

Council

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Briefing note and supplementary papers

Date: **Thursday 16 February 2023**

Time: **5.00 pm**

Place: **Council Chamber - Oxford Town Hall**

The Council agenda, reports, this briefing note, and any other supplementary papers should be considered together.

This briefing note forms part of the papers to be considered at the Council meeting.

All papers for this meeting can be accessed through the council's website.

For further information please contact:

Democratic Services

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Briefing note

Information for councillors and additional papers to be considered.

	Pages
Minute's silence and tributes	
To hear tributes and observe a minute's silence in memory of former Lord Mayors or serving councillors or serving senior officers who have died:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Former Cllr Margaret Godden	
1 Apologies for absence	
2 Declarations of interest	
3 Announcements	
4 Budget debate procedure	11 - 12
Recommendation: Council is recommended to note that the times permitted for each state in the budget debate (Item 9 on the agenda) are as detailed in the Council's Constitution.	
5 Public addresses and questions that relate to matters for decision at this meeting	
None.	
Committee recommendations to be considered before the budget debate	
6 General Purposes Licensing and Licensing and Gambling Acts Committees - recommendations on fees and charges 2023/24	
Recommendations: the General Purposes Licensing Committee and the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee recommend that Council resolves to:	Main agenda pack
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Agree the relevant licence fees and charges for 2023/24 as set out in Items 6a and 6b (and repeated in the relevant sections of Item 9, Appendix 7).	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Agree the relevant licence fees and charges for 2023/24 set out in Item 6c as amended, to include a new discounted fee of £62	

for Private Hire Vehicles that are Low Emission and Wheelchair Accessible.

6a Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005 License Fees and Charges for the 2023/24 Financial Year

6b Miscellaneous Licensing: Fees and Charges for the 2023/24 Financial Year

6c Commercial Events, Hackney Carriage and Private Hire, Road Closure Orders, Scrap Metal Dealers, Sex Establishments and Street Parties: License Fees and Charges for the 2023/24 Financial Year

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Budget and Council Tax

7 Report of the Council's Chief Finance Officer on the robustness of the 2023/24 budget

Recommendation: That Council notes this report in setting its budget for 2023/24 and the indicative budgets for 2024/25 – 2026/27.

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8 Report of the Scrutiny Budget Review Group

The Scrutiny Budget Review Group report is included in the main agenda pack.

The Cabinet response is attached.

Recommendation: Council is asked to note the recommendations of the Budget Review Group and Cabinet's response.

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9 Budget 2023/24

Cabinet on 08 February 2023 agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

Recommendations: Cabinet recommends that Council resolves to:

1) **Approve** the 2023-24 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets for consultation and the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-9, noting :

- a) the Council's General Fund Budget Requirement of £24.793 million for 2023/24 and an increase in the Band D Council Tax of 2.99% or £9.76 per annum representing a Band D Council Tax of £336.31 per annum
- b) the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2023/24 of £51.572 million and an increase of 7% (£7.51 per week) in social dwelling

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rents from 1 April 2023 giving a revised weekly average social rent of £114.73 as set out in Appendix 5

- c) shared ownership dwellings are increased in line with those of other social rents as discussed in paragraph 39
 - d) the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme as shown in Appendix 6.
- 2) **Agree** the fees and charges shown in Appendix 7
 - 3) **Delegate** to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management the decision to determine whether it is financially advantageous for the Council to enter into a Business Rates Distribution Agreement as referred to in paragraphs 20-22 of the report.
 - 4) **Approve** the payment into the County Council Pension Fund of £5 million in 2023-24 as referred to in paragraph 28 of the report
 - 5) **Implement** the changes to Council Tax charges in respect of second homes and properties empty for more than one year as referred to in paragraphs 23-25 from 1st April 2024 when the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is enacted.
 - 6) **Note** the application of the Council Tax Support Fund allocation as referred to in paragraph 11-14 of the report.

9a Additional recommendations from Cabinet and corrections to the published budget

There are no additional recommendations or corrections.

9b Alternative budget proposals - Liberal Democrat Group amendments

Liberal Democrat Group amendments to the revenue and capital budgets, including explanation, for debate.

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9c Alternative budget proposals - Green Group amendments

Green Group amendments to the revenue and capital budgets, including explanation, for debate.

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9d Individual amendments to the budget

Individual amendments to the revenue and capital budgets, including explanation, for debate.

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10 Council Tax 2023/24

Recommendations: That Council **resolves to approve** for the financial year 2023/24 recommendations 1 to 5 and to **note** points 6 to 8 below:

1. The City Council's precept and Council Tax requirement of £15,682,423 including Parish precepts and £15,415,353 excluding Parish precepts.
2. The average Band D Council Tax figure (excluding Parish Precepts) of £336.30, a 2.99% increase on the 2022/23 figure of £326.54. Including Parish Precepts the figure is £342.13, a 2.88% increase (see paragraphs 2 to 8).
3. A contribution of £10,000 to Old Marston Parish Council in recognition of the additional expenditure that the Parish incurs as a consequence of maintaining the cemetery (see paragraphs 11 and 12).
4. The amount of £666,093 to be treated as Special Expenses (see paragraph 16).
5. The Band D Council Taxes for the various areas of the City (excluding the Police and County Council's precepts) as follows:

Littlemore	£367.52
Old Marston	£369.96
Risinghurst and Sandhills	£359.59
Blackbird Leys	£341.16
Unparished Area	£339.20

These figures include Parish Precepts and special expensing amounts as appropriate; in addition to the City Wide Council Tax of £321.77.

