

**REVENUE BUDGET, CAPITAL STRATEGY AND COUNCIL TAX 2020/21**

Committee: Full Council

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[U185]

1 **ISSUE**

1.1 This report sets out the Council's proposed revenue budget, capital strategy, and the required level of Council Tax in 2020/21. The report assesses the robustness of the budgets, the adequacy of reserves and up-dates the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

2 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 To approve:

- The formal Council Tax Resolution which calculates the Council Tax requirement as set out in Appendix 1 (to follow).
- The draft 2020/21 revenue budget and MTFS for 2021/22 to 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 2.
- A proposed Council Tax freeze.
- The Statement of Reserves as set out in Appendix 3.
- The 2020/21 Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix 4.
- The Capital Strategy and financing as set out in Appendix 5.
- The awarding of discretionary Business Rate relief as detailed in paragraphs 6.5 and 6.6 of this report.

3 **BACKGROUND / OPTIONS**

3.1 At the Full Council meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2019, members approved a net budget for 2019/20 of £8,917,492 and a frozen Council Tax. The budget had a planned draw of £1,538,798 from the Surplus Savings Reserve. The Medium Term Financial Strategy at that time showed a balanced budget in 2020/21 (using further resources from the Surplus Savings Reserve), but with then significant budget deficits in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

3.2 The outturn position for 2018/19 was reported to the Finance and Assets Committee on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019. This showed that due to the proactive actions taken by management to reduce the Council's cost base prior to and during 2018/19, the Council underspent in 2018/19 by £987,740. This was transferred into the Surplus Savings Reserve.

- 3.3 The Council put aside one-third of the New Homes Bonus it received in 2015/16. This has been used in recent years to provide revenue funding to cover the costs of the Leisure Centre, this up until the point that the Council started to receive the management fee from the operator. With the first operator payment falling due in 2019/20, any surplus received in advance of the annual running costs, will initially be used to repay the drawdown from this reserve until it is returned to its 2015-16 level. As this reserve then has no further planned use, it is recommended that the reserve is then closed with the balance being transferred into the Surplus Savings Reserve for use in balancing the budget in future years. The remainder of this report is based on this transfer having been made.
- 3.4 Management has continued to reduce the Council's cost base during the current financial year. This work has led to further one-off and on-going savings being made; which both contribute to the projected outturn underspend for this financial year and also provide savings throughout the term of the MTFs. The current yearend forecast underspend for 2019/20 is £627,505, this too will be transferred to the Surplus Savings Reserve at yearend and has been reflected in the figures in this report.

#### 4 SPENDING ROUND 2019

- 4.1 Local Government was expecting a major change in the way it is funded by Government in 2020/21. At this time last year we were expecting a:
- Spending Review, a major review by Government of all of its spending plans, determining the quantum of funding that will be made available to each Department for a number of years.
  - Fair Funding Review, a review of the relative needs of all local authorities to determine how much of the funding allocated above, would be allocated to each individual authority.
  - Business Rates Retention Scheme revision, which would result in local authorities retaining 75% of Business Rates collected, rather than the current 50%; but at the same time some direct grants paid to councils by Government, such as Revenue Support Grant and Rural Services Delivery Grant would be withdrawn.
- 4.2 On the 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019, Government postponed plans for the Spending Review, Fair Funding Review and Business Rate Retention Scheme revision, announcing that in order to fully engage and consult on such fundamental reforms, these would now take place in 2020, to be implemented for the 2021/22 financial year.
- 4.3 Instead they announced they planned to implement a one-year Spending Round, which would "roll forward" the current year's settlement into 2020-21, this to provide certainty and stability into the local government sector.

#### 5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT

- 5.1 The Final Local Government Finance Settlement was announced in a written statement on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020. There were no changes from the Provisional Settlement which had been announced on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

- 5.2 The Settlement confirmed the extension to the previous four year funding settlement that covered the period 2016/17 to 2019/20 into 2020/21, rolling over the previous funding schemes either in cash terms or increased in line with the change in the Business Rate multiplier.
- 5.3 The Revenue Support Grant figure was one of those increased in line with the Business Rate multiplier, which has resulted in us getting a small increase in cash terms.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Settlement	£659,999	£353,703	£11,576	£11,764

