

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: Cabinet	REPORT NUMBER: MCa/19/37
FROM: Councillor John Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Finance	DATE OF MEETING: 13 January 2020
OFFICER: Katherine Steel, Assistant Director, Corporate Resources Melissa Evans, Corporate Manager, Finance and Commissioning & Procurement	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB132

DRAFT GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2020/21 AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report contains details of the draft revenue and capital budgets and the Council's strategic financial aim. The purpose of this report is to present the draft General Fund Budget for 2020/21 and four-year outlook.
- 1.2 To enable Cabinet Members to consider key aspects of the draft 2020/21 Budgets, including Council Tax and make any recommendations to feed into the final Budget report in February.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The General Fund Budget for 2020/21 and four-year outlook is an essential element in achieving a balanced budget and sustainable medium-term position. Setting a balanced budget for the coming year is a statutory requirement, therefore no other options are appropriate in respect of this.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the draft General Fund Budget proposals for 2020/21 and four-year outlook set out in the report be endorsed for recommendation to Council on 27 February 2020, subject to further consideration at the next Cabinet meeting on 10 February 2020.
- 3.2 That the draft General Fund Budget for 2020/21 is based on an increase to Council Tax of 1.66%, which equates to £2.76 per annum (5p per week) for a Band D property, to support the Council's overall financial position, which will be considered further at the February Cabinet meeting.
- 3.3 That from 1 April 2020 properties that are unoccupied and unfurnished (Class C discount) receive a 25% reduction for the first 28 days as set out in section 11.

REASON FOR DECISION

To bring together all the relevant information to enable Cabinet Members to review, consider and comment upon the Council's General Fund budget before the February Cabinet and recommendations to Council.

4. KEY INFORMATION

Strategic Context

- 4.1 In recent years the government policy frameworks have been reducing core funding for local government as part of its deficit reduction strategy and increasingly incentivising funding to councils to deliver local economic and housing growth and to facilitate the development of strong, safe, healthy and self-sufficient communities. This is continuing, so encouraging and supporting both business and housing growth is essential to the financial future of the Council.
- 4.2 The Government's Fair Funding Review is still a work in progress, and it aims to set new baseline funding allocations for local authorities by delivering an up-to-date assessment of their relative needs and resources. The Government is developing an updated funding formula by looking at the factors that drive costs for local authorities. The outcome of these deliberations is still awaited and will be implemented from 2021/22.
- 4.3 The Council recognised the changing funding landscape, the challenges and opportunities this creates and has developed a financial strategy that responds to this challenge as set out in section 6 below.
- 4.4 On 16 December 2019, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) published its restated March 2019 economic and fiscal outlook.
- 4.5 The economy ended 2018 growing a little less strongly than expected in October. Survey indicators of current activity have weakened materially, in part reflecting heightened uncertainty prior to the General Election related to Brexit. As a result, the OBR has revised their forecast for Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth this year down to 1.2% – more than reversing the upward revision they made in October in response to the Government's discretionary fiscal loosening in the Budget. They have not altered their assessment of the outlook for potential output, so the medium-term forecast is little changed: GDP growth still settles down to around 1.5% a year.
- 4.6 They now expect public sector net borrowing to come in at £22.8 billion (1.1% of GDP) this year, down £2.7 billion since October thanks primarily to higher income tax receipts and lower debt interest spending. By 2023/24 the improvement since that October estimate is £6.3 billion, again thanks primarily to higher income tax receipts and lower debt interest spending.
- 4.7 These downward pressures on borrowing are partially offset by the £2.1 billion net cost of 20 policy decisions announced since the Budget – notably the £1.7 billion of additional planned public services spending announced at the Spring Statement. This leaves the expected deficit in 2023/24 at £13.5 billion (0.5% of GDP).

- 4.8 Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation was above the 2% target throughout 2018, averaging 2.5%. In the fourth quarter of 2018 it had fallen back to 2.3%. CPI inflation fell further in January 2019 to 1.8%, largely reflecting lower gas, electricity and petrol price changes. This was the first time in two years that inflation was below the 2% target. The OBR has revised down their forecast for CPI inflation since October, dipping to 1.9% in 2020, returning to the 2% target thereafter. They have made a larger downward revision to RPI inflation due to the much weaker outlook for house prices in 2019 and 2020.
- 4.9 On 4 September 2019 the Chancellor delivered his 2019 Spending Round. The key points that are relevant to Local Government are as follows:
- a) Confirmation that the Fair Funding Review, Business Rates Review and business rates reset has been deferred by 12 months to 2021/22.
 - b) £2.9 billion increase in Core Spending power overall. Most of the additional funding is for adults' and children's services, but there is £54m for Homelessness.
 - c) Funding to remove negative RSG has been continued for 2020/21.
 - d) 75% business rates pilots will come to an end and there are no new pilots planned for 2020/21.
 - e) £40m additional funding for Discretionary Housing Payments.
 - f) £23m to fund a range of measures around Universal Credit – whilst this won't come to districts it will be a positive support for people in the area.
 - g) Continuation of the Discover England Fund to promote inbound tourism.
 - h) £241m in 2020/21 in the Towns Fund to regenerate high streets, town centres and local economies.
 - i) Additional £30m for the Business, Energy, & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to accelerate the development of decarbonisation schemes.

Provisional Finance Settlement

- 4.10 The Provisional Finance Settlement was announced on the 20 December 2019, whilst there is new money from Central Government this has been prioritised for adult and children's social care.
- 4.11 The settlement provides no update on the progress of either the move to further business rates retention or the Review of Relative Needs and Resources (commonly called the Fair Funding Review). However the settlement confirmed that the next business rates revaluation is planned for 2021 and from then on the Government intends to move to a three-yearly revaluation cycle.

4.12 The headlines are as follows;

- a) No change to the New Homes Bonus threshold of 0.4%. The 2020/21 element of NHB will be paid for one year only. The legacy payments of the bonus in respect of growth in 2019/20 and previous years will continue to be paid in 2020/21. The Government will consult on the future of the housing incentive in the Spring. The Written Ministerial Statement says this will include moving to a new, more targeted approach which is aligned with other measures around planning performance and confirmed that the payments will be phased out;
- b) The Rural Services Delivery Grant will remain unchanged at £81 million in 2020/21. The Government is minded to retain the current method of distributing the grant but will consult on this;
- c) Business rates baseline will rise in line with inflation;
- d) £400m compensation for under-indexing the business rates multiplier will be distributed to all councils, Mid Suffolk's share of this is £91k and;
- e) Continuation of the option for shire districts with the lowest council tax levels to increase council tax by the higher of 2% or £5. The Government will continue with its policy of not setting referendum limits for parish and town councils, which they will keep under review for future years.

4.13 The Provisional Finance Settlement provided Mid Suffolk with additional funding of £213k. The Baseline Business Rates increased by £36k, and an additional £91k for compensation for the under-indexing of the business rates multiplier. New Homes Bonus increased by £85k, mainly due to the empty properties coming back into use element of the allocation which was not originally budgeted for.

4.14 Table 1 below shows the Provisional Finance Settlement compared to the budget for 2020/21.

Table 1: Provisional Finance Settlement

	<u>2020/21 Assumed</u>	<u>2020/21 Provisional Settlement</u>	<u>(Increase)/ Decrease</u>
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Baseline Funding Level	2,238	2,274	(36)
Compensation for under-indexing the business rates multiplier	-	91	(91)
New Homes Bonus	1,527	1,612	(85)
Rural Services Delivery Grant	433	433	-
Funding	4,198	4,411	(213)

