

Report to: **COUNCIL**
Date: **17 September 2019**
Title: **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2024/25**
Portfolio Area: **Cllr N Jory - Budget Setting Process**
Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Council considers the Medium Term Financial Strategy and **RECOMMENDS** that:

(NOTE: These recommendations are set out in detail in Appendix C)

Recommendation 1: To set the strategic intention to raise council tax by the maximum allowed in any given year, without triggering a council tax referendum, to endeavour to continue to deliver services. The actual council tax for any given year will be decided by Council in the preceding February.

Recommendation 2: To respond to any Government announcement/consultation in September 2019 on Business Rates Reform

Recommendation 3: To continue to actively lobby and engage with the Government, Devon MPs and other sector bodies such as the District Councils Network and the Rural Services Network, for a realistic business rates baseline to be set for the Council for 2020 onwards, if business rates reform is introduced for 2020-21 or a later timescale (it is widely thought that it will be delayed until

2021-22).

Recommendation 4: That WDBC continues to lobby in support of the Government eliminating Negative Revenue Support Grant in 2020/21 (and thereafter) and continues to lobby for Rural Services Delivery Grant allocations which adequately reflect the cost of rural service provision.

Recommendation 5: To use £200,000 of New Homes Bonus funding for 2020-21 (or any alternative scheme) to fund the revenue base budget and then reduce to £100,000 by 2021-22 and £50,000 by 2022-23 for modelling purposes.

Recommendation 6: That the minimum level of Unearmarked Reserves to be retained is increased from £750,000 (2019/20 level) to £900,000 for 2020/21, to reflect the increase in financial risks which the Council faces.

Recommendation 7: To transfer £200,000 of Unearmarked Reserves into the Financial Stability Earmarked Reserve.

Recommendation 8: That the Council continues dialogue with the actuaries of the Devon Pension Fund and DCC on the options for the Council's Pension position, with the aim of reducing the current contributions, increasing affordability, whilst best managing the pension deficit. A report will be presented to Members by January 2020 of options, once the results of the Triennial Pension Revaluation are known.

Recommendation 9: That the Council maintains an Upper Limit on External Borrowing (for all Council services) as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy of £50 million.

It is also RECOMMENDED that Council notes the:-

- (x) forecast budget gap for 2020/21 of £0.38 million and the position for future years; and**
- (xi) current options identified and timescales for closing the budget gap in 2020/21 and future years, to achieve long term financial sustainability.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is based on a financial forecast over a rolling five year timeframe to 2024/25. The Council, along with other local authorities, has faced unprecedented reductions in Government funding since the

Comprehensive Spending Review 2010. Between 2009/10 and 20/21, the Council's Core Government funding has reduced by £3 million.

- 1.2 West Devon has continued to work in partnership with South Hams District Council which has allowed West Devon Borough Council to achieve annual savings of £2.2 million and more importantly protect all statutory front line services.
- 1.3 Between both Councils the annual shared services savings being achieved are over £6 million. However, the Councils continue to face considerable financial challenges as a result of uncertainty in the wider economy and constraints on public sector spending.
- 1.4 West Devon Borough Council is currently forecasting a £0.38 million budget gap in 2020/21. It is important to note that this is a snapshot (a position statement) in September 19 and future Member decisions on the budget strategy and Government announcements will inform future figures within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 1.5 In the Financial Modelling in Appendix B, the total budget gap is £379,913 in 2020/21 and this is predicted to decrease to £354,158 in 2021/22 (the £354,158 assumes the budget gap in 20/21 of £379,913 has not been closed). The aggregated Budget Gap is £1.24 million over the five years.
- 1.6 It is important to note that this Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out the budget strategy for the Council for the next five years, with annual reviews and updates when items are further known or are announced by the Government (e.g. it is envisaged that the One Year Spending Review for 2020-21 will be announced in September 2019).
- 1.7 This is the starting point for developing a meaningful five year strategy that sets out the strategic intention for all of the different strands of funding available to the Council. The Council will then be able to rely on this to inform future decisions.
- 1.8 A Cross Party Member Working Group (Financial Stability Review Group) was set up in November 2017 with defined Terms of Reference to look at the Medium Term Financial Strategy and to further look at options for securing financial stability for the longer term. The FSRG is due to reconvene in September 2019 when the announcements on the Spending Review for 2020-21 are envisaged to be made (see details in Section 2.4). The FSRG will regularly report to the Hub Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.9 A version of this report will be considered by the Hub Committee at its meeting on 10 September 2019 and the views arising from this meeting will be given to the Council meeting.