- 5.4 The Settlement made a further change in the awarding of New Homes Bonus grant. Amounts earned in year 10 of the scheme, between October 2018 and October 2019, will only attract reward for one-year in 2020/21. Previous awards had been for four years, and this continues for those awarded prior to 2020/21. What this therefore means is that we receive four years of reward in 2020/21, but this reduces to two years in 2021/22 and one year in 2022/23. The current expectation is that the grant will be discontinued at this time, but, like all other funding sources in local government, this is far from clear. There is a view that Government remain committed to incentivising housing growth, but the exact form of this is unclear and there appears to be a growing view that New Homes Bonus is not the answer and they would prefer something more “targeted”. Government have announced that a consultation will take place in the spring to consider options.
- 5.5 That said, due to the increased level of house building in the District in the past year, our New Homes Bonus grant for 2020/21 is forecast to be £695,237, which is an increase of £122,556 when compared to that received in 2019/20.
- 5.6 The Settlement includes details of other specific grants, including the Rural Services Delivery grant, an allocation to the most rural authorities, which amounts to £161,606 in 2020/21 (this is the same value as in 2019/20); Housing Benefit administration grant of £166,767 (a reduction of £4,662 compared to 2019/20) and Council Tax administration grant £63,345 (a reduction of £3,334 compared to 2019/20).
- 5.7 The Settlement further identified the local authorities who will have Business Rates Pools during 2020/21, Cambridgeshire was amongst those councils (see paragraph 6.3).
- 5.8 The Settlement makes provision for shire districts to increase Council Tax by up to 2% or £5, whichever is the greater, in 2020/21 without the need for a referendum. To put a value on this, if we were to increase Council Tax by £5 in 2020/21 (this is the higher figure for us), this would generate additional income of £150,951 in that year. The draft budget assumes, that Council Tax will remain frozen for 2020/21 at £142.14.
- 5.9 The Business Rate Retention Scheme continues as previously operated in 2019/20. The baseline has been uplifted by CPI inflation. Growth in this Council’s Business Rates remain positive, however, there is always a risk that appeals against Business

Rates can be lodged and, if successful, can be backdated for several years. The Council does therefore include a provision for appeals in determining how much of the rates collected should be posted into the budget.

- 5.10 The Business Rate multipliers for 2020/21 were also announced in the Settlement. The small business non-domestic multiplier will increase from 49.1 pence to 49.9 pence and the multiplier for larger businesses (rateable values greater than £51,000) will be 51.2 pence. The multiplier is up-dated using the September CPI which was 1.63%.

## 6 BUSINESS RATES

- 6.1 The NNDR 1 return for 2020/21 was produced by the end of January in line with statutory requirements. Figures from this have been included in the draft budget as now presented.
- 6.2 The MTFs assumed that the Collection Fund for Business Rates would be in balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, however the completed NNDR1 shows that the Fund will be in surplus at this point and that £12,451 of additional income will be available to this Council in 2020/21.
- 6.3 East Cambridgeshire applied to be, and was accepted by Government, to be part of a Business Rate Pool in 2020/21, alongside a number of other authorities in Cambridgeshire.
- Cambridgeshire County Council
  - Cambridgeshire Fire Authority
  - Fenland District Council
  - Peterborough City Council
  - South Cambridgeshire District Council

It is anticipated that this arrangement will benefit this authority by around £400,000 in 2020/21.

- 6.4 As highlighted elsewhere in this report, forecasts for retained Business Rates beyond 2020/21 are almost impossible at this time, but the figures presented take a prudent view, showing a significant reduction on those expected in 2020/21.
- 6.5 The Government announced, in a written ministerial statement on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020, additional Business Rates measures that will apply from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. These measures will increase the current retail discount and extend that discount to cinemas and music venues; extend the duration of the local newspapers office space discount; and introduce an additional discount for public houses as follows:
- a) Currently retail premises receive a discount of one-third. In 2020/21 this will be increased to 50 percent for eligible retail premises that occupy a property with a Rateable Value less than £51,000. Eligible retail premises have been extended to include cinemas and music venues;
  - b) Offices occupied by Local Newspapers will receive a discount of £1,500 for 5 years from 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2025;

- c) Public Houses with a rateable value less than £100,000 will receive a £1,000 discount in 2020/21. This will be in addition to the retail discount detailed above and will apply after the retail discount.

6.6 The Government have issued guidelines on the operation of these reliefs and State Aid rules will apply in the usual way. Local authorities are expected to use their discretionary relief powers (Section 47 of the Local Government Act 1988, as amended) to grant these reliefs in line with the relevant eligibility criteria set out in the guidelines. However, the full cost of granting these reliefs will be compensated through a Section 31 grant from Government. Council is asked to approve the award of these reliefs.