5. HOW IS THE COUNCIL'S REVENUE BUDGET BEING SPENT IN 2019/20?

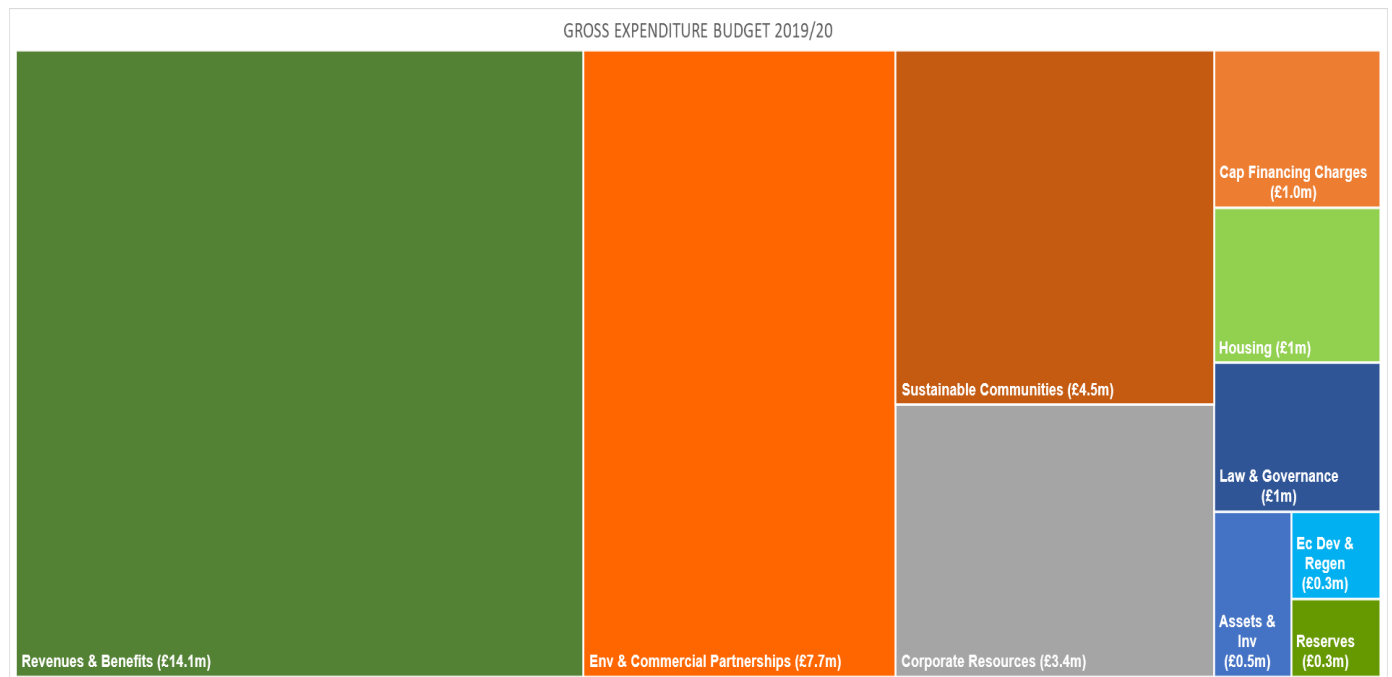
5.1 The Council's 2019/20 gross expenditure is £33.8m and income is £23.5m giving a net cost of service of £10.3m. Table 2 below shows how this is funded.

Table 2: Revenue Budget 2019/20

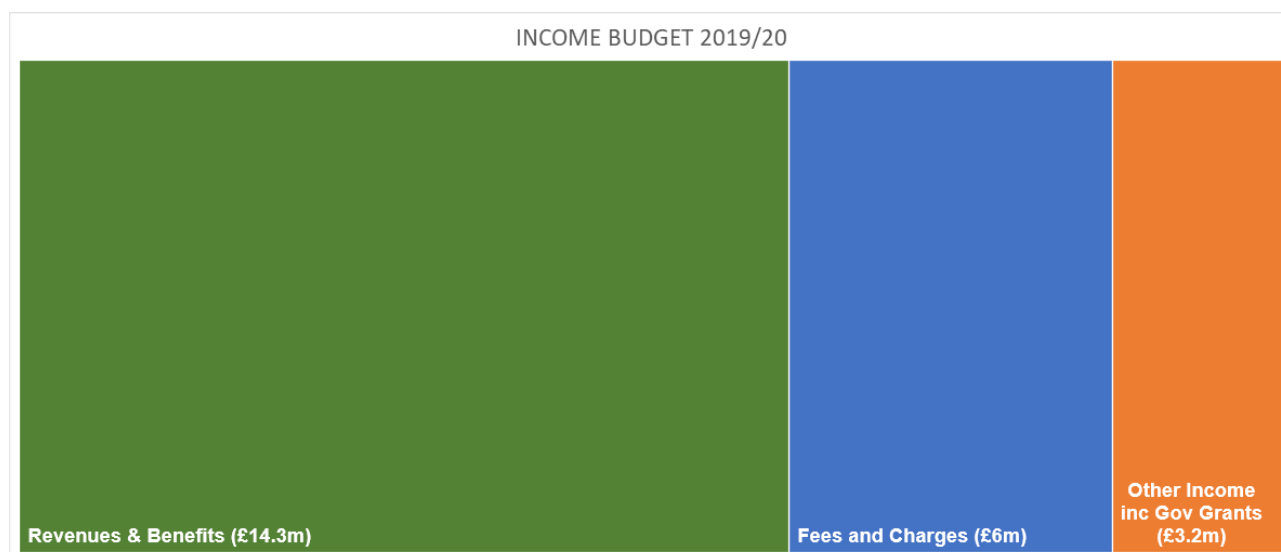
	£,000
Gross Expenditure	33,809
Income	(23,557)
Net expenditure 2019/20	10,252
Funded by:	
Earmarked Reserves	(1,446)
New Homes Bonus to balance the budget	-
S31 Grant	(783)
Business Rates	(2,043)
Collection Funds Deficit	570
Rural Services Delivery Grant	(433)
Council Tax	(6,117)
Total Funding	(10,252)

5.2 Graph 1 below shows how the £33.8m gross expenditure is allocated across the services and Graph 2 shows the breakdown of the £23.5m income. The funding element is not shown in these graphs.

Graph 1 Gross Expenditure by service area in 2019/20



Graph 2 Income in 2019/2020



- 5.3 The Revenues and Benefits element (£14m) in both the expenditure and the income charts above includes housing benefit paid out to claimants and reimbursed from the Government.
- 5.4 The forecast position for 2019/20 at quarter 2 reported to Cabinet in January 2020 showed a projected underspend of £397k. However, there may be further variances that occur throughout the remainder of the year. An updated position will be reported to Cabinet in March 2020 and the final outturn position in May 2020.

6. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) 2020-2024

Strategic Aims

- 6.1 In order to achieve the vision and ambition for the districts with significantly reduced government resources the Council needs to take a medium-term view of the budget through a financial strategy that is focused on meeting the corporate priorities.
- 6.2 The main strategic financial aim is to become self-financing i.e. not reliant on Government funding. There is a secondary aim to be in a position to generate more funds than are required for core services, to enable additional investment in the district.
- 6.3 There are 3 key elements that need to be carefully balanced to ensure success. These are:
1. Cost management;
 2. Income generation; and
 3. Service levels.

Principles

- 6.4 The approach over the medium term is to transform the Council into an organisation that is thriving and not just surviving, by reviewing, remodelling and reinventing the way the Council operates.

