

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – TUESDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2019

Title of report	GENERAL FUND AND SPECIAL EXPENSES REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2019/20
Key Decision	a) Financial Yes b) Community Yes
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Purpose of report	For Cabinet to agree 2019/20 General Fund and Special Expenses revenue budget proposals for recommendation to Council on 26 February 2019.
Reason for Decision	To enable the Council to set a balanced budget for 2019/20 as required by statute.
Council Priorities	The budget assists the Council to achieve all its priorities.
Implications: Financial/Staff Link to relevant CAT Risk Management Equalities Impact Screening Human Rights Transformational Government	As contained in the report. The budget is relevant to all Corporate Action Teams (CATs). The budget will be monitored throughout the year to ensure savings are achieved and services delivered as planned. The requirement for equalities impact screening and assessments is being assessed during the consultations and details if required will be provided as part of the management responses. None identified. Not applicable.

Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory
Comments of Deputy Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory
Consultees	Corporate Leadership Team 21 November 2018 Strategy Group 27 November 2018 Cabinet 11 December 2018 Policy Development Group, 9 January 2019 Trade Unions Federation of Small Businesses Parish and Town Councils
Background papers	None.
Recommendations	<p>THAT CABINET:</p> <p>1. NOTES THE ASSURANCE STATEMENT BY THE S151 OFFICER;</p> <p>THAT CABINET RECOMMENDS TO FULL COUNCIL THAT IT:</p> <p>2. APPROVES THE GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2019/20 AS SUMMARISED IN APPENDIX B</p> <p>3. APPROVES THE SPECIAL EXPENSES REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2019/20 AS SUMMARISED IN APPENDIX C</p> <p>4. FREEZES THE DISTRICT'S COUNCIL TAX IN 2019/20</p> <p>5. REQUIRES BUDGETED SURPLUS INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE IN 2019/20 TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE SELF SUFFICIENCY RESERVE</p>

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The draft General Fund budget proposals for 2019/20 were considered and approved for consultation by Cabinet on 11 December 2018. The reports were subsequently shared with a number of groups, including the Policy Development Group on 9 January 2019. An extract of the minutes from the Policy Development Group meeting which includes comments made by members in respect of the proposals are included in Appendix D for Cabinet consideration.
- 1.2 This report summarises any changes made since the last Cabinet report and presents the responses to the budget consultation so that any final recommendations can be made to Council on 26 February 2019.

- 1.3 The Council's funding has been forecast in the context of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement and continuation of the Governments four year settlement as announced on 13 December 2018.
- 1.4 Building on the new Finance Business Partnering service delivery of the Finance service, the approach to developing expenditure and locally generated income budgets has included a greater level of engagement with budget holders and a focus on more sophisticated estimates taken in order to reduce variance between budgeted and outturn position. This new approach has also projected the revenue position for 2020/21 to 2023/24 for indicative purposes only and for informing the review of the projections of the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 1.5 Members will be aware that the decision to outsource the Council's Hermitage and Hood Park leisure centre facilities and creation of a new facility and subsequent closure of the Hermitage centre was approved by Council on 21 November 2017. The procurement exercise to secure an operator to manage the council's existing leisure centres and to build a new facility and subsequently close the Hermitage facility has now concluded with a preferred bidder selected. The full details of the procurement process and successful bidder can be found in a separate report on the agenda for Cabinet on 5 February 2019. The budgetary forecasts in relation to the cost of the leisure centres has been based on the contracted revenue costs associated with running the leisure centres until transfer date, the ongoing costs that will be incurred post outsourcing date (but that will cease later in the year or in the following year), and the anticipated reduction in corporate support overheads that will be achieved by reviewing the council's internal support functions. The council is required to make a management fee payment to the operator in the first three years of the contract before the arrangement transfers to one which the council benefits from a payment from the operator for the remainder of the contract. The management fee payable to the operator is included in the budget is now based on the preferred supplier.
- 1.6 As a result of Cabinet decision to apply for VAT exemption on the provision of sporting goods and services, the council is estimated to receive in the region of £1m in reclaimed VAT. The details of this reclaim and the intended use is covered in more detail in a separate report on this agenda. The final budget has been updated to include assumptions around the amount of reclaimed VAT and expenditure of this.
- 1.7 The council, along with all counterparties in respect of Business Rates in Leicester and Leicestershire, entered a bid to undertake in a 1 year pilot of 75% business rate retention. The successful Leicestershire bid was announced as part of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement on 13 December. At the time of developing the bid, it was projected that Leicestershire could retain an additional £13.8m. At the time of writing this report, work is ongoing to finalise the council's own projections in respect of business rates in 2019/20 and similarly this is the same for all other Leicestershire authorities. However, it is predicted that the additional funds retained will exceed £13.8m. The budgeted position in respect of business rates for the council includes a provisional share of the additional rates pending agreement of the allocations between all District parties. Expenditure in line with the bid principles of support financial sustainability and infrastructure growth has also been included on this basis.
- 1.8 The Council's General Fund financial position is broadly made up of two elements and this report presents budgetary changes within this context:

