

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

JOINT MEETING OF PERFORMANCE, AUDIT & GOVERNANCE  
COMMITTEE AND OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEES  
20 NOVEMBER 2018

REPORT BY HEAD OF STRATEGIC FINANCE AND PROPERTY

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN, BUDGET REPORT AND SERVICE  
PLANS 2019/20 – 2022/23

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

**Purpose/Summary of Report**

This report updates and sets out proposals for Joint Committee (Performance, Audit & Governance Committee and Overview & Scrutiny Committee) recommendations on the following:

- Draft Service Plans for 2019/20;
- The The Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 – 2022/23;
- The 2019/20 to 2022/23 Capital Programme; and
- A 2.5% uplift to the 2019/20 Schedule of Charges.

All the recommendations should be considered within the national context of continued financial uncertainty and risk for local government.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR JOINT COMMITTEE: to endorse that the Executive recommends the following for approval by Council:**

<b>(A)</b>	<b>The draft service plans for 2019/20. ERP C</b>
<b>(B)</b>	<b>That the East Herts share of Council Tax be increased by £5 for 2019/20 (Section 2.6)</b>
<b>(C)</b>	<b>The updated position on the Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget for 2019/20 including the budget pressures and risks;</b>

<b>(D)</b>	<b>The new savings in 2019/20 as shown in Table 9;</b>
<b>(E)</b>	<b>Implementation of the Capital Programme as set out in Essential Reference Paper 'B'; and</b>
<b>(F)</b>	<b>A 2.5% uplift to the the schedule of charges for2019/20. The full Schedule of charges will be presented to the executive .</b>

## **1.0 Background**

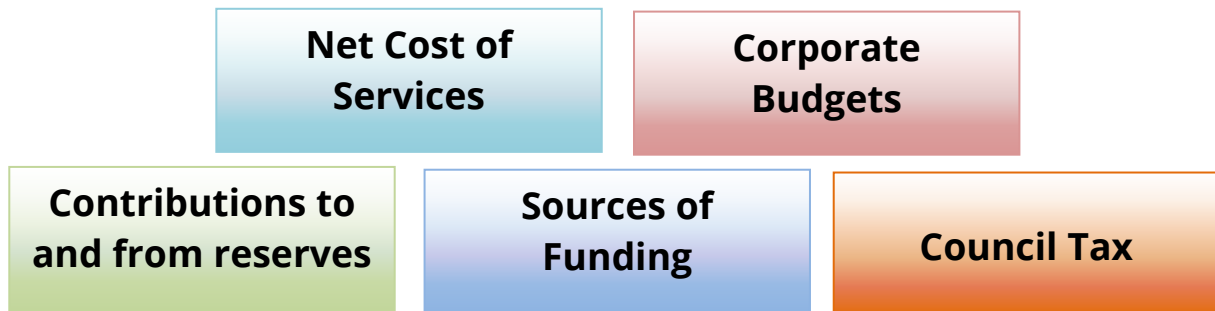
- 1.1 This report sets out the Council's approach to setting the budget for 2019/20 and the revenue and capital budget proposals for the four years commencing 2019/20.
- 1.2 Throughout the past few months Finance has met with members and senior officers to discuss the issues and opportunities that this year's budget setting process will present.
- 1.3 The principal objective of the process was to consider previous and current budget decisions the Council has made and then ensure that they were both robust and able to deliver a sustainable Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 1.4 Some of the key issues discussed throughout this time included the long term national financial outlook and the impact this will have on local budgets and the ability to produce income streams for a future balanced budget.
- 1.5 The report sets out the proposals and outcomes that officers have arrived at to ensure that East Herts Council maintains a sustainable budget position for the future.
- 1.6 The Council's strategic aims and priorities drive the medium term financial planning process, with changes in resource allocation determined in accordance with policies and priorities. The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) provides the framework for the development of annual budgets in line with the aims of the Council's Corporate Strategy.