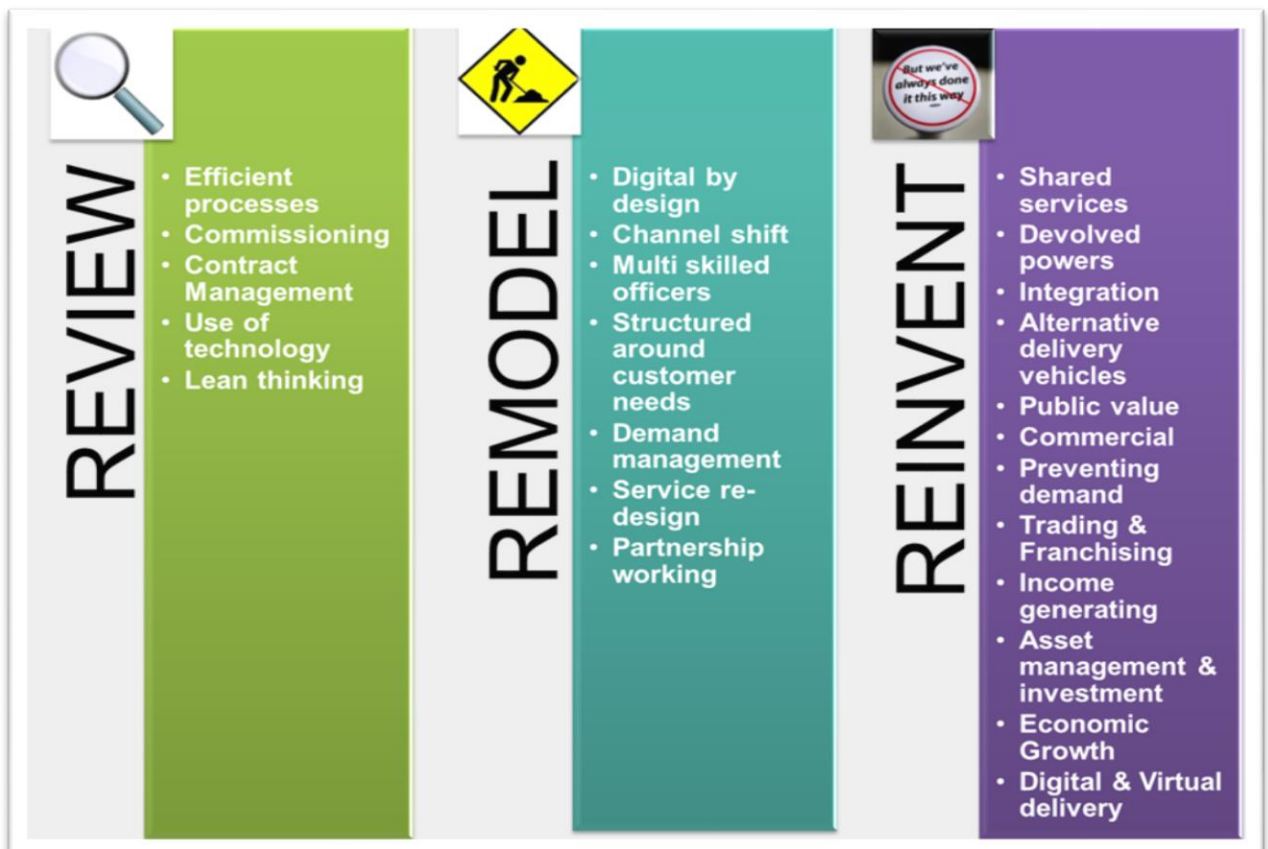
The Cabinet proposes that the following overarching principles should be considered when evaluating ideas and opportunities for change as set out below:

- Reduce our costs (both internally and across the wider system)
- Increase our income
- Provide better / “best” value
- Increased social value
- Provide a better service for our customers
- Reduction in administration costs, without compromising service

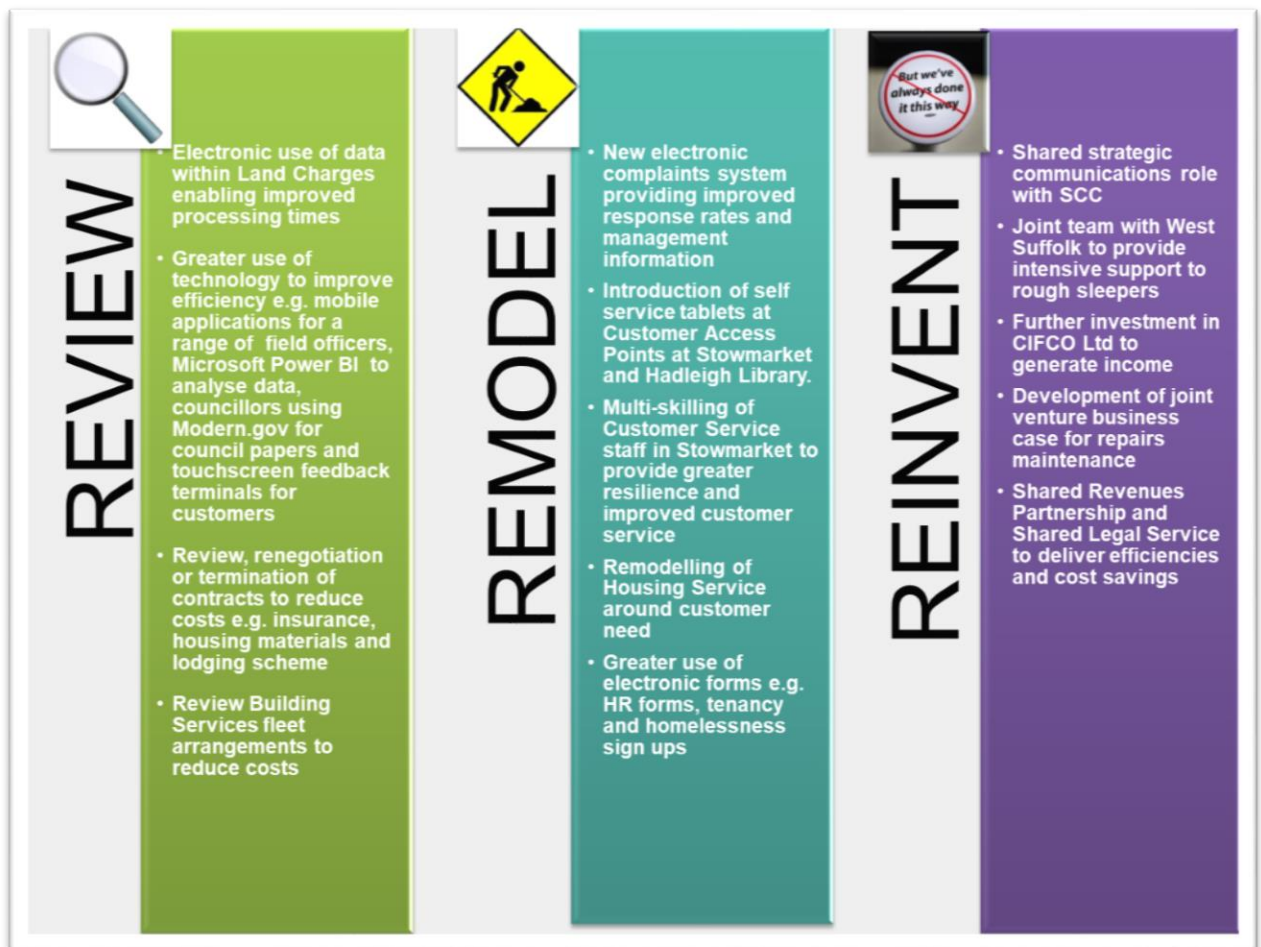
- 6.5 The focus will be on internal efficiencies and improvements within existing structures. Continuously looking to streamline work and reduce waste in processes. Greater cross-functional working and multi-skilling and improving ways of working to move away from ‘professional silos’ and toward integrated services for the public. Where customer demand is understood, analysed and met through new services and business models, and where the demand itself is re-shaped and managed while engaging service users to ascertain priorities.

- 6.6 The approach below shows in more detail for each element the methodology that will be adopted to achieve this.

Approach



- 6.7 During 2019/20 a great deal of work has been undertaken following this approach as shown in the diagram below. Work will continue into 2020/21 and is likely to require a longer-term approach and may require additional resources and investment. The Council will continue this approach in order to transform the way it operates over the next three years.



7. RESERVES

- 7.1 When setting the budget for the forthcoming year the Council must have regard to the level of reserves needed to provide enough resources to finance estimated future expenditure plus any appropriate allowances that should be made for contingencies.
- 7.2 The Council has been making significant savings for a number of years as set out in 8.18 below, and with each year the challenge gets more difficult without negatively impacting on service standards. The approach outlined above will deliver savings or generate income to ensure the Council is in a self-financing position. However, some of these will not be realised until 2021/22 onwards and investment from reserves may be required to deliver them.
- 7.3 Reserves only provide one-off funding so the Council should avoid using reserves to meet regular recurring financial commitments.

7.4 In 2020/21 the Council is using £1m from earmarked reserves, as follows;

- £777k of earmarked reserves against specific service expenditure (£477k shown against new pressures in paragraph 8.16 Table 7);
- £250k on members locality budgets

7.5 There are a number of reserve transfers from the Growth and Efficiency Fund (GEF) identified in 2019/20 which have not yet been spent. They include the £3m potential contribution to the Strategic Investment Fund, £2.6m contribution towards the Regal Theatre and £200k towards battery storage at the Leisure Centre.

7.6 Table 3 below shows the earmarked reserves balance from 31 March 2019, forecast through to 31 March 2021. This shows that the level of reserves drops by 22% (excluding CIL) over the two years.