1.8.1 Net revenue expenditure - this includes all expenditure incurred net of income generated through fees and charges and other income (including additional grants authorities apply for, which are not part of central government funding) and financing costs, broadly made up of investment income, interest charged in respect of loans and the minimum revenue provision charge made in respect of unsupported borrowing to fund capital expenditure; and

1.8.2 Funding - The main sources of funding available to finance revenue expenditure which include locally retained Business Rates, Council Tax, New Homes Bonus and Revenue Support Grant.

1.9 The approved 2019/20 budget will undergo regular monitoring and scrutiny during the financial year through quarterly performance monitoring and finance clinics, so that when they arise any variances can be identified at an early stage and remedial action taken to deal with them where necessary.

2.0 GENERAL FUND 2018/19 – PROJECTED OUTTURN

2.1 The third quarter Performance Report is due to be considered by Cabinet in April and will present outturn projections for the current year. A surplus of £1.1m is forecast compared to the original budget of £299k. A number of favourable movements have contributed to this position including an increase in the anticipated level of business rates (£190k) and salary savings. Full details of the main variances to Quarter 2 can be found in the Quarter 2 Performance Management Report presented to Cabinet on the 11 December 2018. A full update in respect of further variances will be presented as part of the forthcoming Quarter 3 report due to be presented in April 2019.

2.2 As part of the setting of the annual budget on 27 February 2018, the council committed to transferring the surplus income over expenditure in 2018/19 to the Self-Sufficiency reserve. The Self-Sufficiency Reserve remains at £2.76m and there has been no expenditure against the reserve since it was created. As part of the Journey to Self-Sufficiency Programme and development of the council's Commercial Strategy, members will be presented with proposals to utilise this fund for investing in income generating opportunities or delivering savings.

2.3 The forecast outturn position presented as part of Appendix B is based on the forecast outturn at period 9.

3.0 2019/20 NET REVENUE EXPENDITURE PROPOSALS

3.1 The Councils net revenue expenditure position is affected by three main elements which include: the revenue expenditure in relation to the provision of services net of income generated through fees and charges and other income (including additional grants authorities apply for, which are not part of central government funding); and financing costs, broadly made up of investment income, interest charged in respect of loans and the minimum revenue provision charge made in respect of unsupported borrowing to fund capital expenditure.

3.2 For 2019/20, there has been an increase in net revenue expenditure for 2019/20 compared to 2018/19 of £1.5m, made up of budgetary pressures (increased expenditure or reduced income) and savings (increased income or reduced expenditure).

3.3 Budget proposals presented in this report have been considered and approved by the Corporate Leadership Team and are categorised as either:

3.3.1 Savings Challenge - Savings put forward as part of the organisational wide savings challenge to achieve savings of 2.5% (or £300k) in the net cost of delivering each General Fund service, including the net position of changes under the de-minimus level of £5k. In total, the budget holders put forward proposals with a combined value of £270k saving. De-minimus budget movements across the General Fund totalled a saving of £264k, taking the total reduction in the net cost of service to £534k.

