

CABINET - 28 JANUARY 2025

Budget and Business Planning 2025/26 – 2027/28

Report by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In relation to the Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (Section 4);

Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) approve the Review of Charges for 2025/26 and in relation to the Registration Service, charges for 2026/27 (Annex A);
- b) approve the changes to High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding and the deficit for 2025/26 (paragraph 152 and Table 15);
- c) receive any recommendations and observations from Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- d) approve the Financial Strategy for 2025/26 (Section 4.5);
- e) approve the Earmarked Reserves and General Balances Policy Statement 2025/26 (Section 4.6); and the creation of a new reserve to hold grant funding related to Extended Producer Responsibilities;
- f) approve the use of retained business rates from EZ1 Science Vale Growth Accelerator and EZ2 Didcot Growth Accelerator as set out in paragraph 159 and Annex B;
- g) note that following any funding changes as a result of the final Local Government Finance Settlement and information from the district and city councils in relation to business rates or council tax will be managed as set out in Paragraph 9; and
- h) delegate to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance, the authority to make any appropriate changes to the proposed budget not covered by Paragraph 9.

Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to RECOMMEND Council:

- i) approve a Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2025/26 to 2027/28 as set out in Section 4.1 (which incorporates changes to the existing Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Section 4.2);
- j) agree the council tax and precept calculations for 2025/26 set out in Section 4.3 and in particular:
 - (i) a precept of £533,328,633;
 - (ii) a council tax for band D equivalent properties of £1,911.40.

- k) approve a revenue budget for 2025/26 as set out in Section 4.4
2. In relation to the Capital and Investment Strategy and Capital Programme (Section 5);

Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to recommend Council to:

- l) approve the Capital and Investment Strategy for 2025/26 - 2035/36 (Section 4.1) including;
 - (i) the Minimum Revenue Provision Methodology Statement (Section 5.1 Annex 1);
 - (ii) the Prudential Indicators (Section 5.1 Annex 2) and
- m) approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2025/26 (Section 5.2); and
 - (i) continue to delegate the authority to withdraw or advance additional funds to/from external fund managers to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer;
 - (ii) approve that any further changes required to the 2025/26 Treasury Management 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;
 - (iii) approve the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators; and
 - (iv) approve the Specified Investment and Non - Specified Investment instruments as set out in Section 5.2.
- n) approve the new capital proposals for inclusion in the Capital Programme and proposed pipeline schemes (Section 5.3)
- o) approve the capital programme (Section 5.4).

Executive Summary

- 3. This report is the culmination of the Budget and Business Planning process for 2025/26 to 2027/28 and sets out the Cabinet's revenue budget for 2025/26, medium term financial strategy to 2027/28, capital programme to 2034/35 plus supporting policies, strategies and information.
- 4. The Budget and Business Planning report to Council on 11 February 2025 will be set out in five sections:
 - 1. Leader of the Council's Overview
 - 2. Budget engagement and consultation findings
 - 3. Section 151 Officer's Statutory Report
 - 4. Revenue Budget Strategy
 - 5. Capital & Investment Strategy
- 5. Sections 1 and 3 re not published as part of this report, but will be published as part of the report for Council on 11 February 2025. This report sets out the budget engagement and consultation 2025/26 findings (Section 2), the

Cabinet's proposed Revenue Budget Strategy (Section 4) and the Capital & Investment Strategy (Section 5). Alongside this, the report also sets out the Review of Charges for 2025/26.

6. Cabinet's revenue budget proposals take into consideration the latest information on the council's financial position outlined in this report. In finalising the proposals, Cabinet has taken into consideration feedback from the public engagement and consultation on the revenue budget proposals. Section 2.1 provides analysis of the responses to all of the engagement and consultation activities.
7. Observations from the Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings on 6 December 2024 and 17 January 2025 will be considered once published.
8. Some information in relation to funding for 2025/26 remains outstanding and estimates have been made. This includes:
 - The Final Local Government Finance Settlement.
 - Confirmation of Business Rates income including the collection fund position and Section 31 Grant Funding.
 - Final confirmation of the Council Tax collection fund position.
9. Any reductions to assumed business rates income or council tax surpluses will be managed through the Collection Fund reserve. Any increases to funding notified following the publication of this report will be added to General Balances.

Section 2 - Budget engagement and consultation

10. The council's approach to consultation and engagement is explained further in the consultation and engagement strategy 2022 - 25. This puts residents at the heart of decision-making and aims to engage with and listen to residents and other partners in a more active and inclusive way.
11. The council's approach to budget engagement for 2025/26 aimed to:
 - Involve, inform and engage residents, businesses, staff and partners about the financial pressures facing the council and underline our ongoing commitment to delivering against our strategic priorities.
 - Enable the council to develop a clear understanding of what is important to local people, their priorities and the challenges facing their communities and to feed that insight into the budget and business planning process.
 - Increase understanding of how the council works, the range of services it delivers and what council tax is spent on.
12. The approach to consultation and engagement to support 2025/26 business and business planning has been organised into three phases:
 - **Phase 1:** Representative residents' survey

- **Phase 2:** Participatory engagement: Budget simulator, focus groups and sounding boards for children and young people
 - **Phase 3:** Public consultation on the substance of the 2025/26 budget
13. Key findings from Phase 1 and 2 which were shared as part of the agenda for Performance & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2024 are set out in Section 2.1 and the summary feedback from Phase 3 is included in Section 2.2.
 14. Any recommendations and observations from Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee (to follow) will be added at Section 2.3 ahead of the Cabinet meeting.

Revenue Budget Strategy – Section 4

15. Section 4 sets out the Council Tax Requirement and council tax for band D equivalent properties for 2025/26, and the MTFS to 2027/28. It comprises the following sections:
 - 4.1 Detailed Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025/26 to 2027/28
 - 4.2 Previously Agreed and New Budget Changes 2025/26 – 2027/28
 - 4.3 Council Tax Bands and Precepts 2025/26
 - 4.4 Detailed Revenue Budgets 2025/26
 - 4.5 Financial Strategy 2025/26
 - 4.6 Earmarked Reserves and General Balances Policy Statement 2025/26
 - 4.6.1 Forecast Earmarked Reserves 2024/25 to 2027/28
 - 4.7 Overarching Equality Impact Assessment
 - 4.8 Overarching Climate Impact Assessment
16. Starting from the funding and spending assumptions in the council's existing MTFS agreed in February 2024, the following paragraphs set out the latest funding information and proposed new budget changes. All of this is combined into the updated budget for the council which supports the services it provides.

Overview of Service Budgets

17. The budget supports a range of service provision which contributes to the council's vision and nine priorities. Since most service provision continues from one year to the next, the first step in building the budget for 2025/26 is to roll forward 2024/25 budgets.
18. This starting point has then been adjusted for changes in 2025/26 built into the MTFS agreed in February 2024. After taking account of planned budget increases and changes to savings, the current MTFS includes net additional funding for services totalling £17.9m in 2025/26. This includes £15.7m for demographic growth for adult and children's social care and increases in waste tonnages, reflecting anticipated population and housing changes. A further

£15.9m will be added for inflation and £3.9m for demand and other pressures. One -off investments in 2024/25 of £5.4m will fall-out in 2025/26. In addition to this there are savings of £12.2m.

19. Proposed new changes to expenditure needed to align with the anticipated cost of service provision and funding for 2025/26 are included in this report. All of the changes are shown as incremental or year on year, unless otherwise stated; changes in each year remain in the budget for subsequent years unless there is a further change (either positive or negative).

Proposed Budget Increases

20. The type of changes making up the proposed new increases for each service are summarised in Table 1a. The combined increase taking account of previously agreed as well as new increases is shown in Table 1b.

Table 1a: Proposed New Changes to Service Budgets

| | 2025/26 £m | 2026/27 £m | 2027/28 £m | Total £m |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Inflation | 1.9 | 9.6 | 24.0 | 35.4 |
| Demographic (Population) Changes | 7.6 | 5.3 | 11.5 | 24.4 |
| Demand & Other Pressures | 8.6 | -0.7 | 0.6 | 8.6 |
| Investments | 11.2 | -3.8 | 0.1 | 7.5 |
| Savings | -17.9 | -4.8 | -0.2 | -22.8 |
| Total | 11.4 | 5.6 | 36.1 | 53.1 |

Table 1b: Proposed New and Previously Agreed Changes to Service Budgets

| | 2025/26 £m | 2026/27 £m | 2027/28 £m | Total £m |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Inflation | 17.7 | 25.1 | 24.0 | 66.8 |
| Demographic (Population) Changes | 23.3 | 14.2 | 11.5 | 49.1 |
| Demand & Other Pressures | 13.0 | -5.9 | 0.6 | 7.7 |
| Investments | 5.8 | -3.2 | 0.2 | 2.9 |
| Removal of one – off funding for investments in 2024/25 | -0.4 | -0.7 | 0.0 | -1.1 |
| Savings | -30.1 | -9.3 | -0.3 | -39.7 |
| Total | 29.3 | 20.3 | 36.1 | 85.6 |

- Inflation
21. The National Living Wage (NLW) will increase by 6.7% to £12.21 per hour and £10.00 per hour for 18-20 year olds from April 2025.
22. The Autumn Budget assumes Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation of 2.5% in 2024 with inflation remaining above 2% but gradually falling until 2028. As shown in Table 2 the forecast is higher in all years than set out in the Spring Budget 2024.

| Table 2 | Forecast CPI Spring Budget 2024 | Forecast CPI Autumn Budget 2024 |
|----------------|--|--|
| 2024 | 2.2% | 2.5% |
| 2025 | 1.5% | 2.6% |
| 2026 | 1.6% | 2.3% |
| 2027 | 1.9% | 2.1% |
| 2028 | 2.0% | 2.1% |

23. The increase in the National Living Wage also means that pressure relating to pay inflation (based on national agreements) for the council's employees is now likely to be higher than the 2.5% increase originally assumed for 2025/26 because of the impact on national pay scales. The current assumption for 2025/26 is in line with the average increase for 2024/25 of 3.5%. However, this is expected to be able to be managed through use of existing funding for pay inflation not required in 2024/25.