Table 3: Forecast Earmarked Reserve Levels

Transfers to / from Earmarked Reserves	Balance 31 March 2019	Transfers 2019/20		Balance 31 March 2020	Transfers 2020/21		Balance 31 March 2021	
		Transfers to	Transfers from		Transfers between	Transfers to		Transfers from
Carry Forwards	(85)		85	(0)			(0)	
Growth and Efficiency Fund	(9,006)	(3,090)	2,861	(9,235)	500	(3,017)	8,039	(3,713)
Commercial Development Risk Management	(500)	(1,000)		(1,500)		(1,000)		(2,500)
Climate Change	-			-	(500)			(500)
Welfare Benefits Reform	(211)			(211)				(211)
Business Rates Retention	(1,014)			(1,014)				(1,014)
Business Rates Equalisation	(2,962)			(2,962)				(2,962)
Government Grants	(214)		35	(179)			34	(145)
Commuted Maintenance Payments	(775)			(775)			39	(736)
Elections Fund	(84)	(20)	75	(29)		(20)		(49)
Planning Enforcement (Legal Costs)	(35)			(35)				(35)
Planning Enforcement	(45)			(45)				(45)
Revocation of personal search fees	(51)			(51)				(51)
Homelessness	(363)		33	(330)			68	(262)
Temporary Accommodation	(118)		42	(76)			10	(66)
Planning (Legal Costs)	(506)			(506)			333	(173)
Neighbourhood Planning Grants (NPGs)	(27)	(54)		(81)		(47)		(128)
Strategic Planning inc Community Housing Grant, Brownfield Sites etc	(313)		43	(270)				(270)
Strategic Planning - Joint Local Plan	(224)		33	(191)			118	(74)
Repairs and Renewals	(293)			(293)				(293)
Waste	(205)		127	(78)			15	(63)
Sub-total exc CIL	(17,031)	(4,164)	3,334	(17,861)	-	(4,084)	8,655	(13,290)
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	(8,532)			(8,532)				(8,532)
Total earmarked reserves	(25,563)	(4,164)	3,334	(26,394)	-	(4,084)	8,655	(21,822)

7.7 There is an agreed process for CIL bids, however nothing has been included in this table for CIL income and expenditure for 2020/21 as this is difficult to predict.

7.8 The level of risk has been assessed regarding the Council's in-district planned brownfield and greenfield commercial developments. These include Needham Market and Stowmarket middle schools, the Council's former offices in Needham Market and the major development planned for the Gateway 14 site in Stowmarket. Robust business cases have been produced for each of these projects but given the element of risk inherent in any development, a prudent decision has been made to transfer £1m to the Commercial Development Risk Management reserve in 2020/21. As these developments come to fruition the level of the reserves may be reduced.

7.9 As a result of conversation with the Opposition Groups about their budget proposals, £500k is being transferred from the GEF to a new Climate Change earmarked reserve to ensure funding is available for the recommendations that will come from the Climate Change Taskforce.

7.10 In addition to the earmarked reserves, the Council also holds a general fund reserve of £1.052m, which equates to approximately 10% of the net cost of service. This is a prudent level of reserve to hold to mitigate against unexpected financial risks that cannot be offset by savings during the year or with use of the earmarked reserves in Table 3.

8. FORECAST BUDGET GAP TO 2023/24

8.1 To establish the medium-term budget gap several assumptions have been made as to the expected level of funding and a number of cost pressures and savings have been identified over the period. These are set out later in this section.

Funding

8.2 Funding arrangements for councils have changed significantly in recent years, the revenue support grant has been completely removed and the future funding of New Homes Bonus (NHB) continues to remain an uncertainty.

8.3 2019/20 is the last year of the four-year Comprehensive Spending Review where councils had some certainty about their funding levels, therefore the position from 2020/21 remained more difficult to forecast until the Government announced a one-year settlement for 2020/21.

8.4 The Fair Funding Review and changes to the distribution of business rates has been delayed as a result of Brexit discussions, therefore the position after 2020/21 remains more difficult to forecast.

8.5 Government has recognised that councils are now more reliant on council tax and business rates as the main sources of funding and has announced that from 2021 business rate retention will be 75% compared to 50% of the growth achieved in business rates income. A full review of business rates is likely to happen following the general election.

8.6 Since NHB was introduced in 2011/12 the Council has received £15.5m in total. As shown in Table 4 below the use of NHB to balance the budget increased from 4% in 2016/17 to 24% in 2018/19. In 2020/21 the Council is in the position of being able to balance the budget without any use of NHB and transfer the full £1.6m to earmarked reserves.

8.7 From 2011/12 to 2019/20 £6.8m NHB has been transferred to the Growth and Efficiency Fund. The Council is not reliant on NHB to balance the budget in any year up to 2023/24, but the projected transfer from the annual surplus decreases each year to just £91k in 2023/24 leaving less money available to invest into the district. If the Council wishes to continue to have resources for investment, actions will need to be taken over the next 3 years under the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Table 4: New Homes Bonus used from 2016/17 to 2020/21

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Amount of NHB received	2,641	2,028	1,463	1,380	1,612	9,124
NHB used to balance the budget	110	267	354	0	0	731
% NHB used to balance the budget	4%	13%	24%	0%	0%	8%

8.8 Table 5 and Graph 3 below shows the NHB over the last ten years plus the estimated allocations for 2021/22 to 2023/24. This assumes 1% growth over and above the 0.4% threshold, one more year's growth for 2020/21 only and the legacy payments being phased out from 2021/22 year on year with nothing being received in 2023/24.

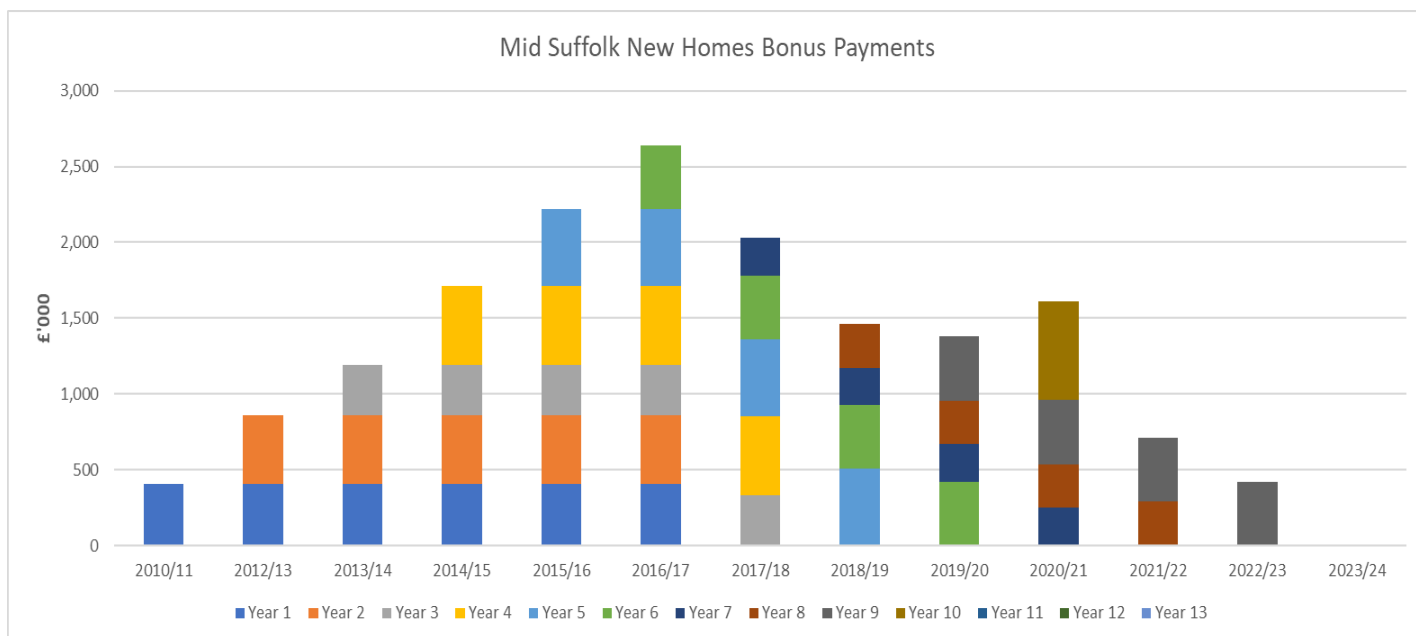
8.9 This clearly shows how the NHB has declined from a peak of £2.6m in 2016/17 to £1.6m in 2020/21, after the Government announced it would reduce the allocation from 6 years to 5 years in 2017/18 and to 4 years in 2018/19, as well as introducing a 0.4% growth baseline in 2017/18.

