REPORT TO: FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT AGENDA ITEM: 9

COMMITTEE

DATE OF 19th FEBRUARY 2015 CATEGORY:

MEETING: RECOMMENDED

REPORT FROM: DIRECTOR OF FINANCE and OPEN

CORPORATE SERVICES

MEMBERS' KEVIN STACKHOUSE (01283 595811) DOC: u/ks/budget round

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budget proposals 15 16

SUBJECT: FINAL BUDGET PROPOSALS REF:

2015/16 and FINANCIAL PLAN to

2020

WARD(S) ALL TERMS OF

AFFECTED: REFERENCE: FM 08

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 That a Council Tax Level and Band D equivalent rate for 2015/16 is recommended to Full Council on 2nd March 2015.

- 1.2 That estimated net General Fund Revenue Expenditure totalling £10,892,994 for 2014/15 (revised) and £10,996,355 or 2015/16 is recommended to Full Council on 2nd March 2015.
- 1.3 That the Medium-term Financial Plan to 2020 on the Council's General Fund Revenue Account as detailed in **Appendix 1** is approved.
- 1.4 That the financial projection on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to 2024 as detailed in **Appendix 2** is approved.
- 1.5 That the 5-year capital investment and financing plan to 2020 as detailed in **Appendix 3** is approved.
- 1.6 That the Councils estimated National Non-Domestic Rate Return (NNDR 1) for 2015/16 showing retained business rates (before the tariff) of £8.79m is noted.
- 1.7 That the report of the Council's Section 151 (Chief Finance) Officer under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 is noted.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

2.1 To detail the Council's final budget proposals for 2015/16 and medium term financial projections on its main revenue and capital accounts. This includes an assessment of the overall budget and level of reserves as required by the

- Local Government Act 2003. The proposals will form the basis of setting the Council Tax for 2015/16 by Full Council on 2nd March 2015.
- 2.2 The Council's overall proposed base budget for 2015/16 and projected medium-term financial position was reported in detail to the Committee on 15th January 2015 (details are available at: http://south-derbys.cmis.uk.com/south-derbys/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1731/Committee/367/Default.aspx
- 2.3 This report does not repeat those details but firms up the position following a period of scrutiny and consultation.
- 2.4 The remaining matter outstanding is to confirm the recommended level of Council Tax for 2015/16 and this is detailed within the report.
- 2.5 The report also provides an overview of the Housing Revenue Account and its updated financial projection that was considered and approved by the Housing and Community Services Committee on 5th February 2015. This included the rent increase for 2015/16.
- 2.6 The report is divided into the following sections.
 - Section 3: General Fund Revenue Account, including Council Tax
 - Section 4: Housing Revenue Account
 - Section 5: Capital Investment
 - Section 6: Report of the Chief Finance Officer under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Projected General Fund Revenue Account
- Appendix 2 Projected Housing Revenue Account
- Appendix 3 Capital Investment Programme
- Appendix 4 List of Earmarked Reserves

3.0 General Fund Revenue Account

- 3.1 As reported in January, the Council's Base Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) were reviewed ahead of 2015/16. This took account of the Local Government Financial Settlement for 2015/16, together with outcomes from a base budget review undertaken during the autumn.
- 3.2 The position has remained unchanged from that reported in January and is detailed in **Appendix 1**. An amount of £661,000 has been earmarked against the General Reserve in 2015/16 for new capital investment. Six projects were approved by the Committee in January and these are detailed later in the report.

3.3 Although there is an on-going budget deficit position in future years, the level of the General Reserve is well above the minimum level directed by the Financial Strategy. The projection (as reported) is summarised in the following table.

General Fund: Medium-Term Projection as at December 2014

Year	Budget Deficit / Surplus (-)	Sums Earmarked against Reserve	Balance of General Reserve
Base Budget 2014/15	-£149,586	£202,000	-£5,857,676
Proposed Budget 2015/16	-£91,189	£881,000	-£5,067,865
Projection 2016/17	-£84,724	£420,000	-£4,732,589
Projection 2017/18	£526,904	£90,000	-£4,115,685
Projection 2018/19	£814,773	£20,000	-£3,280,912
Projection 2019/20	£1,101,315	£20,000	-£2,159,597

- 3.4 Effectively, the General Fund has a budget surplus for 2015/16 and 2016/17 based on current projections. A deficit is then forecast from 2017/18 as expected reductions in core government funding take effect.
- 3.5 In the meantime, the balance on the General Reserve remains healthy and after allowing for the deficit in the 3 years after 2016/17, the projected level is £2.1m, well above the minimum contingency level of £1m.

