Cabinet

11 December 2018



Title	Outline Budget 2019-20 to 2022-23						
Purpose of the report	To make a Key Decision						
Report Author	Chief Finance Officer						
Cabinet Member	Councillor Howard Williams	Councillor Howard Williams Confidential No					
Corporate Priority	Financial Sustainability	Financial Sustainability					
Recommendations	1. The net budgeted expenditure (before investment and use reserves) for 2019-20 be set at a maximum level of £22.2m 2. That Cabinet support the overall strategy set out in the reperfor addressing efficiencies and achieving medium term financial sustainability 3. That the financial health indicators set out in paragraph 3.2 be agreed.						

1. Key issues

- 1.1 The key issue facing Council continues to be their ongoing financial sustainability. In January 2016 the Council received confirmation that it would not receive any general Revenue Support Grant (RSG) to support its Revenue Budget from 2017-18 and that in 2019-20 it would in fact have a negative adjustment of £750k, meaning it would be paying that sum to the Treasury, effectively negative RSG. At the time of writing this report the Council has not received updated figures, these will be communicated on 6th December (after the date this report has been produced, officers will update Cabinet at the meeting on any key announcements), for grant allocations for 2019-20.
- 1.2 The technical Consultation on the funding settlement, which the Council responded to in September, indicated that the Government is minded to drop its proposal for negative grant allocations for 2019-20 which would reduce the Council's budget gap by £750k if confirmed. However, the indications from the Treasury is that beyond 2019-20 the Government will continue to look to make savings on the funding of local government. We therefore anticipate in the years beyond 2019-20 there will be steady reductions in the amount of business rates we as a borough council will be allowed to retain. These assumptions have been fed into our projections are a key factor in the increase in the budget gap in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

- 1.3 The financial year 2020/21 is a particularly uncertain year for funding as we are awaiting the outcome of:
 - a) the next Spending Review determining total level of funding for local government;
 - b) the Fair Funding review looking at how funding is distributed between Councils; and
 - c) implementation nationally of "75% Business Rates Retention" (the reference to 75% applies only above a baseline set by Government).
- 1.4 It is anticipated that one outcome of the Fair Funding Review is there will be a shift in funding from lower tier councils (i.e. districts and boroughs) to upper tier (i.e. counties and unitaries) in response to adult social care financial pressures. In turn this is likely to result in a shift in the proportions of business rates retained by councils from districts and boroughs to counties.
- 1.5 This funding reduction is one of the main drivers in the projected budget gaps summarised in Appendix A which will develop and which would not be sustainable if not addressed.

Projected Budget Gaps if mitigating actions not put in place:

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Estimated Gap	1,366	4,847	6,028	4,082

1.6 Sections 2 and 3 of the report below summarises the medium term financial strategy in place designed to generate offsetting income, deliver efficiencies and to mitigate the projected budget gaps. The Council, over the outline Budget period, is undertaking a significant housing delivery programme which will potentially deliver over 600 housing units across a range of tenures including emergency accommodation, single person homelessness, affordable housing and private rental housing all of which there is a need for our residents. Whilst once these housing units are completed they will deliver ongoing rental income streams which will improve the Council's longer term financial position, in the shorter term the Council will need to finance the development costs of this housing delivery programme.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Revenue impact of Development Properties	2,477	3,457	3,822	308

1.7 Given the funding gaps indicated above, it is particularly important that the Council continues to pursue its strategy of acquiring high quality income generating assets in order to offset the financing costs of the housing delivery programme and also to offset the impact of reducing central government funding and to enable the Council to continue to provide services to its residents at the levels they expect.