The Council is also asked to **note**:

6. Oxfordshire County Council's precept and Band D Council Tax as set out in paragraph 19 below
7. The Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley's precept and Band D Council Tax as set out in paragraph 20 below, and
8. The overall average Band D equivalent Council Tax of £2,332.44 including Parish Precepts (subject to confirmation of the Band D figures for the County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner).

Cabinet recommendations relating to the Council's budget

11 Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24

Cabinet on 8 February 2023 agreed the recommendations as set out in

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the report.

Recommendations: Cabinet recommends that Council resolves to approve:

1. The Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24 as set out in paragraphs 29 to 78 of this report and the Prudential Indicators for 2023/24 – 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 2;
2. The Borrowing Strategy 2023/23 at paragraphs 52 to 54 of this report;
3. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement at paragraphs 55 to 57 which sets out the Council's policy on charging borrowing to the revenue account;
4. The Investment Strategy for 2023/24 and the investment criteria as set out in paragraphs 58 to 77 of this report and in Appendix 1; and
5. The Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation at Appendix 4.

pack

12 Capital Strategy 2023-24 to 2026-27

Cabinet on 8 February 2023 agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

Recommendation: Cabinet recommends that Council resolves to approve the Capital Strategy attached at Appendix A.

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Officer reports

13 Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel and Draft Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2023-2027

Recommendations: That Council resolves to:

1. Thank the Independent Remuneration Panel for its work.
2. Agree to include in the Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2023-27 the following provisions from the Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2019-23, as recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel:
 - a) The following Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs):
 - i. Leader - 3 x basic allowance
 - ii. Deputy Leader – 1 x basic allowance
 - iii. Non-statutory Deputy Leader - 1 x basic allowance
 - iv. Lord Mayor –1 x Basic Allowance
 - v. Deputy Lord Mayor – 0.25 x basic allowance
 - vi. Sheriff - 0.25 x Basic Allowance
 - vii. Cabinet Members with particular responsibilities – 1.5 x basic allowance

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- viii. Chair of Scrutiny Committee – 1x basic allowance
 - ix. Chair of Audit & Governance Committee – 0.25 x basic allowance
 - x. Chair of a Planning Committee – 0.5 x basic allowance
 - xi. Leader of an opposition group – 1 x basic allowance with the additional clarification set out in paragraph 11
 - xii. Chair of Scrutiny Standing Panel – 0.25 x basic allowance (Maximum of 2 Standing Panel SRAs available. Panel must meet at least 5 times to qualify. If more Standing Panels are set up then 0.5 x basic allowance to be divided between the Panel Chairs)
- b) The rule that councillors will receive a maximum of two special responsibility allowances (excluding civic office holders);
 - c) The rule that where a member of the Council is also a member of another council, that councillor may not receive allowances from more than one council in respect of the same duties;
 - d) The rule that a 15% reduction to a special responsibility allowance will be applied for councillors who attend less than two thirds of the scheduled meetings required within a special responsibility
 - e) The ability for councillors to elect to forgo any part of their entitlement to an allowance;
 - f) The rule that where allowances have been paid in advance for a period during which a councillor is no longer a councillor, those allowances should be repaid;
 - g) Allowances for maternity or adoption leave, with the extension to entitlement set out at paragraph 14;
 - h) Allowances for travel to be paid for travel outside the City of Oxford boundary with the prior agreement of the Head of Law and Governance, with the additional reference to promoting green and public transport set out at paragraph 16;
 - i) Reasonable adjustments for councillors with a temporary or permanent disability;
 - j) The rule that all claims for repayment must be made on the forms provided and should be accompanied by receipts/invoices as appropriate before payment can be authorised;
3. Agree to increase the basic allowance to £5,471 for 2023/24, in line with the IRP proposal to increase the basic allowance by 4.5% in 2023/24.
 4. Agree to the indexation of the basic allowance to the local pay settlement for local government employees from 2024/25 onwards.
 5. Agree that the special responsibility allowance for 'Cabinet Member without particular responsibilities' be removed.

6. Agree to include in the Scheme provision for allowances for co-opted members and Independent Persons at the rate of £75 for up to 4 hours and £150 for more than 4 hours but less than 24 hours in respect of any Committee, Sub-Committee or Panel meeting attendance of which they are a member.
7. Agree to increase the maximum amount that any Member can claim for child and other dependants' care in any one financial year to £1,306 for 2023/24.
8. Agree to increase the maximum amount that any Member can claim for child and other dependants' care in any one financial year in line with the rate of increase in the Oxford Living Wage.
9. Agree to include the provision that 'Members' personal circumstances, including health, will be taken into account by the Head of Law & Governance in consultation with the Committee & Member Services Manager before any allowance reduction is applied' in respect of allowance reductions.
10. Agree that councillors will forgo part of their future allowance payments in the following circumstances:
 - (a) A 15% reduction to the basic allowance will be applied for:
 - i. Members who fail to attend more than four meetings of Full Council in any municipal year except when a serious medical condition is the reason for absence;
 - ii. Members who fail to attend the induction training for newly elected councillors. A newly elected Councillor is any Councillor who was not holding City Council office before the election in question.
 - (b) A 10% reduction to the basic allowance will be applied for:
 - i. Members who fail to attend compulsory planning and development control training (held every two years).
 - ii. Members who fail to attend compulsory code of conduct training (held annually).
 - iii. Members who are appointed to a Licensing Committee who fail to attend the compulsory licensing training (held annually).
11. Adopt the Draft Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2023-27 attached at Appendix B.

14 Matters exempt from publication and exclusion of the public

If Council wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any aspects of the preceding agenda items it will be necessary for Council to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 specifying the grounds on which their presence could involve the likely

disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

(The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Section 15 of the Council’s Constitution – sets out the conditions under which the public can be excluded from meetings of the Council)

This briefing note is published as a supplement to the agenda and should be considered along with the agenda; reports; and other supplementary papers.

