

Report to: Finance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting: 9 January 2023
Report of: Director of Finance
Title: Financial Planning

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable the Budget Panel to consider service level expenditure, funding and council tax levels for the medium term 2023/24 to 2025/26, including the use of reserves and the 2023/24 Council Tax calculations.
- 1.2 The report sets out:
- the revenue budgets for the period 2023/24 to 2025/26 and a revised budget for 2022/23
 - the capital programme for the period 2022/23 to 2025/26
 - the Council's income charging policy (including the individual Service fees and charges)
 - the Capital Strategy 2023/24 including the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Prudential Indicators
- all of which are subject to Council approval.
- 1.3 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 2023/24 to 2025/26.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Finance Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 Considers the budget (**Attachment 1**) as laid out in the report, including:
- the base budget for 2023/24
 - the Capital Investment Programme 2023/24 to 2025/265
- 2.2 Considers the schedule of fees and charges & income charging policy (**Attachment 2**)
- 2.3 Considers the capital strategy for 2023/24, including the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Prudential Indicators. (**Attachment 3**)
- 2.4 Notes the advice provided by the Director of Finance on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of reserves
- 2.5 Notes the indicative budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26.
- 2.6 Makes any recommendations to Cabinet

3.0 IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Financial Implications

3.1.1 These are covered within the report.

3.2 Legal Implications

3.2.1 The Local Government Act 1992 requires billing authorities to complete and approve their budgets and set a council tax before 11 March each year, prior to the start of the financial year on 1 April. The budget and Council Tax Requirement for 2023/24 must therefore be agreed by Council by 11 March 2023.

3.2.2 It is a statutory requirement that the Capital Strategy is 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.

3.2.3 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.

4.0 Equalities

4.1 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.

4.2 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 Alison Scott, Director of Finance.

Attachments:

1. Budget Setting report
- 2a. Income Charging Policy
- 2b. Fees & charges schedule
3. Capital Strategy (including the Treasury Management policy and Prudential Indicators)