100% Business rates retention and the Fair Funding review

- 1.8 The Government shifted its proposals for implementing "100%" business rates retention to now proposing a "75%" retention model. The percentages refer to the amount of business rates retained across local government as a whole, there will continue to be a redistribution mechanism with councils with strong business rates tax bases such as the Surrey districts and boroughs paying significant tariffs to help fund councils with weaker tax bases relative to their need to spend. The 75% scheme is anticipated to be implemented nationally in 2020-21 Associated with this the Government has invited bids from groups of councils to pilot 75% schemes. Whilst the Surrey councils successfully bid to pilot in 2018-19 a 100% scheme, we have been obliged to bid for a 75% scheme. If the Surrey councils were successful if would allow the Surrey councils to retain approx. £20m of business rates in Surrey to support economic development with respect to the districts and boroughs share and to support financial transformation with respect to the County share. This would be a reduction from the £28m retained anticipated to be retained under the 100% scheme. However, as there is a smaller number of 75% pilots proposed than was the case for 100% scheme and given that a lot of areas are bidding the chances of becoming a pilot. The Surrey councils have submitted a pilot proposal for 2019-20 based on a similar set of principles as the current 100% scheme. We anticipate learning whether the Surrey councils have been successful on 6th December when the funding settlement details are announced.
- 1.9 Whilst it is noted above that the chances of the Surrey councils this time round being successful in becoming a bid is lower than proved the case for 2018-19 there is a backup plan which will help Spelthorne and some of the Surrey districts and boroughs, this is in the form of a parallel bid for a business rates pool. A business rates pool is where a top up council (i.e. a council which receives a transfer of business rates from other councils) combines with a group of tariff councils (i.e. councils which are making transfers to other councils) in such a combination that the 50% levy the tariff councils have to pay on any growth in their tax base above the baseline set by the Government is reduced to more or less zero. If the pool proposal were accepted Spelthorne would be one of four Surrey districts and boroughs combined with Surrey CC. This would enable us to potentially retain an additional £300k to £600k of business rates which are not ring-fenced.
- 1.10 The Government are committed to introducing their Fair Funding Review at the same time as the 75% retention scheme nationwide. The review is important as this will be reviewing the underpinning formulae which over the years have sought to achieve an element of resource equalisation by trying to take into account councils "need to spend" relative to the strength of their tax bases. The review will feed into the determination of the baseline positions set by the Government as to how much business rates should be retained initially (before growth) after taking into account tariff payments (for councils, such as the Surrey districts with strong tax bases) or top up receipts (for those councils with weaker tax bases relative to need to spend).

2. Options analysis and proposal

The Outline Budget needs to cover the following areas:

- (a) Zero or negative revenue grant support and other funding support from the Government including New Homes Bonus, and address the risks and volatility associated with increasing reliance on business rates retention and the potential for the amount of business rates allowed to be retained to be reduced in future years.
- (b) Anticipated external pressures such as statutory changes impacting over the outline budget period.
- (c) The impact of pressures on Surrey County Council cascading down as a result of reduced funding from the upper tier authority and its transformation proposals which may have knock on effects on districts and boroughs.
- (d) The short term impact of financing housing delivery
- (e) How we fund our corporate priorities by generating increased income streams
- (f) The level of Council Tax, which the Council wishes to levy
- (g) Future assumptions on interest rates and investment types.
- (h) The level of services that the Council wishes to provide and the level of revenue expenditure the Council wishes to incur in the provision of those services. This is particularly important in light of the significantly reduced grant the Council will now receive. To support the challenging process of prioritisation of budget spending and saving decisions it is proposed that serious consultation be given to undertaken a statistically robust budget consultation exercise to inform decision making.
- (i) The level and range of charges the Council should make for its services.
- (j) The use of revenue reserves (if any) the Council wishes to use to support that level of service.
- (k) The level of reserves the Council wishes to retain to provide investment income and ensure stability for the future.
- (I) The alternative use of reserves to generate future savings.
- (m) To review the Council's portfolio of assets to ensure that it is maximising value obtained from use of assets (both in terms of cost of maintaining those assets and income generated from them) and to review opportunities to rationalise the portfolio and generate additional income streams.
- (n) The level of capital expenditure which the Council wishes to support and how it will seek to borrow, including being prepared to borrow where there are robust business cases in support. This will be more fully expanded on in the new Capital Strategy document which will go to February Council for approval.