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Council 16 February 2023 Item 4:

Procedure for debate on the medium term financial strategy and budget (Item 9 on the agenda)

The Constitution 11.4 (Council budget debate procedure) sets out the order of business for the Council meeting(s) where the Council's budget, capital programme and medium term financial strategy for the following year(s) are approved and the Council Tax is set, and sets out the timings and order of the debate on Item 9.

The procedure and timings for the debate on Item 9 of the agenda are set out in the table below.

Before the meeting

- Amendments submitted by opposition groups must be received by Committee and Member Services by 1.00pm one working day before the meeting. The Chief Finance Officer shall report on the soundness of these amendments before these are debated.
- All principal speakers for the budget debate and amendments should be nominated in advance to Committee and Member Services (democraticservices@oxford.gov.uk) by 9.00am one working day before the meeting. The Lord Mayor will decide the order speakers are taken subject to advice from Group Leaders. Additional speakers will be taken by the Lord Mayor should time allow.

Before or at the meeting

- The Leader or in their absence the Deputy Leader shall indicate before debate which amendments they will accept without a vote.
- Individual amendments in part h(iii) shall be presented in writing with financial information and reasons; taken as read without the requirement for the proposer to speak; and taken in order as presented to the Committee and Member Services Officer (submitted at least 15 min before the start of debate on amendments).
- The Chief Finance Officer shall report on the soundness of these amendments before these are debated.

Procedure for debate on item 9: Budget 2023/24

Debate on the Council's budget, capital programme and medium term financial strategy as recommended by the Cabinet (to last no more than 1 hour and 25 minutes excluding the debates at (b) and (c) and the votes)

Normal rules of debate and rights of reply apply at each stage.

Stage	Debate Time (maximum)	Lengths of speeches: All speakers have 3 minutes unless otherwise stated.
(a) Proposal of the Cabinet budget	15 minutes for proposer's speech	Proposer – max 15 minutes Seconder required (may reserve right to speak) Move straight to (b 1)
(b 1) Proposal of Liberal Democrat Group budget amendments	33 minutes	Proposer – max 10 min Seconder required (may reserve right to speak) proposer of (a) responds (3 min speech) before proposer of (b1) sums up
Vote (ordinary vote)		Liberal Democrat Group proposals all together
(b 2) Proposal of the Green Group budget amendments	33 minutes	Proposer – max 10 min Seconder required (may reserve right to speak) proposer of (a) responds (3 min speech) before proposer of (b 2) sums up
Vote (ordinary vote)		Green Group proposals all together
Break	30 minutes	Submission of individual amendments for debate to Committee secretary no more than 15 minutes after the start of the break.
(c) Individual amendments debate submitted by the deadline and published in the briefing note or extracted from the submitted amendments and circulated in writing after the break	40 minutes No limit on debate for each amendment.	Taken in order received. Those out of time fall. Taken as read: announced with proposer and seconder by Lord Mayor, displayed on screen. Normal rules of debate, except the proposer is encouraged to speak just once at the end of the debate on their amendment.
Vote (ordinary vote)		Separate votes on each amendment or group of amendments
(d) Debate on Budget (amended or unamended)	30 minutes + unused time from (a), (b) and (c) to take to max of 2hr 30min overall	Normal rules of debate.
Recorded vote		Must be a recorded vote

Followed by

- Adjournment for 10 minutes if necessary
- Report on Setting of the Council Tax for the following year (agenda item 10)
- Recorded vote on the proposed Council Tax.

Agenda Item 6c

GENERAL PURPOSES LICENSING COMMITTEE FEES & CHARGES 2023/2024	2022/23 Charge £	2023/24 Charge £	Increase/ (Decrease) £	Increase/ (Decrease) %
Taxi Licensing:				
VEHICLES				
Hackney Carriage	400.00	420.00	20.00	5.00
Hackney Carriage (Low Emission Vehicle)	300.00	315.00	15.00	5.00
Hackney Carriage (ULEV Early Adopter Discount)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Hackney Transfer of Ownership	100.00	105.00	5.00	5.00
Hackney Change of Vehicle	100.00	105.00	5.00	5.00
Hackney Temporary Vehicle	75.00	78.00	3.00	4.00
Private Hire	262.00	275.00	13.00	4.96
Private Hire (Low Emission Vehicle)	162.00	170.00	8.00	4.94
Private Hire (ULEV Early Adoprer Discount)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Private Hire (Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV))	N/A	100.00	N/A	New
Private Hire (Low Emission Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle) (WAV)	N/A	62.00	N/A	New
Private Hire Transfer	100.00	105.00	5.00	5.00
Private Hire Change of Vehicle	100.00	105.00	5.00	5.00
Private Hire Temporary Vehicle	75.00	78.00	3.00	4.00
Taxi Licensing:				
DRIVERS				
Hackney Combined (1 year licence)	115.00	120.00	5.00	4.35
Hackney Combined (3 year licence)	345.00	360.00	15.00	4.35
Hackney Combined (3 year licence only) for Oxfordshire Licensed drivers with 1 full year on current licence	230.00	240.00	10.00	4.35
Hackney Combined (3 year licence only) for Oxfordshire Licensed drivers with 2 full years on current licence	115.00	120.00	5.00	4.35
Private Hire (1 year licence)	101.00	106.00	5.00	4.95
Private Hire (3 year licence)	303.00	318.00	15.00	4.95
Private Hire (3 year licence only) for Oxfordshire Licensed drivers with 1 full year on their current licence	202.00	212.00	10.00	4.95
Private Hire (3 year licence only) for Oxfordshire Licensed drivers with 2 full year on their current licence	101.00	106.00	5.00	4.95
Taxi Licensing:				
ADDITIONAL CHARGES:				
Mandatory Safeguarding and Disability Awareness Training - Oxfordshire County Council Charge (Provider)	50.00	50.00	0.00	0.00
Local Knowledge & Safeguarding Test	75.00	78.00	3.00	4.00
Local Knowledge & Safeguarding Re-Test	75.00	78.00	3.00	4.00
DBS Application (check) - at cost / DBS Charge	50.00	50.00	0.00	0.00
DVLA check - for new applicants only, at cost	7.00	7.00	0.00	0.00
Trust ID - DBS and RTW Online Check	N/A	12.00	N/A	New

