

## Lancaster City Council | Report Cover Sheet

<b>Meeting</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date</b>	14 January 2020
<b>Report of</b>	Director of Corporate Services		
<b>Purpose of Report</b>			
To provide an update on the Council's budget strategy for 2020/21 and financial outlook up to 2023/24. Specifically, the report considers the budget and council tax proposals for 2020/21.			
<b>Key Decision (Y/N)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Date of Notice</b>	<b>Exempt (Y/N)</b> <b>N</b>

### Report Summary

The report summarises the latest budget and council tax proposals for 2020/21 and looks forward to the work to be undertaken in respect of the Capital Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### Recommendations of Councillor Anne Whitehead

1. That Cabinet make recommendations to Council regarding the Lancaster City Council element of the Council Tax as set out in paragraph 3.4 (option one) of this report which is a £5 increase to the Band D Council Tax (from £226.95 to £231.95).
2. That Cabinet makes recommendations regarding its initial budget proposals as set out in section 4 and appendix one of this report.
3. That the recommendations and proposals in this report be referred to Council on 29 January for initial consideration as well as being presented for scrutiny by Budget and Performance Panel on 21 January, in order that any feedback can be provided to Cabinet at its 11 February meeting.

### Relationship to Policy Framework

The budget should represent, in financial terms, what the Council is seeking to achieve through its Policy Framework.

### Conclusion of Impact Assessment(s) where applicable

Climate	Wellbeing & Social Value
Digital	Health & Safety
Equality	Community Safety

A number of budget proposals address the climate emergency and digital improvements as well as wellbeing improvements. The budget framework in general

sets out a financial plan for achieving the Council's corporate priorities which incorporate the above cross cutting themes.

**Details of Consultation**

Details of consultation are set out in sections 7 and 8 of the report.

**Legal Implications**

No legal implications directly arising from this report.

**Financial Implications**

As set out in the report.

**Other Resource or Risk Implications**

No other implications directly arising from this report.

**Section 151 Officer's Comments**

The Section 151 Officer has co-authored this report.

**Monitoring Officer's Comments**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments on this report.

<b>Contact Officer</b>	Dan Bates, Director of Corporate Services
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**Links to Background Papers**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Under the Constitution, Cabinet has responsibility for developing corporate planning proposals and a balanced budget for Council's consideration.
- 1.2 The Cabinet meeting on 5 November considered updated estimates with respect to government funding and council tax and the corresponding impact on the revenue budget gap as well as a timetable for completing the budget framework for 2020/21 to 2023/24. Since that report the Government has released the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement and a number of informal meetings have been held between officers and members to consider specific revenue budget proposals for 2020/21.

### 1.3 This report sets out:

- An update to the estimates in respect of Council funding including Revenues Support Grant, Retained Business Rates, New Homes Bonus following on from the release of the provisional local government finance settlement and the corresponding impact on the budget gap. (section 2)
- Consideration of options for setting the Council's element of the council tax for 2020/21. (section 3)
- A summary of the proposals for achieving a balanced revenue budget for 2020/21. (section 4)
- An update on the work undertaken in respect of the capital programme for 2020/21 to 2023/24 and a longer term Capital Strategy. (section 5)
- An update on the development of a Medium Term Financial Strategy which will secure the long term financial resilience of the authority and identify resources to meet the Council's ambitions for the next five years. (section 6)

## 2 FUNDING UPDATE

### 2.1 The Council's net revenue expenditure is funded from the following sources:

- Settlement Funding Assessment which is divided into Revenue Support Grant and Localised Business Rates
- New Homes Bonus
- Council Tax

2.2 The Government released the provisional local government finance settlement on 20 December 2019. Next year, 2020/21, is a one year settlement following on from the four year settlement for 2016/17 to 2019/20 and preceding the Government's 'Fair Funding' review and a likely 4 year settlement which will cover 2021/22 to 2024/25. A summary of the provisional settlement for Lancaster City Council is provided in table one below.

**Table One – Provisional Settlement allocations for Lancaster City Council**

	Provisional Settlement	LCC Forecast	Difference
Revenue Support Grant	202,944	203,086	142
Retained Rates	5,736,762	5,740,750	3,988
Settlement Funding Assessment			
New Homes Bonus	1,501,981	1,502,012	31
Total Government Funding	7,441,687	7,445,848	4,161

2.3 As table one shows, the provisional settlement allocates £4k fewer resources than anticipated and this effectively slightly increases the gap for the 2020/21 revenue budget, from that reported to 5 November Cabinet.