3. OUTLINE BUDGET 2019/2020 – 2022/2023

- 3.1 Attached as Appendix A is a summary of projected expenditure and possible financing to 31 March 2023. It will be seen that the amount needed to be funded from Council Tax is £9.460m, taking into account use of reserves and investment income. Service expenditure would total some £23.6m in 2019/20.
- 3.2 Council Tax rate increases for 2019-20 and future years are assumed to be on the basis that the Council will continue to seek to protect Council tax and increase Band D by £5 per annum (equates to 2.6%) rather than utilise the full 3% increase now allowed. This is in recognition of the pressures our residents are under and therefore seeking to set an increase broadly in line with inflation.
- 3.3 The Outline Budget projections take into account anticipated inflation on significant contracts which the Council has in place.
- 3.4 The projections currently assume an annual increase in pay awards of 2.5%. This reflects the anticipated move of the Council to local pay arrangements from April 2019 under which it will seek to, subject to affordability, slightly more than match the national pay increase. The national pay increase for 2019-20 for local government is 2%. The Council is looking to increase this by 0.5%.
- 3.5 The Outline Budget projections assume that the Government will continue to progress the roll out of Universal Credit. The projections assume the roll out will be fully completed by 2023-24 which results in the gradual loss of the £0.5m credit the Council receives for its efficiency in recovering overpayments. This is one of the key factors in pushing up the budget gap over the outline budget period.
- 3.6 Budget consultation exercise one option to aid the Cabinet to make future difficult budget decisions between competing budget priorities would be to commission a statistically robust budget consultation exercise. It is proposed that this is considered in 2019-20 to assist with feeding into the budget process for 2020-21 when the gap is potentially more challenging. The consultation could focus around decisions on flood defence expenditure and other corporate plan priorities.
- 3.7 In response to the reducing funding levels, Cabinet and Management Team recognised in 2014 that a fundamental transformation programme "*Towards a Sustainable Future*" (TaSF) needed to be put in place to aim at making the Council a self-funding council by the end of the outline budget period.
- 3.8 The TaSF programme looks at maximising income streams from investments and the Council's assets, this will link with the Council's refresh Housing Strategy which is aiming to use Council assets to generate additional housing supply (easing the pressure on the housing and homelessness budget) and generate income streams for the Council. The project to reduce the space the

Council occupies as offices at Knowle Green is nearing completion, which will result in business rates and operational savings and in turn enables the Council to develop the West Wing for affordable housing.

- 3.9 Programme management streams have been put in place to manage the delivery of the strands set out above.
- 3.10 Currently the Council's treasury management investments are performing well with the core investments achieving an average of 5% in 2017-18. It is anticipated this level of performance can be maintained and has been built into the Outline Budget projections. The total funds allocated into medium term pooled funds is being increased which will result in higher levels of investment income which will help support the Revenue Budget. This level of performance will also help generate interest on the monies being set aside in the sinking funds building up to cover future needs to incur expenditure on our commercial assets such as capital refurbishments or to cover rent free periods.
- 3.11 The Council has made excellent progress with respect to taking opportunities to maximise income streams from assets. As result of recent acquisitions the Council has secured additional income from assets for a sustained period well beyond the outline budget period of around £5m per annum net of financing and management costs. The Council is growing its dedicated property unit to ensure that it continues to have the right mix of expertise to manage a significant commercial portfolio. The Unit will assist the Council in identifying and acquiring further income generating assets. The Council also uses a range of advisors to ensure it continually monitors the performance of its portfolio.
- 3.12 In 2019-20 the Council's commercial assets portfolio will generate a net (after paying interest, loan repayments, supervision costs, and sinking funds set asides) £9.6m to support the Council's revenue budget, see table below.