3.3.2 Staffing increases – which include the cost of pay award, pension increases and incremental salary progression for 2019/20. The additional cost in 2019/20 of staffing is £396k.

3.3.3 Cost Pressure – additional budget provision to cover unavoidable cost pressures. The total of these is £353k and a breakdown is included in Appendix A.

3.3.4 Service Development – additional budget provision to cover enhancement of the service. The total value of service development proposals is £1.2m.

3.4 Since presentation of the draft budget to Cabinet in December, the following changes have been made:

Cost Pressures

3.4.1 Revenues and Benefits

Following the production of the draft budget by the Revenues and Benefits Partnership Management Board, an additional partner contribution is required of £26k by the council compared to the draft budget.

Since the draft budget, grant reductions have also been confirmed resulting in additional cost pressures:

- The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) have confirmed the Administration Subsidy Grant for 2019/20 and there is a reduction of £24k compared to 2018/19.
- There is also an estimated reduction in the Local Council Tax Scheme (LCTS) Admin Subsidy payable by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) of £6k.

3.4.2 Finance – Additional Licence Fees

The software provider of the council's finance system increased the licence fees from October 2018. The draft budget only included the increase for 6 months, an additional £13k has been included in the final budget to reflect the full year increase.

3.4.3 Brexit Contingency

A £10k one-off contingency has been included within the budget to cover any additional costs to the council in the preparation of the UK's exit from the European Union.

3.4.4 **Insurance**

The draft budget for insurance provision did not reflect the annual price increase or to the transfer of the leisure centres from May 2019. The net effect is an increase of budget of £9k.

3.4.5 **Net Financing Costs**

Further analysis undertaken since the December Cabinet report has identified that the net financing costs for 2019/20 will represent an additional cost of £12k, which represents an extra £3k from the draft budget presented.

Service Developments

3.4.6 **Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP)**

A budget provision of £450k for the purposes of match funding up to two LLEP bids to support local town centres. For example, some of this funding could be utilised to support Kegworth in the redesign of the town centre following the bypass works.

3.4.7 **Financial Sustainability and Infrastructure**

As detailed in paragraph 1.7, the council is taking part in a 1 year pilot of 75% retention of business rates. An expenditure budget of £550k has been included within the final budget to cover costs associated with activities that meet the definitions of 'financial sustainability and infrastructure', in line with the bid principles of the Leicestershire business rate pilot bid. A corresponding increase in business rate income has also been factored in as per 4.4 below and as such this has a nil impact on the budget.

Other Changes Affecting Net Cost of Services

3.4.8 **Staffing**

Since the December budget an additional £45k of staffing costs have been identified, of which £39k relates to the change in policy that requires additional holiday pay to be paid to staff who undertake paid overtime.

3.4.9 **Leisure**

As detailed in paragraph 1.5, the council now has the details of the management fee payable to the preferred supplier. An additional £206k has been included in the final budget to reflect the actual fee payable in 2019/20. The full details of the procurement process and successful bidder can be found in a separate report on the agenda for Cabinet on 5 February 2019.

3.4.10 **VAT Reclaim**

As detailed in paragraph 1.6, the council is estimated to receive in the region of £1m in reclaimed VAT. The details of this reclaim and the intended use is covered in more detail in a separate report on this agenda. The final budget has been updated to include assumptions around the amount of reclaimed VAT and expenditure of this. This has a nil impact on the budget.

3.4.11 **De-minimus service developments**

Additional service developments and budgetary pressures of £5k and below, identified following the December Cabinet meeting, totalling £21k.

3.5 A full breakdown of proposals showing the movement from the 2018/19 budgeted position can be found in Appendix A.

4.0 2019/20 FUNDING

4.1 The provisional local government finance settlement was announced on 13 December 2018 and confirmed the level New Homes Bonus, Revenue Support Grant and the tariff and levy charges against business rates to be retained by the Council. As detailed in paragraph 1.7 the settlement also included the successful outcome of the Leicestershire-wide bid to become a Business Rate pilot. Budgetary estimates below are therefore based on the 4 year settlement and other assumptions as detailed below.