8.10 For 2020/21, the 0.4% growth for Mid Suffolk means that the first 174 new homes built will receive no payment.

Table 5: New Homes Bonus sums per year

Payments											Estimated		
	2010/11	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Year 1	409	409	409	409	409	409							
Year 2		452	452	452	452	452							
Year 3			334	334	334	334	334						
Year 4				521	521	521	521						
Year 5					506	506	506	506					
Year 6						420	420	420	420				
Year 7							247	247	247	247			
Year 8								290	290	290	290		
Year 9									422	422	422	422	
Year 10										653			
Year 11													
Year 12													
Year 13													
Total	409	860	1,194	1,714	2,221	2,641	2,028	1,463	1,380	1,612	713	422	

Graph 3: New Homes Bonus Payments – Estimated for 2021/22 to 2023/24



- 8.11 In calculating the expected level of funding across all sources, the following assumptions have been made:
- £1.9m use of reserves from 2020/21 to 2022/23.
 - NHB as per 8.8 and Table 5 above.
 - No growth in business rates income.
 - Nothing has been included for forecast Business Rates surplus or deficit beyond 2019/20 based on the assumption that the equalisation earmarked reserve will accommodate this.
 - Rural Services Delivery grant will continue beyond 2019/20.
 - Council Tax 1.66% increase each year from 2020/21 to 2023/24, generating on average an incremental additional £109k per annum.
 - Tax base growth of 1.25% for 2020/21 generating an additional £76k and 1.3% per annum from 2021/22, approximately £84k per annum.
- 8.12 Table 6 below shows the forecast funding from 2020/21 to 2023/24. Ignoring the use of reserves (£1,027k for 2020/21, £313k 2021/22, £286k for 2022/23 and £250k for 2023/24) funding decreases by 7% over the 4-year period. This is due to the assumed reduction of NHB as shown in Table 5 above.
- 8.13 By 2023/24 Government funding is virtually non-existent except for Rural Services Delivery Grant. The main sources of funding for the Council are Business Rates and Council Tax.
- 8.14 In 2020/21 the Council will be using £1m of S31 grant to transfer to the Commercial Development Risk Management reserve as explained in paragraph 7.9 above and will be transferring the entire £1.6m NHB to the Growth and Efficiency Fund reserve.
- 8.15 Over the next three years the Council will need to utilise 62% or £2.4m of the £3.9m S31 grant to balance the budget leaving £1.5m surplus funds as well as all of the £1.1m forecast NHB.

Table 6: Forecast Funding 2020/21 – 2023/24

Description	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	Budget	Budget	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Funding:					
Other Earmarked Reserves	(1,196)	(777)	(63)	(36)	-
Growth and Efficiency Fund - Community Capacity Building	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)
New Homes Bonus - provisional 2021/22 onwards	(1,380)	(1,613)	(713)	(422)	-
S31 Business Rates Grant	(1,313)	(1,404)	(1,313)	(1,313)	(1,313)
Government Support					
(a) Baseline business rates	(2,238)	(2,274)	(2,274)	(2,274)	(2,274)
(b) B/Rates – levy	488	522	522	522	522
(c) B/Rates – growth/pooling benefit	(293)	(293)	(293)	(293)	(293)
(d) B/Rates prior yr deficit	597	-	-	-	-
(e) Rural Services Delivery Grant	(433)	(433)	(433)	(433)	(433)
Council Tax Collection Fund surplus	(27)	(27)	(27)	(27)	(27)
Council Tax (1.66% increase to Band D)	(6,035)	(6,220)	(6,402)	(6,593)	(6,790)
Growth in taxbase	(82)	(76)	(82)	(84)	(87)
Total Funding	(12,162)	(12,845)	(11,328)	(11,204)	(10,945)

Pressures

- 8.16 In addition to the reduction in Government funding there are £3.3m of cost pressures that have been identified in 2020/21 and beyond. However, this includes £477k of other funding from reserves. Table 7 below shows the cost pressures the Council is expecting to face over the next four years.

Table 7: Forecast Cost Pressures 2020/21- 2023/24

MID SUFFOLK - MOVEMENT YEAR ON YEAR	19/20 to 20/21 £000	20/21 to 21/22 £000	21/22 to 22/23 £000	22/23 to 23/24 £000
Net Service Cost previous year	10,252	10,017	9,742	10,245
Cost Pressures				
<u>Inflation</u>				
Employees - includes pay award, increments	398	365	379	393
Contracts	62	87	89	91
Business Rates	10	10	10	11
Sub total cost pressure	469	461	478	495
<u>Assets and Investments</u>				
Gateway 14 Ltd	136	(726)	160	288
PV Panels - cost of servicing & repairs	65	(8)		
CIFCO - net interest receivable	24	(14)	(13)	(15)
<u>Customer Access</u>				
ICT - telephony, software licenses & contract costs	162			
<u>Environment</u>				
Waste - refuse contract	68			
Waste - recycling credits		130		
Waste - cost of disposal (Trade and Garden waste)	50			
Materials Recycling Facility (cost of disposal) (funded from reserves)	15			
<u>Housing</u>				
Homelessness Grant funding - no longer received	30			
<u>Sustainable Communities</u>				
Planning appeals (100% funded from reserves)	268			
Joint Local Plan - examination costs (Funded from reserves - £118k)	118			
Neighbourhood Planning (removal of contribution to reserve)	74			
Policy Strategy Health & Well-being (funded from reserves - £26k)	35			
Provision of Free Swims for children aged 16 years and under during school holidays	25			
Planning - consultants & professional fees	20			
<u>Other Cost Pressures</u>				
Employee Costs	181	61	-	(36)
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	191	213	14	55
Other items (net) - funded from reserves £50k	73	(101)	(42)	(65)
Total Pressures	2,003	16	597	722
Pressures funded from earmarked reserves (as mentioned above)	477			

- 8.17 In calculating the pressures, the following assumptions have been made:
- It has been agreed that a pay award of 2% will be made, so pay budgets have been increased accordingly.
 - General Inflation
 - Business rates on the Council's own properties - 3.9%
 - Utilities – Nil increase
 - Major contracts – 2% to 2.5%
 - Pension fund assumptions
 - future rate contribution - 23%, no change from 2019/20
 - pension lump sum – no change from 2019/20

Savings / Income

- 8.18 Over the years 2011/12 to 2019/20 the Council has achieved cumulative savings/income of £30.9m through shared services, efficiencies, better use of technology and maximising commercial opportunities.
- 8.19 Continuing in this vein and following the approach set out in section 6, savings/income of £2.7m have already been identified for 2020/21 and beyond. Table 8 below shows the savings/income the Council is expecting to achieve over the next four years.

Table 8: Forecast Savings/Income 2020/21- 2023/24

MID SUFFOLK - MOVEMENT YEAR ON YEAR	19/20 to 20/21 £000	20/21 to 21/22 £000	21/22 to 22/23 £000	22/23 to 23/24 £000
Savings				
Assets and Investments				
CIFCO (further investment) - net interest receivable	(270)	(13)	38	(19)
Needham Market and Stowmarket Middle Schools	(68)			
BMS Invest recharge	(49)			
Aldi - business rates	(41)			
Rental income retail building, Needham Market		(40)	(40)	
Growth Companies Recharges - Prof & Consultancy Fees	(25)			
Customer Access				
Digital Transformation - end to end		(25)		
Environment				
Waste - income (garden / trade & recycling credits)	(197)			
Grass cutting of SCC verges	(50)			
Car Park income	(22)			
Finance				
Insurance Premiums	(51)			
SRP Contract saving	(41)			
Housing				
Community Housing Fund 2 yr fixed term post (funded from reserves 18/19 & 19/20)	(105)			
Law and Governance				
Elections (funded from reserves in 19/20)	(75)			
Sustainable Communities				
Planning fee income	(253)			
Funding for 2 Police Community Support Officers (funded from GEF in 18/19 & 19/20)		(75)		
Other Savings				
Increase vacancy management contingency 2.5% to 5%	(246)	(18)	(19)	(20)
Reduction in transfers to reserves	(207)	(47)	-	
Interest Payable (Pooled Funds)	(147)			
Interest Payable (Other)	(132)			
Interest Receivable (Pooled Funds)	(128)			
Charge to HRA and Capital	(82)	(23)	(23)	(24)
Contract management savings	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Total savings	(2,238)	(291)	(94)	(113)
Total Net Service Cost movement	(235)	(275)	503	609
New Net Service Cost	10,017	9,742	10,245	10,854

Budget Gap

- 8.20 Table 9 below shows the forecast surplus or deficit for 2021/22 - 2023/24 with and without New Homes Bonus.
- 8.21 The position for 2020/21 is a £1.8m surplus. This is achieved by using no New Homes Bonus, £189k S31 grant, £433k Rural Service Delivery Grant and £1m from reserves as well as transferring £1m from the S31 grant to the Commercial Development Risk Management reserve as explained in paragraph 7.9.