	2019-20 £'000	2020-21 £'000	2021-22 £'000	2022-23 £'000
Rental Income	(50,629)	(49,122)	(50,116)	(50,366)
Loan Interest Payable	23,028	22,911	22,760	22,370
Minimum Revenue Provision	11,052	11,334	11,624	11,921
Sinking Funds	6,405	4,840	5,840	6,735
Set aside for specific revenue purposes	555	555	555	555
Net Income (used to fund Revenue budget)	(9,589)	(9,482)	(9,337)	(8,785)

3.13 The projected increase in the sinking funds is summarised in the table below:

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
BP Main Site	3,190	3,690	4,190	4,290
BP SW Corner	655	805	955	1,105
Elmbrook House	223	273	323	373
12 Hammersmith Grove	2,208	3,108	4,008	4,908
Stockley Park	450	550	650	750
WBC4	0	200	400	600
Communications House	536	1,036	1,536	2,036
Thames Tower	1,121	1,961	3,011	4,061
Charter Building	1,543	4,023	5,213	7,013
Porter Building	677	1,362	1,562	1,652
Total	10,603	17,008	21,848	26,788

- 3.14 As mentioned above the Council is continuing to look at acquiring properties either directly or through appropriate delivery vehicles to enable it to provide temporary accommodation as an alternative to Bed and Breakfast accommodation which is expensive and has other issues and to deliver affordable housing and a range of tenure types across the Borough. During 2016-17 the Council set up Knowle Green Estates as its housing delivery company and through the company it seized the opportunity to purchase the Harper Hotel emergency accommodation establishment. The Council will be able to use all of the housing units at the Hotel for its own residents diverting them away from expensive alternative arrangements.
- 3.15 The Council will continue to take forward the strategies outlined above to help close the current estimated Budget Gaps. Additionally the following factors and actions are anticipated to help close the gaps:
 - Further investment in medium term funds which increases investment returns
 - Outcome of business rates retention/pooling/section 31 grants associated with business rates
 - Continuing to look for acquisition opportunities to assist with our housing development plans
 - Focus on cross cutting savings in areas such as printing, postage
 - Reflecting ongoing savings arising from Knowle Green reconfiguration
 - Reviewing the timing and financial impact of development property works
 - Assessing one off use of new and existing grants
 - Pursuing external funding from business partners

- Reviewing revenue contributions to finance the capital programme
- Root and Branch efficiency outcomes
- Additional income levels being generated by some service areas
- Prioritising growth proposals

The Level of Revenue Reserves to use in Support of the Council Tax

- 3.16 Reserves are financial balances set aside within the Council's balance sheet to enable future financing of revenue or capital expenditure. These can be held for three main purposes:
 - A working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing – this forms part of general reserves
 - A contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies

 this also forms part of general reserves. The key general reserve is the
 General Fund.
 - Funds to meet known or predicted liabilities and future spending are often referred to as earmarked or specific reserves. This purpose is reflected in the build-up of sinking fund reserves for our commercial assets.

The cash balances held in our reserves are invested to earn interest income which helps support the overall revenue budget and the provision of services.

- 3.17 The Council currently uses specific revenue reserves to finance expenditure in the following ways:
 - a) Interest equalisation is built up in years when investment returns are better than expected and used to support investment income in years when returns are lower.
 - b) New Schemes Fund the fund is now exhausted and it is not proposed to continue to provide a stream of funding toward specific revenue costs but instead we intend to put monies back into the fund to offset future years expenditure from those areas.
 - c) The key focus is generating additional revenue income streams. It is recognised that whilst the projects to deliver a number of such streams are well under way they will take time to reach the point of delivering income. There is therefore the case that on the basis there is a clear strategy and plan for delivering income streams that in the interim, in order to avoid making short term cuts which ultimately in the longer term may not have been necessary that some use of reserves to help close the revenue gap would be sensible.
 - d) The Housing Initiatives Reserve with a balance of £3m has been identified as being a source of funding for supporting Housing Strategy initiatives.
 - e) Sinking funds for commercial assets to be built up to cover potential end of lease refurbishment and possible future void and rent free periods.
 - f) The Local Environmental Assessment reserve has been set up to enable the Council to react to any environmental impacts on the Borough.

