with other updates on demand-led growth and corporate items has generated the need for a major savings programme, which stands at £20,791k in 2023/24, a significant increase from the £9,630k which was identified in February 2022.

13. The adverse economic conditions and particularly the sudden onset of a recession and inflationary pressures represent the main cause of the current cost-of-living crisis, with the impact from increasing costs and declining revenues having negative impacts on local residents and businesses, creating a challenging economic environment. It should be recognised that this in turn creates an element of risk on the Council's funding, with circa 75% of the Council's funding now being derived from local taxation.
14. Furthermore, COVID-19 legacy issues continue to impact on Council services and finances, with pandemic related pressures in 2022/23 of £14,722 at Month 7, with £11,291k of this having been factored into the previous budget strategy in February 2022 and £3,431k of new and emerging issues. While these extraordinary costs have been financed from specific central government grants up to 31 March 2022, it is not expected that any further funding will be forthcoming and ongoing structural pressures emerging from the pandemic will continue to cause cost pressures. This is largely driven by the unwinding of £4,406k of reserve balances used in 2022/23 to cover part of the budgeted pressure for the year and the £3,431k of new and emerging issues.
15. Notwithstanding the additional challenges presented by economic turmoil and the legacy impacts from the pandemic, this budget strategy does not rely upon use of General Balances to support service expenditure and therefore maintains these at £26,780k over the five-year MTF period. A review of the range of general risks affecting the Council indicates that the recommended level of uncommitted reserves should be between £20,000k and £39,000k, meaning that £6,780k remains available to the Council to deploy, should it be required.
16. In addition to General Balances, the Council holds Earmarked Reserves to manage specific risks, projects and cyclical expenditure commitments. At 31 March 2023, these are projected to total £18,641k, with £2,149 k of this sum being the remaining balance held to manage COVID-19 costs and a further £4,297k being the remaining balance of identified funding to meet exceptional inflationary pressures. This strategy includes budgeted releases from Earmarked Reserves of £6,791k, with a drawdown of £3,834k being included to bridge the gap between funding and expenditure in 2023/24, with a further £1,535k of previously planned releases from COVID-19 funding and the continuation of the funding for the Older Peoples Discount for a further year, leaving a forecast £10,328k of Earmarked Reserves on the balance sheet at the end of the five-year budget strategy.

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17. Savings proposals totalling £45,683k have been developed towards mitigating the emerging expenditure pressures as funding levels are projected to grow at a slower rate than demand for Council Services, with a residual £9,542k budget gap to be mitigated over the period from 2025/26 to 2027/28 should this programme of savings be realised in full. As in previous years, savings proposals for the forthcoming financial year are specific in nature, with medium-term plans structured around wider strategic approaches to transformation of local services. Proposals have been developed within the themes of Service Transformation, Effective Procurement, Managing Demand and Income Generation & Commercialisation, with an overview of specific measures set out within this report.
18. Whilst the Local Authority settlement is still awaited, it is clear that Government Grants and Business Rates income will fail to match prevailing levels of inflation currently and in the medium term and that demand levels for Adult and Children's Social Care provision have shown and will continue to show unrelenting growth. It has therefore proved necessary for the Council to propose a step change increase in Fees & Charges. These have historically been the lowest in London. The proposed increases will narrow the gap with other authorities and will still leave Hillingdon with the one of the lowest levels of Fees & Charges per capita in London.
19. Within Income Generation & Commercialisation savings are a range of proposals relating to levels of income raised from Fees & Charges, which are levied to support a number of specific services rather than the cost of these measures falling wholly on the local Council Taxpayer. The Council has sought to maintain lower levels of charges as part of the broader approach of delivering Sound Financial Management for residents, a strategy which has succeeded with charges per household being amongst the very lowest across London. As a result of the broad range of competing demands on limiting funding, a strategy of moving towards full cost recovery on these charges is set out within this budget.
20. This draft budget outlines £340,003k of proposed capital expenditure – including substantial investment in local infrastructure, a new leisure centre and delivery of significant additional SEND capacity in the borough's schools – of which £59,405k is to be financed through borrowing. Taken together with historic capital spending, this investment will result in the Capital Financing Requirement peaking at £273,015k in 2024/25 and declining thereafter. Of this peak borrowing requirement, £232,870k is expected to necessitate external borrowing, with £40,145k being financed through General Fund reserves and working capital.

Risk Management

21. A fundamental context to the Council's budget strategy are its levels of reserves. The Council holds a combination of General and Earmarked Reserves in order to mitigate the Council's financial position against the risk of unforeseen or exceptional financial shocks, with General Balances held to cover a broad range of risks as set out in the Council's Balances & Reserve Policy that was approved in February 2022 (along with the Council's current budget strategy) which set a range of balances between £20m and £39m, and Earmarked Reserves being

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held to mitigate specific risks, or to fund project and cyclical expenditure (where the cycle is something other than a financial year).

22. The rationale for holding General Balances is set out in the Balances & Reserves Policy, and covers impacts from the general financial climate, including the Council’s own financial standing and that of its residents and local businesses, the risk of inflation and/or interest rate shocks, demography and contact management, the timing of capital receipts and availability of reserve levels. These General Reserves represent a mechanism for the Council to manage shocks, and with the reserve balance forecast to be £26,780k by 31 March 2023 these are within the approved range. For 2022/23, General Reserves stand at 13% of the Council’s budgeted Net Revenue Expenditure, which represents the cost of running Council services before taxation income and Government grants.
23. Earmarked Reserves are held for a number of reasons but are more specific in nature than the risks that General Balances cover, with the Council forecast to hold £18,641k by 31 March 2023. The Council holds Earmarked Reserves for a variety of purposes which include the mitigation of inflation and price risk, smoothing the impact of project related and cyclical commitments spanning financial years, managing expenditure associated with transformation and holding ringfenced/specific funding streams.
24. Based on the approach adopted to generating the Council’s budget strategy, the procedures it follows, and the assumptions included in this report, the budget strategy is deemed to be based on sound forecasting and realistic assumptions that enable the Cabinet to present this position to the public, local businesses and Council members for consideration.
25. As part of the Cabinet’s final budget proposals to Council presented in February 2022, the Corporate Director of Finance will provide assurances around robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves as part of the statutory framework for local authority budget setting. These assurances will be framed with reference to principles and standards included within CIPFA’s Financial Management Code.