4.2 For 2019/20 there is an estimated increase in total funding of £1.4m.

4.3 The Council will receive nil Revenue Support Grant in 2019/20 as per the 4 year settlement.

4.4 Forecast Business Rates income for 2019/20 has been estimated based on the period 9 performance of Business Rates plus assumptions around the anticipated level of growth in the district in 2019/20 based on an assessment of commercial developments underway. The Council has now submitted its final projections of Business Rates for 2019/20 to the Government and this information has been used to determine the final budget position. As per paragraph 3.4.7 above, an indicative £550k share of the circa £13.8m additional rates to be retained in Leicestershire to cover 'Financial Sustainability and Infrastructure' demands has also been included. In addition, a marginal gain of £30k compared to original forecasts is also included. The budgeted position for Business Rates in 2019/20 therefore now stands at £6.4m.

4.5 The Council is not planning to increase the District's share of the Council Tax in 2019/20. This will be the tenth year without an increase. The net income foregone by not increasing council tax for 2019/20 from its 2018/19 level is £168k. The cumulative loss of income as a result of this policy from 2010/11 to 2019/20 will be £8.5m and the cumulative average saving to residents of £286 over the ten years. The budgeted level of Council tax income now been assessed on the approved council tax base which includes the level of anticipated housing growth in 2019/20 and a non-collection rate of 2%. This has resulted in an additional £45k worth of council tax income in addition to the £86k projected as part of the draft budget. The total increase of £131k therefore takes the council tax budget from £5.2m for the 2018/19 year to £5.3m for the 2019/20 year.

4.6 The Council Tax Collection Fund is monitored throughout the year and the forecast income will be available from the fund towards next year's budget. The budget for 2019/20 has reduced by £199k from £289k to £90k. This is a favourable change of £26k compared to the draft budget submitted to Cabinet in December 2018. This step-change in anticipated Collection Fund surplus is as a result of the council more accurately predicting its housing growth in year which has reduced the effect of a surplus received a year in arrears.

4.7 The level of New Homes Bonus for next year is determined by the Council Tax Base report (CTB1) which was completed and returned to Central Government in October. The Government had previously announced that it may increase the national baseline for housing growth of 0.4% of council tax base (weighted by band), below which the Bonus will not be paid. As a result, it had been assumed as part of the council's draft budget that

the baseline will be increased to 0.6% for 2019/20. The provisional settlement confirmed that the baseline would be maintained at 0.4% and therefore there is an additional £72k in addition to the increase of £91k in New Homes Bonus funding in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19. The total budget for 2019/20 therefore stands at £3.1m compared to £2.9m in 2018/19.

5.0 2019/20 BUDGET POSITION

5.1 Given the proposals in respect of net revenue expenditure and funding forecasts as detailed above, the predicted surplus and contribution to General Fund reserves for 2019/20 is £161k. Subject to 2018/19 outturn this surplus position will take the Self-Sufficiency Reserve from an estimated £3.9m at 31 March 2019 (as per paragraph 2.1), to £4m at 31 March 2020, assuming there is no spend against this reserve.

5.2 The draft Budget Summary for 2019/20 can be found in Appendix B.

6.0 SPECIAL EXPENSES

6.1 The forecast outturn for 2018/19 Special Expenses forecast outturn remains at £527k net expenditure as per the approved budget. However, the contribution to/from reserves has changed from a contribution to reserves of £13k to a contribution from reserves of £14k, a net effect of £27k. Further information to available in the Finance Update reports to the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party.

6.2 For 2019/20, the expenditure budget has increased by £23k as a result of service management increases (£5k), grounds maintenance increases (£16k) which includes an additional site at Lillehammer drive, events (£2k), motor vehicle activated signs (£3k) and a reduction in cemetery income (£7k), partly offset by reduced general repairs and operational purchases budgets for Coalville park and recreation grounds (-£10k).

7.0 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

7.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019-2024 (MTFS) is presented to members as a separate agenda item at this meeting for approval.

7.2 The MTFS has been updated following the announcement of the provisional local government settlement for 2019/20 and the business rates pilot. The MTFS provides the potential likely impact of the outcome of the Fair Funding Review and the 75% business rates retention scheme, alongside proposals to increase the self-sufficiency by reducing reliance on government grants in the future.

