

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 13 SEPTEMBER 2021

PART I – DELEGATED

10. CORPORATE FRAMEWORK, SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2022- 2025 (DoF)

1 Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek agreement to the process whereby the Council will determine its three-year medium-term Corporate Framework for 2022-2025, the related service plans, and the allocation of financial resources to achieve them.

2 Details

Introduction

2.1 Each year the Council is required to set a realistic, achievable in-year budget and indicative budgets for the following two years. Overall responsibility for the budget setting process is the responsibility of the Director of Finance. (shared services)

2.2 The process for agreeing the strategic, service and financial plans relies upon the principles that:

- The Policy and Resources Committee concentrates at a strategic level on how the Council allocates resources between its key objectives, the level of council tax to be set, and the financial reserves to be held.
- Service committees formulate recommendations to the Policy and Resources Committee on the provision and level of services within their remit and validate the details of the budget to achieve this.
- Officers prepare savings & growth proposals for consideration by the service committees.

Corporate Framework

2.3 The Council adopted its current three-year Corporate Framework (which used to be known as the Strategic Plan) for the period 2020-2023 on 23 February 2021). This was prepared taking into account consultation on priorities with the Local Strategic Partnership and the public and national priorities. The themes and objectives within the plan are:

- Housing and Thriving Communities
 - We will work on a local plan to deliver sufficient housing and adopt that plan by 2023
 - Through our joint ventures and partnerships we will take all available practicable action to increase the supply of affordable homes in the district
 - We will seek to increase the number of Green Flag accredited parks and open spaces
 - We will work towards reducing inequalities, prevent homelessness and encourage healthy lifestyles
 - We will continue to work with partners to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour and secure investment in priority interventions
- Sustainable Environment
 - We will produce and deliver a Climate Change Strategy and action plan
 - We will continue to improve the energy efficiency of the council's buildings
 - We will deliver and implement a Cycling and Walking Strategy

- We will seek to maintain our position as the highest recycling authority in Hertfordshire
- Successful Economy
 - We will undertake a review of the council's role in relation to the economy and agree an economic strategy
 - We will continue to participate in the Hertfordshire Growth Board and South West Herts Partnership and engage the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to support the economy
 - Three Rivers will be recognised as a great place to do business
 - We will continue to improve our relationship with the local business community
 - We will continue to support Visit Herts and promote Three Rivers as the home of the internationally significant Warner Bros Studios
- High Performing, Financially Independent Council
 - We will generate enough income to continue to provide services for the district
 - We will develop and deliver an improved Property Investment Strategy to maximise income from our assets and support the Commercial Strategy
 - We will progress our Customer Experience Strategy that provides a range of contact channels for customers and sets out corporate expectations of how they should be treated
 - We will produce an Organisational Development Strategy to support the council in delivering its priorities and objectives

2.4 The Corporate Framework consists of two elements, noted below. For each year of the Framework we will produce a shorter Action Plan, for our customers, to tell them what they can expect us to achieve in that year.

- an introduction that outlines the purpose of the plan and the internal and external influences that have been taken into account during the plan's development, and
- a representation of each of the themes with corresponding objectives

Service Plans

2.5 Officers will prepare service plans based on the Corporate Framework. These are currently scheduled to be presented to committees in November. The plans will include:-

- Summary of the latest approved budgets
- Human Resource Management
- Organisational Chart
- Performance Management including performance indicators.
- Project Management
- Contracts
- Risk assessment