- 1.7 As part of last year's budget process it was noted that grant funding cuts since 2010 has meant that the Council has delivered net savings of £2.6m.
- 1.8 Additional budget efficiencies required over the next four years could be in excess of £3m dependant on the outcomes of a number of government initiatives including the Business Rate Retention Policy, Fairer Funding Regime and reliance on grants. This will present a significant challenge for the Council and where possible, the Council has looked to minimise the impact on front line services.
- 1.9 The report contains the following sections and Essential Reference Papers:

Report Sections	
2	Budget Components
3	Budget Pressures and Risks
4	2018/19 Budget Preparation and Engagement
5	Service Plans
6	Reserves
7	Capital
8	Schedule of fees & charges
9	Advice from the S151 officer
10	Implications/ Consultations
Essential Reference Papers	
A	Implications/Consultation
B	Capital
C	Service Plans
	The following 2 additional Essential Reference Papers will be published at a later date
	Reserves
	Schedule of charges

## 2.0 Budget Components

2.1 The council's revenue budget comprises of five major 'building blocks' as follows:



2.1.1 **Net Cost of Services:** these are the direct costs incurred by the council in delivering services, less any specific income generated. Included in the Net Cost of Services is use of the Councils reserves to fund these services.

2.1.2 **Corporate Budgets:** these are the costs incurred and income received by the council that are not service specific e.g. Pension Fund deficit contributions, interest income and payments. Also included in this heading are the Contingency and New Homes Bonus Priority Spend budgets which are not allocated to specific services at the beginning of the financial year.

2.1.3 **Contributions to/from Reserves:** this represents funding within the revenue Budget from Earmarked Reserves, which have been allocated to fund specific purposes. The impact of the use of Reserves is a reduction in the total income demand on Council Taxpayers. Reserves are, however, a finite source of funding and their use should represent value for money.

2.1.4 **Sources of External Funding:** these income budgets are general and non-service specific income sources. They include funding from Central Government and Non-Domestic Rates income (also known as Business Rates).

**2.1.5 Council Tax:** this income is also a general and non-service specific source of income. Only once budgets for the other 'building blocks' have been established can the amount required from Council Tax be calculated, known as the 'Demand on the Collection Fund'.

2.2 The Budget recommendations for each of the building blocks are provided below.

### Net Cost of Services

2.2.1 The total cost of services for 2019/20 will be capped at £14.3m as part of the cash limit budget process. This is comparable to last year's budget of £13.8m. This decision allows Heads of Service to work within their own service delivery requirements and service plans to make the best use of the resources available. This revised budget includes pay and contract inflation assumptions as detailed in section 3 of this report. The breakdown of these costs for the Medium Term Financial Plan is set out in the table on the following page:

Table 1: Net Cost of Services

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Chief Executive Dept	389	396	403	410
Communications, Strategy & Policy	1,131	1,151	1,171	1,191
Human Resources	495	503	510	518
Strategic Finance & Property	1,727	1,966	2,005	2,045
Democratic & Legal	1,266	1,281	1,297	1,313
Housing & Health	2,271	2,308	2,346	2,383
Planning	725	759	794	829
Operations	3,757	3,956	4,159	4,366
Revenues & Benefits	906	934	963	992
Business & Technology	1,636	1,643	1,652	1,659
<b>Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>14,303</b>	<b>14,897</b>	<b>15,300</b>	<b>15,706</b>

## Corporate Budgets

2.2.2 A breakdown of these proposed income streams/costs for 2019/20 onwards is set out below in Table 2:

Table 2: Corporate Budgets

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Fees & Charges	(51)	(191)	(243)	(283)
NHB to Parish and Towns	697	696	775	943
Interest Payments	669	207	133	133
Investment Income	(990)	(640)	(440)	(390)
Pension Fund deficit contribution	696	796	796	796
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,021</b>	<b>868</b>	<b>1,021</b>	<b>1,199</b>

