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**Report of the Chief Officer – Financial Services**

**Report to Council**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

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**Subject: Revenue Budget 2021/22– Green Amendments**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This report provides Members of Council with comments on the robustness of the proposals contained in the amendments to the budget motion in the name of Councillor David Blackburn.

**2. Robustness of the budget**

- 2.1 The Local Government Act (Part II) 2003 places a requirement on the Council that when making decisions on the setting of the council's budget and the council tax, they must consider a report from the council's statutory finance officer (the Chief Officer - Financial Services) on the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of reserves within the proposals. The report of the Chief Officer - Financial Services at item 8(i) on the council summons includes at section 11 comments to this effect in respect of the proposed budget motion.
- 2.2. Given this requirement, in considering any proposed amendment to the budget motion, members must also consider the comments of the Chief Officer - Financial Services on the robustness of the proposals. These comments supplement those contained in the main report.

### **3. Proposed amendments**

- 3.1 Councillor Blackburn's amendments to the budget motion set out his proposals showing areas of additional spend and the sources of funding which are largely self-explanatory. In considering these amendments, the Chief Officer - Financial Services would wish members of Council to be aware of the following:
- (a) Amendments 36 and 37 both propose reductions in the Council's contribution to Leeds 2023. Whilst the payment to Leeds 2023 can be varied the Council's grant agreement with the Trust does not reasonably allow the Council to do that other than by negotiation and agreement by both parties. Therefore these budget amendments could only be implemented following the successful re-negotiation of the current grant agreement.
  - (b) Amendment 38 proposes a 5% reduction in salaries above PO6 and equivalent which will impact on employees' terms and conditions of employment which can only be achieved either through collective agreement with the trade unions or through dismissal and engagement of staff on new contracts of employment. The amendment assumes that this could be achieved within a six month period.
  - (c) Amendment 38 also includes a proposal regarding a reduction of 28% in Special Responsibility Allowances for Members and a 9% reduction in basic allowances for Members. Recommendations in respect of Members' allowances are made by the Independent Remuneration Panel and therefore any proposed reduction could not be implemented without first consulting with this panel.
  - (d) A number of savings and spending proposals in the amendments are interdependent which creates additional risks to the budget. These risks should be managed by not committing to the additional spend until the additional savings have been realised.
- 3.2 Should these budget amendments be approved, they will be subject to the council's procedures for further consultation and will need to be informed by equality impact assessments as appropriate.
- 3.3 These budget amendments do not have any impact on the council's general reserve.

### **4. Overall conclusion**

In conclusion, whilst the proposals in these amendments will increase the risks associated with the delivery of the council's budget, and these risks are set out in section 15.6 of the 2021/22 Revenue Budget and Council Tax report, the amendments to the budget motion in the name of Cllr David Blackburn will not materially impact on the overall robustness of the Council's budget for 2021/22 or the adequacy of its general fund reserves as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.