Financial Plan - Revenue

- 2.6 The Local Government and Finance Act 2012 brought in fundamental changes to the way in which local government is financed. These changes are designed to stimulate growth but they also transfer more financial risk from central government to local government.
- 2.9 With Government funding reduced and an increasing reliance on generating additional business rates income, then it becomes important for the Council to manage its budgets prudently and services need to continually investigate new initiatives to generate additional sustainable revenue income whilst also looking to realise opportunities to reduce costs.
- 2.10 The Council prepares and monitors a rolling three-year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) consisting of a working budget for the current year and indicative budgets for the following years. This contains budget estimates calculated at a detailed level. The latest budget monitoring report (at end of June – Period 3) is elsewhere on this agenda.
- 2.11 Officers will convert the previous indicative budget for 2022/23 into a detailed plan. They will also add a ‘new’ third year indicative budget to complete the three-year plan for 2022/23 to 2024/25. **Appendix 1** details the assumptions to be used in preparing these detailed budget figures.
- 2.12 Current plans include annual council tax increases of £5.00 for a Band D equivalent in each year of the MTFP.
- 2.13 In determining a budget strategy, the Committee is asked to consider the following financial objectives:-
- a) if any savings already factored into the three-year medium term financial plan are unlikely to be achieved, then equivalent savings must be identified;
 - b) that the Council should aim to balance its budget over the medium term whilst retaining prudent general fund balances of around £2m.
 - c) that any proposals for growth, including those to pump-prime initiatives in the draft strategic plan, should (in the first instance) be matched in service plans by equivalent savings (preferably savings that do not impact on the level of service provided). The scheme used to prioritise revenue and capital growth is shown at **Appendix 2**.

Capital Investment Programme

- 2.14 The budget monitoring reports provide the current position on progress against the 2021/22 capital investment programme and the resources available for future investment.
- 2.15 Officers will carry out option appraisals on the future capital investment schemes. It is proposed to use the method of prioritising schemes that was applied last year.
- 2.16 Officers should note that schemes that are deemed to be as ‘invest to save’ are likely to be regarded more favourably than those requiring growth in revenue expenditure.
- 2.17 In accordance with the Protocol on Member / Officer Relations, briefings on the strategic, service or financial plans can be requested by party groups.

Budget Consultation

- 2.18 Members are asked to consider whether the Council wishes to carry out any budget consultation, and if so, what form it should take.

Timetable

- 2.19 Attached at **Appendix 3** is the draft timetable. The Strategic and Financial Plans for 2022-2025 will be recommended for adoption to Council on 22 February 2022 by the Policy & Resources Committee resulting from its meeting on 24 January 2022. Final service plans will be approved in March 2022.

3. Options/Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The recommendation, if accepted, allows the planning process to commence.

4. Policy/Budget Implications

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.
- 4.2 The recommendations in this report do not relate to the achievement of any performance indicators.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no changes to the budget or the savings targets already agreed by Members as a result of this report.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council must set its budget before 11 March 2022 in accordance with Section 32 (10) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- 6.2 The Council's Chief Financial Officer (Shared Director of Finance) has a statutory duty to report to the Council if it is likely to incur expenditure that is unlawful or likely to exceed its resources.
- 6.3 The Localism Act includes powers to allow local residents to veto through a referendum council tax rises that propose to exceed the limit imposed by Central Government.

7. Equal Opportunities Implications

- 7.1 Relevance Test

| | |
|---|----|
| Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact? <i>There is no proposed change to current policy.</i> | No |
|---|----|

| | |
|---|-----|
| Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact? | No |
| Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment as required? | N/A |

8. Staffing Implications

- 8.1 Staff and their representatives will be kept fully aware of the consequences of this year's planning process as it evolves.

9. Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website Implications

9.1 None specific.

10. Risk and Health and Safety Implications

10.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

| Nature of Risk | Consequence | Suggested Control Measures | Response (tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer) | Risk Rating (combination of likelihood and impact) |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| Failure to agree the Corporate Framework and Service Plans for implementation from 1 April 2022 and failure to meet statutory deadline for setting a legal budget | The Council does not have a Corporate Framework for 2022/23 and does not legally set a budget | Revert to previous Corporate Framework and MTFP | Tolerate | 4 |

10.2 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

10.3 In the officers' opinion none of the risks above, were they to come about, would not prejudice the achievement of the existing Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

11. Recommendation

11.1 That the assumptions to use in preparing the detailed budgets for the period shown in Appendix 1 be agreed.

11.2 That the scheme used to prioritise revenue & capital growth shown in Appendix 2 be agreed.

11.3 That the draft timetable at Appendix 3 be agreed.

11.4 That the format of any budget consultation if agreed be approved by the Director of Finance in consultation with the Lead Member for Resources.