1.10 Since this report was written, the Chancellor has announced the Spending Review for 2019. The full implications of this announcement will be presented in the next Budget report to the Hub Committee meeting on 5 November 2019. The Council is awaiting a technical consultation to be announced by the Government, but it is thought that the key elements will be as below:

- The Council Tax Referendum limit is likely to be proposed at 2% for District Councils. It has not yet been confirmed whether this would also include the normal £5 limit – officers are anticipating it will be a 2% or £5 council tax limit for District Councils – whichever is the higher. The reduction in the limit from 2.99% to 2% would mean a loss of council tax income of £47,000;
- It is probable that there will be funding to remove negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) for one year in 2020/21. In addition, legacy payments for New Homes Bonus are likely to be honoured but the scheme for 2020/21 is still for discussion with Ministers. Business Rates Pilots will come to an end and there are no new pilots planned for 2020/21;
- Reform of the Business Rates Retention Scheme and the Fairer Funding Review will both be delayed until 2021/22.

Individual Council figures are due to be released in December 2019 with the Local Government Finance Settlement. The budget report to the Hub Committee on 5 November 2019 will include all of the latest information that is known to date.

2 BACKGROUND AND UPDATE ON THE BUDGET 2020/21

2.1 Over the past four years, West Devon Borough Council has had a 38.2% reduction in Government funding. This compares against 38.8% for the average for Shire District Councils. The Council now receives **no main Government Grant (Revenue Support Grant)** – this has been reduced to zero. Core Government funding has been reduced by £3million per year since 2009/2010.

2.2 Negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) for 2019/20 of £293,000 was eliminated by the Government for one year. There has been no news on what will happen to negative RSG from 2020/21 onwards and therefore the modelling in this report has assumed negative RSG will remain for 2020/21 onwards in some form (e.g. as part of the business rates baseline reset). It is currently estimated to be £293,000 per annum which would be deducted off the Council's business rates funding and represents negative Government grant (it is effectively the Council's further predicted funding cuts). The Council would need to pay this money (£293,000) over to the Government out of its business rates income.

- 2.3 It is thought that the Council Tax Referendum limits for District Councils for 2020/21 will remain the same (the higher of £5 or 2.99%).
- 2.4 The new Chancellor (Sajid Javid) has announced that there will be a one year Spending Review covering the period 2020-21, with a multi year Spending Review held thereafter. The one year Spending Review will be announced in September 2019 – this will mean the Council should find out more information about its finances in September for 2020-21.
- 2.5 Rishi Sunak (Chief Secretary to the Treasury) announced that the Government's Priorities in the Spending Review will be: "We will invest in the priority areas of schools and policing, while delivering our promises on the NHS, defence and Official Development Assistance (ODA)." It is noted that local government is not mentioned as a priority for funding by Rishi Sunak – therefore investment for local Councils is not a stated priority.
- 2.6 The Council was already expecting a one year funding settlement for 2020-21, with any more fundamental changes in funding delayed until 2021-22. It is expected that the Fair Funding Review and the reform of Business Rates will now be delayed until 2021-22 but this has not yet been confirmed. The Council assumes that no decisions or announcements are going to be made until Parliament reconvenes in September. It is also thought more likely that New Homes Bonus will continue in its current form in the one year settlement for 2020-21, with changes being put in place after that.