2.4 The Government is currently undertaking a Fair Funding review which will look at how Government Funding is distributed from 2021/22 onwards. It is expected that whilst local government as a whole might expect a 'cash flat' settlement, the prioritisation of social care pressures will result in a decrease in funding to district councils from 2021/22 onwards and this has been reflected in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### 3 COUNCIL TAX

3.1 As part of the provisional finance settlement, the Government published its referendum criteria for council tax. District councils will be permitted to raise their council tax by 1.99% or £5, whichever is higher, without reference to a referendum. Table two below considers the following two options for council tax:

- Option one – an annual 1.99% or £5 increase in council tax (whichever is higher) – for Lancaster City Council, this will be £5 in each of the next four years
- Option two – no increase in council tax

**Table Two – Impact of council tax options: 2020/21 to 2023/24**

Year	Taxbase (% Annual Increase)	Option One: Annual increase of £5 in Council Tax		Option Two: No annual increase in Council Tax		Additional Income from £5 increase
		Band D	Income	Band D	Income	
2019/20	41,400 (0.49%)	226.95	9,395,679	226.95	9,395,679	0
2020/21	41,700 (0.72%)	231.95	9,672,315	226.95	9,463,815	208,500
2021/22	42,117 (1.00%)	236.95	9,979,623	226.95	9,558,453	421,170
2022/23	42,538 (1.00%)	241.95	10,292,110	226.95	9,654,038	638,072
2023/24	42,963 (1.00%)	246.95	10,609,849	226.95	9,750,453	859,260

3.2 The budget proposals have assumed an increase of £5 in council tax. This will raise an additional £277k. If there was no increase in council tax, income would increase by £68k due to additional properties; the £5 increase resulting in a further £209k in income (shown in the final column above). The table above also shows the difference, in terms of income, between a £5 tax increase and no increase which, over four years, amounts to an additional £859k in income if option one, an annual £5 increase, is adopted.

3.3 Taxbase growth of 0.72% in 2020/21 is lower than the 1% which was forecast in the MTFS. The proposed increase of £5 is lower than the 2.99% forecast in the MTFS and is a result of the Government reducing the referendum threshold

on district council tax from 3% to 2%. Taken together, these two impacts result in council tax income being £101,061 lower than forecast in the MTFS.

- 3.4 **The recommendation arising from this report is that the Council on 29 January 2020 agree a £5 increase (option one) to the level of the 2020/21 Band D council tax for the Lancaster City Council element.** It is also recommended that option one is selected for the purposes of completing estimates in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

#### 4 BUDGET PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The 5 November Cabinet report set the approach for considering proposals for a balanced revenue budget for 2020/21. Since the report, a number of informal meetings were held with the Cabinet to develop proposals. Additionally, emerging proposals and detailed information on growth bids and savings plans have been shared with all Councillors.
- 4.2 Proposals for closing the budget gap are shown in table three below and are provided in more detail in appendix one.

**Table Three Cabinet’s Draft Revenue Budget Proposals – 2020/21**

	Sub-total £'000	Total £'000
Budget Gap for 2020/21 reported to Cabinet 5 November		213
Lower than estimated Council Taxbase	16	
Lower than estimated Government Funding	4	
	<hr/>	20
Inescapable cost pressures	646	
Savings/income identified by the budget process	(511)	
Triennial review of pensions	(1,121)	
	<hr/>	(986)
Growth Bids – revenue budget	429	
Growth Bids – funded from reserves	2,478	
Net funding from reserves	(2,154)	
	<hr/>	753
Current Budget Gap		<hr/> <b>0</b> <hr/>

- 4.3 The proposals set out in the table above produce a balanced revenue budget for 2020/21, which forms part of the recommendations of this report. If Cabinet agree the proposal, then it will go forward to the Budget Scrutiny Panel on 21 January 2020 and to Council on 29 January 2020 and then form part of the Budget and MTFS report to the Budget Council Meeting on 26 February 2020.

- 4.4 A significant amount of growth bids will be funded from reserves. The Reserves Strategy requires all proposals for reserves funding to be subject to further scrutiny prior to the release of funds. This scrutiny will seek to ensure that specific effective plans are in place for the use of reserves and that clarity exists in respect of outcomes which will be achieved in respect of the proposals.

## 5 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 5.1 Capital bids have been considered as part of the annual budget process and the revenue budget proposals in the previous section include, where applicable, capital funding costs (known as Minimum Revenue Provision) for those bids where it is anticipated that there will be a net revenue cost.
- 5.2 There are a number of significant capital bids which cover major upcoming corporate priority projects which will be put forward for the capital programme. These ambitious schemes, which cover economic development, regeneration, housing development and meeting the climate emergency will, require significant borrowing but will generate property income as well as business rates and council tax growth to cover capital costs and also contribute to the Council's longer term revenue budget position.
- 5.3 It is proposed to undertake some informal sessions with Cabinet in order to more closely consider the capital programme for 2020/21 to 2023/24 and a Capital Strategy to cover this period and beyond prior to bringing specific recommendations to the February Cabinet ahead of the Budget Setting Council on 26 February 2020.