Demographic Changes

24. Demographic changes include increases in funding for adult and children's social care and increases in waste tonnages, reflecting anticipated population changes and housing growth.
25. Details of the proposed budget increases are set out in detail in Section 4.2 and summarised below.

Investments: Proposed New and Combined Impact with Previously Agreed Changes

26. New investments of £11.2m are proposed for 2025/26 with an on-going impact of £7.5m by 2027/28 after taking account of one – off investments in earlier years. The detailed proposals for each service as well as changes to budgets held centrally are set out in Section 4.2 and summarised in Table 3a. The combined impact when these are added to changes to existing planned investments is set out in Table 3b.

Table 3a: Proposed New Budget Investments by Service

| Service Areas | 2025/26 £m | 2026/27 £m | 2027/28 £m | Total £m |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Adult Services | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Children's Services | 3.1 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 3.4 |
| Environment & Highways | 1.9 | -0.4 | 0.0 | 1.5 |
| Economy & Place | 3.3 | -3.0 | -0.1 | 0.2 |
| Public Health & Communities | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.3 |
| Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Community Safety | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Resources and Law & Governance | 1.6 | -0.9 | 0.0 | 0.8 |
| Transformation, Digital & Customer Experience | 1.0 | 0.3 | 0.0 | 1.3 |
| Total | 11.2 | -3.8 | 0.1 | 7.5 |

Table 3b: Proposed New and Previously Agreed Budget Investments by Service

| Service Areas | 2025/26 £m | 2026/27 £m | 2027/28 £m | Total £m |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Adult Services | -1.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | -1.4 |
| Children's Services | 0.6 | 1.0 | 0.3 | 1.8 |
| Environment & Highways | 0.2 | -0.4 | 0.0 | -0.2 |
| Economy & Place | 3.7 | -3.2 | -0.1 | 0.5 |
| Public Health & Communities | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.3 |
| Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Community Safety | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 |
| Resources and Law & Governance | 1.4 | -0.9 | 0.0 | 0.5 |
| Transformation, Digital & Customer Experience | 1.0 | 0.3 | 0.0 | 1.3 |
| Total | 5.8 | -3.2 | 0.2 | 2.9 |

Children's Services

27. A £1.0m investment is proposed to develop services to support under 5-year-olds, developing early help and early years support so that all children can get the best possible start in life. There is also a proposed £0.1m investment in Social Work Apprenticeships due to an overlap between apprenticeships being concluded and the release of agency workers.
28. On-going funding of £2.0m is proposed to fund an investment in Children's Prevention. £1.4m of this will be funded by a ring-fenced Children's Prevention Grant. Further information about the requirements for the use of the funding is awaited.

Environment & Highways

29. A £1.5m investment is proposed to increase the cleansing of Highway Drainage assets.
30. A one-off investment of £0.4m is proposed to support holding the price of a joint ticket (parking and bus fare) at Park & Ride car parks unchanged from 2024/25.
31. The revenue budget also includes proposed funding to support the cost of borrowing to support £56m of structural highways maintenance within the capital programme (see Table 5 summarising changes within budgets held centrally and Section 5.1).

Economy & Place

32. It is proposed to add a one – off investment of £2.0m for pro-active flooding measures and working with communities who have suffered flooding. It is anticipated that this would be used over multiples years so an element of this funding will be held in the Budget Priorities Reserve for use in future years.
33. In addition, an ongoing £0.1m is proposed for an additional two flood officers to recruit, train and support Flood Wardens, or the equivalent, in those places that have Section 19 reports under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 associated, and to work with Emergency Planning and local resilience bodies to encourage relevant Parish and Town Councils or equivalent to complete emergency plans.

34. A one – off investment of £1.0m is proposed to leverage investment in rail, including supporting active travel access, improvement programmes and the development of strategic cases and masterplans to prove the environmental, economic and community case for rail.
35. An investment of £0.1m is proposed in 2025/26 and 2026/27 to facilitate delivery of four National Strategic Infrastructure Projects.
36. An investment of £0.1m is proposed in Climate Action relating to carbon sequestration to move the council’s operational emissions towards a negative net total (i.e. beyond ‘net zero’). In addition, this investment will cover the cost of forward purchasing Carbon offsets to reduce the impact of future offsetting costs.

Public Health & Communities

37. An increase of £0.3m in the budget for Domestic Abuse reflects the increase in the ring-fenced Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation Grant. In total the grant for 2025/26 is £1.5m, increasing from £1.2m in 2024/25.

Transformation, Digital & Customer Experience

38. A £0.8m investment in a revised data team structure is proposed as part of the transformation programme to enhance capacity and lead to better decision making and improved outcomes for the organisation.
39. A further investment of £0.1m relates to additional resource in the delivery unit, and a further £0.1m to the cost of Digital Management Tools.

Budget Pressures: Proposed New and Combined Impact with Previously Agreed Pressures

40. There are new pressures of £18.1m in 2025/26 with an on-going impact of £68.5m by 2027/28. The detailed proposals for each service are set out in Section 4.2 and summarised in Table 4a.
41. Table 4b shows that when added to the previously agreed pressures from prior years, there are pressures of £53.6m in 2025/26 rising to £122.5m by 2027/28.

Table 4a: Proposed New Budget Pressures by Service

| Service Areas | 2025/26 £m | 2026/27 £m | 2027/28 £m | Total £m |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Adult Services | 0.1 | 1.2 | 17.1 | 18.3 |
| Children’s Services | 13.6 | 10.6 | 12.4 | 36.7 |
| Environment & Highways | 1.1 | 1.2 | 4.1 | 6.4 |
| Economy & Place | 0.1 | -0.1 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Public Health & Communities | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.3 |
| Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Community Safety | 1.3 | 0.8 | 0.6 | 2.6 |
| Resources and Law & Governance | 1.5 | 0.5 | 1.6 | 3.6 |
| Transformation, Digital & Customer Experience | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.3 |
| Total | 18.1 | 14.3 | 36.1 | 68.5 |

Table 4b: Previously Agreed and Proposed New Budget Pressures by Service

| Service Areas | 2025/26 £m | 2026/27 £m | 2027/28 £m | Total £m |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Adult Services | 13.7 | 16.0 | 17.1 | 46.9 |
| Children's Services | 28.4 | 13.2 | 12.4 | 54.0 |
| Environment & Highways | 3.6 | 2.2 | 4.1 | 9.9 |
| Economy & Place | 0.7 | -0.9 | 0.2 | 0.0 |
| Public Health & Communities | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.3 |
| Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Community Safety | 2.3 | 1.4 | 0.6 | 4.3 |
| Resources and Law & Governance | 4.2 | 1.0 | 1.6 | 6.8 |
| Transformation, Digital & Customer Experience | 0.3 | -0.1 | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| Total | 53.6 | 32.8 | 36.1 | 122.5 |

42. 2027/28 is a new year that needs to be added to the MTFS so the pressures in that year mainly reflect demographic growth for Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Home to School Transport, Waste Management, and the addition of estimated pay inflation at 2.5%.

Adult Services

43. Demography has been recalculated based on future population growth in relevant cohorts and recent activity trends and this is predicted to produce a reduction to the existing demography pressure of £0.4m included in the budget agreed in February 2024 from 2025/26 onwards.