GENERAL PURPOSES LICENSING COMMITTEE FEES & CHARGES 2023/2024	2022/23 Charge £	2023/24 Charge £	Increase/ (Decrease) £	Increase/ (Decrease) %
Trust ID - DBS Online Check only	N/A	8.00	N/A	New
Licence badge/replacement badge	10.00	11.00	1.00	10.00
Replacement external plate	25.00	26.00	1.00	4.00
Internal Vehicle Licence Plate	15.00	16.00	1.00	6.67
Replacement Internal Vehicle Licence Plate	15.00	16.00	1.00	6.67
Exempt badge/replacement badge	25.00	26.00	1.00	4.00
Replacement approved fare chart	4.00	4.00	0.00	0.00
Replacement approved no smoking signs (includes VAT)	2.00	2.00	0.00	0.00
Duplicate paper licence (replacement)	5.00	6.00	1.00	20.00
Unpaid Cheque Charge	30.00	32.00	2.00	6.67
Amendments to Private Hire Operator Licence	100.00	105.00	5.00	5.00
Charge for Vehicle Exemption Notice	50.00	52.00	2.00	4.00
Taxi Licensing:				
PRIVATE HIRE OPERATOR LICENCE				
Vehicle 3 & under (1 year licence)	490.00	514.00	24.00	4.90
Vehicle 4 & over (1 year licence)	980.00	1028.00	48.00	4.90
Vehicle 3 & under (5 year licence)	2,450.00	2,570.00	120.00	4.90
Vehicle 4 & over (5 year licence)	4,900.00	5,140.00	240.00	4.90

GENERAL PURPOSES LICENSING COMMITTEE FEES & CHARGES 2023/2024	2022/23 Charge £	2023/24 Charge £	Increase/ (Decrease) £	Increase/ (Decrease) %
Road Closures				
Commercial Event Road Closures- Events (under 500 people)	105.00	115.00	10.00	9.52
Commercial Event Road Closures- Market and Street Fairs	255.00	280.00	25.00	9.80
Commercial Event Road Closures- Events (500 or more people)	305.00	335.00	30.00	9.84
Road Closure with no commercial element inc Street Parties	16.00	17.00	1.00	6.25
Scrap Metal Dealers (Three Year Licence)				
New Site Licence	1220.00	1280.00	60.00	4.92
Renewal Site Licence	1220.00	1280.00	60.00	4.92
Variation Site Licence	300.00	315.00	15.00	5.00
New Mobile Collector Licence	605.00	635.00	30.00	4.96
Renewal Mobile Collector Licence	605.00	635.00	30.00	4.96
Variation Mobile Collector Licence	300.00	315.00	15.00	5.00
Sex Establishments				
Sex establishment (Sex Shop or Sex Cinema)- New	2508.00	2630.00	122.00	4.86
Sex establishment (Sex Shop or Sex Cinema)- Renewal	2508.00	2630.00	122.00	4.86
Sex establishment (Sex Shop or Sex Cinema)- Variation/ transfer	449.00	469.00	20.00	4.45
Sexual entertainment venues new	5880.00	6170.00	290.00	4.93
Sexual entertainment venues renewal	5880.00	6170.00	290.00	4.93
Sexual entertainment variation/ transfer	449.00	469.00	20.00	4.45

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Appendix 1

Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Budget Review Group and endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 01 February 2023 concerning the Scrutiny Budget Review 2023/24. The Cabinet agreed the response at its meeting on 08 February 2023.

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That the Council continues to dedicate funding to the work of the archive and maintains the post of professional archivist to ensure that this statutory duty is satisfactorily complied with alongside highly qualified volunteers.	Yes	I accept the recommendation from the Budget Review Group and the ongoing funding has been included in the Cabinet Budget recommended to Council.
2) That the Council provides an up-to-date, confidential explanation to all Members of the options available to the Council to achieve the savings that would arise from ODS depot consolidation.	Yes	A confidential member briefing can be provided from the officers and ODS representatives on the options assessed to date and the challenges. This will be based on work undertaken to date and not be commissioning further work. At present the ODS business plan does at present include savings from depot consolidation.
3) That the Council provides a statement setting out the options regarding the acquisition of a new cemetery site without which there would be a significant revenue shortfall.	Yes	Feasibility on a specific site is well underway. A cabinet and council report with a business case will come forward this year, and subject to planning and addressing restrictions on title, we will then be able to develop a delivery plan.
4) That the Council updates the estimates during the period of the MTFP of the income and expenditure, including capital, on the Covered Market to take account of the slippage in the plans to fill the empty units and in the plans to start evening openings with music to promote footfall.	Yes	Accepted. The expected revenue has been modelled for the masterplan exercise and can be monitored. Capital spend is monitored by Development Board and revenue spend by Property Services.

