

Cabinet

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2022 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

9 Wiltshire Council's Budget 2022/23

The Leader introduced the report which proposed the 2022/2023 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022/2023 to 2025/2026 that will resource the Council's new Business Plan. The report also set out the Council's Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2029/30, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget 2022/23 and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

The Cabinet received questions submitted by Nick Parry and Colin Gale in relation to this agenda item. A copy of the questions and responses are available to read in agenda supplement 1 on the Council's website [here](#).

Supplementary questions were asked by Mr Gale who commented on the lack of detail in the budget papers in relation to concessions for blue badge holders in light of the forthcoming introduction of car parking charges, the charges for the disposal of waste items at Household Recycling Centres detailed in the budget and the status of Town/Parish election costs in between the normal round of elections. The Leader confirmed that the detail for the three areas listed above would be available in due course and be part of future consultation processes.

The Leader reported that the process undertaken to consult on the Budget was open and transparent. He summarised the budget timetable and confirmed that the budget papers had been discussed in detail with members at their briefing on 18 January 2022, the Financial Planning Task Group on 18 and 21 January 2022 and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 25 January 2022 prior to its consideration by the Cabinet, Group Leaders meetings with the Trade Unions Representatives and Non-Domestic Ratepayers, a further meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Council on 15 February 2022.

In presenting the report, the Leader indicated that whilst managing the impact of the on-going effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on services, the council is forecasting an underspend position for the 2021/22 financial year, putting the Council in a strong position going into 2022/23 with further provision

now being set aside within the Budget Equalisation Reserve to help manage the budget gaps over the MTFs period and also ensuring funds continue to be set aside to mitigate risks that may arise for example latent demand for services.

The Leader reported that the 2022/23 budget will ensure that vital services to the residents, businesses and communities of Wiltshire will continue to be provided during the ongoing pandemic, as well as delivering on the commitments as set out in the new Business Plan. Having sound and sustainable finances is key to the delivery of the Business Plan.

The report recognised the one year nature of the current government funding, the uncertainty of future reform and set out the likely state of the Council's finances beyond 2022/23 with an estimated budget gap in year three (2024/25) of the MTFs.

Cabinet members then had an opportunity to comment more specifically on the impact of the budget proposals for their areas of responsibility. In summing up, the Leader indicated that the budget was designed around the needs of Wiltshire residents, aligned to the Business Plan and enable the Council to remain on a stable and solid financial footing.

Cllr Graham Wright, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, reported that the Committee met on 25 January 2022 to consider the Cabinet report. Robust Scrutiny was undertaken, and the Committee were satisfied with the updates and responses to questions received and supported the proposals in the report. The report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee was published as an agenda Supplement [here](#).

Cllr Pip Ridout, Chair of the Financial Planning Task Group, reported that the Task Group met on 18 and 21 January 2022 to consider the Cabinet report. Many complex questions were raised, and she thanked the Leader and the Corporate Director of Resources (S151 Officer) for summarising the critical issues and for the clarity and transparency of the budget papers.

Cllr Graham Wright commented on arrangements for a lunch club meeting in his ward that he had not been aware of. He asked to be kept informed of meetings of this nature in future. Cllr Jane Davies apologised and confirmed that communication would be improved.

In response to a question from Cllr David Vigar about the budget for Luncheon Clubs, Cllr Jane Davies indicated that a written response would be provided.

Cllr Derek Walters asked about the funding of A350 Melksham Bypass and suggested that investing in improvements to cycling provision and alternative modes of transport. The Leader confirmed that the Council successfully bid for government funding for the bypass. The bypass would divert through traffic away from the centre of Melksham therefore improving the air quality of the town. He also commented on the decarbonising of vehicles and the impact on air quality. Cllr McClelland referred to the A350 Melksham Bypass report considered by Cabinet on 30 November 2021. He explained that this scheme

was a key manifesto commitment which incorporated improvements to cycling and active travel.

Cllr Gavin Grant asked for clarity in relation to Area Board funding, and in particular Grant funding for luncheon clubs. The Leader and Cllr Jane Davies confirmed that funding for Area Boards remained at the same level for the coming year, and luncheon clubs could submit both revenue and health and wellbeing grant applications.

Resolved:

Cabinet is asked to approve:

- a) Approve the updating of the Infrastructure List and allocate CIL funding to include:**
- **£1.378m for the A338 Southern Salisbury Junction Improvements (Exeter Street Roundabout, Harnham Gyrotory and Park Wall Junction)**
 - **£3.154m for the A350 Chippenham Bypass Phases 4 and 5;**
 - **£4.516m for the A350/J17 Capacity Improvements;**
 - **£3.909m for the A350 Melksham Bypass.**

Cabinet recommends to Council:

- b) That a net general fund budget of 2022/23 of £417.703m is approved;**
- c) That the Councils Tax requirement for the Council be set at £311.192m for 2022/23 with an average Band D of £1,638.16, an increase of 91p per week;**
- d) That the Wiltshire Council element of the Council Tax be increased in 2022/23 by the following:**
- i. A 1.99% general increase;**
 - ii. Plus a levy of 1% to be spent solely on Adult Social Care;**
- e) That the Corporate Leadership Team be required to meet the revenue budget targets for each service area as set out in Appendix 1 to this report, for the delivery of Council services in 2022/23;**
- f) Approves the changes in the fees and charges as set out in the report;**

- g) That the Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2029/30 is approved;**
- h) That the Capital Strategy set out in Appendix 9 is approved;**
- i) That the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2022/23 is set at £24.173m;**
- j) That a 4.1% increase is set for social dwelling rents, except for rents currently over the formula rent which will be capped at formula rent as per national guidance;**
- k) All service charges related to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) being increased to cover costs and garage rents increased by 4.1%;**
- l) Endorses the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the forecast budget gap, after the utilisation of the budget equalisation reserve, of £10.705m for the 2024/25 financial year with regular updates to be received on delivery against strategy and addressing the forecast budget gap.**

Reason for Decision:

To enable the Cabinet to recommend to Council a balanced revenue budget for the financial year 2022/23 and to set the level of Council Tax.

To enable effective, transparent decision making and ensure sound financial management as part of the Councils overall control environment.

The Cabinet also sets out the final assumptions being used in the budget for growth, inflation, demand for services, the estimated level of income from sales, fees and charges and the level of income estimated from core funding e.g. council tax, business rates and government grants as well as the level of reserves held and assessed by the Councils Section 151 Officer, as required, to provide future financial resilience.

This provides the Council with a MTFs to deliver on the new business plan priorities and begin to drive long term financial sustainability.