Children's Services

44. Proposals for Education include the reversal of £1.2m funding for High Needs Block Pressures that was expected to be funded from the COVID-19 Reserve. The expenditure budget has been replaced with a £0.5m pressure to fund the Special Educational Needs Inreach/Outreach programme between special schools and mainstream schools, resulting in a net reduction in previously agreed funding.
45. Additional demographic funding is forecast to be required in 2025/26 for children's services across education and social care. For home to school transport there is an on-going impact based on demographic growth of between 7% and 9% estimated to be a pressure of £0.4m from 2025/26 increasing to £3.2m by 2027/28.
46. The growth in demand for Educational Psychologists results in a pressure of £0.6m in 2025/26, and a further pressure of £1.0m in 2026/27.
47. The impact of inflation pressures in contracts with providers of care is estimated to be £2.5m in 2025/26.
48. Within the Early help/Front door service there is a £0.4m on-going pressure which relates to the continuation of funding for Supporting Families funded posts, Community Impact Zone, and Locality Community Support Service staffing as the grant to support this is not expected to continue in 2025/26. The

future of this funding is uncertain at this point, but it is believed it is unlikely to continue, at least in the current form beyond 2024/25.

49. A £2.8m pressure relates to the removal of undeliverable savings relating to 2024/25 and prior years and a risk adjustment of £4.7m has been included in relation to the delivery of existing savings, to reflect the potential challenges in delivering the savings in full.

Environment & Highways

50. Within Network Management there are £1.1m pressures mainly associated with the delay in the Department for Transport decision on the council's lane rental scheme application. A £0.2m pressure relates to reduced income as a result of higher levels of compliance on moving traffic offences.
51. There is also a pressure of £0.2m in 2025/26 relating to landfill site maintenance due to aging equipment and change in emissions and an increase in landfill tax.

Economy and Place

52. A temporary one-off pressure of £0.1m exists in the Climate Team due to less grant funding anticipated than in prior years.

Public Health & Communities

53. Libraries and Heritage services pressures of £0.2m relate to continuing the home library service and early years provision at current levels.

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Community Safety

54. A pressure of £0.2m relates to the cost of a resilience contract to ensure continuation of the fire and rescue service when large numbers of firefighters are unavailable, such as during a major incident or industrial action.

Resources and Law & Governance

55. A £0.3m pressure in Financial & Commercial Services relates to the removal of an income budget no longer achievable as it related to a overpayments recovery target which was a temporary rather than permanent income source.
56. A £0.2m pressure in the Law and Governance service relates to the removal of budgeted vacancy factors due to demands on the service.
57. £0.2m relates to previously agreed but unachievable savings target from 2023/24 relating to organisational wide IT costs.

Transformation, Digital and Customer

58. A £0.2m pressure relates the removal of a previously agreed saving relating to helpdesk consolidation which cannot be achieved as planned.

Proposals for new service savings and combined impact with changes to previously agreed savings

59. New budget reductions of £17.9m are proposed for 2025/26 with an on-going impact of £22.8m by 2027/28. The detailed proposals for each service are set

out in Section 4.2 and summarised in Table 5a. The combined impact of these new savings when added to the savings in the existing plan is shown in table 5b.

Table 5a: Proposed New Budget Savings by Service Area

| | 2025/26 £m | 2026/27 £m | 2027/28 £m | Total £m |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Adult Services | -8.1 | -1.0 | 0.0 | -9.1 |
| Children's Services | -2.9 | -2.4 | -0.2 | -5.4 |
| Environment & Highways | -3.8 | -0.4 | 0.0 | -4.2 |
| Economy & Place | -0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Public Health & Communities | -0.8 | 0.6 | 0.0 | -0.2 |
| Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Community Safety | -0.2 | -0.5 | 0.0 | -0.7 |
| Resources and Law & Governance | -2.0 | -1.1 | -0.1 | -3.2 |
| Transformation, Digital & Customer Experience | 0.0 | -0.1 | 0.0 | -0.1 |
| Total | -17.9 | -4.8 | -0.2 | -22.8 |

Table 5b: Previously Agreed and New Service Savings

| | 2025/26 £m | 2026/27 £m | 2027/28 £m | Total £m |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Adult Services | -9.4 | -1.0 | 0.0 | -10.4 |
| Children's Services | -11.8 | -8.0 | -0.3 | -20.0 |
| Environment & Highways | -4.2 | -0.4 | 0.0 | -4.6 |
| Economy & Place | -0.7 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 0.3 |
| Public Health & Communities | -0.6 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Community Safety | -0.2 | -0.5 | 0.0 | -0.7 |
| Resources and Law & Governance | -2.1 | -1.0 | -0.1 | -3.2 |
| Transformation, Digital & Customer Experience | -1.0 | -0.1 | 0.0 | -1.1 |
| Total | -30.1 | -9.3 | -0.3 | -39.7 |

Adult Services

60. Adult Services continue to support people in Oxfordshire to live well in their community, remaining fit and healthy for as long as possible. Savings include the continuing impact of the Section 117 Mental Health Act 1983 joint health funding of £4.2m, a £0.3m saving relating to the reduction in short stay hub beds by supporting hospital discharges and moving support into homes.
61. A £0.4m saving is proposed from a reduction in the number of packages receiving double handed care and a saving of £0.2m from an introduction of a fixed charge for setting up of a universal deferred payment agreement for the first time since 2015, as set out in Care Act 2014 to bring it in line with what other local authorities are charging.

Children's Services

62. Within the Early Help/Front door service there is a proposed £0.1m saving associated with the expected ending of supporting families funding, which is yet to be confirmed. £0.5m savings has been identified in the Provider Services and Safeguarding service, associated with providing capital loans to foster carers to

increase local capacity, and a £0.3m savings from reviewing the delivery of an outdoor therapy service.

Environment & Highways

63. Savings of £1.5m within Highways Maintenance relate to the on-going impact of the council's investment in LED lamp replacements on streetlighting energy usage. In addition, there is a £0.5m saving for the drawdown from commuted sums to support the previous year's growth in highway maintenance services. In infrastructure delivery there is a saving of £0.1m for increased allocation of staff time to council projects and schemes.

Economy & Place

64. Proposed savings of £0.1m include a higher S106 income target and savings from a reduction in the works budget in the central Oxfordshire team.

Public Health & Communities

65. £0.8m savings relate to the release of council funding due to utilisation of government grants to fund services across the council.

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue & Community Safety

66. £0.03m savings are proposed from the implementation of interim measures to improve fire engine availability and response times.

Resources and Law & Governance

67. £1.0m savings in the Property & Assets function include savings from vacating Abbey House, rationalisation of the estate, and Health & safety responsibilities within Facilities management. There are also £0.2m savings from the review of current contracts.

Cross Cutting Proposals

68. The vision for a successful and sustainable council of the future is one where we are an employer, partner and place shaper of choice. The council will:
- be leaner and more focused on delivering key priorities to the best of our ability;
 - operate from fewer buildings and make sure those we keep are used to their full capacity;
 - embrace technology where it improves productivity and connectivity to the people we serve, helping us become more efficient;
 - collaborate more closely with partners in the voluntary and community sector so we're no longer the main provider for every service; and
 - harness commercial opportunities where they deliver value for our residents
69. This vision is being delivered through the council's Delivering the Future Together transformation programme. This will accelerate delivery of financial and non - financial benefits achieving our operating principles and supporting the council's financial sustainability.
70. A saving of £7.7m has been included for cross cutting themes relating to Delivering the Future Together in 2025/26. This includes savings of £5.0m from

undertaking a review of contracts and third party spend, £1.0m savings from commercial opportunities, £0.7m savings from organisational redesign in addition to £1.3m savings remaining to be achieved from 2024/25, £0.3m saving from focus on confirming and clarifying corporate landlord responsibilities and budgets, a £0.2m saving from a proposing to streamline the council's approach to commissioning services through the voluntary and community sector and £0.5m savings from developing the council's integrated transport hub. These have been allocated to services on an indicative basis but this will need to be updated during 2025/26 as the outputs from the review of contracts and organisational redesign become available.

Budgets Held Centrally

71. New corporate budget pressures and investments of £7.4m are proposed for 2025/26 with an on-going impact of £10.8m by 2027/28.
72. Changes to budgets held centrally are summarised in Table 6.

| Table 6 | 2025/26 £m | 2026/27 £m | 2027/28 £m | Total £m |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Employers' National Insurance: Service Impact | 4.3 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 4.8 |
| Increase in interest on cash balances | -1.0 | 1.1 | 0.5 | 0.6 |
| Capital Financing | -1.7 | 2.2 | 0.7 | 1.2 |
| Revenue Funding for the Capital Programme | 1.6 | -1.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| £65m Prudential Borrowing for priority capital schemes including Highways Maintenance | 4.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.2 |
| Total | 7.4 | 1.9 | 1.5 | 10.8 |

Capital Financing and Interest on Cash Balances

73. Interest payments on external borrowing are lower than previously forecast in 2025/26 as a result of higher cash balances. These balances also mean interest on cash balances is expected to be higher in 2025/26.

Funding for the Capital Programme

74. The increase to the capital financing requirement as a result of the proposed borrowing to support the capital programme (see paragraph 31 and Section 5.1) results in an increase of £4.2m in Prudential Borrowing costs. A £1.6m one – off revenue investment in 2025/26 will fund £0.3m towards working with other organisations collaboratively on planning regeneration in Banbury Town Centre and a further £1.3m for active travel measures to encourage walking and cycling.

