
REPORT TO: FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM: 10

DATE OF
MEETING: 17 JANUARY 2002

CATEGORY:

REPORT FROM: CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

RECOMMENDED
OPEN

MEMBERS'
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SUBJECT: GENERAL FUND BUDGETS
2001/2002 AND 2002/2003

REF: KS/JHM

WARD(S)
AFFECTED: ALL

TERMS OF
REFERENCE: FM08

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the estimates of income and expenditure for 2001/02 and 2002/03 for the Committee's services are approved.
- 1.2 That the proposals for budget reductions and service developments for 2002/03 as set out in 4.8 and 4.9 are approved.
- 1.3 That the Committee's proposed fees and charges for 2002/03 are approved.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To detail the Committee's probable out-turn for 2001/02 and the base budget for 2002/03. It also details proposed budget reductions and service developments for 2002/03, together with proposals for the level of fees and charges under the responsibility of this Committee for 2002/03.

3.0 Executive Summary

Probable Estimate 2001/02

- 3.1 The Committee's probable out-turn for 2001/02 shows a total net expenditure of £3,574,930 which is a very small increase overall of approximately £2,500 compared to the cash limit estimate. However, this does not portray the true situation, as the Committee's Services will achieve an **overall reduction of approximately £375,000** (after excluding internal recharges/reallocations).

- 3.2 This is mainly due to additional income received on bank deposits and easements (£85,000) and additional grant received for/lower costs of housing and council tax benefit (£300,000). A large proportion of the amount relating to benefits (£200,000) is on going, and arose out of the final out-turn for 2000/01 as previously reported. The remainder is considered to be, at this stage, "one-off" due to the uncertainty surrounding new grant arrangements for Housing Benefit fraud.

Base Budget 2002/03

- 3.3 The Committee's total base budget for 2002/03 (at November 2001) prices is £3,749,260, which is an increase of approximately £174,000 on the probable out-turn for 2001/02. After excluding internal recharges and reallocations, **the overall increase is approximately £92,000**, and is almost entirely due to "one-off" gains in 2001/02 (as highlighted in 3.2 above) not occurring in 2002/03.

4.0 Detail

- 4.1 The report is sub-divided into several appendices, as follows:

- ◆ Appendix 1 - a summary of each cost centre under the responsibility of each Divisional Manager, showing the build-up to a "bottom line" total net expenditure for the Committee overall. In addition, a summary is also provided for the gross expenditure associated with central and departmental (CEC) activities.
- ◆ Appendices 2 and 3 – an analysis detailing the major variances.
- ◆ Appendix 4 - a summary of the proposed budget reductions for 2002/03.
- ◆ Appendix 5 - a summary of the proposed service developments for 2002/03.
- ◆ Appendix 6 – a schedule showing the proposed fees and charges for the Committee's Services for 2002/03.

4.2 Basis of 2002/03 Estimates

The budget for 2002/03 has initially been compiled at November 2001 prices. An allowance for inflation has then been added where this is considered unavoidable, to cover for price increases from November 2001 to March 2003. This calculates the cash limit estimate for 2002/03, in which budgets should be managed. The assumptions built into estimates are as follows:

- Employee Costs – 3%
- Energy, Rates and Water Costs – 2.5%
- Contracted Services – 2.5%
- Pensions – an increase from 270% to 300% of the employees' basic amount
- All other costs – no increase
- Fees and Charges – an average of 2.5% across the Committee's Services

The estimates are also based on service levels in 2001/02 continuing, and include any full year effects of previous year's growth and capital expenditure. However, any non-recurring items have been removed.

4.3 The Council's Overall Financial Position

The table below shows the probable level of council spending for this current year (2001/2) and for the next three years. This does not take into account any new money allocated to meet new spending demands or indeed the savings generated to contribute towards them.