## Contributions to and from reserves

2.2.3 The budget invariably includes items that are not annually re-occurring and that require financing from the council's reserves. An example of this is the Elections Reserve which is only used to fund election costs in election year, although a contribution is made to it every year. The proposed Earmarked Reserve contributions for 2019/20 onwards (except those included in the Net Cost of Services) are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Earmarked Reserves Contributions

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Contributions to Reserves	739	1,435	2,366	2,871
Contributions from Reserves	(181)	(182)	(182)	(182)
<b>Net Reserves Movement</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>1,253</b>	<b>2,184</b>	<b>2,689</b>

## Sources of Funding

2.2.4 Table 4 shows the external sources of funding available to East Herts Council over the last 4 years and the projected available for 2019/20. As revealed below, over the 5 years from 2014/15 to 2019/20 the cumulative reduction in annual funding available to East Herts is £2.4m. This has had a direct impact on the resources available to deliver services.

Table 4: External Sources of Funding

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Revenue Support Grant	2.816	2.057	1.145	0.351	0	0
Non Domestic Rates	2.864	2.385	2.116	2.497	2.680	2.675
New Homes Bonus	2.199	2.798	3.608	3.559	2.645	2.788
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.879</b>	<b>7.240</b>	<b>6.869</b>	<b>6.407</b>	<b>5.325</b>	<b>5.463</b>
<b>Cumulative Reduction</b>		<b>0.639</b>	<b>1.010</b>	<b>1.472</b>	<b>2.554</b>	<b>2.416</b>

2.2.5 The key information presented in the table includes the Revenue Support Grant removal over the 5 year period and that the New Homes Bonus has in part replaced the RSG that funding in the latter years.

2.2.6 Previous decisions to freeze or reduce Council Tax for East Herts residents has meant that Council Tax income has **not** kept in line with inflation. This has had the effect of eroding the council's tax base over the last 5 years.

2.2.7 The New Homes Bonus was introduced in 2011 with the aim of encouraging housing growth with a local authority payment.

2.2.8 *"The New Homes Bonus is designed to create an effective fiscal incentive to encourage local authorities to facilitate housing growth. It will ensure the economic benefits of growth are more*

*visible within the local area, by matching the council tax raised on increases in effective stock. This will redress the imbalance in the local government finance system, whereby resources for growth areas did not keep pace with growth."*

*DCLG February 2011*

2.2.9 East Herts Council has used the NHB Bonus funding to support the General Fund budget for the last 6 years (50%) and to support both Parish and Town Councils (25%). The remaining 25% has been contributed to reserves to fund investment and one off schemes.

### **Council Tax**

2.2.10 E Herts collects the Council Tax on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Police and also Town and Parish Councils. The split of this collection for 2018/19 is set out in the table below:

Table 5: Council Tax Split

<b>Partner</b>	<b>2018/19 split</b>
HCC	76.98%
EHC	9.57%
Police	9.56%
Town & Parish	3.89%

2.2.11 East Herts increased Council Tax by £5 in 2017/18, only the second increase in 6 years. It is proposed that for 2019/20 onwards East Herts will increase its share of the Council Tax by £5 per year, the maximum increase allowed in any year. This level of increase will be built into the Medium Term Financial Plan on an ongoing basis to mitigate the effect of the frozen rates in previous years.



## 2.3 Consolidating the 5 Building Blocks of the budget

2.3.1 These five blocks make up the overall budget summary for 2019/20 as set out below:

Table 6: Budget Summary

	<b>Revised Budget 2019/20</b>
	£000
Net Cost of Services	14,303
Corporate Budgets	1,021
Contributions to Reserves	558
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>15,882</b>
Sources of Funding	(5,463)
Council Tax	(10,298)
<b>Revised Budget Gap</b>	<b>(121)</b>

## 3.0 Budget Pressures and Risks

3.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan is a complex model subject to many factors and the forecasts which are by necessity subject to continuous review and refinement to reflect the latest information as it emerges.