## 7 THE 2020/21 BUDGET

7.1 Due to the proactive actions taken by management to reduce costs and generate new sources of funding in recent years, the revenue budgets for 2020/21 and 2021/22 are fully funded; but there are significant budget deficits remaining in subsequent years which will need to be addressed.

7.2 The draft budget for 2020/21 is set out in Appendix 2 to this report.

7.3 The following key assumptions have been made in preparing the draft budget:

- Staff pay will increase by 2% per annum throughout the MTFs period;
- Inflation on other expenditure has only been included where there is a contractual inflationary increase for example utilities and insurance. 2% has been added to the Waste contract with East Cambs Street Scene. Other budgets have not been increased by inflation;
- Following the Pension Fund revaluation as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 and discussion with the fund manager the Council's contribution rate has remained at 17.2%, with in addition, the lump sum contribution remaining at £485,000 in each year;
- The Housing Benefit budget reflects the latest information from Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) this at December 2019 (this has been up-dated since the version presented to Finance and Assets Committee);
- The Leisure Centre budget remains in line with the original funding strategy; that it should be revenue cost neutral. The MRP costs associated with the Leisure Centre project are being fully met in 2020/21 from the management fee to be paid to the Council by the operator. Additional management fee received over that needed to cover the debt and running costs of the Leisure Centre will initially be used to repay the New Homes Bonus reserve before then being put into a "sinking fund" to ensure that money is available for future maintenance and repairs at the Centre.
- East Cambs Trading Company (ECTC) has reduced its management fee for parks and gardens by £100,000.

## 8 RESERVES

8.1 The Council holds reserves, at levels which remain prudent. It is important to review the level of reserves on a regular basis, in particular to ensure that potential liabilities not in the Council's base budget can be funded from earmarked reserves; and that unearmarked reserves are at a sufficient level to cover any unforeseen events.

8.2 As part of the process of preparing this budget, officers have reviewed each reserve to ensure its purpose and level is appropriate. A Statement of Reserves is attached at Appendix 3.

8.3 The sole unearmarked reserve is the General Fund. This stands at £1,045,629. There is no statutory minimum level set for a local authority's reserves; it is a matter for each local authority's own judgement after taking into consideration the strategic, operational and financial risks it faces. It has been this authority's policy for some time that the level of the unearmarked reserve be set at 10% of their net operating budget, this is a reasonably prudent approach and a higher percentage than many other authorities locally. The proposed net operating budget for 2020/21 is £10,217,205. Using the 10% figure, this would therefore require an unearmarked reserve of £1,021,721. As this would result in a reduction to the value of this reserve, for reasons of prudence it will remain unchanged in 2020/21.

## 9 FEES AND CHARGES

9.1 Officers have reviewed the fees and charges, and details of the proposals are shown at Appendix 4. The proposed budgets include increases as a result of both volume and price.

9.2 There have been no new fees or charges introduced in 2020/21.

9.3 Where fees and charges are predominately related to staff costs it is planned to increase these by approximately 2% to match the anticipated increase in salary costs from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. A similar approach will be adopted in future years, with fees and charges being increased by the same percentage as the anticipated pay increase for staff. This approach ensures that the additional cost of providing the service is met by the person / organisation benefiting from the service, rather than the general populous through Council Tax.

9.4 As external funding from Government grants continues to reduce, the Council's approach to fees and charges will need to reflect the increasing importance of this as an income source.

## 10 CAPITAL STRATEGY

10.1 The CIPFA revised 2017 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes required from 2019/20 all local authorities to prepare a capital strategy report, which provides:

- a high level long term overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services;
- an overview of how the associated risk is managed;
- the implications for future financial sustainability.

10.2 This Council has no long term capital objectives at this time. The medium term capital programme has been reviewed, and is attached at Appendix 5. The programme is largely a continuation of the previous programme. The total value of the programme in 2020/21 is £3,592,526.