5) That the Council does not commit the windfall gains, arising from the deferral of the Fairer Funding Review and the receipt of additional grants, for spending which would be recurring.	Yes	The windfall gains from the Finance Settlement are estimated to be around £3.6 million with £2million of this falling in 2024-25. Since the Consultation Budget a number of budgetary pressures totalling £1.2 million over the 4 year period which will require funding. Further items totalling around £618k over the 4 year period have been provided for by the Cabinet as detailed in the budget report the balance of the funds, totalling around £1.8 million, will be transferred to the COVID Reserve to deal with future fluctuations in income and expenditure over the period of the MTFP. A caveat is that some of the unavoidable pressures met by this pot are potentially ongoing, but we agree with the spirit of Scrutiny's recommendation.
6) That the Council mitigates the pressure on residents arising from the current financial and economic circumstances and provides clear, concise information on the funding schemes available to help residents – including the provision of assistance to those who need it when applying for support.	Yes	The Council can commit to providing up to date advice on available funding schemes such as the Hardship Scheme and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) via our website. It should be noted that there are several new funding streams which should be available to support residents, including one-off payments to those on low incomes (details currently being finalised), the new discretionary council tax hardship scheme, and we are hopeful of securing extended DHP funding.
7) That the Council re-assesses the assumptions being made about bad debt provision relating to commercial property.	Yes	The Council is required to assess its provisions that it holds at the year end, when closing the accounts. It currently holds a provision of around £6.8 million in respect of commercial rent debt which as at 31-3-2022 stood at £7.3 million.
8) That the Council diversifies its investment portfolio away from commercial property towards the regeneration of Council-owned properties which are eligible for Public Works Loan Board funding, and considers other types of investments and assets, including potential investment in	Yes	The capital programme allows for investment in property which is council owned, which is of a regenerative nature. Budget has been allocated in Corporate Property to recruit for this purpose to help to drive income back to pre-pandemic levels. Whilst the council will seek other

renewal energy projects within Oxfordshire.		potential investments in renewal energy projects it is also mindful of the need to adhere to PWLB lending criteria in that investments should not be predominantly for financial gain and is also mindful of some recent financial failures experienced by local authorities of making such investments.
9) That the Council re-evaluates its assumptions around reduction in use of park and rides as a result of changes in charges to create a more realistic picture of what both income levels and usage would look like with different fees.	Yes	<p>It remains challenging to accurately forecast the usage at the park and ride sites, particularly on weekdays, although we are seeing an increase in usage and income.</p> <p>The modelled 10% resistance factor on 1%, 2% and 3% increases shows that by increasing tariffs there is a significant risk that the Council would face a loss of income. The performance of the P&Rs will continue to be monitored throughout the year and the tariffs reviewed annually. The success of the combined ticket trial is currently being reviewed and any amendment to the tariff should include the learnings from this trial so the re-evaluation will be further downstream. We will continue to work with both County and the Bus Companies to mutually agree the charges.</p>
10) That the Council considers how patients who need to drive to the midwifery services at Florence Park might be supported with regard to parking charges.	In part	We are happy to make contact with the health authorities locally and explore a solution as part of the consultation on introducing charges which will be necessary. However, giving support to just one user in one car park would potentially be inequitable, and it is noted that payment for parking is not unusual to access other medical facilities.

<p>11) That the Council provides sensitivity analysis of the net revenues to the Council from the operation of the current ZEZ and its proposed expansion during the period of the MTFP in order to justify current assumptions.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council continues to work with Oxfordshire County Council on proposals for expansion of the Pilot ZEZ. Both data on existing operation as well as modelling capability on the likely usage of an expanded ZEZ rest with the County Council. It can be assumed that both the modelling and associated analysis of likely income would be required inputs to any final decision to proceed with an expanded ZEZ.</p>
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Liberal Democrat Budget Amendment Explanatory Notes

Our country is facing highly unusual circumstances: recovery from a two-year pandemic has combined with the fallout from Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine to yield a cost of living crisis not seen in decades. Our budget amendment seeks to take a mix of one-off and ongoing savings to provide short-term assistance to people in financial difficulty, as well as charting a long-term path to prosperity.

Proposed Savings

- We restore savings relating to archival and communications roles that were originally proposed in the budget for consultation, but which the administration has since removed. We believe that the council's functioning will not be significantly impeded, or else they would not have made it to the consultation budget stage to begin with, and while any role losses are regrettable we believe the funds can be directed to benefit people in acute need.
- We restore the Ward Members' Budget level agreed in last year's budget, forgoing the administration's proposed one-year rise. We note that individual members often under-spend this budget, which is understandable due to the work required to identify opportunities to use it, and believe that pooling it into a centralised hardship fund will make more effective use of the same money.
- We save on electoral services and members' allowances by adopting quadrennial elections and a single deputy leader rather than the administration's current two deputies, in common with many other local authorities.
- Finally, we propose a one-off sale of artworks from the town hall's collection that we do not believe represent either Oxford's past or the future to which it aspires, and therefore are better shown elsewhere. These are *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist*, *The Rape of the Sabines*, and a hunting trophy presented to James Morrell by the Berkshire Hunt depicting a man holding a fox over hounds. The three works have a collective market value of £284,000, with the one-off yield directed to a short-term extraordinary hardship fund. By selecting these particular pieces for sale to other galleries or collectors, the City Council can lean its public displays towards pieces that represent Oxford's heritage and values, and away from depictions of past brutality that bear no particular relation to our city.

