

Revenue Budget 2023/24 – Morley Borough Independents Amendments

Date: 22nd February 2023

Report of: Chief Officer - Financial Services

Report to: Council

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

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.

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 Robert Finnigan.

The Council's strategic ambitions can only be delivered through a sound understanding of the organisation's longer-term financial sustainability which enables decisions to be made that balance the resource implications of the Council's policies against financial constraints. This is the primary purpose of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy which then provides the framework for the determination of Council's annual revenue budget for which the proposals for 2023/24 are contained in the '2023/24 Revenue Budget and Council Tax' report. This report informs Members of any potential impact of proposed amendments on the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of reserves within the 2023/24 budget proposals.

Recommendations

- a) It is recommended that Council note that whilst the proposals in these amendments will collectively increase the risks associated with the delivery of the Council's budget, the amendments to the budget motion in the name of Councillor Robert Finnigan will not materially impact on the overall robustness of the Council's budget for 2023/24 or the adequacy of its general fund reserves as at 31st March 2024

What is this report about?

- 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 9(i) on the council summons includes at part 7 comments to this effect in respect of the proposed budget motion.
- 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.

Proposed amendments

- 3 Councillor Robert Finnigan'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) Amendment 34 proposes a reduction in the Council's contribution to Leeds 2023. Whilst the payment can be varied this should be done in accordance with the terms of the Council's grant agreement with Leeds 2023 which requires the Council "acting reasonably" to give three months written notice to terminate the Agreement or and/or any Grant payment. In addition, since this amendment proposes a contribution to West Yorkshire Police to re-introduce 37 additional PCSOs in Leeds, sufficient for at least 1 additional PCSO for every ward in the city, further savings proposals will be required to be identified in future financial years to fund this recurring expenditure.
 - (b) Amendment 35 outlines a reduction to Members Special Responsibility Allowances by 31%. Recommendations in respect of member's allowances are made by the independent remuneration panel. Therefore, before any proposed reduction could be implemented the Council would first have to consult with this panel.
 - (c) Amendment 35 also proposes a reduction in the funding of full-time Trade Union Convenors. This forms part of employees' terms and conditions of employment that can only be achieved either through collective agreement with the trade unions or through the dismissal and re-engagement of staff on new contracts of employment. The amendment assumes that the reduction can be introduced during the financial year. Any slippage in respect of this assumption will require the identification of further savings proposals to fund the planned contribution to the general reserve.
 - (d) The amendments include savings and spending proposals which are interdependent and which create additional risks to the budget. Where possible this risk should be managed by not committing to the additional spend until the additional savings have been realised or clearly identified.
- 4 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.
- 5 These budget amendments do not have any impact on the Council's general reserve. In respect of the Housing Revenue Account general reserve the overall level of reserve available will be £7,400k which is considered to be adequate to meet the identified risks.

Overall conclusion

- 6 In conclusion, whilst the proposals in the amendments will collectively increase the risks associated with the delivery of the Council's budget, and these risks are set out in part 10 of the 2023/24 Revenue Budget and Council Tax report, the amendments to the budget motion in the name of Councillor Robert Finnigan will not materially impact on the overall robustness of the Council's budget for 2023/24 or the adequacy of its general fund reserves as at 31st March 2024.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 7 Not applicable

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 8 Not applicable

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 9 The 2023/24 Budget proposals themselves were developed through consultation with a range of stakeholders, notably with the Executive Board, all Scrutiny Boards, the Council's Corporate Leadership Team and other senior officers. They have also been subject to public consultation, the results of which are included in full at Appendix 2 of the 2023/24 Revenue Budget and Council Tax report on today's agenda. This report comments on the proposed amendments to the 2023/24 Budget proposals and has not been the subject of separate consultation

What are the resource implications?

- 10 All resource implications are included in the 2023/24 Revenue Budget and Council Tax report on today's agenda. This report comments on the proposed amendments to the 2023/24 Budget proposals which do not impact on the overall proposed Budget position.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 11 The key risks associated with the 2023/24 Budget are discussed in the 2023/24 Revenue Budget and Council Tax report on today's agenda. Whilst the amendments in the name of Councillor Robert Finnigan will collectively increase the risks associated with the delivery of the Council's budget, they will not materially impact on the overall robustness of the Council's budget for 2023/24 or the adequacy of its general fund reserves as at 31st March 2024

What are the legal implications?

- 12 In accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, decisions as to the Council's budget are reserved to Full Council. In accordance with the Local Government Act (Part II)

2003, which places a requirement on the Council to 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, this robustness report is considered an integral part of the budget process. As such, the recommendations are not subject to call in, as the budget is a matter that will be determined by Full Council.

13 If required, proposals will also be subject to separate consultation and decision-making processes, which will operate within their own defined timetables and be managed by individual directorates.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

14 Not applicable

How will success be measured?

15 Not applicable

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

16 Not applicable

Appendices

- Not applicable

Background papers

- None