Updates to Funding Assumptions

Core Spending Power

75. The Local Government Provisional Settlement set out that Core Spending Power for local government will rise by 6.0% for councils in England on the basis that all councils agree the maximum council tax increase.

76. As shown in Table 7 the position for the council will be an increase from £663.1m in 2024/25 to £705.3m in 2025/26 assuming a council tax increase of 4.99% and after adjusting for grants rolled into Core Spending Power from 2025/26.

Table 7: Core Spending Power (CSP) 2024/25 and 2025/26

| | 2024/25 Final Local Government Settlement Adjusted for Grants Rolled In £m | 2025/26 February 2024 MTFS Adjusted for Grants Rolled In £m | 2025/26 Provisional Local Government Settlement £m | Change in Grant Funding Compared to February 2024 MTFS £m |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Council tax requirement excluding parish precepts | 498.6 | 532.7 | 532.4 | n/a |
| Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) | 78.4 | 80.0 | 79.4 | -0.6 |
| Compensation for under-indexing the business rates multiplier | 14.6 | 14.6 | 15.2 | 0.6 |
| Social Care Grant | 42.5 | 37.8 | 48.6 | 10.8 |
| Better Care Grant (previously iBCF and Adult Social Care Discharge Fund) | 13.2 | 13.2 | 13.2 | 0.0 |
| ASC Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund | 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 0.0 |
| Children's Social Care Prevention Grant | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.4 | 1.4 |
| Revenue Support Grant | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 0.0 |
| Fire Pensions Grant rolled in in 2024/25 | | | | |
| Grants rolled into Revenue Support Grant in 2025/26 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 0.1 |
| Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant (rolled into CSP in 2025/26) | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.5 | 0.3 |
| New Homes Bonus | 1.7 | 0.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| Rural Services Delivery Grant | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Recovery Grant | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Services Grant | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Total (6.4% increase compared to 2024/25) | 663.1 | 691.9 | 705.3 | 13.7 |

Social Care Grant

77. The Provisional Settlement confirmed that in 2025/26, £5.9 billion will be provided through the Social Care Grant, supporting both adult and children's social care. This is an increase of £880m compared to 2024/25. The £500m increase in funding in 2024/25 that was announced in the Final Settlement for 2024/25 will also continue in 2025/26.
78. The council will receive £48.6m in 2025/26. The existing MTFS assumes funding of £37.8m so this is an increase of £10.8m made up of a continuation of the £4.8m 2024/25 increase notified in the Final Settlement for 2024/25 and £6.0m new funding for 2025/26.
79. The distribution of the 2025/26 increase has been equalised to take account of the funding generated through the adult social care precept. The council's share is around 0.7% of the national total and compares to Relative Needs Formula distributions in previous years where the council received around 1.0% of the national total.

Children's Social Care Prevention Grant

80. A new Children's Social Care Prevention Grant, totalling £250m has been distributed using a new children's needs-based formula and will be increased to £263m in the Final Settlement. The Provisional Settlement sets out that the council will receive £1.4m or 0.6% of the national total. The funding will need to be used to invest in the national roll out of family help but further information is awaited.

Services Grant

81. The Services Grant will end in 2024/25 with no further funding in 2025/26. The MTFS already assumed that this would fall out so there is no impact.

New Homes Bonus

82. £1.7m un-ringfenced funding from the New Homes Bonus, which was extended by a further year into 2024/25, was expected to fall out in 2025/26 so no further funding is assumed in the MTFS.
83. There will be a final round of New Homes Bonus (NHB) payments in 2025/26, with the Government consulting on proposals for reforming the NHB as part of wider funding reform beyond 2025/26. The Council will receive £1.1m.

Rural Services Delivery Grant

84. The Rural Services Delivery Grant totalled £110m nationally in 2024/25. This funding has been repurposed in 2025/26. The Council has not previously received any share of this grant so there is no impact on the MTFS.

Recovery Grant

85. A new one – off 'Recovery Grant' worth £600m has been distributed to areas with greater need and demand for services. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement confirmed that the council will not receive any funding through this grant.

Revenue Support Grant

86. Grant funding for Extended Rights to Home to School Transport (1.0m in 2024/25) and the Transparency Code New Burdens grant (£0.012m) have been rolled into un-ringfenced RSG in 2025/26 in addition to £1.4m Fire Pension Grant that was rolled in in 2024/25.
87. After taking account of inflation on the grants rolled in the council will receive £2.5m in 2025/26.

Adult Social Care Ringfenced Grants

88. £1.05 billion was allocated through the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund in 2024/25 to support local authorities to maintain key aspects of adult social care, such as fees, to support provider pressures. The council will receive a further £10.0m in 2025/26. There is no change compared to 2024/25 or to the assumed funding for 2025/26.

89. The improved Better Care Fund (iBCF) (£10.7m) and Adult Social Care Discharge Fund (£2.5m) will be combined into a new Adult Social Care Better Care Grant in 2025/26. Both grants are unchanged compared to 2024/25.

Consolidation of Grant Funding

90. The following grants will be moved into the Settlement (but not into Core Spending Power) in 2025/26.
91. The Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant (£160m including an uplift of £30m for 2025/26) has been consolidated as a new, separate line in the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, maintaining its existing distribution. The council will receive £1.2m in 2024/25. This will increase to £1.5m in 2025/26.
92. A single Children and Families Grant, worth £414m nationally has been consolidated from existing programmes, previously funded by Department for Education. Conditions placed on this funding published alongside the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement set out that this needs to be used to continue preventative services where they are running now. These services include whole family support to help children and families overcome challenges at the earliest opportunity. This should be in line with the Children's Social Care National Framework, take forward the learning and evidence from the Supporting Families programme, and lay the groundwork for Family Help.
93. Existing grant funding that will be consolidated into the single Children and Families Grant in 2025/26 is shown in Table 8.

| Table 8 | Existing Grant Funding £m |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Supporting Families | 1.7 |
| Supported Accommodation Reforms - New Burdens to Local Authorities | 1.0 |
| Staying Put | 0.3 |
| Virtual School Heads Extension for Previously Looked After Children | 0.1 |
| Leaving Care Allowance | 0.1 |
| Personal Advisors | 0.1 |
| Children & Families Grant 2025/26 | 3.3 |

Other Grant Funding Updates

Household Support Fund

94. The Household Support Fund has been available since 2021 to help the most vulnerable households across England with essential food and energy costs.

95. Funding of £1bn nationally for the Household Support Fund (HSF) and Discretionary Housing Payments will be available in 2025/26. The amount for the council along with any grant conditions are yet to be confirmed.

Highways Maintenance

96. The Autumn 2024 Budget announced nearly £1.6 billion in capital funding for local highways maintenance in England for 2025/26. This includes £500m additional funding compared to funding levels for 2024/25.
97. Oxfordshire's baseline for 2024/25 is £24.5m. This will increase by £9.0m to £33.5m in 2025/26. Further information is awaited on the grant conditions as well as clarification about whether existing grant funding for the Integrated Transport Block has been rolled into this total.
98. The Department for Transport will also introduce a new incentive element in 2025/26 to ensure that best practice in sustainable highways asset management is followed. 25% of the funding uplift will be held back until local authorities can prove that they are meeting certain criteria. Further details will be shared with local authorities in due course.
99. The notified grant for 2025/26 is £9.0m higher than previously assumed. Pending further clarification about the funding, it is proposed to use anticipated corporate funding that can be freed up as a result of the increase in the grant to manage a funding pressure of £1.5m identified in the Decarbonisation Programme. £2.25m will be held pending confirmation about the arrangements for the 25% incentive element. The remaining £5.25m will be held in contingency to mitigate risks in the capital programme and pending clarification about funding for the Integrated Transport Block (£3.7m).

Bus Grant

100. Oxfordshire's total bus funding allocation from the Department for Transport has been notified at £10.1m for 2025/26 and incorporates both Bus Service Operator Grant (BSOG) of £0.8m and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding of £9.2m (of which £5.4m is capital funding and £3.8m revenue) as well as Capacity and Capability grant of £0.1m.
101. The Department for Transport remains committed to the use of Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) as the means to provide transparency to the public on local plans to improve bus services.
102. The delivery plan will need to set out all the schemes and measures to be funded by the new grant as well as expenditure from all previous BSIP funding which is still being used to deliver schemes and measures in 2025/26. The plan needs to be submitted to the DfT by 31 March 2025.
103. The delivery plan needs to include total funding and key milestones for each scheme and an initial assessment of the likely outcomes and contributions to the local BSIP, aligned with the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and wider authority objectives. The DfT will not approve the Delivery Plans but requires that the list of schemes and measures is published.

104. Pending agreement of the delivery plan it is proposed to add the £5.4m capital element of the BSIP funding to the capital programme to support bus journey time and infrastructure improvements. Some of the funding will need to be used to support revenue expenditure, including to support/subsidise the council's demand response transport (Comet), along with allowing continuation of public bus service subsidy (a mix of new and enhanced services). The use of the funding will be set out as part of the delivery plan.
105. The remaining £3.8m revenue funding will be spread evenly over 2025/26 and 2026/27 and used to support Bus service subsidy & passenger experience improvements.