## 6. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

- 6.1 A revised Medium Term Financial Strategy will be considered at the Budget Setting Council. The revision of the MTFs will be important and timely in order to provide sound financial planning processes to underpin the new Council's ambitions. Key considerations of the MTFs include:
- Consideration of the medium term outlook, taking account of the impact of decisions made to balance the 2020/21 budget alongside forecasts for future funding. Table four shows current estimates of the budget gap following on from the proposals to balance the 2020/21 budget.

**Table Four – Medium Term Budget Gaps – 2020/21 to 2023/24**

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Estimated Budget Gap (£'000s)	0	1,759	1,567	1,624

The gap is structural in nature and reflects anticipated changes in Government funding arising from the Fair Funding review which will be implemented from 2021/22.

- Taking account of the above, the MTFs will seek to balance a positive outlook in supporting Council ambitions with the requirement to secure long term financial resilience of the organisation. Continued focus on the Funding the Future Strategy and associated plans will ensure that

the Council can seek returns from capital investment and new ways of working whilst managing risk and promoting good governance.

- The Funding the Future Strategy incorporates a commitment to zero based budgeting and this has been used in this budget process and will be further considered by the Financial Resilience Group alongside ongoing work to embed the Council's new priorities during 2020/21.
- Incorporation of recent CIPFA guidance in respect of Capital Strategies and prudential borrowing so that the Council is able to pursue ambitious projects which deliver economic prosperity and housing growth which also contribute to the Council's financial resilience and carbon reduction targets.
- A thorough review of the Reserves Strategy to ensure adequate level of reserves are maintained which balance longer financial sustainability with the deployment of surplus reserves towards Council ambitions.

6.2 A full update on the Housing Revenue Account budget and financial outlook will be considered alongside the revenue budget including options to ensure that the service's 30-year business plan is viable and that its ongoing budget is balanced, whilst delivering value for money to tenants. This update will be reported to the 11 February 2020 Cabinet.

## **7 DETAILS OF CONSULTATION**

7.1 As in previous years, the usual high level consultation with relevant stakeholders on the budget will be undertaken prior to Budget Council in February. More specific consultation may be required depending on the budget savings options being considered. Consultation on council housing matters will be undertaken through the District Wide Tenants' Forum.

## **8 OPTIONS AND OPTIONS ANALYSIS (INCLUDING RISK ASSESSMENT)**

8.1 Regarding the budget strategy, Cabinet may approve the proposals as set out, or require changes to be made to the suggested approach. The overriding aim of any budget setting process is to approve a balanced budget by statutory deadlines, allocating resources to help ensure delivery of the Council's corporate and service ambitions. The proposed approach is in line with that broad aim and any changes that Cabinet puts forward should also be framed in that context.

8.2 In term of the actual budget position, this report puts forward a balanced budget. If Cabinet agrees the budget then it will form their proposal to Budget Scrutiny Panel on 21 January 2020 and to Council on 29 January 2020. The feedback from these meetings will be considered by Cabinet and incorporated into a final budget proposal which will be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 11 February 2020 and recommended to Council on 26 February 2020.

## Appendix One – Cabinet’s Revenue Budget Proposals – 2020/21

	Sub- total	Total
<b>Original Budget Gap</b>		213
Taxbase lower than forecast	16	
Difference between forecast and LG Settlement	4	20
Triennial pensions review		(1,121)
Inescapable cost pressures		646
Savings / Additional Income Identified		(511)
Job Evaluation (current estimate subject to finalisation)		217
<b>Communities and Environment</b>		
Energy Management including Solar Phase 1	36	
Salt Ayre Boiler Replacement	10	
Two Electric Refuse Vehicles	46	
Electric Fleet Replacement Programme	31	
Pool Cars	18	
Salt Ayre Leisure Centre	(4)	
Mellishaw Park	37	
Customer Services Software	23	197
<b>Economic Growth and Regeneration</b>		
Development Management	20	
Local Plan	96	
Building Control	119	
Prosperity, Skills and Wealth Building	131	
Regeneration	(92)	
Heritage Action	3	
Property Investment	(383)	(107)
<b>Corporate Services</b>		
Staff Development	50	
Member Training	11	
Digital Strategy	54	115
<b>Office of Chief Executive</b>		
VCSE Miscellaneous Grants		6
Gap taking account of the above		(324)
<b>Use of Reserves</b>		
Job Evaluation	293	
Digital Strategy	90	
Culture Strategy and Provision	113	
Economic Prosperity Plan	40	
Economic Development	110	
Housing Feasibility _ Stock Survey and Housing Co.	107	
Committee System Investigation	30	
Energy Management Hardware and Software	50	
Revenue Contribution to Capital: Mellishaw Park	240	
CE Recruitment Costs	30	
Planning Policy: Local Plan	592	
Canal Quarter	124	
Heysham Gateway	279	
Bailrigg Garden Village/Morecambe High Streets	280	
Housing Feasibility Invest to Save	100	
<b>Total Use of Reserves</b>		2,478
<b>Net Funding from reserves</b>		(2,154)