8.22 The three-year surplus from 2021/22 of £2.6m is achieved by using £7.2m in total of the following;

- £1.1m New Homes Bonus;
- £3.9m S31 grant;
- £1.3m Rural Services Delivery Grant; and
- £0.9m from reserves

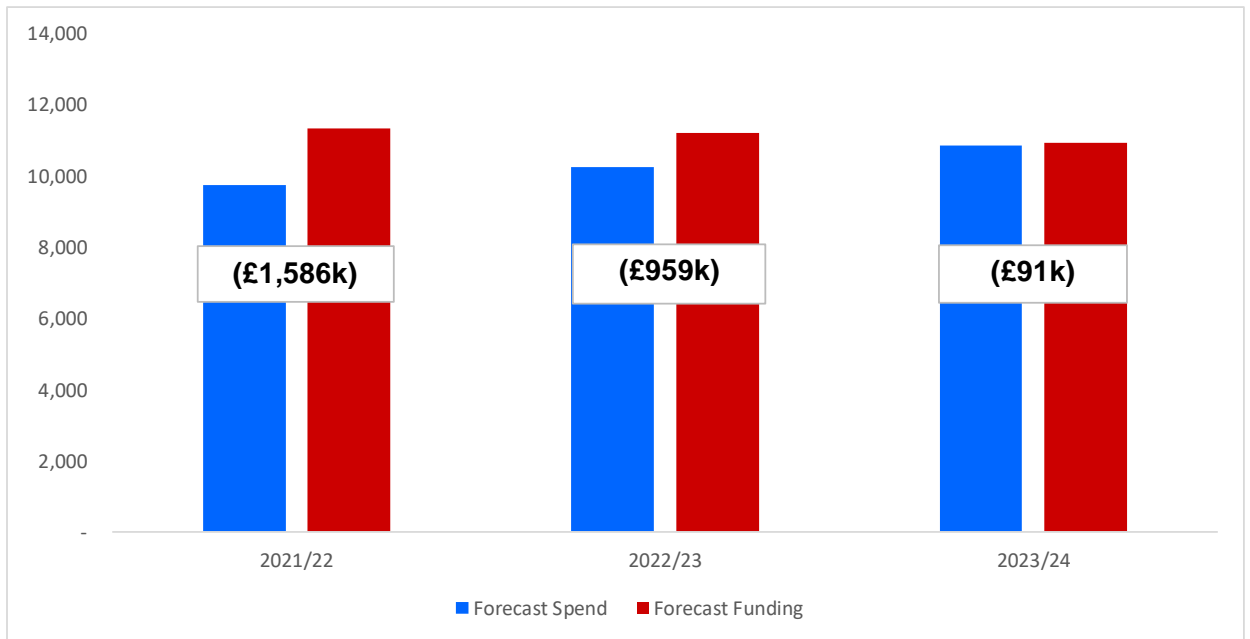
8.23 When NHB is phased out completely by 2023/24, the projected surplus for the Council is only £91k. With the key objective to become self-financing and to have more than enough funds to invest within the council itself and the across the district, the Council will need to deliver significant income or savings by reviewing, remodelling and reinventing the way the it operates as set out in section 6.

Table 9: Forecast Budget Gap 2020/21 – 2023/24

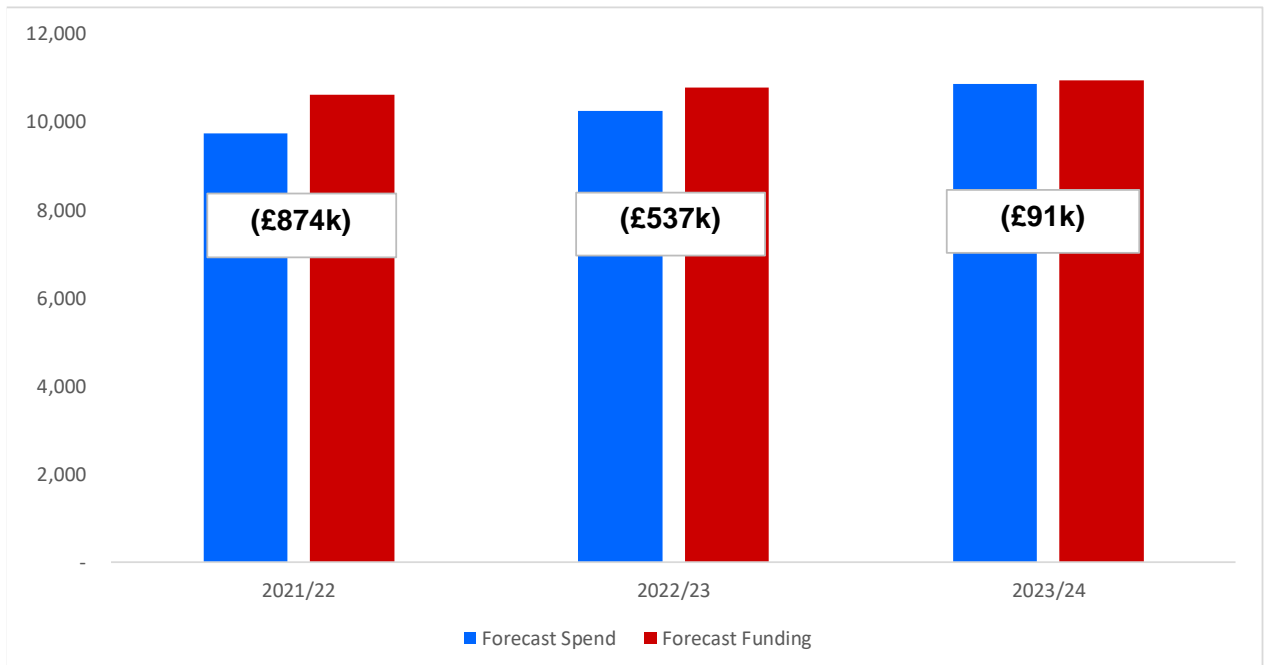
	Mid Suffolk		
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<u>Including NHB</u>			
Net Service Cost previous year	10,017	9,742	10,245
Pressures	16	597	722
Savings	(291)	(94)	(113)
Net Service Cost current year	9,742	10,245	10,854
Funding	(11,328)	(11,204)	(10,945)
Annual Deficit /(Surplus)	(1,586)	(959)	(91)
Cummulative Deficit/(Surplus)	(1,586)	(2,545)	(2,636)

	Mid Suffolk		
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<u>Excluding NHB</u>			
Net Service Cost previous year	10,017	9,742	10,245
Pressures	16	597	722
Savings	(291)	(94)	(113)
Net Service Cost current year	9,742	10,245	10,854
Funding	(10,616)	(10,782)	(10,945)
Annual Deficit /(Surplus)	(874)	(537)	(91)
Cummulative Deficit/(Surplus)	(874)	(1,410)	(1,501)

Graph 4: Forecast Budget Gap (surplus)/deficit, including NHB (annual) 2021/22 - 2023/24



Graph 5: Forecast Budget Gap (surplus)/deficit, excluding NHB (annual) 2021/22 - 2023/24



9. HOW IS THE COUNCIL'S REVENUE BUDGET BEING SPENT IN 2020/21?

9.1 The summary in Appendix A shows a breakdown of the Council's net cost of service for 2019/20 (£10.252m) and 2020/21 (£10.018m) a reduction of £234k (2%).