Proposed Expenditure

- We propose the creation of a short-term hardship fund empowered to make extraordinary grants to people in financial difficulty. We face a cost of living crisis brought about by a mixture of Brexit fallout, the lasting effects of the

pandemic and the shorter-term energy crisis caused by Russian aggression, and central government's efforts to paper over the cracks have been exceedingly lacklustre. By providing a £100,000 supplementary fund for each of the next two years we aim to bolster the City's existing funds for people experiencing housing insecurity or other financial crisis and help as many people as possible feel secure in their everyday needs.

- We propose to restore the £45,000/yr Advice Development Fund that was cut in the previous year's budget. The cost of living crisis means that our advice services need all the funding they can get to help people in financial difficulty find and use the various national and local aid available – in particular, to engage with and access the hardship fund proposed above. In retrospect, February 2022 was the worst possible time for the administration to cut advice funding, with the war in Ukraine dramatically escalated by Russia's launch of a (thankfully completely unsuccessful) drive to take Kyiv just 8 days after the 2022 budget was set, with chaos in energy markets and prices setting in shortly thereafter. It is therefore time to reverse that cut and restore advice funding to its prior state.
- We propose to restore the £25,000/yr grant to Experience Oxfordshire that was recently eliminated. It is good to help people who are in financial crisis, but it is better still to help people to avoid falling into crisis in the first place. With local small businesses that rely on tourism placed under great strain by the pandemic, now is the time to restore funding to an organisation that promotes the city to visitors and thereby helps secure the prosperity of local firms. With every job loss avoided meaning less demand on the advice services and hardship funding described above, we believe this intervention is very likely to pay for itself in the long run.
- Finally, we look to the long term by investing in developing planning policy to get on top of our housing crisis and put Oxford's cost of living on a sustainable path. While Brexit, COVID and Putin have combined to deliver a disastrous short-term shock, we should not ignore that chronic scarcity of housing in Oxford means that the cost of living in our city was unacceptably high even before any of those events. Lack of affordable housing for key workers has been a problem in Oxford for decades, leading to financial strain as well as forcing people to commute long distances, which is bad for our environment as well as quality of life. Delivering housing by nibbling into green space either inside the city or on its fringes is both undesirable if avoidable and politically fraught: by developing the policy instruments to deliver residential densification, we can both spare green land and get on top of the housing shortage that is the root cause of unaffordable Oxford.

REVENUE

GROUP AMENDMENTS TO THE ADMINISTRATIONS CONSULTATION BUDGET

REVENUE

£1000's

	2023/24 £000'S	2024/25 £000'S	2025/26 £000'S	2026/27 £000'S
Consultation Budget Net Budget Requirement	23,433	22,094	22,618	23,157
Changes since the consultation budget				
Sub total changes since the consultation budget	218	716	703	535
Additional Savings proposed				
1 Elections every 4 years starting from 2024-25		(35)		
2 Elimintate second deputy leader allowance	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)
3 Restore Archivist saving	(20)	(20)	(20)	(20)
4 Restore communications savings		(30)	(52)	(52)
5 Revert ward members budget	(24)			
6 Sale of town hall artwork	(284)			
7				
Total additional savings proposed	(333)	(90)	(77)	(77)
Cumulative additional savings	(333)	(423)	(500)	(577)
Additional costs proposed				
1 Hardship relief fund	100	100		
2 Additional planning policy resource to develop urban densification policy	50	50		
3 Restore funding to advice services	45	45	45	45
4 Experience Oxfordshire	25	25	25	25
5				
6				
7				
Total additional costs proposed	220	220	70	70
Net effect on budget in-year of proposals	(113)	130	(7)	(7)
Cumulative effect on budget	(113)	17	10	3
Additional Budget transfer to/(from) reserves	1,255	1,351	(500)	(331)
Transfer from/(to) working balance				
Alternative Budget Net Budget Requirement	24,793	24,291	22,814	23,354
Financed By :				
Council Tax- Consultation Budget	(15,416)	(16,036)	(16,518)	(17,015)
Retained Business Rates - Consultation Budget	(8,517)	(8,058)	(6,099)	(6,142)
New Homes Bonus	(663)	0	0	0
Revenue Support Grant	(197)	(197)	(197)	(197)
Total	(24,793)	(24,291)	(22,814)	(23,354)
(surplus)/deficit	0	(0)	0	0
General Fund Working Balance				
Working Balance 1st April	(3,856)	(3,856)	(3,856)	(3,856)
Transfer (to)/from balance	0	0	0	0
Working Balance 31st March	(3,856)	(3,856)	(3,856)	(3,856)

(577)

580

3

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Head of Finance – Section 151 Comments on Lib Dem Group Alternative Budget for 2023-24 to 2026/27

Date 14-02-2023

I have reviewed the budget submitted by the Liberal Democrat party as an alternative to the Labour Administrations budget and can conclude that it is arithmetically correct and could be implemented if it was voted through.

General Fund Revenue Budget – There are a number of additional proposals to the revenue budget which have been balanced by savings. Savings have been derived mainly from the selling of 3 paintings, The Morell Trophy, The Rape of the Sabines and Salome and Head of St John the Baptist, based on the last market valuations obtained. Whilst this would generate a capital receipt, this could be used in place of the revenue funding currently used to finance the capital programme generating the resultant saving.

There are no further call on reserves over the 4 year period.

Capital Budget – There are no changes proposed on the Administrations Capital Budget

HRA – There are no changes proposed on the Administrations HRA Budget

Nigel Kennedy

Head of Financial Services (Section 151 Officer)

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The Green Group would like to extend our thanks to the finance team and all officers involved in the process of developing the budget this year. It is widely understood that the economic context this Council finds itself in is incredibly challenging. The aftermath of Covid-19, the energy crisis and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have created conditions which have put huge pressure on all Councils, including this one. While this is undoubtedly true, it is also the case that the decisions of the Westminster government have exacerbated all of these pressures. Over a decade of austerity, the continued failure to invest in local government and a lack of willingness to tackle spiraling energy costs have left Councils in a dire situation. Until we have proper funding for local government and greater freedom to raise income locally, we will continue to be hampered from setting the kinds of budgets that all members would want to see.