3.2 Specific service issues are monitored by the Heads of Service who are responsible for identifying pressures and opportunities that will impact on service delivery and have financial implications.

3.3 The following issues have been reviewed and items included as a provision in the Medium Term Financial Plan only where the financial impact is assessed as being quantifiable and unavoidable. Where the financial impact is unclear or subject to significant uncertainty, specific provision may not be made but be included as financial risks that if costs materialise in year will be met from the available reserves or balances.

### 3.4 Pay Awards / NJC Pay review

- 3.4.1 In recent years the Government's public sector pay cap has been followed when negotiating local government pay awards. This has been necessary as the government has assumed the same pay restraint will be followed by local government when determining annual local government spending limits and finance settlements.
- 3.4.2 Last year's announcement of a two year 2% + 2% pay offer to local government unions has meant an additional pressure on the previous reported funding gap.
- 3.4.3 Coupled with this announcement was the necessity for Local Authorities to consider and implement a new spinal point option that would eradicate the outstanding National Living Wage (NLW) issues. The implications are that nationally this will require a 2.5-4.0% increase in the national pay bill for 2019/20, the impact for East Herts is has thus been considered within the context of the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 3.4.4 Although salary increase of 1% is generally included within the Medium Term Financial Plan budget planning process, and previous information had led to additional provision being included in the MTFP the proposed changes will cost EHDC an additional £318k in 2019/20. An independent advisor is currently working with our finance team to verify these figures and ensure the budget requirements are robust. It is possible that these figures may change prior to Council in December 2018.

### 3.5 Inflation and Growth

- 3.5.1 Provision for inflation has been made in the MTFP for all contractual uplift costs based on terms and conditions set out in contractual agreements and for inflation on business rates in respect of Council owned properties.

## 4.0 2019/20 Budget Preparation and Engagement

- 4.1 During November and December 2018, Members and Officers will be encouraged to participate in a number of "Have your Say Part 2 " budget workshops to look at the authority's Medium Term Financial Plan and to explore both money saving and money making opportunities to bridge the funding gaps in future years . These workshops will look at prioritising spend in the future and exploring alternative income streams. The results will feed into the 2020/21 Medium Term Financial Plan budget setting process.

### 4.2 The Budget Gap and Savings Proposals

An initial review of the Medium Term Financial Plan set out a funding gap of £2.8m across the 4 years with £121k attributable to 2019/20. The work carried out by officers has changed a number of these figures and has found solutions to some of the early year budget gap especially in 2019/20

- 4.3 Following on from this work the officers have reviewed and revised their own budgets and are agreeable to a Cash Limit budget for 2019/20. This gives Heads of Service the opportunity to manage their own budget within the constraints of the Medium Term Financial Planning framework.
- 4.4 A summary of the budget gap and the required budget savings is shown below in Table 7
- 4.5 The budget paper for 2018/19 presented at Council on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018 detailed a number of potential savings projects

(ERP C) that were investigated throughout 2018/19. In addition to this work an updated business plan for the council's wholly owned company Millstream has proposed an additional income stream. The report to agree this is also included in the December Council agenda.

Table 7: Budget Gap

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Budget gap @30.10.18	<b>544</b>	722	629	500
Additional Salary pressure 0.5%	<b>318</b>	73	80	80
Movement in Net Cost of Services	<b>(631)</b>	0	0	0
Revised Budget gap	<b><u>231</u></b>	<u>721</u>	<u>722</u>	<u>629</u>
Council tax increase by £5	<b>(110)</b>	(115)	(120)	(125)
"Project 2018" savings proposals	<b>(121)</b>	(0)	0	0
Revised Budget Gap	<b><u>(0)</u></b>	<u>538</u>	<u>607</u>	<u>509</u>

4.6 The result of these pieces of work is that £121k of savings/additional income has been identified and these are detailed in Table 8 below. Agreement of these savings will ensure a balanced budget for 2019/20.

