

This report is public	
Progressive Oxfordshire Amendment to 2024/25 Budget	
Committee	Council
Date of Committee	26 February 2024

Purpose of report

To present the amendment put forward by the Progressive Oxfordshire Group to the budget for 2024/25 recommended by Executive to Council.

1. Recommendations

The Council resolves:

- 1.1 To insert the following new recommendations in the report to Council entitled 'Budget Setting for 2024/25 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy up to 2028/29'.
- 1.2 In relation to the proposed Fees and Charges schedule for 2024/25, insert at recommendation 1.2 the following:
 - 1.2.1 To remove the 2024/25 increase in bulky waste charges and retain at 2023/24 levels and introduce a new premium charge for faster service.
 - 1.2.2 To remove the charge for replacement bins
 - 1.2.3 To remove the 2024/25 increase in the NOA, Cooper School and Stratfield Brake fees and charges and retain at 2023/24 levels at a cost of £0.012m.
- 1.3 In relation to the Revenue Budget Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), insert at recommendation 1.5 the following:
 - 1.5.1.1 Agree net directorate budgets as set out in table 2.2 below (and as a consequence of this amendment other tables will need to be amended accordingly per recommendation 1.4).
 - 1.5.3 To remove savings proposal reference SWAST243 (£0.075m) and therefore not introducing a charge for replacement bins (see 1.2.2).
 - 1.5.4 To amend savings proposal SWAST241 by introducing alternative charges for bulky waste (see 1.2.1) in 2024/25, this has a net nil impact on the budget and MTFS.
 - 1.5.5 To reduce savings proposal SPCON242 by £0.022m in 2024/25 in order to keep Pioneer Square public conveniences open.
 - 1.5.6 To agree a new pressure of £0.020m for an additional cleaning contract for the public conveniences at Pioneer Square.

1.5.7 To reduce the general contingency budget by £0.129m to fund the proposed budget amendments

1.4 Delegate authority to the S151 officer to update the suite of budget papers and appendices to reflect this amendment.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 Progressive Oxfordshire Group Narrative

2.1.1 *The Progressive Oxfordshire Group is bringing forward a set of amendments to the Executive's proposed budget in order to:*

- *ease extra fees and charges in relation to lost and damaged bins, bulky waste collection, and recreational facilities.*
- *retain a public service in the form of the conveniences at Pioneer Square proposed for closure.*

2.1.2 *Noting the additional funding provided as part of the Final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25, the Group considers these amendments to deliver achievable benefits for Cherwell residents, while retaining funds within the contingency budget.*

2.1.3 *In terms of waste collection services, the amendment seeks to remove the proposed charge for lost and damaged bins thereby preserving the council's current approach during the present cost of living crisis. The amendment additionally seeks to freeze charges for bulky waste collection, noting that the proposed premium service makes the overall change cost neutral.*

2.1.4 *Freezing the fees for recreational facilities allows the council to facilitate sports and leisure activities within the district while keeping costs down for users.*

2.1.5 *Retaining the public conveniences at Pioneer Square will allow the council to maintain a facility where no alternatives in Council-owned premises are easily available nearby. Additional analysis will be needed to understand the impact of making these fully accessible in future.*

2.2 The overall financial impact of this proposed budget amendment is £0.129m and each of the changes are proposed to continue on an ongoing basis. Funding can be provided from the general contingency budget within Policy Contingency in 2024/25. Therefore the proposed budget movement has an overall net nil impact on the budget proposal.

2.3 This budget amendment does not impact on the proposed level of council tax that will be charged of £153.50 for a Band D property. The gross budget is reduced by £0.087m, and income assumptions by the same resulting in no change to the proposed council tax requirement of the council. As there are changes to the gross budget, the statutory calculations in the council tax setting report would also need to be amended.

- 2.4 The impact of the proposed budget movement is shown in the Table 2.1. There is net nil impact in 2024/25, but an ongoing impact of £0.129m in future years.

Table 2.1 – Impact of proposed budget movements on MTFS Budget Gap

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
MTFS Net Budget Gap	0.000	6.909
Retain NOA, Cooper School and Stratfield Brake fees at 2023/24 levels	0.012	0.000
Remove saving proposal SWAST243	0.075	0.000
Adjust saving proposal SWAST241	-	-
Reduce savings proposal SPCON242	0.022	0.000
New pressure – associated to SPCON242	0.020	0.000
Total cost of new recommendations	0.129	0.000
Funded by General Contingency Reserve	(0.129)	0.129
Revised MTFS Net Budget Gap	0.000	7.038

- 2.5 The proposed amendments to Directorate budgets are as follows:

Table 2.2 – Budget movements to fund proposed amendment

Directorate	Net budget 2024/25 £m	Proposal £m	Revised Net Budget 2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Communities	8.917	0.117	9.034	0.072	0.152	(0.033)	(0.015)
Resources	4.314	-	4.314	(2.369)	0.021	0.024	(0.100)
Chief Executive	5.355	0.012	5.367	(0.097)	(0.098)	(0.056)	0.009
Service Sub-total	18.586	0.129	18.715	(2.394)	0.075	(0.065)	(0.106)
Corporate Costs	4.293	-	4.293	3.594	1.195	0.532	0.198
Policy Contingency	4.108	(0.129)	3.979	0.837	0.524	0.524	0.524
Net Cost of Services	26.987	0.000	26.987	2.037	1.794	0.991	0.616
Funding	(26.987)		(26.987)	5.001	2.500	2.207	(1.478)
Funding Gap / (Surplus)	0.000	0.000	0.000	7.038	4.294	3.198	(0.862)

2.6 A summary of the proposed changes to the overall savings proposals by directorate is shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 - Movement on 2024/25 savings proposals

Directorate	2024/25 £m	Proposal £m	Revised £m
Communities	(1.141)	0.097	(1.044)
Resources	(0.400)	-	(0.400)
Chief Executive	(0.266)	-	(0.266)
Total Savings Proposals	(1.807)	0.097	(1.710)
Prior Year Savings	(0.286)	-	(0.286)
New Efficiency Savings	(1.221)	-	(1.221)
New Savings	(0.300)	0.097	(0.203)
Total Efficiency and Savings Proposals	(1.807)	0.097	(1.710)

2.7 A summary of the proposed changes to the overall pressures proposals by directorate is shown at Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 – Movement on 2024/25 pressures

Directorate	2024/25 £m	Proposal £m	Revised £m
Communities	0.462	0.020	0.482
Resources	0.287	-	0.287
Chief Executive	(0.161)	-	(0.161)
Total New Pressures	0.588	0.020	0.608
Prior Year Pressures	(0.222)	-	(0.222)
Savings Non-delivery	0.016	-	0.016
New Pressures	0.794	0.020	0.814
Total Pressures	0.588	0.020	0.608

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
<p>Finance</p>	<p>S151 Opinion</p> <p>The proposed amendment can be accommodated within the resources available to the council by allocating £0.129m from general policy contingency to fund the proposals in this amendment.</p> <p>Reducing the policy contingency allocation to fund reductions in estimated income reduces the gross budget and income by equal amounts but has no impact on the net budget or the council tax requirement; therefore, the formal calculations to arrive at the council tax requirement need to be amended for the council tax calculation report elsewhere on the agenda. However, it is important to note that there are no implications for the overall level of council tax requirement to be required, or the band D level of council tax of £153.50.</p> <p>It should be noted that the allocations from policy contingency use funding that is forecast to be one-off. However, the proposed amendments are assumed to continue in future years. As such, the savings forecast to be required in 2025/26 will increase by £0.129m to £7.038m. This is an increase in savings to be identified for 2025/26 of 2% which does not materially change the financial challenge to be addressed.</p> <p>Conclusion The proposals set out in this budget amendment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not materially impact on the S25 statement at Appendix 3 and so Members of the Council should continue to have due regard to this statement in considering this budget amendment. • are fully funded in 2024/25 through reducing the Policy Contingency budget to £3.979m, leaving a general contingency of £0.707m. • result in a minor change in the level of savings forecast to be required in future years • require no change to the proposed use of reserves. <p>As such the Assurance Statements (para 28 – 32) in the S25 Statement at Appendix 3 of the Executive’s proposed budget continue to apply.</p> <p>Therefore, I am satisfied that this budget amendment is robust.</p>

	<p>Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151), 21 February 2024</p>
Legal	<p>The Council is legally required to set a balanced budget each year together with a requirement to produce a Revenue Budget under the various Local Government Finance Acts. The legal framework for which is set out in the main body of this report. Officers consider the recommendations will achieve this if approved by full Council.</p> <p>Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires that the Council must consult persons or bodies appearing to it to be representative of persons subject to non-domestic rates in its area about the Council's proposals for expenditure (including capital expenditure) in the financial year. The Council must do this each year and do so before the budget decision making meeting (makes its calculations for the council tax requirement) in relation to the financial year.</p> <p>The statutory consultation outlined above has taken place alongside a more general consultation with the wider public on the draft budget and budget priorities. The savings proposals have been consulted upon as appropriate, and further consultations may be required prior to implementing certain proposals.</p> <p>Members must have regard to the s25 report of the s151 officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.</p> <p>The Public Sector Equality Duty S149 (1) requires a Local Authority in exercise of its functions to have due regard to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act. (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. <p>Decision makers must keep the above requirements in mind when making decisions.</p> <p>Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, 22 February 2024</p>
Risk Management	<p>No change in risks however the EIA identified at Appendix 8b would no longer be required as the saving proposal would be deleted.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 21 February 2024</p>