Extended Producer Responsibilities

106. Local Authorities will receive around £1.1bn of new funding in 2025/26 through the implementation of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme to improve recycling outcomes. Exceptionally for 2025/26 only, HM Treasury will guarantee that if Local Authorities do not receive EPR income in line with the central estimate there will be an in-year top up, with the detail on this to be set out through the Settlement process.
107. The council will receive £5.1m funding in 2025/26. A new reserve is proposed to be created to hold the funding until it is used to meet additional costs in waste services and for projects to drive up recycling and reuse of packaging waste, which will result in less residual waste and reducing the impact of rising costs in future years including the implementation of the Carbon Emission Trading Scheme in April 2028. It is anticipated that income will reduce over time as producers change packaging.

Employers' National Insurance Contributions (NICs)

108. The Autumn Budget included an increase to employer's National Insurance contributions in 2025/26 and corresponding compensation for local authorities. Within the Policy Statement published on 28 November 2024 there was a commitment to provide support for public sector employers for additional employer NICs costs.
109. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement confirms that funding of £515m nationally for local authorities to manage the impact of the increase to Employers' National Insurance will be for direct costs only. The funding will be allocated based on net current expenditure for each council as part of the Final Local Government Finance Settlement.
110. The Local Government Association has previously estimated that the NIC change would cost councils £637m in direct costs. On this basis, the estimate is that the council will only receive around 80% of the estimated cost of £3.9m, so ahead of confirmation it is estimated that the council could receive additional funding of £3.1m.

Public Health Ringfenced Grant

111. The ringfenced Public Health grant is £34.4m in 2024/25. Confirmation of the grant funding for 2025/26 is awaited.

Council Tax and Adult Social Care Precept

Planned Council Tax Increases

112. The Provisional Local Government Settlement confirmed that the referendum principles for core council tax for 2025/26 will be 3%, and 2% for the adult social care precept.
113. The MTFS agreed in February 2024 assumes a council tax increase of 1.99% in 2025/26 and 2026/27. Each 1% increase above that will generate around £5.1m additional on-going funding in 2025/26 with larger increases in future years as a result of the growth in the taxbase.
114. A proposed increase of 4.99% for Band D council tax in 2025/26 is shown in Table 9. This is made up of the 2.99% core increase plus 2.00% for adult social care. Band D council tax will increase by £90.84 from £1,820.56 in 2024/25 to £1,911.40 in 2025/26.

Table 9: Proposed Council Tax Increases

| | 2025/26 MTFS | 2025/26 Referendum Limit | 2026/27 | 2027/28 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---|----------------|----------------|
| Core Council Tax Increase | 1.99% | 2.99% | 1.99% | 1.99% |
| Adult Social Care Precept | | 2.00% | 2.00% | 2.00% |
| Total Council Tax Increase | 1.99% | 4.99% | 3.99% | 3.99% |

115. Council tax increases for 2026/27 and 2027/28 are assumed at 3.99% on the basis of a core increase of 1.99% aligned with anticipated inflation and a further Adult Social Care Precept of 2.0%. Information about the future arrangements for council tax referendum limits for these years is expected to be shared by the Government later in 2025/26.
116. The council tax base is the number of Band D equivalent dwellings in a local authority area adjusted for the assumed rate of collection of council tax. Billing authorities (district councils) are required to provide this information to the precepting authorities and the method used to calculate the tax base is prescribed in regulations. Growth in the tax base of 1.75% per year is assumed in the MTFS reflecting anticipated increases in the number of households in Oxfordshire paying council tax. Updates from the district councils received in December 2024 confirm that the tax base will grow by 1.87% in 2025/26, generating additional on-going council tax income of £0.7m compared to the existing MTFS.
117. Cabinet is recommended to recommend to Council to approve a council tax requirement (precept) for 2025/26 of £533,328,633 (Section 4.3) and approve a

2025/26 council tax for band D equivalent properties of £1,911.40 (recommendation j).

Council Tax Surpluses

118. In addition to the tax base, the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires billing authorities to determine the estimated surplus or deficit on the council tax collection fund as a result of income from council tax/ratepayers being more or less than originally estimated. Estimates for the forthcoming year are formed from the position for three years, the actual position for the prior financial year, the estimate for the current financial year and an estimate for the forthcoming financial year. Surpluses/deficits are shared between billing and major precepting authorities. The MTFs assumed that the county council's share of surpluses on the council tax collection fund would be £8.0m in 2025/26.

Business Rates

119. The Council also receives general funding from business rates based on the Government's assessment of need known as the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA). The Provisional Local Government Settlement confirmed that the council's SFA will increase from £78.4m in 2024/25 to £79.4m in 2025/26. The existing MTFs assumed an increase of 2.0% to £80.0m. This means the SFA will be £0.6m lower than assumed in the MTFs.
120. In addition to the SFA, the Council receives compensation for under-indexation of the business rates multiplier by way of un-ringfenced Section 31 Local Government Act 2003 grant. The MTFs assumes that this grant would be £14.5m in 2025/26. The Provisional Local Government Settlement confirmed an increase to £15.1m which will increase grant funding by £0.6m.
121. Local authorities have been able to retain the growth in business rates from a baseline of April 2013 up until the point of a business rates reset which was originally planned for April 2020 but has yet to take place. The forecast for retained growth in 2025/26 was assumed to be £4.9m in the MTFs.
122. However, since 2020/21 business rates income has been impacted by reliefs for retail, leisure and hospitality businesses. The Autumn Budget confirmed these will continue for a further year in 2025/26 but at a reduced level. In 2024/25 the council has received Section 31 grant income of £3.6m to replace local business rates income not received as a result of those reliefs. Confirmation of the grant funding for 2025/26 is not expected to be received until the Final Local Government Finance Settlement at the earliest but will be lower as a result of the reduction in the level of reliefs available to businesses. This reduction should be offset by an increase to the local share of the business rates.
123. The amount of business rates funding to be passed from the districts to the county council (comprising the local element of the SFA and any growth) is expected to be confirmed at the end of January 2025.

124. The combined business rates collection fund surplus/deficit for 2024/25 notified by the district councils was nil as any surpluses were offset by deficits. Confirmation of the position for 2025/26 for each district is not expected to be available until early/mid February 2025. The existing MTFs assumption that there is no surplus or deficit is unchanged ahead of the receipt of this information.
125. Estimated business rates funding is summarised in Table 10. While the SFA was included in the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement updates on the other funding are awaited from the district councils (for local business rates income) and MHCLG for the Section 31 grant funding for Business Rates reliefs and Indexation.

Table 10: Business Rates Funding

| | 2025/26 | 2026/27 | 2027/28 |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Settlement Funding Assessment | 79.4 | 81.0 | 82.6 |
| Local Growth | 2.9 | 5.0 | 5.1 |
| Section 31 Grant for Business Rates Reliefs – Retail & Hospitality reliefs ¹ | 1.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Section 31 Grant – Indexation Element | 15.2 | 15.2 | 15.2 |
| Section 31 Grant for Business Rates Reliefs – on-going reliefs | 1.8 | 1.8 | 1.8 |
| Total Section 31 Grant for Business Rates Reliefs and Indexation | 18.9 | 17.0 | 17.0 |
| Collection Fund Surplus (+) or Deficit (-) | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Total | 101.2 | 102.9 | 104.6 |

Updated Position for 2025/26 compared to current Medium Term Financial Strategy

126. Table 11 sets out the revised position for 2025/26 compared to the current plan incorporating the new changes set out in this report.
127. The first column shows the budget for 2025/26 assumed in the MTFs agreed by Council in February 2024. The second column then shows proposed changes to funding and expenditure.

¹ These reliefs were extended until 31 March 2026 in the Autumn Budget 2024 but with the rate of discount reduced from 75% to 40%. The estimated grant funding and local growth (reflecting additional Business Rates payable by local businesses as a result of the reduction in the reliefs) has been adjusted on that basis.

