

MINUTE EXTRACT

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 15 February 2023

94 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023/24

The Director of Finance introduced the report which set out the draft budget for 2023/24 as proposed by the Leader of the Council for approval by Policy and Resources Committee and onward recommendation to Council on 27 February 2023 to fulfil the legal obligation on Members of the Council to set a balanced and sustainable budget for 2023/24.

The Director of Finance outlined that the proposal left the Council with £13m of unearmarked reserves and that it was essential to rebuild those reserves as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy in future years alongside close monitoring of the budget in-year to avoid overspends, particularly given the limited scope there was within the proposed budget to manage in-year pressures. It was further outlined that the final Local Government Settlement figure had now been arrived at with £135,000 additional funding which was proposed to be added to the reserves.

It was then moved by Councillor Jannette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson, that the officer recommendations as detailed in the report be approved, subject to the following addition to be referred to the Council meeting –

“That the additional funds of £135,000 arising from the final settlement are allocated as follows:

£41k be invested in specialist, complex investigation work to support Children’s social care cases where there are multiple victims or perpetrators.

£94k be invested by not taking the following four budget options that fall within the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in respect of:

- The review of bulky waste (ERIC) collection service £10k
- The Environmental Health Service Review £40k
- The reduction in the recycling promotional budget £20k
- The reduction in Waste & Environmental Services budget £24k”

The Committee debated the motion at length with particular discussion taking place regarding the proposed 4.99% Council Tax increase and the number of other Local Authorities proposing a similar increase. Following questions by members, the Section 151 Officer confirmed that he was satisfied that sufficient allowances had been made for inflationary costs and that the proposals would enable a balanced and sustainable budget for 2023/24.

At 19:38pm, the Chair adjourned the meeting to enable discussion within Political Groups to take place on the proposal.

The Committee resumed at 19:47pm.

The motion was then put to the vote. It was –

Resolved (9:6) That –

- (1) Delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer, following consultation with the Chair and Group Spokespersons of the Policy & Resources Committee, to do anything necessary – including minor financial adjustments – to give effect to the proposals contained in this report and address any funding changes, if any.**
- (2) the response to the financial proposals forming a draft budget for the purposes of consultation under section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act, set out as below be noted:
Appendix 1 Budget Proposals
Appendix 2 Budget consultation
Appendix 3 Policy & Service Committee budget proposals feedback
Appendix 4 The Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget
Appendix 5 Provisional Council Tax Statutory Calculations
Appendix 6 Discretionary Rate Relief Policy
Appendix 7 Medium-Term Financial Strategy
Appendix 8 Budget proposal changes since January 2023
Appendix 9 Council Tax Base Calculation Process and Associated Background Information
Appendix 10 Budget Workshop Outcomes**
- (3) the measures being developed to moderate the impact of the present economic conditions on the Borough and the people who live and work in Wirral be noted, including the intention to carry forward a sum of £113,000 as part of financial year-end processes to assist the residents of the Borough in dealing with cost-of-living pressures.**
- (4) a Revenue Budget of £366.47m be recommended to Council, noting that the Section 151 Officer in liaison with the Monitoring Officer and Head of Paid Service may need to make adjustments to the Budget estimates before the preparation of final reports for Full Council on 27 February 2023.**
- (5) Accordingly it be recommended that Council:**
 - a) Approve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set out as Appendix 7**
 - b) Approve increases to the Council's fees and charges equal to or above the annual Consumer Price Index reported by the Office for National Statistics in February 2023, unless either of the following conditions apply:
 - i. There is a statutory constraint that prevents such an increase,**
 - ii. The Council is operating in a market whereby such an increase would result in the Council being uncompetitive.****
 - c) Approve the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for Business Rates for 2023/24 set out as Appendix 6.**

d) Approve that Unearmarked Reserves (General Fund Balances) is maintained at a figure not lower than £13.18m for the course of the 2023/24 financial year.

e) Authorise, in respect of the Budget Proposals, that the Director with portfolio undertake such actions as they consider necessary to implement the agreed Budget and deliver the savings, income and efficiency proposals developed as part of the formulation process and update Committees accordingly.

f) Approve the 2023/24 Schools Budget of £337.017m

(6) (subject to a separate vote at Council) that Council:

a. Sets the Band D Council Tax at £1,798.48 for the Wirral Borough Council element of the Council Tax, representing a general increase of 2.99% and 2.00% ringfenced increase to Adult Social Care, and the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2023/24 of £171.9m as detailed in Appendix 5.

b. Note that the additional precepts from the Police & Crime Commissioner for Merseyside and the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority remain in estimated form and delegates authority to the Section 151 Officer to implement any variation to the overall council tax arising from the final notification of the precepts.

(7) That the additional funds of £135,000 arising from the final settlement are allocated as follows:

£41k be invested in specialist, complex investigation work to support Children's social care cases where there are multiple victims or perpetrators.

£94k be invested by not taking the following four budget options that fall within the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in respect of:

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