- 3.18 The Council will be looking to implement arrangements to make repair and renewal annual contributions for addressing maintenance of service assets addressing issues early in a planned way is usually cheaper in the long run. As part of addressing this it is proposed to have a further additional stepped increase in planned maintenance of £250k in 2020-21 which will take the increase in the planned maintenance budget on an ongoing basis to £1m since 2017/18 This is helping to ensure that the Council is appropriately maintaining its operational assets supporting the delivery of services for residents.
- 3.19 Given that there may be timing differences between additional asset income streams and the need to invest to make schemes happen there may be a need for the Council to incur some borrowing. Given the relatively low rates the Council can obtain from the likes of the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB); Homes and Community Agency or the European Investment Bank it is more cost effective to borrow rather than draw down medium term investment funds. The Council's treasury management advisers Arlingclose have assisted in developing the Council's borrowing strategy and have been working closely with the Council to identify alternative commercial borrowing opportunities. It should be noted however that Council's cannot borrow to cover deficits in their Revenue Budgets.

3.20 At 1 April 2018 Revenue Reserves were as follows:

	2018
	£'000
Revenue Grants Unapplied	1,836
Capital Fund*	1,443
Carry Forward Reserve	711
Housing Initiatives Fund	2,135
Bronzefield Maintenance Fund	272
New Schemes Fund (NSF)	1,221
Interest Equalisation	493
Building Control Reserve	65
Insurance Reserve	50
New Homes Bonus	50
Youth Council Reserve	20
Bridge Street Car Park Reserve	33
Business Rates Equalisation Reserve	4,198
Local Environmental Assessment Reserve	250
Sub Total	12,777
Asset Acquisition Reserves (incl. sinking funds)	13,748
Total	26,525

The capital element of the NSF is now exhausted but there is still the revenue element of £1.2m in the table above.

The Level of Capital Expenditure to be supported

3.21 Each year the Council approves a four-year Capital Programme, which is split between Housing and "Other Services."

The 'other services' programme consists mainly of capital expenditure on leisure, assets, replacement vehicles and information technology.

The 'other services' capital programme has generally been financed from our capital receipts, i.e. money received in past years from the sale of assets such as the sale of the housing stock under the Local Stock Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) reserved right to buy receipts (RTB) and other 'one off' sales.

Commercial income generating assets acquisitions are funded through borrowing, however these are designed to ensure that they generate a net surplus in excess of borrowing costs in order to provide funds which can be used to support the revenue budget.

- 3.21 The Housing Capital Programme will be financed by a mixture of Right To Buy (RTB) receipts, the Social Housing Fund, grants from Homes England, S106 receipts and borrowing where required.
- 3.22 The Prudential Code, which came into effect on 1st April 2004, gave Council's the scope to borrow to fund capital investment. The Council has used these powers to undertake borrowing to acquire assets for housing or economic wellbeing purposes where there has been a robust business case and where the loan costs are more than offset by revenue savings or additional income streams. The Council is actively looking at further opportunities for sustainable income streams. DCLG have recently published a consultation on 'Proposed Changes to the Prudential Framework of Capital Finance' with a response deadline of 22nd December. The outcome of this consultation won't be known until the new year but it is likely that stronger rules around the use of borrowing and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) will come into effect.

Financial Health Indicators

- 3.23 Spelthorne maintain a selected number of indicators useful for monitoring purposes. Targets are set for capital and revenue outturn, and for debtors and creditors. The current set of indicators is set out below:
 - a) Revenue outturn against original budget target: +/- 1.5%.
 - b) Capital outturn against original budget target: +/- 20%.
 - c) Council Tax collection target: 98.5%.
 - d) Business rates collection target: 98.5%.
 - e) Sundry debts aged more than 90 days overdue no more than 13% of total debts.
 - f) Payment of creditors within 30 days target: 96.5%.