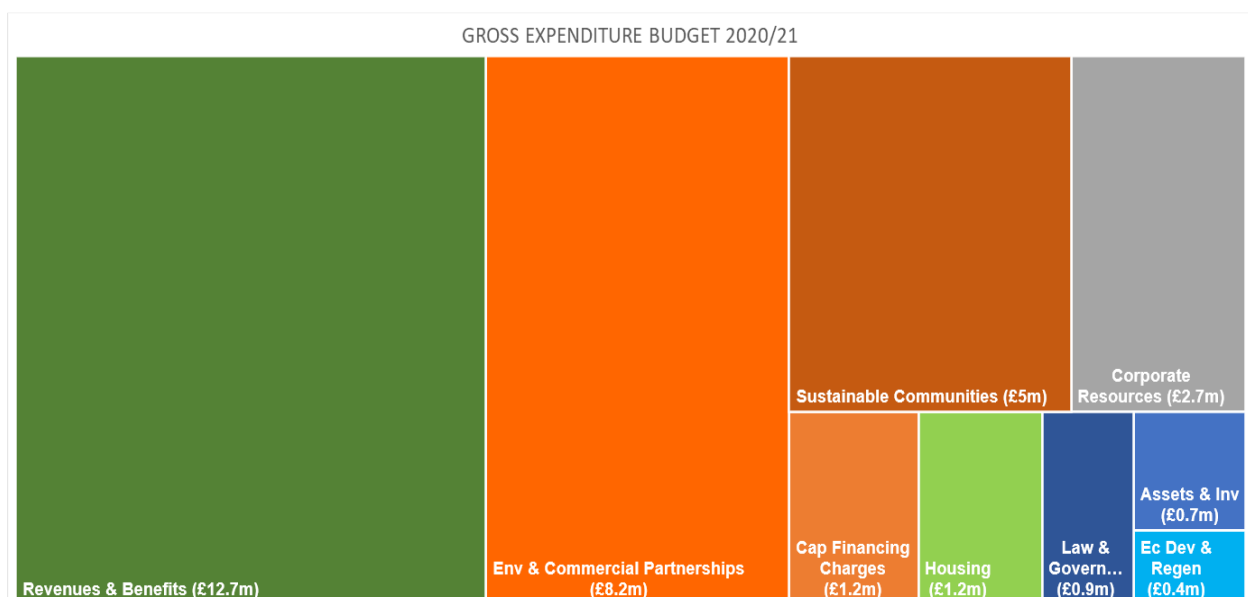
The Council's 2020/21 gross expenditure is £33.3m and Income is £23.3m giving a net cost of service of £10m. Table 10 below shows how this is funded.

Table 10: Revenue Budget 2020/21

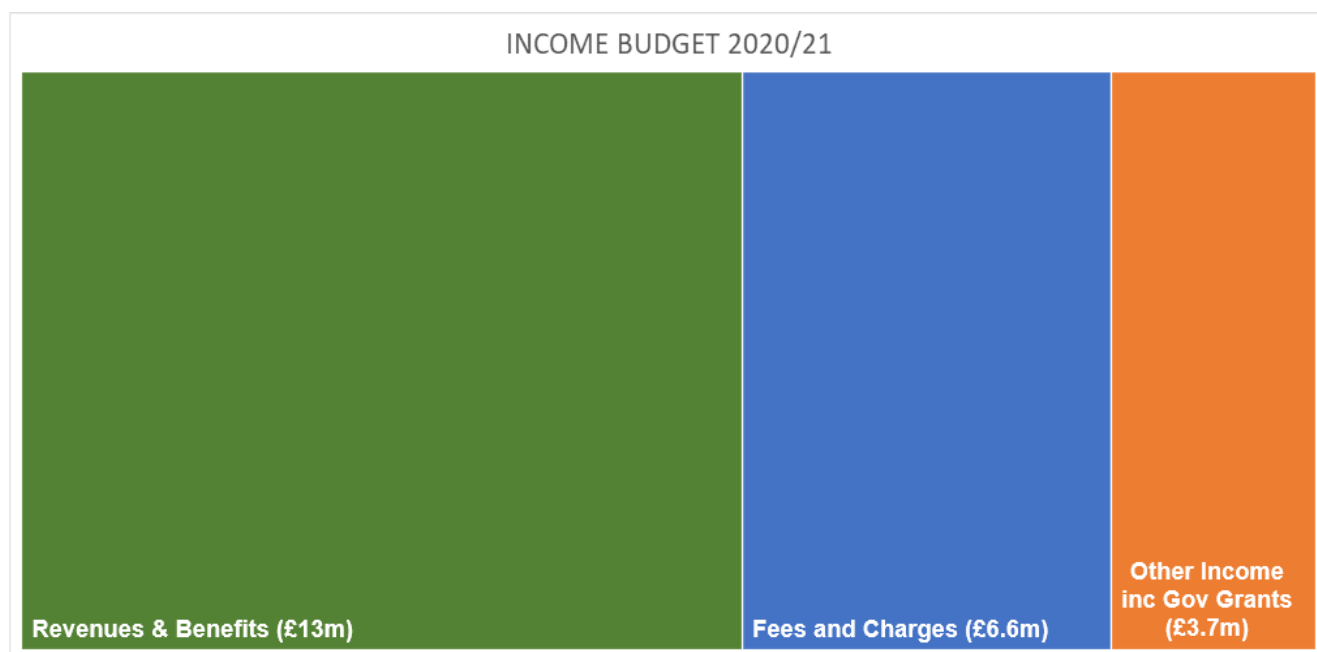
	£,000
Gross Expenditure	33,336
Income	(23,318)
Net expenditure 2020/21	10,018
Transfer to Commercial Development Risk Management Reserve	1,000
Funded by:	
Earmarked Reserves	(1,027)
New Homes Bonus received	(1,613)
S31 Grant	(1,404)
Business Rates	(2,045)
Collection Funds (Surplus)/Deficit	(27)
Rural Services Delivery Grant	(433)
Council Tax	(6,296)
Total Funding	(12,845)
Budget deficit/(Surplus)	(1,827)

9.2 Graph 6 below shows how the £33.3m gross expenditure is allocated across the services and Graph 7 below shows the breakdown of the £23.3m income. The funding element is not shown in these graphs.

Graph 6 Gross Expenditure by service area in 2020/21



Graph 7 Income by service area in 2020/21



- 9.3 The Revenues and Benefits element (£13m) in both the expenditure and the income charts above includes housing benefit paid out to claimants and reimbursed from the Government.

Fees and charges

- 9.4 Fees and charges have been reviewed by budget holders as part of this budget setting process and a summary of fees and charges for 2019/20 and 2020/21 will be included in the report to Cabinet in February 2020.
- 9.5 A further benchmarking exercise will be undertaken during 2020/21 to review the Council's levels of fees and charges.

10. CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 10.1 The detailed Capital Programme is attached at Appendix B. The planned spend for 2020/21 is £12m. The main areas are the re-development of the former Council Offices, Needham Market £0.7m (funded from GEF), £8.7m investment in CIFCO and £0.7m for the development of the Leisure Centres (funded from borrowing).
- 10.2 The Capital and Investment Strategy will have further details of the Council's borrowing capacity and the impacts of the capital programme, this will be presented to Cabinet in February along with the final budget report, following review by Joint Audit and Standards Committee in January 2020.