Report prepared by:
Nigel Pollard – Section Head Financial Planning

Data Quality

Data sources: Financial Management system

Data checked by: Alison Scott – Director of Finance

Data rating:

| | | |
|---|------|--|
| 1 | Poor | |
|---|------|--|

| | | |
|---|------------|---|
| 2 | Sufficient | |
| 3 | High | ✓ |

Background Papers

Medium Term Financial Plan 2021-2024

APPENDICES

- 1 Assumptions to be used in preparing budgets
2. Scheme for Prioritising Revenue Growth, Savings and Capital Bids
3. Timetable

ASSUMPTIONS TO BE USED IN PREPARING BUDGETS

The following assumptions will be made in preparing the detailed estimates for the three-year medium-term financial plan.

Employee Costs

A 1% year on year increase has been assumed however, this is subject to change depending on any update before for final budget setting. A 1% increase is approx. equivalent to an additional budget pressure of £130k. The Council also allows for a 1% vacancy provision.

The employers' pension contributions and national insurance contributions will also be built into the financial projections.

Parish Precepts

This is assumed to increase by 3%.

Other Cost Inflation - Supplies & Services

As in past years, a cash freeze will be applied to detailed budgets unless there is a contractual agreement (e.g. in fuel prices) to the contrary or there are known increases or demographic pressures – i.e.: unavoidable growth.

Fees & Charges

With RPI expected to be averaged at 2.7% for 2022, an increase of **3%** will be factored into the forecast for all fees and charges that are not set by statute. Heads of Service will be asked to review increases in the light of their effect on demand, affordability and vulnerability. Any request to not increase discretionary fees and charges must be supported by a growth bid.

SCHEME FOR PRIORITISING REVENUE GROWTH, SAVINGS AND CAPITAL BIDS

| Criteria | Revenue Growth | | Savings | | Capital Bids | |
|--|----------------|--|---------|---|--------------|--|
| | Score | Description | Score | Description | Score | Description |
| Measure of Quality of Service | 3 | Maintaining Current Service | 3 | Reducing External Service | 3 | Maintaining Current Service |
| | 6 | Improved Internal Service | 6 | Reducing Internal Service | 6 | Improved Internal Service |
| | 9 | Improved External Service | 9 | Maintaining Current Service | 9 | Improved External Service |
| Customer Impact / Quantity of Service | 3 | Affects < 10% of residents | 3 | Affects all residents | 3 | Affects < 10% of residents |
| | 6 | Affects < 50% of residents | 6 | Affects < 50% of residents | 6 | Affects < 50% of residents |
| | 9 | Affects all residents | 9 | Affects < 10% of residents | 9 | Affects all residents |
| Links to Strategic Plan | 2 | Contributes to General Theme | 2 | Contributes to Specific Objective | 2 | Contributes to General Theme |
| | 4 | Contributes to General Aim | 4 | Contributes to General Aim | 4 | Contributes to General Aim |
| | 6 | Contributes to Specific Objective | 6 | Contributes to General Theme | 6 | Contributes to Specific Objective |
| Impact on Partners (as defined in the Community Strategy) | 1 | No impact on partner agencies or joint priorities | 1 | Impacts several partners / priorities | 1 | No impact on partner agencies or joint priorities |
| | 2 | Impacts on 1 partner agency / priority | 2 | Impacts on 1 partner agency / priority | 2 | Impacts on 1 partner agency / priority |
| | 3 | Impacts several partners / priorities | 3 | No impact on partner agencies or joint priorities | 3 | Impacts several partners / priorities |
| Partnership Funding | 1 | No Partnership Funding | 1 | Fully Funded by Partners | 1 | No Partnership Funding |
| | 2 | Partly Funded by Partners | 2 | Partly Funded by Partners | 2 | Partly Funded by Partners |
| | 3 | Fully Funded by Partners | 3 | No Partnership Funding | 3 | Fully Funded by Partners |
| Equalities | 1 | No impact on vulnerable groups | 1 | Impacts several vulnerable groups | 1 | No impact on vulnerable groups |
| | 2 | Impacts on one vulnerable group | 2 | Impacts on one vulnerable group | 2 | Impacts on one vulnerable group |
| | 3 | Impacts several vulnerable groups | 3 | No impact on vulnerable groups | 3 | Impacts on several vulnerable groups |
| Asset Management | 1 | Not related to asset maintenance | 1 | Saving means backlog repair remains | 1 | Not related to asset maintenance |
| | 2 | Allowing asset to continue in use | 2 | Allowing asset to continue in use | 2 | Allowing asset to continue in use |
| | 3 | Expenditure required to bring asset up to standard enabling service to continue (i.e. an element of 'backlog' repair exists) | 3 | Not related to asset maintenance | 3 | Expenditure required to bring asset up to standard enabling service to continue (i.e. an element of 'backlog' repair exists) |