- 10.3 The Council's Treasury Management Strategy is a separate document, which was reviewed at Finance and Assets Committee on the 6<sup>th</sup> February and is on today's Full Council agenda seeking approval.
- 10.4 With the Council's Waste Service now being provided by East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS), the Council is purchasing waste fleet and hiring this to the Company. The hire charge reflecting the Council's capital costs of doing this, both the minimum revenue provision (MRP) and interest costs. Spend in 2020/21 is forecast at £1,882,077 as vehicles previously purchased by the use of the Weekly Collection Grant from Government, reach the end of their useful life and require replacing. While these additional costs will be reflected in the charge to ECSS, the Council will need to increase the contract value it pays the Company for providing the service as detailed in paragraph 13.4 to ensure that it can meet these additional costs.
- 10.5 The project to refurbish the depot has been deferred into 2020/21, while further feasibility work takes place and costings of the project reviewed. At this time the budget originally put in for 2018/19 remains in place, but potentially this will need to be adjusted as new information comes to hand.
- 10.6 Additional capital provision, £163,200 is built into the budget for purchasing further land to extend Ely Country Park. This purchase will be funded from CIL contributions.
- 10.7 The other two areas of capital spend in the capital programme are the on-going provision of Disabled Facilities, both mandatory and discretionary. The Council receives Government funding (from the Better Care Fund), via the County Council to assist with the funding of this work. The total budget in 2020/21 is £772,299, with £526,577 being funded by grant, with the remainder (£245,722) being funded by the Council by the use of previously obtained capital receipts. And vehicle replacement funding for the Parks and Gardens team, these vehicles are purchased by the Council using Section 106 funding, and then hired to ECTC at a commercial rate.
- 10.8 The Council previously held cash balances which were invested in short and fixed term deposits, however as agreed in the 2017/18 budget, these are now being deployed to fund the expenditure on the Leisure Centre, Waste fleet and the loan to the ECTC. The current expectation is that external borrowing will be required in 2020/21, however, borrowing will only be undertaken when necessary. More details of the borrowing requirement are detailed in the Treasury Management Strategy (also on the agenda for this meeting).
- 10.9 The original loan arrangement with ECTC was that the loan must be repaid within five years (by March 2021). It has been agreed with our External Auditors that the Council does not need to make any annual revenue provision to repay this loan in the short-term, but simply use the Company's repayment to repay the Council's borrowing. Officers will continue to monitor this, to ensure that the Company's accounts remain robust and the expectation remains that funding will be available in / by March 2021 to repay the loan. As long as this remains the case, the Council will not be required to set aside annual revenue provisions, however if at any point it was felt that the loan repayment could be in doubt, the Council would be expected to make provision for any expected shortfall in the year that this became known. The current schedule is that £2.5 million of this loan will be repaid in 2019/20 with the balance in 2020/21.

- 10.10 Council approved a further £1.5 million loan to ECTC in December 2018, specifically for the development of the former Ministry of Defence houses in Ely. It is the expectation that this loan will also be repaid in March 2021. Again, if this is the case, then no MRP will be required on this loan.
- 10.11 In summary therefore, the Council has limited exposure to the on-going costs of capital expenditure at this time. The costs of the Leisure Centre are being met by the operator through the management fee; the loans to ECTC will be repaid in full in March 2021 and in the intervening period a commercial interest rate is being charged, and the costs of the Waste fleet and some of the costs of the depot enhancements will be passed onto ECSS, although the Council's revenue budget has been increased to reflect the replacement of the vehicles reaching the end of their useful life in 2020/21.

## 11 COUNCIL TAX

- 11.1 The MTFs assumed that the Collection Fund for Council Tax would be in balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. However, an increased number of houses being built in the District have resulted in a forecast surplus as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, of which £59,184 will come as income to this Council.
- 11.2 The taxbase for 2020/21 estimated in last year's budget was an equivalent of 30,178.3 Band D properties. However, the real growth in housing between October 2018 and October 2019 and an estimation of future growth in 2020/21 means that the current forecast for 2020/21 is 30,190.1 Band D properties.
- 11.3 It is proposed that the Council freezes its Council Tax for a Band D property at the current level of £142.14, based on the Council Tax requirement of £4,291,221 divided by the taxbase of 30,190.1 properties.
- 11.4 The County Council, Fire and Police Authority budgets and precepts were considered by their respective decision making bodies in early February and we have been notified of their precept requirements.
- 11.5 All parish precepts have also been notified to the Council. These are reflected, along with the precepts set out in paragraphs 11.3 and 11.4, in the formal Council Tax Resolution as detailed as Appendix 1.

## 12 RISK AND SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

- 12.1 The Local Government Act 2003 places two specific requirements on an authority's Section 151 Officer in determining the Council's budget and Council Tax. Under section 25, the Section 151 Officer must advise on the robustness of the estimates included in the budget. The advice given to the Council on these issues is that the estimates have been produced on a prudent basis, with a strong emphasis on ensuring all cost pressures are included. Budget estimates have been developed with senior officers, with regular updates and discussions at Management Team.
- 12.2 The key risks are around funding of the Council. The Settlement provides clarity around grant funding for 2020/21, but looking beyond that, there is very limited information to put forward a MTFs based on confident assumptions on future Government funding. The risks from 2021/22 are significant; there is limited



information on likely sources of funding and indeed the value of any funding to be received.