Table 11: Current MTFS and Updates to the Budget for 2025/26

| | 2025/26 Budget Current MTFS £m | Changes to Funding Assumptions £m | 2025/26 Budget Updated £m |
|-----------------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| Funding: | | | |
| Council Tax | -517.4 | -15.9 | -533.3 |
| Council Tax Collection Fund | -8.0 | 0.0 | -8.0 |
| Business Rates | -101.2 | 0.0 | -101.2 |
| Revenue Support Grant | -1.4 | -1.1 | -2.5 |
| Total Funding | -628.0 | -17.0 | -645.0 |

| | 2025/26 Budget Current MTFS £m | New Budget Pressures, Investments and Savings £m | 2025/26 Budget Updated £m |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| Net operating budget 2024/25 | 611.2 | | 611.2 |
| Directorate Budget Changes | | | |
| Existing planned changes | 17.9 | | 17.9 |
| New Investments (Table 3a) | | 11.2 | 11.2 |
| New service pressures (Table 4a) | | 18.1 | 18.1 |
| New savings (Table 5a) | | -17.9 | -17.9 |
| Subtotal Services Changes | 17.9 | 11.4 | 29.3 |
| Budgets held centrally | | | |
| Existing planned changes | 12.8 | | 12.8 |
| New changes (Table 6) | | 7.4 | 7.4 |
| New grant changes | | -15.7 | -15.7 |
| Net Operating Budget 2025/26 | 641.9 | 3.1 | 645.0 |
| Budget Deficit (+)/Surplus (-) | +13.9 | -13.9 | 0.0 |

128. Table 12 shows the impact of the proposed changes for each service and for budgets held centrally in 2025/26.

Table 12: Proposed changes for each service and budgets held centrally

| Service Areas | Budget Rolled Forward from 2024/25 £m | Add changes in current MTFS £m | Add new budget increases £m | Less new savings £m | Total Change in Budget £m | 2025/26 Budget £m |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Adult Services | 251.7 | 10.9 | 0.1 | -8.1 | 2.9 | 254.6 |
| Children's Services | 199.1 | 3.3 | 16.8 | -2.9 | 17.2 | 216.2 |
| Environment & Highways | 53.5 | 0.5 | 3.0 | -3.8 | -0.4 | 53.1 |
| Economy & Place | 17.0 | 0.4 | 3.3 | -0.1 | 3.6 | 20.6 |
| Public Health & Communities | 12.9 | 0.2 | 0.6 | -0.8 | 0.0 | 12.9 |
| Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Community Safety | 28.9 | 1.0 | 1.3 | -0.2 | 2.1 | 31.0 |
| Resources and Law & Governance | 61.3 | 2.5 | 3.1 | -2.0 | 3.6 | 64.9 |
| Transformation, Digital & Customer Experience | 3.5 | -0.9 | 1.2 | 0.0 | 0.3 | 3.8 |
| Services Total | 627.8 | 17.9 | 29.3 | -17.9 | 29.3 | 657.1 |
| Budgets Held Centrally | | | | | | |
| Capital Financing Costs | 30.3 | 1.3 | 3.0 | -2.2 | 2.2 | 32.5 |
| Interest on balances | -20.2 | 4.1 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 4.7 | -15.5 |
| Contingency & Inflation Risk | 15.0 | 0.1 | 4.3 | 0.0 | 4.4 | 19.4 |
| Un-ringfenced Specific Grants | -52.0 | 6.9 | -15.7 | 0.0 | -8.8 | -60.9 |
| Insurance | 1.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.7 |
| Budgeted contribution from COVID-19 Reserve | -3.8 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.4 | -2.3 |
| Budgeted contribution from Transformation Reserve | -1.5 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.6 | -0.9 |
| Budgeted contribution from Budget Priorities Reserve | -1.4 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.4 | 0.0 |
| Other Budgeted Contributions to reserves ² | 15.4 | -3.1 | 1.6 | 0.0 | -1.5 | 13.9 |
| Total Budgets Held Centrally | -16.6 | 12.8 | -6.2 | -2.2 | 4.4 | -12.1 |
| Net Operating Budget | 611.2 | 30.7 | 23.1 | -20.0 | 33.7 | 645.0 |
| Funding (from Table 5) | | | | | | -645.0 |
| Budget Deficit/Surplus | | | | | | 0.0 |

Funding for Social Care

129. The Policy Statement published by the Government on 28 November 2024 sets out that the Government expects local authority spending on adult social care to increase to reflect demand and cost pressures. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) will monitor local authority budgets and spending in 2025/26, with an expectation that local authorities make appropriate use of increases in income from council tax and grant funding to support adult social care outcomes.

² Includes £4.0m on-going contribution to Demographic Risk Reserve, a £10.2m contribution to the Prudential Borrowing Reserve and adjustment to the Budget Equalisation Reserve.

130. Funding for Adult Services is estimated to increase by £10.2m compared to 2024/25 after taking account of new and existing pressures and savings, a share of funding for pay inflation and employer's National Insurance held centrally as well as a share of the contingency budget. The increase will be funded by the Adult Social Care precept which will generate £10.2m funding in 2025/26. £13.3m of the increase in council tax income and all of the £10.8m increase in the Social Care Grant will be used to fund pressures within Children's Services.

Proposed 2025/26 Budget and MTFs to 2027/28

Funding Reform

131. From 2026/27, the Government has announced that the way councils are funded will be changed with the intention of directing funding to where it is most needed, based on an up-to-date assessment of need and local resources. These reforms will build on the proposals set out in the previous Government's review of Relative Needs and Resources (also referred to as the 'Fair Funding Review') and will include a 'reset' of the business rates retention system. There will be a gradual move gradually towards an updated system and views will be sought on possible transitional arrangements to determine how local authorities reach their new funding allocations.
132. Initial consultation on the objectives and principles of the Government's proposed approach were launched alongside the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/26 with a consultation on the technical detail of resetting the business rates retention system in early 2025 and further consultation later in 2025. Implementation of these reforms will begin through the multi-year Settlement from 2026/27.
133. The MTFs assumes council tax increases of 3.99% in 2026/27 and 2027/28 including a general increase of 1.99% and Adult Social Care precept of 2.00%. Ahead of further information about funding reform, the MTFs assumptions remain unchanged, but as set out in the Financial Strategy at Section 4.5, it is possible that funding through the Settlement Funding Assessment and other grant funding could reduce by £20m - £45m over the medium term.
134. A summary of the funding and proposed expenditure built into the MTFs for 2025/26 to 2027/28 is set out in Section 4.1 and summarised in Table 13.

Table 13: Proposed funding and expenditure built into the MTFs for 2025/26 to 2027/28

| Table 13 | 2025/26 Budget February 2024 MTFS £m | Proposed Change £m | 2025/26 Proposed Budget £m | 2026/27 Indicative £m | 2027/28 Indicative £m |
|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Funding: | | | | | |
| Council Tax | -517.4 | -15.9 | -533.3 | -564.3 | 597.1 |
| Council Tax Collection Fund | -8.0 | | -8.0 | -8.0 | -8.0 |
| Business Rates | -101.2 | | -101.2 | -102.9 | -104.7 |
| Revenue Support Grant | -1.4 | -1.1 | -2.5 | -2.5 | -2.5 |
| Total Funding | -628.0 | -17.0 | -645.0 | -677.7 | -712.2 |

| | 2025/26 Budget February 2024 MTFS £m | Proposed Change £m | 2025/26 Proposed Budget £m | 2026/27 Proposed £m | 2027/28 Proposed £m |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Net operating budget (prior year) | 611.2 | | 611.2 | 645.0 | 679.6 |
| Service Budget Changes | | | | | |
| Investments | -5.4 | 11.2 | 5.8 | -3.2 | 0.2 |
| Pressures | 35.5 | 18.1 | 53.6 | 32.7 | 36.1 |
| Savings | -12.2 | -17.9 | -30.1 | -9.3 | -0.3 |
| Subtotal Service Changes | 17.9 | 11.4 | 29.3 | 20.3 | 36.1 |
| Changes to budgets held centrally | 5.9 | 7.4 | 13.3 | 13.2 | 1.4 |
| Changes to grant funding | 6.9 | -15.8 | -8.9 | 1.1 | 0.0 |
| Net Operating Budget | 641.9 | | 645.0 | 679.6 | 717.0 |
| Total Funding | -628.0 | | -645.0 | -677.7 | -712.2 |
| Budget Deficit (+)/ Surplus (-) | 13.9 | -13.9 | 0.0 | 1.9 | 4.8 |
| Council Tax increase | 1.99% | | 4.99% | 3.99% | 3.99% |

135. Cabinet is recommended to recommend Council to approve a Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2027/28 set out in Section 4.1 and summarised in Table 13, taking into account the proposals set out in Section 4.2 and 4.2.1 (recommendation i).
136. The Financial Strategy (Section 4.5) sets out the financial planning principles applied in setting the budget and MTFs as well as assumptions on future funding. It also includes an assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Financial Management as well as key indicators for measuring the Council's financial health and resilience. Cabinet is recommended to approve the Financial Strategy (recommendation d).

Earmarked Reserves and General Balances

137. Cabinet is recommended to approve the Earmarked Reserves and General Balances Policy Statement (Section 4.6) (recommendation e). This sets out the purpose of reserves along with planned contributions to and from Earmarked Reserves and the proposed minimum level of General Balances for 2025/26. As set out in Section 4.6 Cabinet is also recommended to create a new reserve to hold funding relating to Extended Producer Responsibilities. The forecast level of earmarked reserves over the period of the MTFS is set out in Section 4.6.1.
138. The risk assessed level for general balances for 2025/26 is £30.2m which is equivalent to 4.7% of the proposed net operating budget of £645.0m. The overall risk assessed level is unchanged from the total for 2024/25 but the assessment of risks contributing to that has been updated. Further details are set out in Annex 1 of Section 4.6.