11. EMPTY PROPERTY DISCOUNT

- 11.1 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 introduced discretion for Councils to vary the Council Tax discounts for certain categories of empty properties, whilst maintaining a range of mandatory discounts and exemptions

- 11.2 The discretion allows the Council to vary the exemption and replace it with a local discount where:
- a property becomes unoccupied and is left substantially unfurnished (6-month exemption) (Class C discount); or
 - a property is vacant, and it requires or is undergoing major repair works to render it habitable; it is undergoing structural alteration; or less than 6 months have elapsed since the date on which such work was substantially completed (12-month exemption)(Class D discount).
- 11.3 The Council used this discretion from 2013 to introduce a discount of 100% for the first 4 weeks from the date the property became unoccupied and unfurnished and a 25% discount for 12 months for properties that are uninhabitable. The discount for properties that are unoccupied and unfurnished was amended further in 2014 to a 25% discount for a period of 3 months.
- 11.4 The discount was originally introduced in order to minimise the impact of the reduction in funding from the Government in respect of Council Tax Reduction i.e. generating an income from empty properties would mitigate the need for working age recipients in receipt of a Council Tax Reduction to pay a larger proportion of the Council Tax. It was also hoped that it would add a financial incentive to encourage empty homeowners to bring their properties back into use.
- 11.5 The 2014 change was made purely to address some unintended administrative issues with the 2013 discount, namely an increase in landlord and tenant disputes.
- 11.6 When the original discount was introduced the average void period was around 43 days. This has now reduced to 28 days for Mid Suffolk.
- 11.7 The Council is liable to pay Council Tax on unoccupied/unfurnished properties that they own. The cost of this falls on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Proposal

- 11.8 Reduce the discount period from 3 months to 28 days but keep the level of discount to 25% awarded to properties that are unoccupied and unfurnished (Class C discount). Full Council Tax would be payable after the 28-day discount has expired. The uninhabitable discount would remain unchanged at 25% discount for 12 months.
- 11.9 This would continue to incentivise occupation of the property and increase the level of Council Tax raised.
- 11.10 In considering whether a dwelling has been unoccupied and unfurnished for any one period, any periods not exceeding six weeks occupied and furnished shall be disregarded.
- 11.11 For 2018 £571,364 was raised from charging Council Tax on properties that have been unoccupied and unfurnished for more than 3 months. The Council's share is 10% of this amount, and 96.53% was collected in-year. If the discount had been restricted to 28 days, a further £47k would have been raised.

12. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 12.1 Ensuring that the Council makes best use of its resources is what underpins the ability to achieve the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan. Specific links are to financially sustainable Councils, managing our corporate assets effectively, and property investment to generate income.

13. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 These are detailed in the report.

14. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 The provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (LGFA 1992) requires the Council to set a balanced budget with regard to the advice of its Chief Finance Officer (Section 151).

15. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 15.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Significant Risk No. 13 – We may be unable to respond in a timely and effective way to financial demands and also Corporate Risk No. SE05 – if the Finance Strategy is not in place with a balanced position over the medium term the Councils will not be able to deliver the core objectives and service delivery may be at risk of not being delivered. Other key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
If the Council does not plan and identify options to meet the medium-term budget gap, then it will have a detrimental impact on the resources available to deliver services and the strategic priorities.	Unlikely - 2	Bad – 3	Clear priority outcomes and robust business cases for investment plus use of the Growth and Efficiency Fund to support the MTFs and an Investment Strategy. The S151 Officer will submit the Section 25 report on the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves in February 2019.

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
If economic conditions and other external factors are worse than budgeted for it could have an adverse effect on the Councils future medium-term financial position	Probable – 3	Noticeable - 2	Maintain the focus and momentum on reducing the budget gap throughout the financial year

16. CONSULTATIONS

- 16.1 Consultations have taken place with Assistant Directors, Corporate Managers and other Budget Managers as appropriate.

17. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 17.1 An equality impact assessment will be undertaken with each Assistant Director for any changes within the budget proposals.

18. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 18.1 Assistant Directors, Corporate Managers and other Budget Managers will consider the environmental impact of any savings proposals and throughout the year as they manage their budgets.

19. APPENDICES

Title	Location
Appendix A – Draft General Fund Budget Summary 2020/21	Attached
Appendix B – Draft Capital Programme	Attached

20. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement

General Fund Financial Monitoring 2019/20 – April to September 2019 CAB/128

DRAFT GENERAL FUND BUDGET SUMMARY 2020/21

GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET SUMMARY				
		2019/20	2020/21	Movement
		£'000	£'000	£'000
1	Employee Costs	8,950	9,422	473
2	Premises	820	817	(2)
3	Supplies & Services	4,835	5,260	425
4	Transport	359	316	(44)
5	Contracts	3,418	3,610	192
6	Third Party Payments	13,817	12,461	(1,355)
7	Income	(20,504)	(19,827)	677
8	Charge to HRA	(1,058)	(1,139)	(82)
9	Charge to Capital	(4)	(4)	(0)
10	Transfers to Reserves	274	67	(207)
<u>Capital Financing Charges</u>				
11	Interest Payable (Other)	229	97	(132)
12	Interest Payable (Pooled Funds)	177	30	(147)
13	Interest Payable (CIFCO)	562	510	(52)
14	Interest Payable (CIFCO - further investment)	89	106	17
15	Interest Payable (Other Commercial Investments)	282	421	139
16	MRP	1,038	1,229	191
<u>Investment Income</u>				
17	Pooled Funds	(438)	(566)	(128)
18	Interest Receivable (Cash Surplus)	(19)	(4)	15
19	Interest Receivable (CIFCO)	(1,238)	(1,162)	76
20	Interest Receivable (CIFCO - further investment)	(307)	(594)	(287)
21	Interest Receivable (Other Commercial Investments)	(1,030)	(1,033)	(3)
22	Net Service Cost	10,252	10,018	(234)
23	Transfers from Reserves - earmarked	(1,196)	(777)	419
24	Growth and Efficiency Fund - Community Capacity Building	(250)	(250)	-
25	New Homes Bonus	(1,380)	(1,613)	(233)
26	S31 Business Rates Grant	(783)	(1,404)	(621)
29	Baseline business rates	(2,238)	(2,274)	(36)
30	Business rates levy	488	522	34
27	Business rates – collection fund deficit / (surplus)	597	-	(597)
31	Business rates – growth/pooling benefit	(293)	(293)	-
32	Rural Services Delivery Grant	(433)	(433)	-
33	Council Tax	(6,117)	(6,296)	(179)
28	Council Tax Surplus on Collection fund	(27)	(27)	-
34	Total Funding	(11,632)	(12,845)	(1,213)
35	Transfer to Growth and Efficiency Fund	1,380		(1,380)
36	Transfer to Commercial Development Risk Management reserve		1,000	1,000
37	Shortfall / (Surplus) funding	-	(1,827)	(1,827)
<hr/>				
	Council Tax Base	(36,841)	(37,302)	(461)
	Council Tax for Band D Property	£166.04	£168.79	£2.76
	Council Tax £'000	£6,117	£6,296	£179

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21 to 2023/24

MID SUFFOLK CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2019/20 - 2022/23		Anticipated c/f from 2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	TOTAL BUDGET (over 4 years)	Capital Receipts	Reserves	Revenue Contributions	Government Grants	S106	Borrowing	Total Financing
GENERAL FUND		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£000's	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Housing														
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant		418	579	376	376	376	1,707				1,707			1,707
Discretionary Housing Grants		0	100	100	100	100	400						400	400
Empty Homes Grant		0	100	100	100	100	400						400	400
Total Housing		418	779	576	576	576	2,507	0	0	0	1,707	0	800	2,507
Environment and Projects														
Replacement Refuse Freighters - Joint Scheme		0	188	0	1,922	188	2,298						2,298	2,298
Recycling Bins		0	100	100	100	100	400						400	400
Total Environmental Services		0	288	100	2,022	288	2,698	0	0	0	0	0	2,698	2,698
Communities and Public Access														
Planned Maintenance / Enhancements - Car Parks		100	150	125	100	100	475						475	475
Streetcare - Vehicles and Plant Renewals		0	162	83	90	90	425						425	425
Play Equipment		0	50	50	50	50	200						200	200
Community Development Grants		150	189	189	189	189	756						756	756
Total Communities and Public Access		250	551	447	429	429	1,856	0	0	0	0	0	1,856	1,856
Total Leisure Contracts		491	737	150	150	150	1,187	0	0	0	0	0	1,187	1,187
Investment and Commercial Delivery														
Former Aldi Site		0	60	0	0	0	60						60	60
Former MSDC Offices (Needham Market)		0	664	0	0	0	664		664					664
Strategic Investment Fund	3,000		0	0	0	0	0							0
Gateway 14	1,847		0	0	0	0	0						0	0
CIFCO - further investment	1,334		8,666	3,834	0	0	12,500						12,500	12,500
Other Corporate Buildings	0		80	70	70	70	290						290	290
Total Investment and Commercial Delivery		6,181	9,470	3,904	70	70	13,514	0	664	0	0	0	12,850	13,514
ICT & Customer														
ICT - Hardware / Software costs		0	200	200	200	200	800						800	800
Total Corporate resources		0	200	200	200	200	800	0	0		0	0	800	800
Total General Fund Capital Spend		7,340	12,026	5,376	3,447	1,713	22,561	0	664	0	1,707	0	20,191	22,561