Risks

- 3.6 The greatest risks to the financial plan are still considered to be the degree of future reductions in core government funding, together with underlying cost pressures. The Financial Settlement did not change the level of core funding for 2015/16, which was provisionally set last year.
- 3.7 However, the preceding Autumn Statement broadly confirmed that there would be some further reductions from 2016/17 and it is expected that local authorities will face some large reductions for a further 2 to 3 years. This will depend on the next spending review of the public finances expected after the next Parliament, later in 2015/16.

Future Core Funding

3.8 The current projections beyond 2015/16 have not been changed at this stage. The MTFP has built in on-going reductions in Revenue Support Grant (RSG) in future years. Moderate increases in New Homes Bonus (NHB) and Retained Business Rates (RBR) continue to be made in line with growth predictions which help to partly offset falling RSG.

Future Expenditure

- 3.9 Some additional cost pressures have been added to base budgets in 2015/16. These largely cover maintenance of assets and public facilities. Growth is steadily increasing across much of the District and this is realising additional income. It is important that further cost pressures associated with this growth are kept under review.
- 3.10 The overall financial position has been steadily improving over the last 2 years due to budget savings, together with positive out-turn positions compared to base budgets. Reserves should be further supplemented by the estimated underspend in 2014/15 (as reported in December 2014) although this has not been included in the MTFP at this stage as it is still to be confirmed.
- 3.11 The Budget continues to make on-going provision for some growth in expenditure and annual inflation. In addition, separate reserves are maintained to meet specific one-off costs. Even allowing for a margin of error in assumptions, the overall position is well placed.
- 3.12 However, the Council should remain cautious in the short-term, until the future funding position for local authorities is more certain and to remain flexible to meet any additional spending pressures. Future budget deficits are still projected based on increasing expenditure for current service provision, together with a reduction in core funding.

Council Tax

3.13 In January, the Committee proposed a Council Tax Freeze in 2015/16, supported partly by a specific Government Grant. This is subject to approval by Full Council on 2nd March 2015. The Committee is required to recommend a Council Tax rate to that meeting with the current Band D rate being £150.25.

Retained Business Rates

- 3.14 This part of the Council's core funding is not fixed and will depend on actual transactions during the year. As reported in January, the Council will become part of the Derbyshire Business Rates Pool in 2015/16.
- 3.15 The Council is still required to submit estimated figures to the Government through an annual return. This calculates the estimated net rates available for distribution; following the completion of the annual return, the distributable amounts are estimated as shown in the following table.

Central Government	£10,989,962
South Derbyshire District Council	£8,791,969
Derbyshire County Council	£1,978,193
Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service	£219,799
Total Estimated Net Rates 2015/16	£21,979,923

- 3.16 The Council's estimated rates retention (before the Tariff payment) is £8,791,969. This is higher than the figure used by the Government in the financial settlement of £8,491,000 and is based on updated information locally.
- 3.17 If the out-turn is at the estimated level of £8.791m then additional resources will be retained locally in the Business Rates Pool compared to the provisional settlement for 2015/16 (of £8,491m).

4.0 Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

4.1 The based budget and medium term financial position was considered in detail by the Housing and Community Services Committee on 5th February. This Committee also set the rent increase for 2015/16 in accordance with the approved rent policy, i.e. 2.2%.

http://south-derbys.cmis.uk.com/south-derbys/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1740/Committee/370/Default.aspx

- 4.2 During 2014, the Business Plan for the HRA was subject to a detailed review and update. This was to consider the resources available for New Build and to update the financial projection following the first 2 years of "self-financing" together with the impact of changes to the national rent setting guidelines, to be implemented in April 2015.
- 4.3 The Business Plan review was undertaken by a group consisting of members and tenants, supported by officers. The group reported in November 2014 and the revised business plan, comprising a 30-year financial projection, was considered and approved by the Committee in December 2014.
- 4.4 The Financial Plan, approved in December 2014, was based on updated spending information following the 2013/14 budget out-turn for the HRA, together with changes following the previous review in January 2014.
- 4.5 The Plan was fully costed over its 30 year life and showed a sustainable financial position whilst delivering the existing capital investment programme, repaying debt and delivering the 1st phase of the New Build Programme.
- 4.6 This was on the basis that the HRA's General Reserve would remain at a minimum level of £1m from year to year as set out in the Council's Financial Strategy.

Longer term Plan

4.7 The 10-year projection included in the Business Plan is detailed in Appendix 2. The financial model is established and is designed so that a £1m minimum balance is maintained on the HRA's general reserve and that planned resources are set aside for debt repayment. These are the priority financial objectives to ensure that the Business Plan is sustainable.