3 ASSUMPTIONS FOR FINANCIAL MODELLING PURPOSES

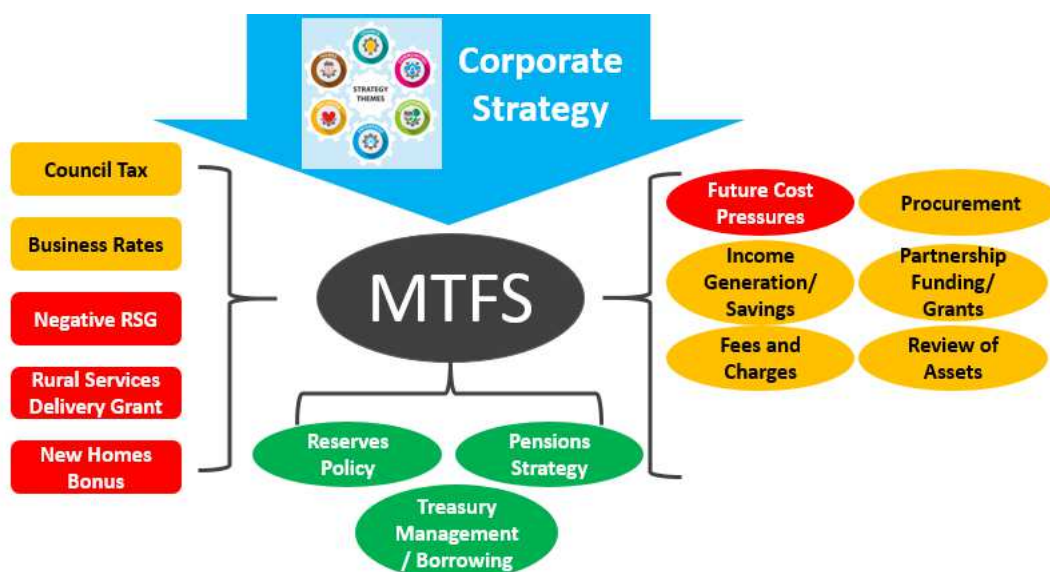
- 3.1 The last pay offer covered the two years up to 31 March 2020. A 1% pay increase has been modelled from 2020/21 onwards. In view of past national agreements, consideration may need to be given to this being increased for modelling purposes to say 2%. The Medium Term Financial Strategy is not an expression of Council Policy on pay awards, but a means of ensuring an appropriate provision is made as part of the overall financial planning of the Council.
- 3.2 This report assumes inflation will run at 2% over the five year period. The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) was 2.0% in July 2019.
- 3.3 The predicted interest rate forecast from our treasury management advisors, Link Services, is that interest rates will remain at 0.75% up to December 2020. By March 2022 the bank base rate is predicted to increase to 1.25%.
- 3.4 An increase in council tax of 2.99% for the next five years has been modelled for council tax purposes. This would equate to a Band D council tax for West Devon of £238.54 in 2020/21 as shown in Appendix B (an increase of £6.91 for the year which equates to 2.99%).

3.5 It has been assumed that the number of properties within the Borough will increase by 70 per annum from 2020/21 onwards – this is an increase of approximately 0.3% and is based on projections from the Strategic Planning team.

4. THE COMPONENTS MAKING UP A MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS)

4.1 The Diagram below sets out all of the component parts which constitute the make-up of a Medium Term Financial Strategy. Appendix C goes through each of these components in detail and makes recommendations where appropriate. The recommendations are summarised below. Items in Green denote those elements where the Council has a large degree of control over the setting of policies and strategies. Items in Amber denote those components of the MTFS where the Council has a degree of control. Red items signal components where the Council has hardly any control over funding allocations which are decided by the Government and future cost pressures which can largely be outside of the Council's control or influence.

2019/20 Net Budget £7.1 million



Council Tax

4.2 Members have options to either freeze council tax or to raise council tax anywhere between zero and 2.99%. Anything above 2.99% currently requires a council tax referendum, which is a costly exercise. Recent funding settlements from the Government are based on the assumption that Councils increase council tax by the maximum allowed. The actual council tax for any given year will be decided by Council in the preceding February. (The council tax for 2020/21, the WDBC share, will be set at the Council meeting on 18th February 2020).

A 2.99% increase in council tax for 2020/21 would equate to an increase of £6.91 and a Band D council tax for WDBC of £238.54.

Recommendation 1: To set the strategic intention to raise council tax by the maximum allowed in any given year, without triggering a council tax referendum, to endeavour to continue to deliver services. The actual council tax for any given year will be decided by Council in the preceding February.

Business Rates

- 4.3 The income from Business Rates which West Devon Borough Council retained in 2018-19 was the funding baseline of £2,049,573 plus the pilot gain of £460,000. Estimates have been made of the Baseline funding Level for 2020/21 onwards as set out in Appendix B. This is £1.66m for 2020/21 and £1.70m for 2021/22.

It is widely thought that the reform of Business Rates will now be delayed until 2021-22 but this has not been publicly confirmed by the Government. It is hoped that further clarity on the timescale for Business Rates Reform will be announced by the Government as part of the One Year Spending Review for 2020-21 in September 19.

