



CABINET

21 January 2019

COUNCIL

29 January 2019

FINANCIAL PLANNING

**Council Finances 2018/19-2021/22: Medium Term Financial Strategy
Capital Strategy 2019/20**

Part A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 21 January 2019
Report of: Director of Finance
Title: Financial Planning

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable the Cabinet to consider service level expenditure, funding and council tax levels for the medium term 2019/20 to 2021/22, including the use of reserves. This budget is a component part of the 2019/20 Council Tax calculations.
- 1.2 The report sets out:
- the revenue budgets for the period 2019-22 and a revised budget for 2018/19
 - the capital programme for the period 2018-22
 - the Council's income charging policy (including the individual Service fees and charges)
 - the Capital Strategy 2019/20
- all of which are subject to Council approval.
- 1.3 The Cabinet is recommended to agree the Council Tax Base to apply for 2019/20.
- 1.4 The report includes advice from the Director of Finance on the adequacy of general reserves and balances in the context of the three year planning horizon 2019-22.

2.0 Risks

- 2.1 The potential risks in this report are shown below; (based on a calculation of severity of impact (1 – 4) and likelihood of risk materialising (1 - 4); 1= very low risk, 16 = a very high risk)

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (Treat, tolerate, terminate, transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
That Cabinet does not agree the council tax base before the statutory date	The Council tax charge is not set	Revert to prior year's tax base	Treat	1
That Cabinet does not recommend revenue and capital estimates for 2019/20 to Council	The Council does not legally set a budget	Revert to previous MTFS	Treat	1
That the Council will exceed its borrowing parameters	Breach of Treasury Management Policy (TMP)	Revision of TMP Prudential indicators	Treat	1
That the Council will be unable to service its annual borrowing costs	Budget Pressure	Provision in MTFS for anticipated borrowing	Tolerate	1
Investment with a counterparty that subsequently defaults	Recovery of principal will take longer	Invest in accordance with TMP	Tolerate	2

That the estimates used in the preparation of the report will not be sufficiently accurate.	Budget not correct	Mitigate through in year budget monitoring . Reset Budget at period 8	Treat	3
That the Council will not have adequate reserves to manage emerging risks.	Reserves diminish	General fund balance is £2M	Treat	3

3.0 Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 3.1 Delegates to the Director of Finance and Portfolio Holder the ability to amend the budget figures in accordance with decisions taken at the Cabinet meeting, Council on 23 January 2019 and any minor variations that may occur before the Council meeting.

That Cabinet recommends

That Council:

- 3.2 Resolves in accordance with the *Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992*, the amount calculated by Watford Borough Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2019/20 is **32,840.6** as outlined in the report.
- 3.3 Approves the continuation of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2019/20.
- 3.4 Approves the budget (**Attachment 1**) as laid out in the report, including:
- the base budget for 2019/20
 - the growth and savings
 - the Capital Investment Programme 2018-22
- 3.5 Approves the schedule of fees and charges & income charging policy (**Attachment 2**)
- 3.6 Approves the Capital Strategy for 2019/20, amended as necessary for the decisions of Council on 23 January 2019, and delegates to the Director of Finance and Portfolio Holder Resources responsibility for agreeing and maintaining the Treasury Management policy. (**Attachment 3**)
- 3.7 Agrees to increase the annual Council Tax for a Band D property in 2019/20 by 2.2%. This will apply to all other bands.
- 3.8 Notes the key risks identified and approves their proposed mitigations.
- 3.9 Notes the advice provided by the Director of Finance on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of reserves.
- 3.10 Notes the indicative budgets for 2020/21 and 2021/22 and the need for further work to close the budget gap.

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 Budget Panel has been fully engaged throughout this process and feedback from its meeting will be circulated prior to the Cabinet meeting.
- 4.2 As part of the statutory consultation with business ratepayers, copies of this report have been sent to the Watford Business Improvement District, the Watford Chamber of Commerce and the borough's Local Strategic Partnership-One Watford. Any feedback will be reported at the meeting.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial Implications

These are covered within the report.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 In the Constitution it is Council who is required to set the budget, which includes the Council Tax Base and setting the level of Council Tax. Cabinet therefore must forward its recommendations on the budget to Council. The Constitution also requires that any recommendation from Cabinet to Council regarding the budget must be submitted before the 8 February in the preceding financial year to enable the Mayor to have the opportunity to call in any decision of Council on the budget. The Council must set its 2019/20 budget by 11 March 2019. The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme has to be approved by Council by 31 January each year for the next financial year.
- 5.2.2 It is a statutory requirement that the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management Policy are reviewed annually. The report meets the requirement of CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and complies with the Local Government Act 2003.
- 5.2.3 It is a statutory requirement that the Chief Financial Officers provides a report under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 on the robustness of estimates used in the budget and the sufficiency of the Council's reserves. This is included in the report.

6.0 Equalities

- 6.1 Watford Borough Council is committed to equality and diversity as an employer, service provider and as a strategic partner. In order to fulfil this commitment and its duties under the Equality Act 2010 it is important to demonstrate how policies, practices, and decisions impact on people with different protected characteristics. It is also important that the Council is not discriminating unlawfully when carrying out any of its functions.
- 6.2 This report provides an over view of Budget proposals and equalities issues will need to be specifically considered before any changes to existing service levels are introduced.

Contact Officers:

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Report approved by Joanne Wagstaffe, Director of Finance.

Attachments:

1. Budget Setting report
2. Income Charging Policy (including the fees & charges schedule)
3. Capital Strategy (including the Treasury Management policy)