- 4.8 Given that these two objectives are met, any increase or decrease in resources are reflected in the planned capital or new build programmes and these are flexed accordingly into the longer term. Effectively, the financial model is based on sustaining the core housing service.
- 4.9 Unless there is a significant change in resources in any year, this should not affect the short to medium term position. However, the cumulative effects of a change in one year, over 30-years, can affect the longer term aspirations built into the Plan.
- 4.10 The main focus of the Plan is over the medium term period of between 5 and 10 years. This ensures that any changes do not materially affect plans already in place to deliver the approved capital investment and new build programmes.
- 4.11 The HRA has 3 separate reserves as follows:

Working Balance or General Reserve	Held as a contingency with a minimum balance of £1m.
New Build Reserve	Accumulated Capital Receipts pending expenditure on building new properties. The financial model assumes that these are drawn down each year to finance New Build ahead of any further borrowing. Therefore, the carrying balance from year to year remains low.
Debt Repayment Reserve	Sums set-aside to repay the initial "self-financing" debt; contributions to the Reserve start from 2018/19 in accordance with the debt repayment profile.

HRA Financial Risks

- 4.12 The Plan remains affordable based on the assumptions and associated budgets in the overall Plan. As planned at the outset of the self-financing framework, the HRA starts to generate surpluses after 2018/19 in order to repay debt.
- 4.13 The biggest risk is still considered to be future rent rises. The Financial Plan is fundamentally based on the Government's national rent guideline from 2015/16, i.e. inflation +1% year on year. If corresponding income levels are not achieved, this will have an effect on projected spending plans and investment.

New Build Programme

- 4.14 A Phase 1 programme has been approved and initial contractors appointed. Land has been identified and assembled and some initial works undertaken. The main projects are expected to commence in 2015/16.
- 4.15 This phase has a budget of £5.4m and is being financed mainly from resources already in the HRA and accumulated capital receipts. It is planned to provide up to 50 new properties.
- 4.16 The Plan also allows for the HRA to borrow a further £9m up to its debt cap over the life of the Business Plan. This is designed to maximise the amount of New Build within available resources.
- 4.17 Although the Plan allows for a further 60 properties by 2018 and then 130 up to 2024, each phase in the future will need to be subject to a separate financial assessment and appropriate approval. The Business Plan Group recommended that alternative delivery models should be considered in the future to achieve the aims set out in the Plan.

5.0 Capital Investment

- 5.1 The main areas of spend continue to be on council housing investment and the improvement of leisure and community facilities.
- 5.2 A substantial part of the investment programme is being financed from external sources, together with the Council's remaining capital reserves.
- 5.3 The full programme along with financing is detailed in **Appendix 3**. The relevant Prudential Indicators for the capital programme are detailed in the Treasury Management Strategy which is a separate report on this Committee's Agenda.

New Investment

5.4 In January, the Committee approved further projects totaling £661,000 which has now been earmarked against the General Fund Reserve. The projects are shown in the following table:

Project	Gross Cost £'000	External Funding £'000	Cost to SDDC £'000
Swadlincote Woodlands Nature Reserve	37	22	15
Rosliston Forestry Centre Play Facility	130	80	50
Private Sector Disabled Facility Grants	186	0	186
Community Partnership Scheme	300	0	300
Grove Hall Active Zone Redevelopment	100	0	100
Noise and Antisocial Behavior Prevention	10	0	10
TOTAL	763	102	661

Capital Receipts

- 5.5 With the implementation of the self-financing framework, Council policy is to reinvest all housing receipts (after any pooling payment to Government) from the sale of council houses and land, into the housing stock and in particular, for New Build.
- 5.6 As regards New Build, the Council has entered into an agreement with the Government to enable it to retain additional receipts generated above a target level of council house sales each year (known as 1-4-1 receipts) to be used on New Build.
- 5.7 As highlighted to the Committee in quarterly budget monitoring reports, a New Build Reserve is accumulating and currently stands at approximately £2m. This will need to be spent on delivering New Build on an incremental basis to satisfy the agreement with the Government.

General Fund Receipts

- 5.8 Future receipts are anticipated from the sale of land off William Nadin Way and as approved, this will be reinvested into relocating the Council Depot.
- 5.9 There is also an anticipated receipt in 2016/17, from the option to sell land previously approved. This is currently subject to a developer invoking their option to purchase the land before it is placed on the open market.
- 5.10 If this receipt is not realised, then other receipts would need to be identified in order for the on-going contribution, from capital receipts, for the replacement of vehicles and plant to be made.
- 5.11 At least £300,000 is currently required by 2017/18. Some additional receipts may also be received from the sale of the existing depot site once it is vacated.
- 5.12 The projected position is shown in the following table.