Table 8: Savings proposals

2019/20 Project saving proposal	2019/20 Saving value
	£000
Millstream additional income	50
Efficiency savings	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>

## 5.0 Service Delivery Priorities

5.1 Alongside the budget setting process, heads of service in conjunction with portfolio holders have identified service delivery priorities for 2019/20. These can be found at **Essential Reference Paper 'C'**. The service plans outline in detail the key actions that are to be delivered over the next year and the means by which they will be monitored. These are proposed in the context of both the 2019/20 budget and the key priorities within the Council's Corporate Strategic Plan which was agreed by Members in February 2016:

- Priority 1: improve the health and wellbeing of our communities (changed to "people")
  - Residents living active and healthy lives
  - Support for our vulnerable families and individuals
  - Communities engaged in local issues
  
- Priority 2: enhance the quality of people's lives (changed to "places")
  - Attractive places
  - Future development best meets the needs of the district and its residents (changed to "future places")
  
- Priority 3: Enable a flourishing economy (changed to "businesses")
  - Support for our businesses and the local economy
  - Vibrant town centres
  - Working with others, to have achieved the right infrastructure for our businesses and communities

5.2 Members are asked to recommend to Executive that the service plans be adopted alongside the budget.

## 6 Reserves

6.1 The reserves are an important part of the budget setting process, there are minimum requirements set out for General

Fund Reserves, however authorities are also expected to maintain a level of Earmarked Reserves to fund one off projects and initiatives. The emphasis for this Medium Term Financial Plan is to ensure the longevity of the Council's funding and provide investment funding for future income generating initiatives.

- 6.2 The table below set out the proposed contributions to and from reserves over the next four years including the increasing contribution from New Homes Bonus, including reserve usage to fund items within the net cost of services.
- 6.3 It is essential for the Medium Term planning that reliance on reserves for ongoing costs is removed and that the funding is used for more appropriate investment purposes. Re-occurring items that have previously been funded through reserves in the MTFP have now been included in the revenue budget on an ongoing basis.

Table 9: Reserves

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Contributions to Reserves</b>				
NHB Priority Spend	697	1,393	2,324	2,829
District Election	28	28	28	28
House Condition Survey	14	14	14	14
Sub-total	<u>739</u>	<u>1,435</u>	<u>2,366</u>	<u>2,871</u>
<b>Contributions from Reserves</b>				
Revenue Budget	(85)	(86)	(86)	(86)
Pension Deficit	(96)	(96)	(96)	(96)
Sub- total	<u>(181)</u>	<u>(182)</u>	<u>(182)</u>	<u>(182)</u>
<b>Total Reserves movement</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>1,253</b>	<b>2,184</b>	<b>2,689</b>

## **7 Capital Programme**

- 7.1 The Capital Programme for 2019/20 to 2022/23 is included in this report in ERP A.
- 7.2 The forecast outturn for the 2018/19 capital programme is £5.8m.
- 7.3 The details on the movement expenditure for the Capital Programme are monitored and reported quarterly to Executive within the Healthcheck report.
- 7.4 Any slippage on significant capital projects during 2018/19 will be considered at the end of the financial year
- 7.5 The capital programme for 2019/20 onwards contains a number of newly agreed capital schemes and also the rolling schemes agreed in previous years.
- 7.6 Currently the review of the Capital programme is undertaken as part of the quarterly health-check report. Any additions to the programme require a funding request to be made through the appropriate governance process. This process is defined by the value of the capital bid.
- 7.7 The council is likely to undertake a number significant capital schemes within the medium term including Old River Lane, Bishop's Stortford. The scope and funding arrangements of such schemes are still in the early stages of project planning. However it should be noted that East Herts may need to give careful consideration to its reserves provision in the forthcoming years and will potentially require a borrowing facility within this medium term financial period.
- 7.8 As any of these schemes are agreed and the funding requirements become more definite these schemes will be included in the capital programme presented within the quarterly health-check report.