Recommendation 2: To respond to any Government announcement/consultation in September 2019 on Business Rates Reform

Recommendation 3: To continue to actively lobby and engage with the Government, Devon MPs and other sector bodies such as the District Councils Network and the Rural Services Network, for a realistic business rates baseline to be set for the Council for 2020 onwards, if business rates reform is introduced for 2020-21 (it is widely thought that it will be delayed until 2021-22).

Negative Revenue Support Grant and Rural Services Delivery Grant (RSDG) for 2020-21 onwards

The negative RSG currently included within the Council's modelling for 2020/21 amounts to £293,000. If the Government eliminates this, as an outcome of the one year Spending Review for 2020/21, the Council's budget position is bettered by £293K for 2020/21. However the benefit of this is likely to only be for one year, with negative RSG expected to be implemented in full in 2021/22 – so it just gives the Council longer to prepare for the extra cuts in funding. If the position changes, the MTFs will be updated to reflect this.

Rural Services Delivery Grant (RSDG) – The Council currently receives an allocation of £464,365 per annum for this grant which is given to Councils to compensate for the extra costs of delivering services in rural areas. The Government has not indicated what RSDG allocations will be for 2020-21 onwards (The financial modelling for 2020-21 onwards assumes that this grant will continue at the same level of £464K per annum).

Recommendation 4: That WDBC continues to lobby in support of the Government eliminating Negative Revenue Support Grant in 2020/21 (and thereafter) and continues to lobby for Rural Services Delivery Grant allocations which adequately reflect the cost of rural service provision.

New Homes Bonus (NHB)

4.4 The Government has stated that 2019/20 represents the final year of NHB funding and from 2020 onwards they will explore how to incentivise housing growth most effectively and will consult on this issue. The financial modelling has included using £200,000 of New Homes Bonus (or its replacement) funding for 2020/21 to fund the revenue base budget and this has then been reduced to £100,000 for 2021/22 and £50,000 for 2022/23 onwards for modelling purposes. The Council is awaiting announcements from the Government on how New Homes Bonus is going to be reformed.

4.5 For 2019/20 there were no changes to the New Homes Bonus baseline of 0.4% (the previous concern was that this could be increased to 0.6%). The baseline is the proportion of housing growth which is deducted as 'natural growth as such' before New Homes Bonus is paid to a Council – this is the equivalent of 98 properties for West Devon. So the Council receives no New Homes Bonus on the first 98 properties of property growth per year. The Council's New Homes Bonus allocation for 2019/20 was £500,595.

Recommendation 5: To use £200,000 of New Homes Bonus funding for 2020-21 (or any alternative scheme) to fund the revenue base budget and then reduce to £100,000 by 2021-22 and £50,000 by 2022-23 for modelling purposes.

Reserves Policy

4.6 The current Levels of Reserves: £1.286 million Unearmarked Reserves and Earmarked Reserves of £4.3 million. The Council's Net Budget is £7.1 million for 2019/20. Therefore Unearmarked Reserves equate to 18% of the Council's Net Budget. There is £0.2m uncommitted in the Invest to Earn Earmarked Reserve and £0.2m uncommitted in the Financial Stability Earmarked Reserve. It is further recommended to transfer £0.2m of Unearmarked Reserves into the Financial Stability Earmarked Reserve, to allow the Council to have further flexibility and options around how to close the Budget Gap in 2020/21.

- 4.7 Given the increase in financial risks which the Council faces, the Council should consider increasing the minimum level of Reserves to be held, through a stepped increase over the next five years, to reflect the new level of risks. The increased financial risks are in part from the Council's commercial investment strategy where prudential borrowing of up to a total borrowing limit of £50 million (for all Council services) has been approved.

Recommendation 6: That the minimum level of Unearmarked Reserves to be retained is increased from £750,000 (2019/20 level) to £900,000 for 2020/21, to reflect the increase in financial risks which the Council faces.

Recommendation 7: To transfer £200,000 of Unearmarked Reserves into the Financial Stability Earmarked Reserve.

Pensions Strategy (Actuarial Valuation)

- 4.8 The Council has taken specialist pension advice on the options for the Council's Pension position (informing the actuarial valuation), with the aim of reducing the current deficit contributions, increasing affordability, whilst best managing the pension deficit. Options were presented to the Council's Audit Committee on 22nd January and this work is being progressed by the S151 Officer in accordance with the timetable for the Triennial Pension Revaluation.