ESTIMATED GENERAL CAPITAL RECEIPTS	2014/15 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Balance b/fwd	2,152	1,586	1,364	764	714	464
Add Approved Land Sales	15	30				
Add Sale of Land at Williams Nadins Way		1,500	500	600		
Add Land Sale Option, subject to Contract			500			
Add Transfer of Land at Coton Park to HRA	200					
Add Transfer from General Reserve (Vehicles)			250			
Less - Financing of New Depot		-500	-1,600	-400		
Less - Contribution to Vehicle Renewals Fund	-250	-250	-250	-250	-250	-250
Less - Amount required to Fund GFund Schemes	-531	-1,002	0	0	0	0
Balance c/fwd	1,586	1,364	764	714	464	214

6.0 Section 25 Report (under the Local Government Act 2003)

6.1 In their role as the Council's Section 151 (Chief Finance) Officer, the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, is required to provide an overall opinion on the robustness of the estimates included in budgets and the adequacy of Council reserves. The commentary is set out in the sections that follow.

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

- 6.2 This report and that considered on 15th January 2014, highlights the risks and uncertainties surrounding the Council's financial plans and in particular, future Government grant levels.
- 6.3 It is considered that estimates of expenditure are prudent in that they provide for inflation and other known variations, together with provisions that recognise both current cost pressures, together with potential costs associated with growth of the District. The Budget for 2015/16 and forward projections are based on the most up-to-date economic forecasts for inflation and interest rates, etc.
- 6.4 In addition, a realistic but prudent view has been taken regarding projected income levels from fees, charges and short-term investments. This also includes the likely effects of future funding in the form of Retained Business Rates and the New Homes Bonus.
- 6.5 The compilation of detailed budgets has been undertaken in conjunction with service managers, including wherever possible, a zero based approach to compiling budgets. It is recognised that the Council has well established performance and budget monitoring arrangements in place to help ensure that Council finances are monitored effectively. This includes a quarterly report to this Committee.
- 6.6 The Council's Financial Strategy directs the Council to plan its spending over a 5-year rolling period for the General Fund and 10 years for the Housing Revenue Account. This provides an indication of the sustainability of spending plans and allows sufficient time in which remedial action can be implemented to address any issues in a planned and timely manner.
- 6.7 The following table shows the projected level of revenue reserves over this planning period, 2015 to 2020.

Projected Level of Revenue Reserves

Revenue Reserves	2014/15 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
General Fund	5,858	5,068	4,733	4,117	3,281	2,160
Earmarked Reserves	3,410	3,332	1,818	1,768	2,093	2,118
HRA	1,100	1,400	1,200	3,600	6,000	9,300
Estimated Balances	10.368	9.800	7.751	9.485	11.374	13.578

6.8 The Council, based on the recommendation of the Chief Finance Officer, has approved to set a <u>minimum</u> (contingency) level of General Reserves of £1m on both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Accounts. This meets the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003.

General Fund

- 6.9 The previous table shows that the level of reserves on the General Fund is currently healthy compared to the minimum target of £1m and are sustainable over the life of the MTFP.
- 6.10 Although the financial projection allows for on-going spending to be financed, the Council will need to mindful of the projected budget deficit from 2017/18 and the potential to place an over reliance on using reserves to finance an ongoing deficit.
- 6.11 Based on this latest projection, General Fund expenditure is still greater than income into the medium to longer term.
- 6.12 The Council does have a history of under spending on its General Fund. This is reviewed each year and budgets adjusted accordingly. However, future under spends are not guaranteed and therefore, should not be relied upon
- 6.13 As a growth area, income from planning fees, etc. are expected to increase. However, this cannot be guaranteed and this income can fluctuate significantly from year to year. Therefore, the base budget should be reviewed when the impact of growth that arises from the development of the Local Plan in particular, is known.
- 6.14 Future projections for core funding in the Business Rates Retention System, have taken into account the latest forecasts for national control totals. This will now be influenced by the performance of the Derbyshire Pool, which clearly could be positive.
- 6.15 Even with anticipated increases in New Homes Bonus and Business Rates income, overall funding is expected to reduce until 2018/19 in accordance with forecasts from the *Office of Budget Responsibility*.
- 6.16 Overall therefore, a cautious approach has been recommended pending the outcome of the next spending review, expected later in 2015/16.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

6.17 The overall financial position on the HRA continues to remain positive. If the financial plan regarding debt management and repayment, together with the approved rent policy in particular is followed, then the HRA should remain sustainable and deliver an initial New Build programme.