7.3 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018 – 2023 was approved by Cabinet in February 2018. At that time, the projected deficit on the General Fund arising over the 5 year period was £5.4m. Following the review in July 2018, this deficit reduced to £4.6m.

7.4 Given the expenditure proposals and assumptions around funding presented as part of this report, the forecast deficit between 2019-2024 is now £5.2m. As detailed in paragraph 5.1 above, the Self-Sufficiency reserve is forecast to stand at £4m as at March 2020.

7.5 Full details of the full assumptions used to determine this forecast can be found in the Medium Term Financial Strategy report on the same agenda as this report.

8.0 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The deadline for responses to the consultation from trade unions, Town and Parish Councils and the Federation of Small Businesses is the 4 February. At the time of writing the report, no responses have been received, and any responses received by the deadline will be brought as an additional paper to the meeting.
- 8.2 The Cabinet paper of the 11 December, containing the draft budget proposals were presented to the Policy and Development Group on 9 January 2019. The comments of the Policy Development Group are included in an extract of the draft minutes attached at Appendix D.

9.0 ROBUSTNESS OF ESTIMATES AND ADEQUACY OF RESERVES

- 9.1 The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council's Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) to comment on the robustness of the estimates and also on the adequacy of the proposed reserves. Members must have regard to these comments when making a decision on the budget proposals for the forthcoming year.
- 9.2 The Section 151 Officer considers that the estimates which form the General Fund budget are robust and prudent, and the proposals are deliverable for 2019/20.
- 9.3 The Section 151 Officer also considers that the overall level of General Fund reserves is adequate for 2019/20.
- 9.4 The Section 151 Officer notes the business, housing and population growth in the district and the need for the future increased expenditure arising from future growth to be funded.
- 9.5 By 2020, all local authorities will have faced a reduction to core funding from the Government and the Section 151 Officer is closely monitoring the progress of the Fair Funding Review, the government's departmental Spending Review and the redesign of the national Business Rate Retention System. The council's current projections within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) make prudent and robust assumptions around the likely level of future funding in light of these government-led reviews.
- 9.6 The updated MTFS presents a total deficit between 2019/20 and 2023/24 of £5.2m. By March 2020, the council's Self-Sufficiency reserve is forecast to stand at £4m, subject to funding future commercial initiatives presented to Cabinet for approval.
- 9.7 The MTFS will be reviewed in July 2019 and reported to Cabinet, by which time we will have further clarity surrounding the likely funding position from 2020 and will be able to present further recommendations to safeguard the council's future financial position on an ongoing basis.

Appendix A

Budget Proposals

Savings Challenge

Proposal Title	Amount	One-off / Ongoing
External Audit Fees - Annual Accounts - reduction in annual external audit fees payable, an overall saving of 23%	-£6,618	Ongoing
External Audit Fees - Annual External Grants Audit - reduction in annual external audit fees payable in relation to grant claims, an overall saving of 47%	-£7,180	Ongoing
ICT Licences - reduction in the Microsoft licences payable less increases for Skype licences and new telephony and unified communications platform	-£22,418	Ongoing
Internal Audit staffing costs - reduction of agency costs	-£6,210	One-off
Investment Income - forecast increase in the amount of interest received on investments	-£43,150	Ongoing
Legal - external legal fees - reduction in budget based on current year expenditure levels	-£5,000	One-off
Legal Practice Manager/Commercial Property Solicitor - changes to staffing structure within legal services	-£3,480	One-off
Licensing - taxi licences - additional income from increased number of driver and vehicle licences issued	-£12,000	Ongoing
Licensing Act 2003 (alcohol and entertainment) - additional income from increased number licences issued	-£10,000	Ongoing
Localisation of Council Tax Support Grant - reduction of support offered to Parish Councils as per the January 2017 Cabinet report	-£25,192	Ongoing
Planning Appeals - Legal and Technical Support - reduction in budget based on current year expenditure levels	-£20,000	Ongoing
Recycle More - additional income from the sale of materials due to a forecast increase in recycling rates	-£30,000	Ongoing
Removal of contribution to Waste Partnership - there is no longer a waste partnership to contribute to	-£10,000	Ongoing
Trade Refuse Increased Income - additional income due to the income of fees by 3.66% and forecasted increase in customer base	-£28,290	Ongoing
Democratic Services – Staffing savings - deletion of Electoral Services Assistant and Apprentice Posts and creation of new Electoral Services Support Officer	-£35,180	Ongoing
Swanning Depot - reduction in NNDR charge due to the demolition of the depot	-£5,650	Ongoing
Total	-£270,368	