Recommendation 8 - That the Council continues dialogue with the actuaries of the Devon Pension Fund and DCC on the options for the Council's Pension position, with the aim of reducing the current contributions, increasing affordability, whilst best managing the pension deficit. A report will be presented to Members by January 2020 of options, once the results of the Triennial Pension Revaluation are known.

Treasury Management and Borrowing Strategy

- 4.9 The Council has taken external treasury management advice on the Council's overall borrowing levels and debt levels (see Exempt Appendix G to the Medium Term Financial Strategy in September 2018). The Council set an Upper Limit on External Borrowing (for all Council services) as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) in September 2018 of £50 million. In March 2019, the Council considered its Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy which contained the new requirements issued by MHCLG in February 2018 of the new guidance.
- 4.10 The Council needs to re-consider its borrowing limit as part of this MTFS in September 2019. Officers are not recommending any change to the current borrowing limit of £50 million. The previous treasury management advice on an appropriate and proportional borrowing limit

for Borough Council was based on a range of benchmarking of indices. Borrowing needs to be proportionate and affordable and with always having regard to the risks involved in the repayment of the debt.

Recommendation 9 – That the Council maintains an Upper Limit on External Borrowing (for all Council services) as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy of £50 million.

Income Generation/Savings and Fees and Charges

- 4.11 The Council's Extended Leadership Team will present further budget options to Members for income generation/savings/reduced expenditure, as part of the Budget Setting Workshop being planned for late September/early October.

Procurement

- 4.12 There is a separate report on the Hub Committee agenda for the IT procurement. This report considers the options available for procuring an IT platform which meets the Councils' customer satisfaction aspirations, and digital vision, and describes the rationale and methodology used in arriving at a recommendation.

Partnership Funding/Grants

- 4.13 Partnership Funding levels for 2020/21 onwards is a separate report on the Hub Committee agenda. It is recommended that the Hub Committee adopts a commissioning model to award partnership funding from 2020-23, based on one or all of the following:

- i) local need
- ii) alignment to the Council's Corporate Strategy
- iii) statutory duty

Commercial Property and Review of Assets

- 4.14 The Council's Asset Base is £46 million at 31 March 2019. The Council will continually review and challenge its asset base in order to deliver the optimum value for money from the Council's Assets.
- 4.15 The Invest to Earn Committee consider commercial property business cases within the Commercial Investment strategy. The Council has approved a commercial investment strategy within the Council's overall borrowing limit of £50 million. To date, four investment properties have been purchased in 2018/19 with a value of just over £21 million in aggregate. An income projection of £200,000 from the net ancillary income from investments in commercial property has been built into the 2019/20 Base Budget.

Council Tax Support Grant (CTSG) for 2020/21 onwards

4.16 The Borough Council is consulting with all of the Town and Parish Councils within the Borough, on the basis that the Borough Council is 'minded to' withdraw the Council Tax Support Grant from Town and Parish Councils with effect from 1st April 2020, in line with the other Devon District Councils and given the number of years which have passed since Council Tax Benefit was abolished in 2014. The Council has requested responses back from Town and Parish Councils by the end of September 2019 and the results will be presented to Members at the Hub Committee meeting on 5th November 2019.

5 BUDGET PRESSURES, SAVINGS AND INCOME GENERATION

5.1 Financial modelling has been undertaken for the next five years to predict the Council's financial situation for the short and medium term.

5.2 **Appendix A** to the Medium Term Financial Position sets out the Budget Pressures forecast for the next five years and the additional savings and income forecast.

5.3 ***These figures in Appendix A show the changes to the existing base budget.***

(As set out in Appendix A)	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Cost Pressures	£479,500	£300,000	£260,000	£335,000	£260,000
Contributions to Earmarked Reserves	£120,000	£120,000	£120,000	£120,000	£120,000
Savings and additional income	(£316,200)	(£221,200)	(£391,200)	(£1,200)	(£1,200)

5.4 On 3 September 2019 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are considering a report on Planning Enforcement, which contains a recommendation for two additional permanent case managers for Planning Enforcement.

5.5 If approved, the two posts are recommended to be funded from the Planning Earmarked Reserve in 2019/20 and would be built into the budget setting process as a cost pressure for 2020/21 onwards (these posts are not yet included as a cost pressure within the financial modelling in Appendices A and B). The annual cost pressure would be £21,460 (WDBC share of the cost).