Budget Proposals for the Property, Highways & Transport Select Committee

26. Service expenditure will grow due to inflationary pressures, demand-led growth and other corporate items including capital financing costs. The below table sets out the impact of these expenditure movements across the Cabinet Portfolios within the remit of this Select Committee for 2022/23.

Table 4: Service Expenditure Budget Proposals

	2022/23	Inflation	Demand-led Growth	Corporate Items	Savings Proposals	2023/24
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Property, Highways & Transport	10,997	1,528	0	0	(1,727)	10,798

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27. Inflation: Cost pressures of £1,528k are projected against 2022/23 expenditure going into 2023/24, with material uplifts in relation to workforce budgets, contracted expenditure and energy costs. In line with wider MTFE modelling, inflation projections are predicated on CPI being 10% during 2022/23 and 2023/24 before returning to 4% over the remainder of the Council's budget strategy. The exceptional inflationary environment within the national, and global, economy is the largest driving force behind the Council's saving requirement in the short-term, with 2022/23 CPI running above the Council's assumptions at the time of setting the 2022/23 budget, leading to the 2023/24 budget proposals including an element of funding for the 2022/23 uplifts above the budgeted level which are currently being funded from Earmarked Reserves.
28. Demand-Led Growth: There are no demand-led growth items within the remit of this committee.
29. Corporate Items: There are no Corporate Items within the remit of this committee.

Savings Proposals

30. As mentioned above, £20,971k of savings proposals have been incorporated into the draft budget for 2023/24, with £1,727k falling within the remit of this Select Committee. Included within this savings programme are proposals to increase Fees & Charges at a general increase of 30%, representing the unprecedented inflation rates for 2022/23 and 2023/24 and an accelerated catch up of historically low fees and charges compared to neighbouring authorities, with Hillingdon generating £108.61 per resident from this funding stream compared to the Council's three immediate neighbours in West London raising £209.02 per resident.
31. Details of the savings programme propels within the remit of this Select Committee are discussed below.
32. Property, Highways & Transport: A comprehensive service review of Highways and Transport is expected to deliver savings of £150k through the implementation of a staffing restructure and changes to operating models, alongside working with schools to implement a new model of road safety measures, which will reduce costs by £90k. In addition to this, maximising the use of assets is core to the wider transformation programme and projects are underway to review assets across the Borough including a wide-ranging programme for the use of the Civic Centre, which will to reduce running costs by £325k in 2023/24. As part of the review of assets, leases to voluntary sector organisations will be considered with a view to consolidating assets, which is anticipated to deliver £100k. The review of Fees & Charges in this area is projected to yield £356k of additional income.
33. In line with maximising the appropriate funding available, zero-based reviews of Highways (£150k), Street lighting (£210k) and Town Centre (£346k) works will all be undertaken and relevant activities to be funded through Capital, releasing an estimated £706k of savings.

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Capital Proposals

34. Capital investment of £340,003k over the period 2022/23 to 2027/28 has been incorporated into the wider General Fund budget strategy set out within this report, with £193,865k investment in major projects, primarily delivering new or expanded infrastructure, and £137,358k investment in recurrent programme of works, ensuring that existing infrastructure is maintained and improved, with a contingency of £8,780k being set against this programme. An overview of these investment plans is detailed in appendix A8 that accompanied the Consultation Budget Report presented at December Cabinet.

Table 5: General Fund Capital Programme by Cabinet Portfolio

	Major Projects	Programme of Works	General Contingency	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Total Capital Programme	193,865	137,358	8,780	340,003
<u>Of which, Service Expenditure in the remit of this committee:</u>				
Property, Highways & Transport	137,859	100,483	0	238,342

35. Further to the overview presented above, the below section sets out the Capital Proposals within the remit of this Select Committee.
36. **Property, Highways and Transport** – total investment of £238,342k from 2022/23 to 2027/28 includes £34,845k to complete the construction of the new West Drayton Leisure Centre in 2024/25, and £25,035k to develop the new Hillingdon Water Sports facility, replacing facilities dispersed by the HS2 project. Other projects include £20,000k on the redevelopment of the Uxbridge Civic Centre to provide a modern base for Council services and release land for housing delivery, £25,000k investment in initiatives to reduce the borough’s carbon footprint and £14,858k funding for Hillingdon First Limited to deliver high quality homes. In addition, major projects to deliver new libraries in Yiewsley and Northwood as part of wider developments, and a range of new investment in other Council assets have been included in this budget.
37. Complementing major projects investment is £100,483k programme of works spend, including £35,321k for the borough’s roads and footways infrastructure, £21,766k works to improve the fabric of the borough’s existing schools, and £12,974k investment in adaptations for residents through the Disabled Facilities Grant Programme. Other programmes include the cyclical renewal of the Council’s existing asset base, ensuring that this remains fit for purpose.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET: MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL FOECAST 2023/24 - 2027/28,
presented to 15 December 2022 Cabinet Meeting

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