
Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Report to Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources)

Date: 20 January 2020

Subject: Initial Budget Proposals for 2020/2021

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	☐ Yes ☒ No
Has consultation been carried out?	☐ Yes ☒ No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	☒ Yes ☐ No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	☐ Yes ☒ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	☐ Yes ☒ No

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) with the Executive Board's initial budget proposals for 2020/21 for consideration, review and comment on matters and proposals relating to service areas that fall within the Scrutiny Board's remit.
- 1.2 The Executive Board's initial budget proposals report for 2020/21, considered at its meeting on 7 January 2020 is attached to this report. Other Scrutiny Boards will be considering elements of the budget proposals relevant to their terms of reference.

2. Background information

- 2.1 A range of background information is set out in the attached Executive Board report that provides the context in which the Initial Budget Proposals for 2020/21 have been prepared.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 In accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, the Chief Officer – Financial Services submitted the attached report to the Executive Board, which sets out the Initial Budget Proposals for 2020/21. The proposals are subsequently submitted to Scrutiny for consideration, review and comment.

- 3.2 The attached report to the Executive Board sets out the Initial Budget Proposals for 2020/21, set within the context of the:
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy (approved by Executive Board in July 2019);
 - The Revenue Budget Update report for 2020/21-2024/25 (received at Executive Board in October 2019);
 - The Technical Consultation in respect of the 2020/21 Local Government Finance settlement; and,
 - Proposed budget savings proposals to bridge the estimated budget gap for 2020/21
- 3.3 The proposals are submitted to Scrutiny for consideration, review and comment; and the Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) is asked to consider matters and proposals relating to service areas that fall within its remit. Other Scrutiny Boards will be considering elements of the budget proposals relevant to their terms of reference.
- 3.4 Any comments or recommendations made by the Scrutiny Board will be submitted to the Executive Board for consideration at its meeting in February 2020; prior to submission of the proposed budget to full Council on 26th February 2020.
- 3.5 As in previous years, it is intended to produce a summary of the discussion and comments from all Scrutiny Boards in order to make a single submission to Executive Board.
- 3.6 Relevant Executive Members and senior officers have been invited to attend the meeting to discuss the attached report and address any issues raised by the Scrutiny Board.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 Consultation is an ongoing process and residents are consulted on many issues during the year. Further to this, it is proposed to consult around the principles and high level proposals in this report through a wider consultation survey. Fuller details are provided in the attached Executive Board report.
- 4.1.2 In addition, in line with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, the proposals are submitted to Scrutiny for consideration and review.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. The law requires that the duty to pay "due regard" be demonstrated in the decision making process. Assessing the potential equality impact of proposed changes to policies, procedures and practices is one of the key ways in which public authorities can show "due regard"

- 4.2.2 The proposals within the attached Executive Board report have been screened for relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration and a full strategic analysis and assessment will be undertaken on the 2020/21 Revenue Budget and Council Tax report which will be considered by Executive Board and subsequently by Full Council in February 2020.
- 4.2.3 Fuller details are provided in the attached Executive Board report.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 The Best Council Plan sets out the Council's ambitions and priorities. The Plan's development and implementation continues to inform, and is informed by, the authority's funding envelope and by staffing and other resources. The current Plan and its proposed update for 2020/21 is therefore aligned with both the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy and its annual budget. The proposed Best Council Plan refresh is also presented elsewhere on the Scrutiny Board's meeting agenda.

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.2 In conjunction with inclusive growth and health and wellbeing, the proposed Best Council Plan update report recommends that the climate change emergency becomes the third 'pillar' underpinning the Council's Best City ambition to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities. A specific focus on this emergency aims to embed sustainability considerations into all aspects of the authority's decision-making.
- 4.3.3 As such, whilst there are no implications for the climate emergency resulting from this report, should any specific service and budget proposals that emerge through the development of the Council's 2020/21 Budget create potential climate emergency issues or opportunities, these will be addressed in the final Budget reports to Executive Board and Full Council in February 2020.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 4.4.1 All resources, procurement and value for money implications are detailed in the main body of the attached Executive Board report.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 The attached Executive Board report has been produced in compliance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework. In accordance with this framework, the approved initial budget proposals are submitted to Scrutiny for review and consideration. The outcome of the Boards review, through a collated Scrutiny Board report, will be presented to the February 2020 meeting of Executive Board at which proposals for the 2020/21 budget will be considered prior to submission to Full Council on the 26th February 2020.
- 4.5.2 Fuller legal implications associated with the proposals presented are detailed in the attached Executive Board report.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 The Council's current and future financial position is subject to a number of risk management processes. Not addressing the financial pressures in a sustainable way is identified as one of the Council's corporate risks, as is the Council's financial

position going into significant deficit in the current year resulting in reserves (actual or projected) being less than the minimum specified by the Council's risk-based reserves policy. Both these risks are subject to regular review

- 4.6.2 Failure to address these issues will ultimately require the Council to consider even more difficult decisions that will have a far greater impact on front-line services including those that support the most vulnerable and thus on our Best Council Plan ambition to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities.
- 4.6.3 Budget management and monitoring is undertaken on a risk-based approach where financial management resources are prioritised to support those areas of the budget that are judged to be at risk, for example the implementation of budget action plans, those budgets which are subject to fluctuating demand and key income budgets. This risk-based approach will continue to be included in the in-year financial reports presented to Executive Board.
- 4.6.4 Risks identified in relation to specific proposals and their management will be reported to relevant members and officers as required. Specific risks relating to some of the assumptions contained within the initial budget proposals are detailed in the attached Executive Board report.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The attached Executive Board presents the Initial Budget Proposals for 2020/21 and the projected budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23. The proposals need to be seen in the context of significant inherent uncertainty for the Council in respect of future funding and spending assumptions. Specifically the implications of the Government's future spending plans with regard to local government and other areas of the public sector after 2020/21 remain unknown. To compound this uncertainty the Government remains both committed to move to 75% business rate retention nationally and implementing the Fair Funding review of the methodology which determines current funding baselines which are based on an assessment of relative needs and resources. The outcome of both these changes, and the subsequent implications for Leeds, will not be known until the autumn of 2020.
- 5.2 In addition it remains uncertain how the Government intend to fund social care in future years and the implications of the UK leaving the EU are as yet unknown.
- 5.3 As set out in the attached Executive Board report, in determining the initial budget proposal and the forecast position for 2021/22 and 2022/23 a number of assumptions have been made as to the level of resources available to the Council. These assumptions are under constant review to reflect any changes in circumstances or if further information emerges in respect of known risks.
- 5.4 Again, as set out in the attached Executive Board report, the initial budget proposals for 2020/21, subject to finalisation of the detailed proposals in February 2020, will still require savings and additional income of £23.2m to produce a balanced budget.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 That the Scrutiny Board considers the relevant information within the attached Executive Board report and identifies any specific comments and/or recommendations for consideration by Executive Board as it prepares its final proposals for consideration by full Council in February 2020.

7. Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.