

DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN AND BUDGET FOR 2021/22

REPORT OF: Head of Corporate Resources
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Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: Yes
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance and Performance
13th January 2021

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of these papers is to set out the draft proposals for the Council's Corporate Plan and Budget for 2021/22.

Recommendations

2. The Committee is asked to consider the proposals for 2021/22 set out in the appended report and agree any comments or recommendations that it wishes to make to Cabinet on:
 - (a) **The financial outlook facing the Council given the extent of the Covid-19 pandemic;**
 - (b) **The proposed increase in Council Tax;**
 - (c) **The strategy to use General Reserve to balance the budget over the short term;**
 - (d) **The proposed Capital Programme; and**
 - (e) **The service commentaries and supporting summary budget tables for each business unit.**

Background

3. Each year the Council approves a Corporate Plan and Budget that shows how it will deliver its services and spend its financial resources in the following financial year. The draft proposals for 2021/22 are set out in the appendix to this report. **The Committee will formally consider these proposals at its meeting on 13th January 2021. Please bring these papers to that meeting.**
4. This year, as a consequence of the Covid19 pandemic, the traditional corporate planning process was supplemented with the adoption of a revised corporate plan in September 2020. Members approved the proposed approach of drawing on the general reserve in 2020/21 to ensure services were financed as the Council responded to and planned its recovery from the pandemic. The strategy was also approved for 2021/22. There was, however, an acceptance that this position was not sustainable over the longer term.

5. The corporate plan and budget papers provided with this report therefore follow the strategy of drawing on the general reserve. The Committee should note though that new financial tools are being announced and deployed by the Chancellor as we respond to the pandemic, and the position as set out within the papers is likely to have changed by the time the budget is presented to Council in March. All changes will be reported to this Committee, verbally if necessary, and then to Cabinet and Council as circumstances demand.
6. The papers presented here contain the latest information as announced within the Provisional Settlement of December 2020.

Consideration by Members

7. As Members of this Committee are aware the Council has a clear and robust process for Member scrutiny of the draft Corporate Plan and Budget. The publication of this report on 18th December 2020 marked the start of the six week consultation period. The Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance and Performance has until the end of that period to submit its comments on the proposals to Cabinet, which will review them when they meet on 8th February 2021.
8. The Corporate Plan and Budget for 2021/22, with any necessary revisions, will then be submitted for approval by Council at its meeting on 3rd March 2021, in the usual way. The final version will be published on the Council's website.

Structure of the Report

9. The Appendix consists of three sections. Section 1 provides an overall summary and the financial outlook facing the Council, including the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the proposed service changes and their financial implications. Section 2 includes a brief overview for each service area and a summary budget table for each business unit. Section 3 contains the draft Capital Programme.
10. Members wishing to seek clarification about, or further information on, the proposals within the draft Corporate Plan and Budget or the wider financial outlook are encouraged to contact the relevant Head of Service and arrange an informal discussion ahead of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance and Performance.

Financial Implications

11. The Council sets its service and financial plans and Council Tax levels each year. This report sets out the financial outlook faced by the Council in 2021/22 and summarises the four-year position in the MTFP. If supported, the range of service proposals in the appendix would enable Members to approve a balanced budget.
12. Please note, as with any set of Corporate Plan and Budget proposals, if Members are not supportive of any particular element(s) of the package, alternative item(s) achieving at least the same financial impact must be agreed as replacements to ensure the budget is in balance.

Risk Management Implications

13. The strategic risks associated with the delivery of the proposals within this Corporate Plan will be considered in full in the usual way as part of the Council's annual strategic risk management process, which identifies key risk areas along with contingency and mitigation plans to alleviate them. These will be reported to this Committee within the usual annual cycle.

Equalities Implications

14. As in previous years the various proposals contained within this report would be subject to equalities impact assessments where this is appropriate. The purpose of the assessment is to determine whether it is likely that there would be a negative impact on any protected groups as a result of any service changes and if so to consider whether these can be mitigated or under the proposal should be changed or dropped.

Background Papers

- Report to Council on Revised Corporate Plan and Budget 2020/21 – 30 September 2020
- Report to Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance and Performance on the Draft Corporate Plan and Budget 2021/22 consultation process – 11 November 2020