High Needs Deficit

139. In line with a change to the CIPFA code of practice on DSG High Needs deficits an unusable reserve to hold negative High Needs DSG balances was created in 2020/21. The forecast deficit of £28.4m in 2024/25 will increase the total accumulated negative balance for High Needs held in this reserve from £55.8m to £84.2m at 31 March 2025.
140. In December 2022 the Government agreed to the extension of the DSG statutory override for a one-off period of three years (up to March 2026).
141. DSG deficits cannot currently be met from general council funding without permission from the Secretary of State. However, this deficit, both accumulated to date, and on-going, is a significant financial risk irrespective of the future arrangements for the statutory override. This will need to be taken into account in the assessment of the overall financial position for the council, including the adequacy of reserves and balances for 2025/26, that is required to be set out in the statutory Section 25 report by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer. The expectation is that the Government will find a solution towards dealing with (and accounting for) the accumulated deficit prior to the end of 2025/26, when the current statutory override is due to end.
142. The DSG funding and High Needs forecast deficit position for 2025/26 – 2027/28 is set out in paragraphs 149 – 156 below.

Review of Charges 2025/26 and 2026/27 – Annex A

143. The council charges for services whenever it is lawful for it to do so. Income from fees and charges, which contributes to the overall funding for the council is estimated at £80m³ or 9% of the council's funding in 2024/25.

³ Excluding charges for Adult Social Care which are managed within the Pooled Budgets.

144. All services must consider, as part of the annual budget and business planning process, the activities which make up the delivery of each service and assess which of them may be made the subject of a charge.
145. Charges that are specified nationally or are statutory will be updated in line with national guidance. Charges for adult social care will continue to be assessed as in line with the [Care Act 2014 and the council's charging policy](#). Other charges are proposed to increase in line with inflation. Where charges relate to the council priorities, the proposed change has been considered in that context.
146. The schedule of proposed charges for 2025/26 and, in relation to the Registration Service, charges for 2026/27 is set out at Annex A. Updates, including where charges are proposed to remain unchanged compared to 2024/25, include the following:
- The cost of school meals is proposed to increase from £2.55 to £2.90 per meal (£3.48 where VAT is chargeable).
 - Contributions to Home to School Transport Spare Seat Scheme for Pre & Post 16 pupils: 3% inflationary increase proposed from 1 September 2025.
 - Parking charges including the cost of joint tickets for parking and bus travel at the council's park and ride car parks proposed to remain unchanged.
 - Charges for on – street parking proposed to remain unchanged.
 - The charge for annual residents' parking permits unchanged.
 - The cost of business parking permits proposed to increase by 10%.
 - Lane Rental Fees – previously these charges were based on an hourly rate which has proved challenging to calculate against activity. Proposed to amend the charge to reflect the time spent on each application.
 - Large scale DIY waste charges proposed to increase by 4.2%.
147. The Registration Service has also reviewed and proposed charges which will enable the service to confirm the cost of services, including bookings for ceremonies such as marriages and civil partnerships up to 31 March 2026.
148. Cabinet is recommended to approve the Review of Charges in Annex A (recommendation a).

Dedicated Schools Grant and High Needs Forecast

149. On 18 December 2024, the Department for Education (DfE) confirmed the 2025/26 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation for Oxfordshire will be £782.7m as shown in Table 14.
150. Expenditure on High Needs DSG funded services has been higher than the available funding since 2020/21 with deficits continuing to grow mainly as a result of multiple years of demand growth rates higher than available funding rates.

Table 14: Dedicated Schools Grant Funding for Oxfordshire

| Summary of Block Funding | 2024/25 Latest Allocation | 2025/26 Allocation as at 18 December | 2025/26 Forecast Expenditure | 2025/26 Forecast Deficit |
|--|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | £m | £m | £m | £m |
| Schools block | 509.2 | 549.6 | 549.6 | 0.0 |
| Central Services Schools block | 5.2 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 0.0 |
| High Needs block | 109.2 | 118.2 | 144.9 | 26.7 |
| Early Years block | 75.4 | 109.4 | 109.4 | 0.0 |
| Total | 698.9 | 782.7 | 809.4 | 26.7 |
| Total excluding Early Years Block | 623.6 | 673.3 | 700.0 | 26.7 |

High Needs DSG Forecast & Deficit

151. As agreed by Council in February 2024 spend on High Needs was expected to exceed the grant funding available in 2024/25 by £21.3m. The forecast as at the end of November 2024 projects an increase in the 2024/25 deficit to £28.4m, an increase of £7.1m. The forecast deficit would increase the cumulative negative High Needs DSG balance held in reserves to £84.2m at 31 March 2025.
152. The forecast deficit of £26.7m in 2025/26 is a mitigated best-case scenario after taking account of the Deficit Management Plan. Table 15 sets out the mitigated best case, and unmitigated worst-case forecasts for the period to 2027/28. It is anticipated that the actual deficit in 2025/26 will be between £26.7m and £38.5m.
153. Some of the mitigations within the Deficit Management Plan are:
- New Special Schools scheduled 2023/24 to 2029/30
 - New Special Educational Needs (SEN) Units/ Resource Bases
 - Transfer of Resource Bases to Schools – to be piloted from 2025/26
 - Implementation of a Banding System from 1 April 2026
 - Savings through contract renegotiation
 - Review of internal services
 - Reduction in the use of Agency workers
 - General Housekeeping and the creation of efficiencies
154. Continued increases in demand and inflationary pressures are proving to be considerably more significant than reductions in expenditure that can be achieved through efficiencies and demand management. There is therefore a significant risk that deficits will continue to increase. Table 15 shows the underlying unmitigated forecast deficit as well as the adjusted estimated deficit after taking account of the impact of the Deficit Management Plan. In both scenarios the total deficit will be over £100m by 31 March 2026.

Table 15: Forecast High Needs DSG Deficits 2025/26 – 2027/28

| | 2025/26 £m | 2026/27 £m | 2027/28 £m |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Mitigated Forecast Deficit | 26.7 | 18.8 | 7.9 |
| Unmitigated Forecast Deficit | 38.5 | 47.5 | 56.0 |
| Cumulative High Needs DSG Deficit – Mitigated | 110.9 | 129.7 | 137.6 |
| Cumulative High Needs DSG Deficit - Unmitigated | 122.7 | 170.2 | 226.2 |

155. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement consultation document recognises the strain that the rising costs of SEND provision are placing on Local Authorities, in particular the DSG deficits on councils' finances.
156. The Government will set out plans for reforming the SEND system during 2025/26. This will also include plans to help Local Authorities “deal with their historic and accruing deficits” as well as considering any transitional period between the current and reformed system. This work will inform any decision about the continuation of the statutory override.

Use of Enterprise Zone Business Rates Funding – Annex B

157. From 31 March 2024, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) ceased to have official recognition and existing LEP functions were transferred to upper-tier local authorities or combined authorities, where they exist. From 1 April 2024 the County Council has a controlling interest in OxLEP Ltd and is the sole member. Group accounts for 2024/25 will be prepared on that basis.
158. From April 2024, the County Council took on the responsibility for the utilisation of the Oxfordshire Enterprise Zone business rates following the transfer of LEP functions into upper tier local authorities.
159. Enterprise Zones we established across the country from 2012 and are designated areas aimed at stimulating economic growth. There are 48 enterprise zones in England and two are in Oxfordshire, Science Vale UK (EZ1 created in 2012) and Didcot Growth Accelerator (EZ2 created in 2016).
160. The growth in business rates within these zones over a 25-year period from their establishment is retained by the local authority to be reinvested in local economic priorities. Until the transfer of LEP functions to upper tier authorities, OxLEP determined the use of the funding across Oxfordshire.
161. It is proposed (recommendation f) that a contribution of £1.6m from EZ1 is made to Enterprise Oxfordshire for operational costs in 2025/26 and 2026/27 and that a contribution of £0.145m from EZ2 is made to the Vale of White Horse District Council for operational costs of EZ2 in 2025/26 and 2026/27. These contributions will be made from accumulated business rates in the two Enterprise Zones.

162. Annex B sets out the estimated income over the 25-year period for each Enterprise Zone along with the use of funding agreed up to April 2024 and proposed use for 2025/26 and 2026/27. Further use of the Enterprise Zone funding will be agreed by the Council in due course.

Capital and Investment Strategy – Section 5

163. Section 5 sets out the capital and investment strategy for 2025/26, the Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26 and supporting information. It is comprised of the following sections:

Section 5.1: Capital and Investment Strategy 2024/25 – 2034/35

Section 5.2: Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26

Section 5.3: Proposed changes to the Capital Programme and pipeline schemes

Section 5.4 Proposed Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2034/35

164. The Capital and Investment Strategy (Section 5.1) outlines the council's approach to capital investment over the next ten years and incorporates the requirements of the CIPFA Prudential Code for Local Authorities.