	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5
	£	£	£	£
Net Revenue Spending	7,180,030	7,796,470	8,359,918	8,615,701
Government Grants	-4,612,490	-4,731,000	-4,825,620	-4,922,132
Council Tax	-3,073,990	-3,228,987	-3,440,591	-3,666,139
From Earmarked Reserves	-135,110	-16,000	0	0
Gross Surplus (-) Deficit (+)	-641,560	-179,517	+93,707	+27,429
Transfers to the Commutation Reserve	237,000	321,000	266,000	176,000
Addition/Reduction (-) To Balances	404,560	-141,483	-359,707	-203,429
Projected balances	1,540,301	1,398,818	1,039,011	835,681

The key points to note for the medium term financial strategy are as follows:

- The financial position has stabilised – balances at the end of the 3-year projection are well within the Councils minimum target of £500,000.
- Although balances are significantly higher (at £1.5m) than the recommended minimum level (£500,000) at the start of the three-year forecasting period, they reduce by some £700,000 over the period, mainly as a result of contributions to the commutation reserve.
- Surpluses will be achieved in the current year (2001/2)
- Next year any gross surplus will be more than offset by contributions to the commutation reserve. This will result in a reduction in balances
- The deficit for 2004/5 is less than for 2003/4 as a result of anticipated expenditure associated with the next Local Plan Review, ceasing. 2003/4 also involves higher contributions to the commutation reserve.

4.4 Looking further forward into the longer term clearly the Council still faces a position where ongoing spending is slightly in excess of its revenue budget, although this is reducing as the impact of the commutation adjustment also reduces.

4.5 **The Service and Financial Planning Working Group** has met to consider initial budget proposals for next year 2002/3. This involved considering both proposals for new spending and savings identified by Divisional Managers to accommodate them. In essence the Working Group identified a need to incur new spending of some £232,532. Part of this spending (£37,782) is for one year only while the remainder £194,750 is anticipated to continue for future years.

4.6 Against this increased spending, the Working Group has identified potential savings of some £165,965, which will offset most of the new spending pressures. In addition, Council Tax increases of 3.5%, 3.5% and 4.5% respectively over the next 3 years have been assumed. The overall impact on balances is that they are expected to fall to around £600,000 by the end of 2004/5. This is comfortably within the three-year projection for balances.

4.7 The above changes in so far as they affect this Committee are reflected in the savings and growth proposals submitted for consideration and are detailed below

4.8 **Budget Reduction Proposals 2002/03**

Divisional managers were requested to identify savings to help maintain the Council's overall financial position and to fund service developments. Those applicable to this Committee are summarised in Appendix 4. The proposals were scored against criteria approved by this Committee and considered by the Working Group. They have been split into 3 categories, as follows:

- ❑ **Category C** – these proposals are pretty much achievable and would have only a minor affect on service delivery. In addition, several of the items will benefit the Council during 2001/02 and have been built into these budgets accordingly. Consequently, the Working Group has suggested that all of these proposals should be accepted.
- ❑ **Category B** – non-applicable to Finance and Management Services.
- ❑ **Category A** – these proposals need further consideration as they entail cuts/termination of services, because there may be effects on other Council services, or because there could be customer resistance, etc. However, the Working Group has suggested that these proposals should also be accepted.

In addition, as part of the refocusing and reprioritisation exercise, the Working Group have suggested 3 other areas where budgets could be reduced, as shown in the Appendix.

4.9 **Service Development Proposals 2002/03**

Appendix 5 summarises the proposals submitted by Divisional Managers. Again, these were scored against criteria approved by this Committee. The appendix shows the scores of all proposals relevant to this Committee, in various groupings and ranked in highest scoring order. The Working Group considered all proposals, in the light of the Council's overall projected financial position and against proposals submitted by other Committees. The suggestions of the Working Group are set out below:

- ❖ **One-off Items** – accept resources for lift maintenance within the Civic Offices. In addition, the item for tracing absconded Council Tax and NNDR payers is to be contained within existing budgets.
- ❖ **Additional staffing** – do not accept the appointment of an Asset Management Officer.
- ❖ **Remaining Proposals** – accept developments for Occupational Health and the Electoral Registration/Postal Voting System, and small items for disposing of confidential waste and purchasing mobile phones.

4.10 Proposed Fees and Charges 2002/03

Appendix 6 provides a schedule of the proposed level that will operate from 1 April 2002, together with a comparison to the existing charge.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 As detailed in the report

6.0 Corporate Implications

6.1 The proposals contained in this report will affect the resources directed to the Committee's services, which have an influence on many of the Council's key aims contained in its Corporate Plan.

7.0 Community Implications

7.1 As above.

8.0 Conclusions

8.1 The Committee is requested to consider carefully the income and expenditure proposals of its Services in the light of the Council's overall financial position.

9.0 Background Papers

Estimate Working Documents

