

Extraordinary Council – 8 March 2021

Agenda Item 3 - Revenue Budget 2021/22 & Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2021/22- 2023/24

CONSERVATIVE GROUP AMENDMENT

Introduction

The Conservative Group notes the administrations' budget proposals as laid on in the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources on this agenda. Key themes associated with the opposition proposals are:

- Reviving the local economy and businesses following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Effective utilisation of the Council's assets to the benefit of the Council Taxpayer.
- Economic and effective use of the Council's workforce to ensure resources are utilised effectively and employment opportunities provided for the future benefit of the young people of Slough.
- Commercial awareness across the Council's service to develop a council that can trade its services on the open market to the benefit of the Slough taxpayer.
- A Council Tax set at a level that the community can afford and does not place an unnecessary burden on family budgets.

Based on these principles, we propose the following amendments:

Growth

Christmas Relaxation of parking charges - Free parking in Slough Town Centre from November to January. This would result in a total growth of £0.440m.

Shop front enhancement grant – To support local businesses who rent their property from Slough Borough Council - a shop front enhancement grant – we would provide a one-year grant based on £1 per square foot at a total cost of £0.073m.

Funding for a local community engagement organisation – This increases awareness of air quality and stimulates an interest in local activism to tackle the issue here in Slough. We propose to provide £0.048m in 2021/22.

Expand Provision of Free School Meals- Additional support for vulnerable families in Slough, expanding the provision of good quality Free School Meals across the Borough during the summer holidays. We propose to provide £0.100m in 2021/22.

One to One Tuition for Vulnerable Children- We pledge to support our most vulnerable children in Slough, by providing a targeted One to One tuition programme, for those identified as being most impacted by COVID-19 by our education teams, to support them in their education. We propose to provide £0.100m in 2021/22.

Promotion and Employment of permanent staff- To tackle this authorities over reliance on agency and contract staff, we propose a designated fund with the objective of promoting, and covering some of the additional recruitment costs, of moving some of the contract/agency staff to permanent roles in this authority. We propose to provide £0.232m for 2021/22.

HR fund- To provide additional support to tackle ongoing HR issues in regards change management processes of moving from such an overreliance on contract/agency staff, to full time positions. We propose to provide £0.050m in 2021/22 to cover this.

Savings

Agency/Interim staff – the opposition note that in the latest figures SBC has provided, it is engaging 284 agency/interim staff. A number have been with the council for many years and we note that this is the most expensive way to populate an organisation. We also note that the Administration has a £1.5m saving in the budget in this area. Based on the figures provided, we calculate that they will have to exit in the region of 50 interim staff to achieve this. Our proposal is to double this saving and note it could impact up to potentially 100 agency staff (up to 35% of the current cohort). This will increase the savings in this area from £1.5m to £3m. We propose that no front-line care staff would be exited under this proposal, protecting our most vulnerable residents.

Sale of Windsor Road - We propose to sell the Windsor Road building. This will result in a capital receipt of £21m net of leaseback which can be used to repay debt. The consequential savings on interest charges will be £0.2m in 2021/22.

Reduction in the Collection of Green Bins –Expanding the proposed reduction in the collection of our green bins by an additional month, covering November-February at an additional saving of £0.024m.

Make CCTV fully funded by partners – rationalising provision and negotiating fully funding by partner agencies. This will deliver £0.180m.

Council Tax

Resulting from our changes above our proposals for Council Tax are as follows:

1. Setting the adult social care precept increase at £42.58 providing the full 3.00% uplift in the adult social care element of the Council Tax. This will provide for the full growth in adult social care as identified in the budget report.
2. Setting the general Slough Borough Council element of the tax at a 0.75% increase on this year's figure.

This would give a total council tax at band D of £1,472.20, a 3.75% increase overall on the previous year's figure.

3. The table below shows the level of the Council Tax over all eight bands (precepts from external bodies exclude):

Band	£
A	981.80
B	1,145.43
C	1,309.07
D	1,472.70
E	1,799.97
F	2,127.24
G	2,454.50
H	2,945.40

Reserves

The outstanding balance resulting from these proposals is £0.100m which we propose to deposit in the council's general reserve.