3.24 Clearly we need to take account of the challenging economic climate on the achievability of the above indicators particularly the collection rate (which through business rates and council tax support will feed through directly into the Council's financial position and debt indicators and we will keep these indicators under regular review.

In addition to the above there are the existing Prudential and Treasury Management indicators which are reported on throughout the year.

Financial implications

3.25 As set out in the report above

Other considerations

3.26 Where service efficiency proposals are put forward to assist in balancing the Budget the Council will need to undertake appropriate equality impact assessments.

Timetable for implementation

3.27 A detailed Budget timetable is being issued to ensure that we are able to set a balanced budget for 2019-20 at the meeting of Council on 21st February 2019.

Background papers:

Appendices: Appendix A – Outline Budget Details

Appendix A

	18-19	19-20	20.24	24.22	22.22
	18-19 Original	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
	£	£	£	£	£
Broken down over Portfolios					
Leader of the Council	1,404,000	1,523,200	1,420,400	1,428,600	1,436,800
Deputy Leader	563,400	563,400		563,400	
Corporate Management	2,155,700	2,304,800	,	2,304,800	, -
Housing	2,103,900	1,939,800			
Finance	2,660,500	2,635,500			
Customer Service, Estates and Transport	2,016,400	2,208,200		, ,	
Planning and Economic Development	4,446,500	5,798,600			
Environment and Compliance	5,691,200	5,805,900			
Community Wellbeing	393,300	348,300		393,300	
Community Weinbeing	21,434,900	23,127,700			
Salary expenditure - vacancy monitoring	(300,000)	(300,000)	(300,000)	(300,000)	(300,000
Pay award	(333,000)	330,000		990,000	
Efficiencies		230,030	223,000	223,000	.,0_0,00
Pensions		0	0	0	
As yet unidentified annual growth anticipated to come		450,000	-	1,250,000	
Fees and charges		100,000	000,000	.,,	.,000,00
Service Expenditure	21,134,900	23,607,700	25,597,100	26,752,100	24,049,50
NET EXPENDITURE	21,134,900	23,607,700	25,597,100	26,752,100	24,049,50
Interest earnings	(900,000)	(900,000)		(900,000)	
Asset Acquisition Income	(31,305,500)		(49, 122, 100)		
Debt Interest payable	14,395,300	23,028,200		22,759,800	
Minimum Revenue Provision	7,344,700	11,051,700	11,334,400	11,624,100	11,920,500
NET EXPENDITURE AFTER INTEREST EARNINGS	10,669,400	6,158,600	9,820,600	10,120,100	7,073,700
Appropriation from Reserves:					
Set aside for Independent Living	(56,000)	0	0	0	(
Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay	747,000	747,000	-		
Refurbishments Reserve Contributions	1,700,000	6,405,000		5,840,000	
Relations intents Reserve Contributions	1,700,000	6,405,000	4,040,000	5,640,000	6,735,000
BUDGET REQUIREMENT	13,060,400	13,310,600	15,407,600	16,707,100	14,555,70
Allocation from National Non-Domestic Rate pool	0	0	0	0	
Retained Business Rates	(3,300,000)	(3,000,000)	(2,200,000)	(2,200,000)	(1,800,000
Business Rates - Economic Development Set Aside	(1,000,000)	0	0	0	(
Negative RSG	0	0	750,000	750,000	
New Homes Bonus Grant	(956,900)	(851,000)	(713,000)	(522,000)	(400,000
NET BUDGET REQUIREMENT	7,803,500	9,459,600	13,244,600	14,735,100	13,105,70
Collection Fund (Surplus)/Deficit	(48,100)	0	0	0	
CHARGE TO COLLECTION FUND	7,755,400	9,459,600	13,244,600	14,735,100	13,105,70
	,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,	2,123,300	,,	,,.	,,,,,
Tax base	39,280	39,981	40,481	40,987	41,49
Council Tax rate	197.44	202.44		212.44	
Council Tax yield	7,755,400	8,093,700		8,707,200	
Deficit/(surplus	0	1,365,900	4,847,300	6,027,900	4,082,20