6. OVERALL POSITION – BUDGET GAP

6.1 Appendix B illustrates the overall financial forecast for the forthcoming five years. The Council's Net Budget is £7.1 million in 2019/20.

- 6.2 A Summary forecast is shown below of the potential budget situation if all of the budget pressures and the savings and income generation in Appendix A were approved. It also shows the situation if the Council Tax is increased by 2.99% per annum (shown in Appendix B).
- 6.3 The following table illustrates the predicted budget gap from 2020/21 onwards for the Council as shown in Appendix B:

Cumulative Budget Gap	2020/21 £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	Total Aggregated Budget Gap £
Modelling as set out in Appendix B	379,913	354,158	60,124	181,562	262,220	1,237,977

- 6.4 In the Modelling in Appendix B, the total budget gap is £379,913 in 2020/21 and this is predicted to decrease to £354,158 in 2021/22 (the £354,158 assumes the budget gap in 20/21 of £379,913 has not been closed). The aggregated Budget Gap is £1.24 million.

7 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND TIMESCALES

- 7.1 The Council is progressing various options for closing the budget gap for 2020/21 onwards, to achieve long term financial sustainability. The table below sets out a timescale for those options and the various strands that the Council is exploring.

Option	Possible Budget Impact	Timescale
Pensions Strategy (Actuarial Valuation) The Council has received specialist pensions advice on its Pensions position (informing the actuarial valuation). Options were reported to the January Audit Committee and the	To be quantified (could be up to £100,000	Reported to the Audit Committee 22 nd January 2019. New pensions

Option	Possible Budget Impact	Timescale
S151 Officer is progressing this work with the Pensions team at Devon County Council and the actuaries.	or more)	contributions for the three years 2020/21 to 2022/23 are likely to be notified to the Council by December 2019.
<p>Council Tax Support Grant</p> <p>The grant to Town and Parish Councils has been reduced by 8.6% over the four year period of the finance settlement from 2016/17 to 2019/20.</p> <p>Council has approved to consult with all of the Town and Parish Councils within the Borough, on the basis that the Borough Council is 'minded to' withdraw the Council Tax Support Grant from Town and Parish Councils with effect from 1st April 2020, in line with the other Devon District Councils and given the number of years which have passed since Council Tax Benefit was abolished in 2014.</p>	£59,000 for 2020/21 onwards	<p>To be considered as part of the 2020/21 Budget process</p> <p>The results of the consultation exercise will be reported back to Members at the Hub Committee meeting on 5th November 2019.</p>
<p>Extended Leadership Team (ELT) Budget options</p> <p>The Extended Leadership (ELT) have been tasked with identifying budget options for Members to consider in September and these are currently being collated and assessed.</p>	To be quantified	September 2019

Option	Possible Budget Impact	Timescale
<p>Asset Review</p> <p>The Invest to Earn Committee are considering commercial property business cases within the Commercial Property acquisition strategy. A report on the updated Commercial Investment Strategy was a separate report on the July 2019 Hub Committee agenda.</p>	<p>To be quantified</p>	<p>On-going through meetings of the Invest to Earn Committee</p>
<p>Funding Options</p>		
<p>Negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG)</p> <p>Negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) for 2019/20 of £293,000 was eliminated by the Government for one year. There has been no news on what will happen to negative RSG from 2020/21 onwards and therefore the modelling in this report has assumed negative RSG will remain for 2020/21 onwards in some form (e.g. as part of the business rates baseline reset).</p> <p>It is currently estimated to be £293,000 per annum which would be deducted off the Council's business rates funding and represents negative Government grant (it is effectively the Council's further predicted funding cuts). The Council would need to pay this money (£293,000) over to the Government out of its business rates income.</p>	<p>Negative RSG of £293,000 for 2020/21 onwards has been built into this budget report.</p>	<p>The position for 2020/21 onwards is not known and it is hoped that this will be announced as part of the One Year Spending Review for 2020/21.</p>
<p>New Homes Bonus allocations for 2020/21 onwards</p> <p>The Government has stated that 2019/20 represents the final year of NHB funding and from 2020 onwards they will explore how to incentivise housing growth most effectively and will consult on this issue.</p>	<p>To be assessed</p> <p>It is not</p>	<p>Awaiting further announcements from the Government</p>