Proposals to cover cost pressures

Proposal Title	Amount	One-off / Ongoing
Waste Services - Extension of Rounds Vehicle Costs	£60,800	Ongoing
Waste Services - Extension of Rounds Staffing Costs	£51,200	Ongoing
Waste Fuel increase and additional mileage	£33,140	Ongoing
Recycling containers	£30,000	Ongoing
Firewall Support and Maintenance and SIP Telephony Platform Maintenance	£23,550	Ongoing
Benefits expenditure	£13,300	One-off
Grounds Maintenance - NDR	£13,000	Ongoing
Grounds Maintenance - Ride on Mower	£12,300	Ongoing
Net Financing Costs	£12,182	Ongoing
Choice Based Lettings Advertising fees	£9,300	Ongoing
Revenues and Benefits External Audit Fees	£5,130	One-off
Revenues and Benefits – Additional Contribution to the Partnership	£26,390	Ongoing
Revenues and Benefits – Reduction in Benefits Admin Subsidy Grant	£24,340	Ongoing
Revenues and Benefits – Reduction in Council Tax Admin Subsidy Grant	£5,800	Ongoing
Finance – Additional licence fees in relation to the Total system	£13,420	Ongoing
Contingency for Brexit	£10,000	One-off
Insurance – increase in premium	£9,960	Ongoing
TOTAL	£353,812	

Service Developments Proposals

Proposal Title	Amount	One-off / Ongoing
HS2 Consultancy	£100,000	3 years
CLT/ELT Training	£50,000	One-off
ICT Equipment for Members	£27,910	One-off
Recycle More Officer	£26,060	Ongoing
Ashby Town Centre Manager	£12,000	One-off
Commercial Street Cleansing Team - One year start-up costs	£11,880	One-off
Alternative Recycling container pilot scheme	£10,000	One-off
Building Control non-fee earning - Project Management	£10,000	One-off
ICT Apprenticeship (18m)	£6,660	One-off
CAB Grant increase	£5,000	Ongoing
Commercial Street Cleansing Team - Ongoing revenue income (net of expenditure)	-£37,410	Ongoing
Financial Sustainability and Infrastructure	£550,000	One-off
LLEP Match Funding	£450,000	One-off
TOTAL	£1,222,100	

Other Changes affecting the Net Cost of Services

Savings in 2019/20 in corporate support as a result of outsourcing of leisure centres	-£98,812	Ongoing
Staffing increases as a result of incremental increases, pay award, pension increases and the cost of posts approved but not included in establishment staffing costs in 2018/19	£396,570	Ongoing
De-minimus budgetary changes (changes below £5k)	-£264,292	Ongoing
Savings Challenge (*detailed in table below)	-£270,368	Ongoing
Leisure Year 1 savings (based on the council no longer providing the service from 1 May 2019 and the anticipated level of management fee payable to the successful bidder).	£181,480	Ongoing
TOTAL	-£55,422	

Funding Changes

Proposal Title	Amount	Movement	One-off / Ongoing
Reduction in Revenue Support Grant	£235,000	Funding reduction	
New Homes Bonus growth as a result of growth in homes in District	-£163,535	Increased funding	Ongoing
Reduction in forecast Collection Fund Surplus	£199,288	Funding reduction	Ongoing
Council Tax Growth as a result of growth in homes	-£130,987	Increased funding	Ongoing
Additional Business Rates funding as a result of increase in rates and anticipated business growth	-£1,522,742	Increased funding	Ongoing
TOTAL	£1,382,976		