- 6.18 The increasing level of the General Reserve from 2017/18 reflects the surpluses being generated in order to set-aside amounts as a provision for debt repayment in accordance with the maturity profile.
- 6.19 Under self-financing, the HRA is less influenced by external factors unless there was to be a significant change to this framework. Financial risks are lower if fixed budgets for repairs and capital investment are met.
- 6.20 It is noted that funding provided to the HRA for Supported Housing may come under pressure and this will need to be kept under review. As with the General Fund, the 10-year plan allows for issues and remedial action to be addressed if there is any significant change.

Earmarked Reserves

- 6.21 The Council also maintains several reserves that are used to meet oneoff/known commitments or to defray expenditure over a number of years, for example, ICT upgrades, vehicle replacements, community development projects and grounds maintenance.
- 6.22 It is considered that current reserves will remain sufficient overall to meet commitments over the life of the current MTFP. Reserves held to finance ongoing community and sports development spending, will need to be kept under careful review if external and partnership contributions significantly reduce.
- 6.23 A list of all other reserves and funds is detailed in **Appendix 4** showing current balances.

Risk Analysis

6.24 The following table summarises the key risks and issues detailed in the report and during this particular Budget Round; it assesses the potential impact upon the Council's reserves as projected in the updated MTFP.

Factor	Issue	Mitigation	Likely effect on	
			Financial position	
Core Funding	Further reductions in RSG and possible changes to redistribution systems.	Current national trends anticipated in the MTFP.	High Cumulatively, a 1% variance in core funding equates to around £300,000 over the MTFP.	
Council Tax and the Collection Fund Balance	 Collection rates reduce due to the economic climate. Demand for Council Tax Support increases 	 "In built" surplus in the Collection Fund. Local growth is continuing and even at a 	Medium Only 11% of the Balance is transferred to the Council's General Fund. In	

	when resources are fixed. • Empty properties increase reducing New Homes Bonus.	moderate pace is beneficial. Council will become a member of a Derbyshire Pool from 2015/16 for retention of growth receipts.	addition, effect is not immediate and costs can be spread.
Growth	 A key factor influencing future levels of grant funding under the business rates redistribution system and NHB. The number of local businesses declines which reduces base income. Affects Council Tax income and other income streams such as Development 	 The MTFP projects growth at 2% per year for Business Rates and 1% for the Council Tax Base; these rates are considered realistic and prudent based on recent years. Future budgets for planning, land charges income, etc. are currently within actual levels 	This could affect the MTFP either way. Growth is a determining factor for the Council's income and expenditure – and is subject to external factors. This will directly impact on the General Fund.
Budget Overspend	 Control (Planning). Underlying cost pressures due to growth yet to surface. Unexpected costs. There are on-going cost pressures as identified in the Base Budget review for 2015/16. 	 for 2014/15. Current level of general and specific reserves is healthy and MTFP allows contingencies for inflation and growth, etc. The base budget has been scrutinised and monitoring arrangements in place allow early identification of issues. 	Medium
General Economic Conditions	 Higher price increases on key costs such as fuel and utilities. Interest rates affect investment returns and debt payments. 	 Central inflation contingency for price increases. The General Fund is currently "debt free" and not subject to movement in interest rates. 	Low

Sufficient balances
allow "internal
borrowing" if
required.
Budgeted income
from short-term
investments is
relatively low.

Consultation and Provision of Information

- 6.25 The information and broad budget proposals, together with details on where the Council spends its money, have been presented across the District. Specifically, this has been undertaken via:
 - Local Area Forums
 - Consultation with the local businesses, together with the Community and Voluntary Sector, including a presentation at the South Derbyshire Partnership on 27th January 2015.
- 6.26 In addition, the proposals have been subject to the Council's scrutiny process and a report back from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be provided at the meeting.
- 6.27 Although there were questions and queries, no substantive issues were raised. A record of all discussions has been minuted at each Area Forum, at the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on 21st January and 11th February 2015, together with the South Derbyshire Partnership on 27th January.

7.0 Financial Implications

As detailed in the report.

8.0 Corporate Implications

There are no other legal, employment or corporate implications apart from those highlighted in the report.

9.0 Community Implications

The proposed budgets provide the financial resources to enable all of the ongoing services and Council priorities to be delivered to the local community.

10.0 Background Papers

None