While this Council has faced these challenges, the challenges the residents of our city face are far greater. That is why our budget amendment seeks to harness what power we do have to mitigate the worst effects of the cost of living crisis. Our amendment also recognises that the climate emergency is becoming ever more urgent and pressing, and that this Council can and should go further in taking action to address it.

The Green amendment would deliver a balanced revenue budget over the mid-term financial plan through investing in measures which would increase the income of the Council, enabling us to invest in projects which address the cost of living and climate crises.

Our budget amendment would invest in additional capacity for commercial property debt collection - an invest to save measure designed to reduce the provision the Council is currently making for bad debt from its commercial property portfolio. We believe the estimates of debt recovery made in this to be conservative.

It would also reorient a portion of the capital project away from 'regeneration' investment and instead into renewable energy, to support the Council's commitments to addressing the climate emergency and generating a modest financial return to the Council in years 3 and 4 of the MTFP. This investment is loaded at the back end of the MTFP to enable sufficient time to identify suitable projects and to lower the risk in the plan. Our group has long made the case that the Council should be reorienting its investments away from commercial property and towards more socially useful and financially viable investments, provided they comply with PWLB rules.

Our amendment would also utilise a small portion of the unforeseen 'windfall' generated by the deferral of central government policies in order to finance one-off spending to alleviate hardship in our city. While this would see an additional draw on reserves, the amendment would see more funds return to reserves than was in the administration's initial consultation budget. This hardship fund would be a substantial contribution to alleviating the worst effects of the cost of living crisis on Oxford's residents, creating a centrally held discretionary fund which can be distributed to service areas as needed.

In addition to these items, our budget would:

- Create new officer capacity for social prescribing, enabling a dedicated officer to be based in community centres across the city connecting residents to pre-existing activities and services which they may not otherwise be aware of.
- Utilise the saving from the scrapping of recycling banks to invest in wider work on developing Oxford's circular economy.
- Providing a publicity budget for small and independent businesses in non-city centre commercial zones, supporting initiatives already being done in communities across the city - such as Magdalen Village - that lack support and funding.
- Reduce the concessionary rate for garden waste bins to the level this fee was at before last year's budget.
- Create a fund and officer capacity for the development of pocket parks in under-utilised spaces across the city.

REVENUE

GROUP AMENDMENTS TO THE ADMINISTRATIONS CONSULTATION BUDGET

REVENUE

£1000's

	2023/24 £000'S	2024/25 £000'S	2025/26 £000'S	2026/27 £000'S
Consultation Budget Net Budget Requirement	23,433	22,094	22,618	23,157
Changes since the consultation budget				
Sub total changes since the consultation budget	218	716	703	535
Additional Savings proposed				
Reduction in bad debt provision through increased capacity for commercial property debt collection	(50)	(100)	(100)	(150)
Estimated return from solar farm investments (2% net of borrowing) - assumes 18 months before revenue is generated.			(53)	(107)
Portion of windfall emerging as a result of deferral in government policies	(250)	(150)	(100)	
Total additional savings proposed	(300)	(250)	(253)	(257)
Cumulative additional savings	(300)	(550)	(803)	(1,060)
Additional costs proposed				
1x additional officer dedicated to commercial property debt collection	50	50	50	50
Hardship relief fund	200	150	100	
1x additional officer for social prescribing	50	50	50	50
Reduction in concessionary rate for garden waste bins	10	10	10	10
Publicity budget for small and independent businesses in non-city centre commercial zones	25	25		
Repurposing recycling banks for wider circular economy work	27	27	27	27
Total additional costs proposed	362	312	237	137
Net effect on budget in-year of proposals	62	62	(16)	(120)
Cumulative effect on budget	62	124	108	(12)
Additional Budget transfer to/(from) reserves	1,080	1,419	(491)	(218)
Transfer from/(to) working balance				
Alternative Budget Net Budget Requirement	24,793	24,291	22,814	23,354
Financed By :				
Council Tax- Consultation Budget	(15,416)	(16,036)	(16,518)	(17,015)
Retained Business Rates - Consultation Budget	(8,517)	(8,058)	(6,099)	(6,142)
New Homes Bonus	(663)	0	0	0
Revenue Support Grant	(197)	(197)	(197)	(197)
Total	(24,793)	(24,291)	(22,814)	(23,354)
(surplus)/deficit	0	0	0	0
General Fund Working Balance				
Working Balance 1st April	(3,856)	(3,856)	(3,856)	(3,856)
Transfer (to)/from balance	0	0	0	0
Working Balance 31st March	(3,856)	(3,856)	(3,856)	(3,856)

HRA

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE ADMINISTRATIONS CONSULTATION BUDGET

REVENUE

£1000's

	2023/24 £000'S	2024/25 £000'S	2025/26 £000'S	2026/27 £000'S
Consultation Budget Net (operating income)/expenditure after appropriations	866	787	(358)	255
Changes since the consultation budget				
Sub total	(2,098)	3,325	(1,180)	1,255
Additional Savings proposed				
1				
2				
3				
4				
Total additional savings proposed	0	0	0	0
Cumulative additional savings	0	0	0	0
Additional costs proposed				
1				
2				
3				
Total additional costs proposed	0	0	0	0
Net effect on budget in-year	0	0	0	0
Cumulative effect on budget	0	0	0	0
Additional Budget transfer to/(from) reserves	1,232	(4,112)	1,538	(1,510)
Alternative Budget Net (surplus)/deficit	0	0	0	0