7.9 The complete proposed capital programme can be found in **Essential Reference Paper B** including schemes already approved in previous years.

7.10 Prudential Code Implications

7.10.1 The council is required under the Local Government Act 2003 to 'have regard' to the requirements of the CIPFA Prudential Code which requires that certain performance indicators and limits known as Prudential Indicators are calculated.

7.10.2 The Prudential Indicators must be approved by Council before the beginning of each financial year. Their purpose is to help the council ensure that its capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

7.10.3 It is recommended that the capital programme being proposed in this budget report is affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Treasury Management Strategy for 2019/20 will address any funding requirements for future years.

## **8. 2019/20 Revenue Schedule of Fees & Charges**

8.1 The proposed schedule of charges will be made available at the Executive meeting.

8.2 The fees and charges budgets (excluding charges for pay and display car parking) included in the 2018/19 Net Cost of Services totalled £2.028m.

8.3 Table 10 shows the impact of the changes proposed in the schedule of charges to the 2019/20 budget.

8.4 The fees and charges have increased by an average of 2.5%, the estimated impact of this increase is additional income of £50.7k in 2019/20.



8.5 Pay and Display charges have not been increased for 2019/20, this is in line with the budget policy agreed at a previous Council, and will be reviewed in 2020/21.

Table 10: Fees & Charges

	2018/19 budget	Impact of proposed 2.5% charges increase	2019/20 budget
	£	£	£
Hertford Theatre	192,500	4800	197,300
Clinical Waste	74,000	1,850	75,850
Domestic Waste	80,600	2,000	82,600
Commercial Waste	750,500	18,750	769,250
Env Health Promotions	2,000		2,050
		50	
Env Health Licences	24,350	600	24,950
<b>Taxi Licensing</b>	148,500	3,700	152,200
Development Management	126,000	3,150	129,150
Legal Fees	31,500	800	32,300
Land Charges	260,000	6,500	266,500
Markets	56,000	1,400	57,400
Hostels	120,000	3,000	123,000
Bed & Breakfast	16,100	400	16,500
Residents' Parking	115,100	2,900	118,000
Parking - Season Tickets	31,200	800	32,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,028,350</b>	<b>50,700</b>	<b>2,079,050</b>

## 9. Advice from the Section 151 Officer

9.1 Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Statutory Section 151 Officer (Head of Strategic Finance & Property) to give advice to the Council on the levels of reserves held and the robustness of the budgets at the time Council makes its decision on the budget proposals.

9.2 It is the advice of the Head of Strategic Finance and Property that these budget proposals are prudent, sensible and robust. In determining the budget proposals:

- Funding sources have been extensively modelled;
- A zero-based salary budget has been produced;
- The MTFP model and assumptions have been considered and refreshed;
- The council's Earmarked and General Reserves have been reviewed;
- The revenue impact of the capital programme has been considered;
- The key financial risks facing the council have been identified and assessed; and
- The budget proposals meet the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act 1997 for a balanced revenue position

9.3 Throughout this report attention has been drawn to the uncertainty of the local government funding regime and the potential impact on East Herts. The assumptions made in the preparation of this report and the MTFP are based on the best information available at the time.

## 10. Implications / Consultations

10.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper A**.

## Background Papers

None

**Contact Member:** Councillor Geoff Williamson  
[geoffrey.williamson@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:geoffrey.williamson@eastherts.gov.uk)

**Contact Officers:** Isabel Brittain – Head of Strategic Finance and Property  
Ext. 2050  
[isabel.brittain@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:isabel.brittain@eastherts.gov.uk)

Ben Wood – Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy Ext. 1699  
[Benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:Benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk)

**Report Author:** Alison Street – Finance Business Partner  
[alison.street@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:alison.street@eastherts.gov.uk)