Option	Possible Budget Impact	Timescale
<p>The financial modelling has included using £200,000 of New Homes Bonus (or its replacement) funding for 2020/21 to fund the revenue base budget and this has then been reduced to £100,000 for 2021/22 and £50,000 for 2022/23 onwards for modelling purposes. The Council is awaiting announcements from the Government on how New Homes Bonus is going to be reformed. This remains a risk for the Council.</p>	<p>known what NHB allocations (or a similar scheme) will be in future years when the NHB scheme is replaced.</p>	
<p>Use of Reserves as a temporary measure</p> <p>The Council could temporarily utilise Reserves to balance an element of the 2020/21 budget, whilst longer term solutions are being implemented.</p> <p>This would be a very short term solution though. The current levels of Reserves are £1.3 million Unearmarked Reserves and Earmarked Reserves of £4.3 million.</p>	<p>To be assessed</p>	<p>To be decided as part of the Budget Process</p>

7.2 Through the Financial Stability Review Group, further measures will be considered to balance the 2020/21 onwards budget positions.

8 CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND PRUDENTIAL BORROWING

8.1 The Capital Programme is set by the Council and may be funded by sale proceeds from the disposal of assets (capital receipts), external grants and contributions, directly from revenue or from borrowing. Bids to the Capital Programme will be presented to Members by December 2019.

8.2 **Commercial Property Acquisition Strategy** – The Council has agreed a commercial property acquisition strategy. To date, four investment properties have been purchased with a value of £21.3 million in aggregate. Purchases made within the strategy are capital expenditure. A report on the updated Commercial Investment Strategy was a separate report on the July 2019 Hub Committee agenda.

8.3 **Prudential Borrowing** - The Council will consider the use of prudential borrowing to support capital investment to deliver services and will ensure that the full costs of borrowing are taken into account when investment decisions are made.

9. Sensitivity analysis and risk analysis

9.1 The Council carries out sensitivity analysis and risk analysis of its Budget Proposals on an annual basis and this is shown in Appendix E.

10 PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

10.1 The MTFS is the starting point for developing a meaningful five year strategy that sets out the strategic intention for all of the different strands of funding available to the Council. The Council will then be able to rely on this to inform future decisions. The different elements that make up a Medium Term Financial Strategy are shown in the diagram in 4.1 and Appendix C. This report is asking Members to set the strategic intention for each of these components of the MTFS.

10.2 Officers will continue to work with the Cross Party Member Working Group (Financial Stability Review Group) and the results of this will be incorporated into future Budget reports. Section 7 sets out the potential timescales against the areas identified.

11. IMPLICATIONS

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	<p>The Hub Committee is responsible for recommending to Council the budgetary framework. It is the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the Budget proposals being proposed by the Council on an annual basis. In accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules, Council must decide the general level of Reserves and the use of Earmarked Reserves.</p> <p>The preparation of the Budget report is evidence that the Council has considered and taken into account all relevant information and proper advice when determining its financial arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements, and in particular, that it will set a lawful budget.</p>
Financial Implications to	Y	In the Modelling in Appendix B, the total budget gap is

include reference to value for money		£379,913 in 2020/21 and this is predicted to decrease to £354,158 in 2021/22 (the £354,158 assumes the budget gap in 20/21 of £379,913 has not been closed). The aggregated Budget Gap is £1.24 million. The recommendations adopted and the annual budget setting process will ensure the Council has arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Council's auditors, Grant Thornton, provided an unqualified value for money opinion for the Borough Council for 2018-19, which was reported to the Council's Audit Committee in July 2019.
Risk	Y	Each of the budget options taken forward by Members will consider the risks of the option.
Supporting Corporate Strategy		The Budget report supports all six of the Corporate Themes of Council, Homes, Enterprise, Communities, Environment and Wellbeing.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		Equality Impact Assessments are completed for the budget proposals.
Safeguarding		None directly arising from this report.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None directly arising from this report.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None directly arising from this report.
Other implications		None directly arising from this report.

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix A – Budget pressures and savings

Appendix B – Modelling of the Budget Position

Appendix C – Components of a MTFS

Appendix D – Schedule of Reserves (Unearmarked and Earmarked)

Appendix E – Sensitivity Analysis

Background Papers

Council – 12 February 2019 – Budget Proposals 2019-20 onwards update report

Hub Committee – 11 September 2018 – Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019/20 to 2023/24

Hub Committee – 16 July 2019 – Medium Term Financial Position for 2020/21 onwards

