

COUNCIL – 20 FEBRUARY 2024

BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLANNING 2024/25 – 2026/27

Conservative Independent Alliance Budget Amendments

Report by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

Executive Summary

1. The Conservative Independent Alliance proposes amendments to the budget proposed by the Cabinet. Recommendations and section numbers are consistent with those set out in the Cabinet's report. The recommendations note where Conservative Independent Alliance amendments need to be considered along with the Cabinet's proposed budget at Item CC8.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. **The Council is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - a. have regard to the statutory report of the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer [set out in Cabinet Section 3.1 and amended at Conservative Independent Alliance Section 3.1] in approving recommendations b to d below;
 - b. (in respect of the budget and medium term financial strategy – at Section 4) approve:
 - (1) the council tax and precept calculations for 2024/25 [set out in Cabinet Section 4.3] and in particular:
 - (i) a precept of £498,633,415;
 - (ii) a council tax for band D equivalent properties of £1,820.56;
 - (2) a budget for 2024/25 [as set out in Conservative Independent Alliance Section 4.4];
 - (3) a medium term financial strategy for 2024/25 to 2026/27 [as set out in Conservative Independent Alliance Section 4.1 (which incorporates changes to the existing medium term financial strategy as set out in Cabinet Section 4.2 amended by Conservative Independent Alliance Section 4.2)];
 - (4) the Financial Strategy for 2024/25 [at Cabinet Section 4.5];
 - (5) the Earmarked Reserves and General Balances Policy Statement 2024/25 [at Cabinet Section 4.6 and amended by Conservative Independent Alliance Section 4.6]. This includes:
 - (i) the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer's recommended level of General Balances for 2024/25 [Cabinet Section 4.6], and

- (ii) **the planned level of Earmarked Reserves for 2024/25 to 2026/27 [Conservative Independent Alliance Section 4.6.1].**
- c. **(in respect of capital – at Section 5) approve:**
 - (1) **the Capital & Investment Strategy for 2024/25 to 2033/34 including the Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Methodology Statement [as set out in Cabinet Section 5.1 and amended by Conservative Independent Alliance Sections 5.1 and 5.3];**
 - (2) **a Capital Programme for 2023/24 to 2033/34 [as set out in Conservative Independent Alliance Section 5.4 which includes new capital proposals set out in Cabinet’s Section 5.3 and amended by Conservative Independent Alliance Section 5.3].**
- d. **(in respect of treasury management – at Section 5) approve:**
 - (1) **the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2024/25 [at Cabinet Section 5.2] including the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and the Specified Investment and Non-Specified Investment Instruments.**
 - (2) **that any further changes required to the 2024/25 strategy be delegated to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance;**

Conservative Independent Alliance Section 3 – Statutory Report by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer)

- 3. Under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Chief Finance Officer is required to report on the robustness of the estimates made in determining the council tax requirement and on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. The assessment of the changes from the Cabinet’s proposed budget is set out in Conservative Independent Alliance Section 3. Council is required to have regard to this report in making their decisions on the budget.

Conservative Independent Alliance Section 4 – Revenue Budget Strategy

- 4. This section sets out those areas which differ from the Cabinet’s proposed budget and includes recommendations on those matters that the Council must approve as part of the budget setting process, including the council tax requirement and council tax amount for a Band D property.
- 5. Conservative Independent Alliance Section 4.2 sets out proposed budget amendments to Cabinet’s Section 4.2. Therefore, the two sections need to be considered together.

6. Cabinet section 4.2.4 Revenue Investments has been updated as the requirement for forward funding for the Workplace Parking Levy is proposed to be postponed by the Conservative Independent Alliance and would not be required in 2024/25.
7. In relation to use of earmarked reserves, Conservative Independent Alliance Section 4.6 amendments set out the changes from the Cabinet's Section 4.6, so the two Sections need to be considered together.
8. Cabinet's Section 4.5 Financial Strategy is unaffected by the Conservative Independent Alliance amendments except that Section 4.6 notes that forecast reserves will be £1.7m higher as at 31 March 2025 compared to Cabinet Section 4.6.

Conservative Independent Alliance Section 5 – Capital Budget Strategy

9. Conservative Independent Alliance Section 5.1 sets out updates to the Cabinet's Capital and Investment Strategy in Section 5.1.
10. Conservative Independent Alliance Section 5.4 incorporates the changes to the Cabinet's new capital programme proposals at Section 5.3 as amended by Conservative Independent Alliance Section 5.3. It also incorporates a proposed delay to the implementation of the Traffic Filters and expansion of the Zero Emission Zone in Oxford.

Equality & Inclusion and Sustainability Implications

11. Overarching summary impact assessments for both equalities and climate, taking into account the overall impact of the budget proposals, are included in Conservative Independent Alliance Section 4.7 and 4.8 and need to be considered in conjunction with Cabinet Section 4.7 and 4.8.

Financial Implications

12. The Council is required by law to set a balanced budget for 2024/25 before 1 March 2024. Alongside this, there is a requirement under Section 25 of the Local Government Finance Act 2003 for the Chief Finance Officer to prepare a statement on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of reserves. Conservative Independent Alliance Section 3 needs to be considered in conjunction with Cabinet Section 3.

Comments checked by: Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

Legal Implications

13. The legal implications remain as set out at Item 8 of the agenda for Council on 20 February 2024.

Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

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February 2024