HRA Working Balance				
Working Balance 1st April	(5,307)	(6,539)	(2,427)	(3,965)
Transfer (to)/from balance	(1,232)	4,112	(1,538)	1,510
Working Balance 31st March	(6,539)	(2,427)	(3,965)	(2,455)

(surplus)/deficit 0 0 0 0

CAPITAL

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE ADMINISTRATIONS CONSULTATION BUDGET
CAPITAL

	2023/24 £000'S	2024/25 £000'S	2025/26 £000'S	2026/27 £000'S
CAPITAL PROGRAM AS PER CABINET DECEMBER 2022 - General Fund and HRA	207,159	125,273	165,349	196,081
Changes since the consultation budget				
Sub total of changes since consultation budget	28,464	59,147	(40,031)	25,494
CHANGES PROPOSED				
1 Removal of Y2 property purchase Investment solar projects (c.70MW @ £0.75m per MW installed).		(5,680)		
2		5,350		
3 Fund for developing pocket parks	65	65		
1x 0.5FTE officer for pocket parks projects support	25	25		
4				
1x addition of solar projects manager		50	50	50
5				
6 Sub total	90	(190)	50	50
REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAM	235,713	184,230	125,368	221,625

FINANCING				
FINANCING AS PER CABINET REPORT 19TH DECEMBER	207,159	125,273	165,349	196,081
Sub Total of changes since consultation budget	28,464	59,147	(40,031)	25,494
ALTERNATIVE BUDGET PROPOSALS				
1 Financing	90	(190)	50	50
2				
Sub Total	90	-190	50	50
Total Financing	235,713	184,230	125,368	221,625

(surplus)/deficit

0 0 0 0

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Head of Finance – Section 151 Comments on Green Group Alternative Budget for 2023-24 to 2026/27

Date 13-02-23

I have reviewed the budget submitted by the Green party as an alternative to the Labour Administrations budget and whilst it is arithmetically correct there are some areas which would give rise to concern.

The General Fund Revenue

The budget allows for additional cost of £1.048 million over the 4 year period, this is balanced by additional income of the same amount. The additional income is further analysed as follows :

- **Reduction in provision for bad debt £400k.** The Council holds a provision for bad debt against commercial property arrears of £7million against £8.5 million of arrears. Work is currently ongoing to determine how much of this debt needs to be written off against the provision and how much can be recovered. Whilst it is possible that more income may be recovered by employing additional resource this is somewhat speculative in the financial climate. Reducing the provision may lead to financial problems at a later date should the income not be collected.
- **Estimated income from solar farm investments £160k** – this is linked to an additional £5.3 million investment in solar farm investments. There have been some notable failures in solar farm investments in a number of authorities in recent times and although officers continue to look into projects of such nature one should exercise some caution before investing in such areas. Equally recent changes in PWLB rules prevent the authority from making such investments, which may be considered ‘predominately for financial gain’. Whilst officers will continue to look into such ventures at this point no suitable ones have been identified and therefore inclusion of this amount in the capital programme together with the resultant income is somewhat speculative presenting some risk to the balancing of the MTFP.
- **Transfer from reserves £488k** – The one-off windfall from the Finance Settlement of around £3.6 million is offset by a number of changes since the Consultation Budget of £1.9 million allowing the transfer **to** reserves of £1.7million. The Consultation Budget allowed for a £2million transfer **from** reserves and therefore the revised final position is a net transfer from reserves of £300k. Taking a further £488k **from** reserves, in the view of the Council’s Chief Finance Officer, reduces the financial resilience of the council over the medium term and it’s ability to deal with existing concerns around income streams and uncertainty around Government funding.

Capital Budget - Within the alternative capital budget, provision has been made for £5.490 million of investment in 2024-25 in solar projects. The investment has been taken from the amount in the capital programme which has been provisionally allocated for city regeneration, the feasibility study for which is currently being

worked up. Should the project need to come forward in the next 4 years then more budgetary provision would be required to enable the project to continue.

No projects have been separately identified for these solar farm investments and therefore it is difficult to substantiate the financial viability of such schemes. Should suitable capital schemes not be identified then any shortfall in net returns to the Council generated from such schemes would need to be covered from reserves or alternative savings and therefore this does present some risk to achieving a balanced budget

The HRA – There are no proposed changes to the Administrations HRA Budget

Nigel Kennedy

Head of Financial Services (Section 151 Officer)

Amendment to Budget – Amendment 1

Proposer

Councillor Lucy Pegg

Seconder

Councillor Rosie Rawle

What is proposed

A £450,000 hardship relief fund split over years 1-3 of the MTFP. The split would be £200,000 in Y1, £150,000 in Y2 and £100,000 in Y3.

Reason

This would allow for a centrally held discretionary hardship fund that can be distributed to service areas as needed. Given the uncertainty surrounding the cost of living, this would provide the Council with a dedicated budget to address the economic needs of residents at a time when people are struggling to make ends meet and central government support is woefully insufficient.

Cost (or estimated maximum cost)

£450,000

How it is to be funded – what is to be stopped/ reduced

Using £450,000 of the one-off windfall from the deferral of government policies

When the proposal starts and how long it lasts

Y1 of the MTFP to Y3

Chief Finance Officer's comments

Taking a further £450k from reserves, in the view of the Council's Chief Finance Officer, reduces the financial resilience of the council over the medium term and its ability to deal with existing concerns around income streams and uncertainty around Government funding.

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