165. Cabinet is recommended to approve the Capital and Investment Strategy for 2025/26, including the Capital Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement which form annexes to the strategy (recommendation I).

166. Cabinet is recommended to approve the Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26 (Section 5.2) including the relevant Prudential Indicators and Specified Investment and Non-Specified Investment instruments. To enable the Treasury Management team to operate effectively, Cabinet is also recommended to continue to delegate the authority to withdraw or advance additional funds to/from external fund managers to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer and approve that any further changes required to the 2025/26 Treasury Management 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 (recommendation I).

167. The Council's Capital Programme is derived from the priorities identified in the supporting strategies and sets out the agreed capital investment to deliver those priorities. The programme is refreshed annually and agreed by Council each February. Section 5.3 sets out the proposed changes to the existing Capital Programme. It also sets out the proposed pipeline schemes – these have indicative funding requirements pending further development and initial business cases. Once developed and business cases approved, these will be brought forward for inclusion in the capital programme.

168. Capital schemes put forward as part of the 2025/26 budget have been prioritised as follows:

- Schemes that facilitate compliance with minimum statutory duties relating to health & safety, schools, and delivery of business-critical services
- Schemes that generate revenue, are self-funding or facilitate cost-avoidance strategies
- Schemes that contribute to the improvement of the highway network, including road safety measures, flood prevention work and pothole prevention measures such as surface dressings
- Schemes that encourage and facilitate active travel and improve market towns
- Schemes that enhance energy efficiency and promote the adoption of sustainable and environmentally responsible solutions
- Schemes which are partly funded by Section 106 developer contributions but require additional funding to progress.

169. The draft capital programme for 2024/25 to 2034/35 is attached at Section 5.4. Cabinet is recommended to approve the new capital proposals for inclusion in the programme (recommendation n) and the capital programme (recommendation o). A summary of the proposed capital programme is set out in Table 16. Funding includes £65m of additional prudential borrowing to support the financing of the new capital proposals. This borrowing creates an ongoing annual revenue cost of £4.2m and will increase the total prudential borrowing amount to £276.3m over the ten - year period.

170. The ten – year Capital Programme shows a shortfall of funding/over-programmed of £11.1m. Given the programme is £1.5bn over a ten-year period, this is not considered an imprudent position. Any new capital resources which arise in 2025/26 will be prioritised to bringing the programme back into balance.

Table 16: Proposed Capital Programme

| Strategy / Programme | Current Year 2024/25 | Proposed Firm Programme (2 years) | Proposed Pipeline Programme | Total Programme |
|--|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| | £m | £m | £m | £m |
| Pupil Place Plan | 32.6 | 96.3 | 105.6 | 234.5 |
| Major Infrastructure | 116.3 | 395.3 | 185.7 | 697.3 |
| Highways Asset Management Plan | 64.4 | 116.4 | 127.0 | 307.8 |
| Property, Estates and Investment Strategy | 28.8 | 67.8 | 17.1 | 113.7 |
| ICT | 7.8 | 4.3 | 0.6 | 12.7 |
| Passported Funding | 8.9 | 9.6 | 2.3 | 20.8 |
| Vehicles and Equipment | 2.9 | 7.1 | 17.7 | 27.7 |
| Total Estimated Capital Programme Expenditure | 261.7 | 696.8 | 456.0 | 1,414.5 |
| Earmarked Reserves | 0 | 61.0 | 81.0 | 142.0 |
| Total Estimated Capital Programme | 261.7 | 757.8 | 537.0 | 1,556.5 |

Risk Management

171. To help manage the impact of financial risk in the proposed budget and MTFs, an on-going corporate contingency is held. The proposed level of corporate contingency budget for 2025/26 is £7.3m and is held to cover:
- the risk that demographic pressures are higher than forecast;
 - any unfunded new burdens or unfunded elements of government grant;
 - any unbudgeted pay award and other inflationary risks; and
 - the risk that proposed savings are not achieved in full, based on the performance targets set out in the Financial Strategy.
172. The statutory report of the Chief Financial Officer required under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2002, which forms part of the suite of papers considered by Council in setting the budget each February, includes a section assessing the key financial risks.
173. In addition to corporate contingency, one-off funding is held in general balances to ensure that a major incident or emergency can be managed without impacting on other services.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

174. The Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty on local authorities that, when making decisions of a strategic nature, decision makers must exercise 'due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination... advance equality of opportunity... and foster good relations.'
175. In developing budget proposals, services have considered the potential impact of change with respect to equality, diversity and inclusion, in line with the council's refreshed framework agreed by Cabinet on 19 November 2024, "Including Everyone".
176. The refresh of the framework gives the opportunity to realign the council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) goals with the broader strategic priorities and reconsider how the framework can be used to drive meaningful change. The council has a track record of going beyond its legal equality duty by considering groups and communities beyond the protected characteristics of the Equality Act. For example, the council considers the impact of its decisions on rural communities, armed forces communities, areas of deprivation and carers. The new Including Everyone framework goes further, recognising the council's commitment to considering future generations in decision-making, as well as refugees and asylum seekers by becoming a Council of Sanctuary. The new framework also includes reference to the socioeconomic duty and consideration of residents experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.
177. A draft overarching summary impact assessment for equalities, taking into account the overall impact of the budget proposals, is included at Section 4.7. It should be noted that a number of proposals are very early in the business case development process.

Sustainability Implications

178. The Climate Action Framework sets the council's commitment to tackling the climate emergency which is underpinned by the Council's priority to put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work.
179. A draft overarching summary impact assessment for climate of the budget proposals is included at Section 4.8. A number of the proposals are very early in the business case development process and therefore will be subject to fuller Climate Impact Assessment as the proposals are developed.

Staff Implications

180. Staffing implications are being considered as part of the Budget and Business Planning process and any proposals are consistent with the council's People and Culture Strategy.

Financial Implications

181. The Council is required by law to set a balanced budget for 2025/26 before 1 March 2025. 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. This report is part of the process to achieve these objectives.

Comments checked by:

Ian Dyson, Director of Financial & Commercial Services

Legal Implications

182. Part 3.2 of the Councils' constitution (Budget and Policy Framework) sets out the obligations and responsibilities of the Cabinet and the Council in approving, adopting and implementing the council's budget and policy framework.
183. The Council Tax scheme is locally determined by each billing authority under Section 13A and Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. This report leads to the council tax requirement being agreed by Council in February 2025, together with a budget for 2025/26, two-year medium term financial strategy covering the period to 2027/28 and ten - year capital programme.
184. The Council is required to set a balanced budget taking account of balances and any other available reserves before the commencement of the financial year to which it relates. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires a council to set a balanced budget. To do this the council must prepare a budget that covers not only the expenditure but also the funding to meet the proposed budget. The Local Government Act 2000 states that it is the responsibility of the council, on the recommendation of the Cabinet to approve the budget and related council tax requirement.

185. The Local Government Act 2003, section 25 requires the council's Section 151 Officer to report to the council on the robustness of the estimates made and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves assumed in the budget calculations.
186. The Council has a fiduciary duty to council tax payers, which means it must consider the prudent use of resources, including control of expenditure, financial prudence in the short and long term, the need to strike a fair balance between the interests of the Council Tax payers and ratepayers and the community's interest in adequate and efficient services and the need to act in good faith in relation to compliance with statutory duties and exercising statutory powers.
187. Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 precludes a councillor from voting on a calculation which might affect the calculation of the council's budget if they have an outstanding council tax debt of over two months. If a councillor is present at any meeting at which relevant matters are discussed, they must disclose that section 106 applies and may not vote. Failure to comply is a criminal offence.

Comments checked by:

Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

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| Annexes: | Annex A: Review of Charges 2025/26 and 2026/27 |
| | Annex B: Enterprise Zone 1 and 2 Retained Income |
| | Section 2.1: Feedback from the representative residents' survey, budget simulator, focus groups and sounding boards for children and young people. |
| | Section 2.2: Feedback from the public consultation on the substance of the 2025/26 budget. |
| | Section 2.3 Observations from Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee (to follow) |
| | Section 4.1: Revenue Budget 2025/26 and MTFS to 2027/28 |
| | Section 4.2: Previously Agreed and New Budget Changes 2025/26 – 2027/28 |
| | Section 4.3: Council Tax and Precepts 2025/26 |
| | Section 4.4: Detailed Revenue Budgets 2025/26 |
| | Section 4.5: Financial Strategy 2025/26 |

Section 4.6: Earmarked Reserves and General Balances
Policy Statement 2025/26

Section 4.6.1 Forecast Earmarked Reserves

Section 4.7 Overarching Equalities Impact Assessment

Section 4.8: Overarching Climate Impact Assessment

Section 5.1: Capital and Investment Strategy 2024/25 –
2034/35

Section 5.2: Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26

Section 5.3: Proposed changes to the Capital Programme
and pipeline schemes

Section 5.4 Proposed Capital Programme 2024/25 to
2034/35

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