

Committee: Healthier Communities & Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panels

24 January 2024

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panels

25 January 2024

Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

30 January 2024

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

31 January 2024

Wards: ALL

Subject: Budget 2024/25 and MTFs 2024-28 (Members are requested to bring the Member's Information Pack with them to these meetings)

Lead officer: Asad Mushtaq, Executive Director of Finance & Digital

Lead member: Councillor Billy Christie, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services

Contact officer: Roger Kershaw

Recommendations:

1. That the Panels consider the draft savings/income proposals and associated draft equalities analyses set out in the Member's Information Pack;
 2. That the Panels consider the proposed new growth proposals set out in the Member's Information Pack;
 3. That the Panels and the Overview and Scrutiny Commission also consider the Budget 2024/25 and MTFs 2024-28 report received by Cabinet at its meeting on 15 January 2024 and in particular the additional growth proposals set out Appendix 5 in the report;
 4. That the Panels consider the draft capital programme 2024-28 set out in Appendix 4 of the attached report on the Budget 2024/25 and MTFs 2024-28;
 5. That the Panels consider the contents of the Member's Information Pack circulated;
 6. That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission considers the comments of the Panels on the Budget 2024/25 and MTFs 2024-28 and details provided in the information pack and provides a response to Cabinet when it meets on the 20 February 2024.
-

1. Purpose of report and executive summary

- 1.1 This report requests Scrutiny Panels to consider the latest information in respect of the Budget 2024/25 and MTFS 2024-28, including the amendment to savings proposals, new growth proposals, the draft capital programme 2024-28, and feedback comments to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission will consider the comments of the Panels and provide a response on the Budget 2024/25 and MTFS 2024-28 to Cabinet when it meets on the 20 February 2024.

2. Details - Revenue

- 2.1 The Cabinet of 16 November 2023 received a report on the Budget 2024/25 and MTFS 2024-28.
- 2.2 At the meeting Cabinet

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet considered and agreed the new capital proposals for 2024/25 to 2027/28 and the draft Capital Programme 2024-2028 (Appendix 1) and refers them to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in November 2023 for consideration and comment.
2. That Cabinet agreed the approach to setting a balanced budget outlined in the report
3. That Cabinet agreed the financial timetable for the Budget 2024/25 and MTFS 2024-28 (Appendix 5)
4. That Cabinet considered and agreed the draft growth proposals for 2024/25 to 2027/28 (Appendix 2) put forward by officers and refers them to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in November 2023 for consideration and comment.
5. That Cabinet considered and agreed the new savings proposals for 2024/25 to 2027/28 (Appendix 3) and refers them to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in November 2023 for consideration and comment.
6. That Cabinet considered and agreed the Equalities Impact Assessments for each saving, where applicable, and refers them to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in November 2023 for consideration and comment.(Appendix 3)

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 It is a requirement that the Council sets a balanced budget. The Cabinet reports on 16 November 2023 and 15 January 2024 set out the progress made towards setting a balanced budget and options on how the budget gap could be closed. These reports identified the current budget position that needs to be addressed between now and the report to the Cabinet meeting on 20 February 2024, prior to Council on 6 March 2024, agreeing the Budget and Council Tax for 2024/25 and the MTFS 2024-28, including the Capital Programme 2024-28.

4. Capital Programme 2024-28

- 4.1 Details of the draft Capital Programme 2024-28 were agreed by Cabinet on 15 January 2024 in the attached report for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission.

5. Consultation undertaken or proposed

- 5.1 Further work will be undertaken as the process develops.
- 5.2 Engagement on the council's budget priorities is an important part of the budget setting process and essential in informing the development of the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. During November and December 2023 we have encouraged residents, businesses and community organisations to have their say on what the priorities should be in the council's budget for the 2024/25 financial year via a short online survey or by attending one of the council's engagement events . Initial findings have been considered in preparing the report to Cabinet on 15 January 2024 but more detailed feedback will be provided in the February report to Cabinet.
- 5.3 There will be a meeting on 8 February 2024 with businesses as part of the statutory consultation with NNDR ratepayers. Any feedback from this meeting will be reported verbally to Cabinet on 20 February 2024.
- 5.4 As previously indicated, an information pack was distributed to all councillors at the end of December with a request that it be brought to all Scrutiny and Cabinet meetings from 24 January 2024 onwards and to Budget Council. This should maintain the improvement for both councillors and officers which makes the Business Planning process more manageable for councillors and ensures that only one version of those documents is available so referring to page numbers at meetings is easier. It also considerably reduces printing costs and reduces the amount of printing that needs to take place immediately prior to Budget Council.
- 5.4 The information pack includes:
- New Savings proposals 2024-28
 - New Growth proposals 2024-28
 - A draft Equality impact assessment for each saving proposal where applicable.

6. Timetable

- 6.1 The timetable for the Business Plan 2024-28 including the revenue budget 2024/25, the MTFS 2024-28 and the Capital Programme for 2024-28 was agreed by Cabinet on 16 November 2023. The agreed key dates are included in the body of this report.

7. Financial, resource and property implications

- 7.1 These are set out in the Cabinet reports for 16 November 2023, and 15 January

2024 (Appendix 1) and the Information Pack.

8. **Legal and statutory implications**

- 8.1 All relevant implications have been addressed in the Cabinet reports. Further work will be carried out as the budget and business planning process proceeds and will be included in the budget report to Cabinet on the 20 February 2024.
- 8.2 Detailed legal advice will be provided throughout the budget setting process further to any proposals identified and prior to any final decisions.

9. **Human Rights, Equalities and Community Cohesion Implications**

- 9.1 All relevant implications will be addressed in Cabinet reports on the business planning process.
- 9.2 A draft equalities assessment has been carried out with respect to the proposed budget savings where applicable and is included in the Information Pack circulated to all Members.

10. **Crime and Disorder implications**

- 10.1 All relevant implications will be addressed in Cabinet reports on the business planning process.

11. **Risk Management and Health and Safety Implications**

- 11.1 All relevant implications will be addressed in Cabinet reports on the business planning process.

Appendices – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

Appendix 1 - Cabinet report 15 January 2023: Budget 2024/25 and MTFS 2024-28

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 The following documents have been relied on in drawing up this report but do not form part of the report:

None.

13. **REPORT AUTHOR**

- Name: Roger Kershaw
- Tel: 020 8545 3458

email: roger.kershaw@merton.gov.uk