| Criteria | Revenue Growth | | Savings | | Capital Bids | |
|---|----------------|------------------------------|--|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Score | Description | Score | Description | Score | Description |
| Statutory/Discretionary Service | 1 | Entirely Discretionary | 1 | Entirely Statutory | 1 | Entirely Discretionary |
| | 2 | Partly Statutory | 2 | Partly Statutory | 2 | Partly Statutory |
| | 3 | Entirely Statutory | 3 | Entirely Discretionary | 3 | Entirely Statutory |
| Contractually Committed | 1 | No Commitment | When proposing a saving, the net saving, i.e. the saving after any costs of withdrawing from a contract should be used | 1 | No Commitment | |
| | 2 | Moral Obligation (e.g. SLA) | | 2 | Moral Obligation (e.g. SLA) | |
| | 3 | Contractually Committed | | 3 | Contractually Committed | |
| Financial Implications | | | | | 1 | Revenue Cost |
| | | | | | 2 | Revenue Neutral |
| | | | | | 3 | Revenue Saving |
| Invest to Save | 6 | Return on Investment in 1 Yr | | | 6 | Return on Investment in 1 Yr |
| Will your growth PID repay the original capital investment? | 4 | Return on Investment in 3 Yr | | | 4 | Return on Investment in 3 Yr |
| | 2 | Return on Investment in 5 Yr | | | 2 | Return on Investment in 5 Yr |

TIMETABLE – CORPORATE FRAMEWORK, SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2022-25

APPENDIX 3

| Date | Responsibility | Details |
|---------------|--|--|
| 13-Sep-21 | Policy & Resources Committee | 2021/22 Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring report |
| 01-Oct-21 | PIDs for Revenue and Capital growth items closes | All PIDS added to group share folder by this date |
| w/c 04-Oct-21 | PID scoring meeting | PID scores to go to Committees during November |
| 19-Oct-21 | Draft Service Plans to CMT | Draft service plans considered by CMT |
| 19 Oct-21 | Council | Recommendation from P&R 13 September 2021 |
| 01-Nov-21 | Policy and Resources Committee | Review draft service plans for 2022-2025. 2021/22 Quarter 2 Performance report. Budget Management report (Quarter 2). PIDs |
| 16-Nov-21 | Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development Committee | |
| 24-Nov-21 | Leisure, Environment and Community Committee | |
| 14-Dec-21 | Council | 2022/23 Council Tax base agreed |
| 24-Jan-22 | Policy and Resources Committee | Draft 2022-2025 Medium Term Financial Plan |
| 22-Feb-22 | Council | 2022-2025 Medium Term Financial Plan approved |
| 22-Feb-21 | Council Tax Setting Committee | Council Tax for 2022/23 approved including Parishes, HCC and Police |
| 14-Mar -22 | Policy and Resources Committee | Final Service Plans |
| 16-Mar-22 | Leisure, Environment and Community Committee | |
| 22-Mar-22 | Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development Committee | |
| 17- May-22 | Council | |