

announced on 19 December 2022, which will be finalised in January/early February 2023.

Despite the continued pressures on council expenditure budgets, including the impact of rising inflation and increasing utility costs, combined with the real terms reduction in Government funding provided to the council since 2010, Members supported the proposed council tax increase of 1.99% for 2023/24 as presented to Finance Council in February 2022. The proposal for an increase of 2.99% in 2024/25 will be revisited next year as part of the budget setting process.

Members recognised the financial challenges the Council faces with regards to the £1.357m forecast budget deficit by next year but also recognised the need to keep council tax at a reasonable level due to the cost of living crisis whilst also maintaining strong service provision and providing support for residents. Members supported the work already being undertaken to reduce the forecast deficit and supported the recommendations in the report.

Consultation on the proposed budget for 2023/24 will commence following approval of the proposals by Executive Cabinet.

Decision:

To agree the contents of the report in order to start the budget consultation process as follows;

- **A proposed 1.99% increase in council tax in 2023/24 with no proposed cuts to services;**
- **A forecast balanced budget for 2023/24, based on a 1.99% increase in council tax as noted above;**
- **A forecast budget shortfall for 2024/25 which will continue into 2025/26, to be addressed through the development and delivery of the council's Transformation Strategy and savings programme;**
- **To note the proposals in the report for investment in the Labour Administration's priority areas.**

Reasons for recommendations

The council wishes to set out its budget proposals and consult on them with residents.

Other options considered and rejected

None, this is the draft budget and alternative budgets may be considered as part of the final budget proposal.

23.EC.53 Fees and Charges 2023-24

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member (Resources) presented the report of the Director of Finance which sets out the current position around fees and charges and proposals for 2023/24.

Members noted the appendix which details the key fees and charges budgets across a number of different categories. Although not exhaustive, the list gives an indication of the core fees involved.

Members recognised those charges over which the Council has no control in setting the amount that can be charged, including planning application fees. It was also recognised that the fees and charges that have been increased by the council are

reflective of actual charges incurred through increasing costs and include no element of uplift for the council.

Decision:

1. To note the current levels of budgeted fees and charges and the issues specific to these;
2. To approve an uplift in the Strawberry Fields service charge of £1 per square foot to better reflect the current costs incurred at the site, as detailed at point 21.
3. To approve an uplift in the rents of all Council owned housing (including Extra Care) of 7%. (This is lower than the agreed approach of increasing them by CPI plus 1% [based on CPI at September each year] as agreed at Cabinet in July 2022, which would result in an increase of 9.8%, but is consistent with the recent government consultation on rents as detailed at points 18 and 19).
4. To approve the increase to the gas charges at Primrose Gardens to £21 per week and set a new charge for Tatton at £32 per week for electricity as detailed at point 20.
5. To approve a general increase of 5% in the fees (limited to the services listed in Table 3 of Appendix 1) for 2023/24. Given that the rate of CPI is currently running at 9.6%, and RPI at 14.2%, the recommended uplift is less than inflation.
6. To approve the full list of fees and charges for upload onto the Council website.

Reasons for recommendations

To ensure that fees and charges are set at appropriate levels and are publicly available.

Other options considered and rejected

No other options considered as we are required to review fees and charges each year.

23.EC.54 Select Move Policy Review 2022

Councillor Terry Howarth, Executive Member (Homes and Housing) presented the report of the Director of Communities which seeks permission to consult on the new draft policy following the review of the allocations policy by the Select Move Steering Group.

As part of the Select Move policy review, changes are proposed to improve how Social housing across the partnership is delivered. Members noted the proposed changes, as outlined in detail in the appendices, which will be subject to consultation for a period of 10 to 12 weeks.

On the 10 November 2022 Executive Cabinet accepted all the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Select Move Task group. Members recognised that this Cabinet report is not the Cabinet response to those recommendations, but the Select Move Partnership has taken into account the recommendations of the Task group when proposing amendments to the policy. The Task group were thanked for their thorough review.

Decision:

- 1. To approve the policy enabling the Select Move partnership to consult on the policy.**
- 2. To agree that any changes following the consultation are delegated for approval to the Executive Member for Homes and Housing.**

Reasons for recommendations

To fulfil the Council's Part VI statutory duties and review the Housing Allocation policy by maximising the allocation of properties to households who are in the most need and to those that can demonstrate a local connection to the borough.

Other options considered and rejected

The policy could remain unchanged, however, there is a requirement to keep the policy under review and ensure that it is fit for purpose and meets the Council's statutory duties.

23.EC.55 Customer Access Policy

Councillor Adrian Lowe, Executive Member (Customer, Streetscene and Environment) presented the report of the Director of Customer and Digital which provides an overview of the proposed Customer Access Charter and Feedback Policy; including the principles and standards for customer access across the organisation.

Members considered the contents of the report which include customer services principles, customer care standards, improvements to current customer access, proposed uniforms, proposed changes to processes to ensure that customers can access specialist services at the first point of contact, and a refreshed Feedback Policy.

Members noted the local indicator targets and the service standards as well as the proposed actions to be delivered in order to develop and implement aligned processes across the service. Members welcomed the report and supported the proposals.

Decision:

To approve the Customer Access Charter including:

- a) Customer access standards**
- b) Feedback policy**
- c) Improvements to general online contact and customer processes**
- d) Uniforms**
- e) Performance measures**

Reasons for recommendations

To ensure that we continue to deliver an excellent standard of customer care in line with the model agreed by both councils as part of the shared Customer Services.

Other options considered and rejected

To not approve the proposed Charter and associated recommendations. This option is not recommended as it would prevent the delivery of a clear customer services approach across the shared service and wider organisation.

23.EC.56 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Decision: To exclude the press and public for the following items of business on the grounds they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

23.EC.57 Shared Services Review - Property and Assets

Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Leader and Executive Member (Economic Development and Public Service Reform) presented the confidential report of the Director of Change and Delivery which outlines the shared services review for Property and Assets.

Decision:

To approve the shared services review for Property and Assets including proposals for the shared service structure and service development plan.

Reasons for recommendations

To support the further development of phase 3 of shared services as agreed by both councils in February 2022.

Other options considered and rejected

Other options have been considered within the report.

23.EC.58 2023-25 Community Commissioning Procurement - Approval to Tender

Councillor Bev Murray, Executive Member (Early Intervention) presented the confidential report of the Director of Communities which seeks approval to proceed to tender for services to be commissioned from the voluntary, community, faith social enterprise sector (VCFSE). It also provides details of commissioning review and overview of all planned commissioned services for 2023-25.

Decision:

- 1. To approve the tendering approach and evaluation criteria as outlined in the report**
- 2. To agree to award the contracts via executive member decision following the procurement process**
- 3. To approve not to apply social value weighting using TOM's methodology and submission through the social value portal for Advice Services commission due to the nature of services to be delivered via SME's / VCFSE organisations and embedded social value that will be within service specifications.**

Reasons for recommendations

- To ensure services within the VCFSE sector receive funding to deliver services that meet the needs of the community.
- The overall contract value of the Advice Services contract will be worth more than £100k, therefore it is important in order to conform to procurement rules and demonstrate transparency that Member approval is obtained.

Other options considered and rejected

To not award any funding would have a negative impact on those within communities who need support.

Chair

Date