- 12.3 The Government has announced that it intends for local authorities to retain 75% of all business rates generated in 2021/22 - but there will continue to be the need to share resources across the country - and there will also be additional new burdens placed on local authorities, which are unclear at this time.
- 12.4 Possibly the greatest concern for this Council however, is that plans suggest that Government intend to implement a full Business Rate baseline reset in 2021/22. The current baseline was set in 2013, when all councils were given a share of Business Rates equal to their needs. Since then councils have been allowed to keep a share of their growth, which for us as a district council has been 40%. In broad figures our baseline is £2.5 million, where we actually budget for £3.4 million of Business Rates because of this growth. If the baseline is fully reset, we will lose all of the growth, and wouldn't know what our revised baseline will be until the results of the Fair Funding Review (as detailed in 4.1) is known. An allowance has been made in the MTFs for this probable reduction, but at this point, there is no certainty on what this is likely to be.
- 12.5 To mitigate the above risk, the Section 151 Officer will continue to report on a frequent basis to Management Team and members as new information becomes available.
- 12.6 The Section 151 Officer is also required to report on the adequacy of reserves. The projected level of reserves, specifically the General Fund Reserve and Surplus Savings Reserve, and their use in 2020/21 are **prudent** and show how these will sustain the functions of the Council in that year.
- 12.7 However, the budget for 2021/22 assumes the vast majority of the remaining balance on the Surplus Savings Reserve is utilised, which will reduce the overall levels of reserves significantly. Reserves can only be utilised once and while the purpose of the Surplus Savings Reserve is to provide one-off funding to balance the budget in future years, the Council needs to be considering all options to reduce the speed that these are utilised so that they remain available further into the future. The Council has a track record of delivering additional savings and generating extra income in advance of the budget requirement, so work done during 2020/21 will hopefully lead to a reduced draw from the Surplus Savings Reserve in that and later years through the MTFs period.
- 12.8 Another key risk around reserves is the risk exposure the Council has with its loan funding of ECTC. Should ECTC encounter any financial difficulties and be unable to repay the £6,500,000 loan made available to it, then the Council will need to account for this within its financial statements. In such an event, the Council would need to draw on its reserves to meet such a liability. At this point, however, there is no indication that this is likely to be the case.

### 13 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

- 13.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy is to set a robust financial framework for the Council's plans over the next four years which support the delivery of the Council's priorities within a context of an annual balanced budget. Specifically, the MTFs:

- Looks to the longer term to help plan sustainable services within an uncertain external economic and funding environment;
- Maximises the Council's financial resilience and manage risk and volatility, including managing adequate reserves;
- Helps ensure that the Council's financial resources are directed to support delivery of the Council's priorities over the medium term.

13.2 The MTFS covers the period 2020/21 to 2023/24. As highlighted earlier the spending round announced by Government for 2020/21 provides assurance about the grant position for that year and these figures can therefore be considered robust.

13.3 However, it is extremely difficult to develop a robust MTFS to cover the period 2021/22 and beyond while the uncertainties around future funding levels remain. As detailed earlier in this report, the Government is currently undertaking a number of pieces of work which will impact on local government funding moving forward. The Spending Review, will determine the quantum of funding available to local government, while the Fair Funding Review will determine how much of this funding is allocated to each individual authority. Then further Government intend to change the Business Rate retention scheme in 2021/22 to allow local government to retain 75% of the amount collected, rather than the current 50%. These issues create considerable uncertainty for local authority funding; and is an issue which will require monitoring; this so that the Council can adjust its MTFS as new information becomes available. Further up-dates will be provided to Council as further information becomes available.

13.4 The assumptions used in the MTFS include:

- Government funding through Revenue Support Grant and Rural Services Grant end in 2020/21;
- New Homes Bonus (NHB) remains part of the overall funding package from Government for the next three years, before being removed. However, while remaining in the funding package, the benefit of NHB reduces considerably over this period, before being stopped completely in 2023/24 (see paragraph 5.4);
- The Council's Business Rate growth continues;
- 2% inflation is added to the Waste contract on an annual basis, however additional budget is provided from 2021/22 when new recycling vehicles will be purchased. The vehicles purchased by the Council using the weekly collection grant from Government will reach the end of their useable life in 2020/21 so will need to be replaced, adding this additional cost. (This cost increase would have occurred regardless of whom is undertaking the contract at this point);
- The loan to ECTC is planned to be repaid in March 2021, the interest received by the Council on this loan will therefore stop at this point. The loan repayment will be used to reduce / prevent the Council needing to borrow externally, therefore reducing costs, albeit not to the magnitude that income will be lost;
- The Council has a track record of delivering cost reductions; it is anticipated therefore that a contribution to the budget deficit forecast in future years will be achieved during the term through general efficiencies and income generating opportunities; however, to be prudent, no account of these are shown within the forecasts within this report.

- Further, while ECTC is anticipated to start making profits in the period of the MTFS, it remains unclear how much of this will need to be retained by the Company as working capital, so at this point, no account of this income being paid back to the Council as a dividend is assumed in the budget.

13.5 The impact of the above assumptions is attached at Appendix 2. This shows the budgets for 2020/21 and 2021/22 are fully funded. However, there are significant budget shortfalls projected in the subsequent years. Clearly many things will change between now and then, so members should not focus on the precise numbers. What is far more important is that members appreciate the direction of funding facing this and many local authorities, and the likely scale. It will be necessary to develop a plan to meet these shortfalls, although the Council does have time (although limited) to put the necessary plans in place. The Council also has access to a reasonable level of reserves, as described in section 8 of this report.

13.6 While noting the uncertainty that is highlighted in this report about the 2021/22 financial year, it is considered unlikely that the quantum of funding from Government will increase and as such, this Council will need to identify measures to bridge the budget gap. A comparison between this year's MTFS and the past two last years does highlight an increasing need to identify savings in the medium term, to ensure that the Council's budget can be balanced in future years.

2018/19 Budget	
2018/19 – budget year	Balanced
2019/20 – MTFS year 1	Balanced
2020/21 – MTFS year 2	Savings to find £2,266,849
2021/22 – MTFS year 3	Savings to find £3,284,390
2019/20 Budget	
2019/20 – budget year	Balanced
2020/21 – MTFS year 1	Balanced
2021/22 – MTFS year 2	Savings to find £3,181,842
2022/23 – MTFS year 3	Savings to find £4,044,479
2020/21 Budget	
2020/21 – budget year	Balanced
2021/22 – MTFS year 1	Balanced
2022/23 – MTFS year 2	Savings to find £3,266,854
2023/24 – MTFS year 3	Savings to find £4,391,777

13.7 Options to resolve the budget shortfalls in future years come from:

- Efficiencies in the cost of service delivery
- Reductions in service levels
- Increased Council Tax
- Increased income from fees and charges
- Increased commercialisation via its trading companies

13.8 While noting the Council's favourable position of having a balanced budget (by use of the Surplus Savings Reserve) for the first two years of the MTFS period, it is strongly recommended that early consideration is made to how savings in future years will be achieved. All the bullets above need to be considered, with a quickening

of the pace of commercialisation and the review of all income generating opportunities, as these are potentially the areas that could generate the highest returns. However, within the MTFs period, all options will need to be considered and potentially implemented.

- 13.9 Any savings achieved in 2019/20, 2021/22 or 2022/23 resulting in potential underspends in those years, will provide further funding in the Surplus Savings Reserve to assist in the balancing of future years.

#### 14 ARGUMENTS / CONCLUSIONS

- 14.1 The proactive actions already taken have led to a balanced budget for 2020/21 and 2021/22 (based on known information and the use of the Surplus Savings Reserve). The budget for 2020/21 therefore has minimal risks attached to it, although the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the new funding regime post 2021/22 do contain significant uncertainty and therefore risk. While there is little this Council can do to remove this uncertainty at this point, it does need to look for opportunities within its own control now, which will bridge some part of the funding gap currently forecast.

#### 15 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The proposed net operating budget of £10,217,205 will be financed by Revenue Support Grant, retained Business Rates, Council Tax and the Surplus Savings Reserve.

#### 16 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Formal Council Tax Resolution – ***To follow (awaiting confirmation of Council Tax levels from major Preceptors)***

Appendix 2 - Draft Budget 2020/21 and MTFs

Appendix 3 - Statement of Reserves

Appendix 4 - Schedule of Fees and Charges

Appendix 5 - Capital Programme

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#### Background Documents

#### Location

Room 104  
The Grange  
Ely

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