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Contact:
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17 February 2025

You are requested to attend a special meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL to be held on Tuesday 25 February 2025 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Campus East, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

A G E N D A
PART 1

1. **APOLOGIES**

To receive apologies for absence, if any.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS**

To note declarations of Members' disclosable pecuniary interests, non-disclosable pecuniary interests and non-pecuniary interests in respect of items on the Agenda.

3. **COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2025/26** (Pages 3 - 12)

To receive a report of the Executive Director (Finance & Transformation) on Council Tax Setting for 2025/26.

Circulation: The Mayor and Members of the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Senior Leadership Team
Press and Public (except Part II Items)

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Agenda Item 3

Part I

Main author: Richard Baker

Executive Member: Cllr Astrid Scott

All Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
SPECIAL COUNCIL – 25 FEBRUARY 2025
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION)

COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2025/26

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council is required under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to set the Council Tax for its area by no later than 11th March. The Council has always aimed to approve the budget and Council Tax by February in order to ensure prompt despatch of bills and hence quicker collection of sums due. The Council approved the 2025/26 budget on 3 February 2025 and the purpose of this report is to set the Council tax for 2025/26.
- 1.2 The 2025/26 Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on 3 February 2025.
- 1.3 As set out in the budget report, the Council will increase the average Band D Council tax (excluding parish precepts) by £7.11 (2.99%) to £244.71 for 2025/26.
- 1.4 Parish Precepts have increased by 7.5% overall to £2.384m and this is an area which the council has no control over, as it is determined by Town and Parish Councils.
- 1.5 For 2025/26, the referendum limits for a band D property set by Government are as follows:
 - County Councils: a core principle of up to 3%, with an additional 2% Adult Social Care precept (now with no requirement to show this separately on the Council Tax bills)
 - District/Borough Councils: 3% or up to £5 on a Band D, whichever is greater
 - Police: up to £14 on a Band D

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That it be noted that the 2025/26 General Fund budget as approved by the Council meeting on 3 February is shown in Appendix A.
- 2.2 That it be noted that the following amounts for the year 2025/26 were agreed in accordance with regulations made under Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the “Act”).
 - a) The gross 2025/26 Tax base for the Borough is 44,517.5 equivalent Band D properties before the application of a collection rate.
 - b) 44,250.4 being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 (the Regulations), as its Council Tax Base for the year 2025/26; including deductions for council tax support and a collection rate of 99.4%.
 - c) Part of the Council's Area being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its Council Tax Base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate;

	100% TAXBASE	99.40% TAXBASE
Ayot St Lawrence	68.3	67.9
Ayot St Peter	114.2	113.5
Essendon	436.9	434.3
Hatfield	12,726.7	12,650.3
North Mymms	4,496.3	4,469.3
Northaw & Cuffley	3,139.3	3,120.5
Welwyn	4,823.4	4,794.5
Welwyn Garden City	18,089.9	17,981.3
Woolmer Green	622.5	618.8
Total	44,517.5	44,250.4

- 2.3 In accordance with the statutory legislation the Council is recommended to resolve;
- 2.4 That the following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2025/26 in accordance with sections 31 - 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- a) £165,489,226 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act, taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.
 - b) £152,276,439 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - c) £13,212,787 being the amount by which the aggregate at 2.4(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 2.4(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year.
 - d) £298.59 being the amount at 2.4(c) above, all divided by the Council tax base at 2.2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
 - e) £3,046,876 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
 - f) £229.73 being the amount at 2.4(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 2.4(e) by 2.2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates.
 - g) Part of the Council's area:
Being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 2.4(f) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 2.2(c) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

Band D Amount £	
Ayot St Lawrence	241.51
Ayot St Peter	267.17
Essendon	373.31
Hatfield	340.73
North Mymms	286.27
Northaw & Cuffley	323.14
Welwyn	336.40
Welwyn Garden City	256.83
Woolmer Green	282.08

h) Part of the Council's Area:

Amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 2.4(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

Valuation Bands (£)	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Ayot St Lawrence	161.01	187.84	214.68	241.51	295.18	348.85	402.52	483.02
Ayot St Peter	178.11	207.80	237.48	267.17	326.54	385.91	445.28	534.34
Essendon	248.87	290.35	331.83	373.31	456.27	539.23	622.18	746.62
Hatfield	227.15	265.01	302.87	340.73	416.45	492.17	567.88	681.46
North Mymms	190.85	222.65	254.46	286.27	349.89	413.50	477.12	572.54
Northaw & Cuffley	215.43	251.33	287.24	323.14	394.95	466.76	538.57	646.28
Welwyn	224.27	261.64	299.02	336.40	411.16	485.91	560.67	672.80
Welwyn Garden City	171.22	199.76	228.29	256.83	313.90	370.98	428.05	513.66
Woolmer Green	188.05	219.40	250.74	282.08	344.76	407.45	470.13	564.16

2.5 That it be noted that for the year 2025/26 the major precepting authorities, Hertfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire have stated the amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the following tables.

Hertfordshire County Council (£)								
	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Ayot St Lawrence	1,179.91	1,376.56	1,573.22	1,769.87	2,163.18	2,556.48	2,949.78	3,539.74
Ayot St Peter	1,179.91	1,376.56	1,573.22	1,769.87	2,163.18	2,556.48	2,949.78	3,539.74
Essendon	1,179.91	1,376.56	1,573.22	1,769.87	2,163.18	2,556.48	2,949.78	3,539.74
Hatfield	1,179.91	1,376.56	1,573.22	1,769.87	2,163.18	2,556.48	2,949.78	3,539.74
North Mymms	1,179.91	1,376.56	1,573.22	1,769.87	2,163.18	2,556.48	2,949.78	3,539.74
Northaw & Cuffley	1,179.91	1,376.56	1,573.22	1,769.87	2,163.18	2,556.48	2,949.78	3,539.74
Welwyn	1,179.91	1,376.56	1,573.22	1,769.87	2,163.18	2,556.48	2,949.78	3,539.74
Welwyn Garden City	1,179.91	1,376.56	1,573.22	1,769.87	2,163.18	2,556.48	2,949.78	3,539.74
Woolmer Green	1,179.91	1,376.56	1,573.22	1,769.87	2,163.18	2,556.48	2,949.78	3,539.74

Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire (£)								
	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Ayot St Lawrence	176.67	206.11	235.56	265.00	323.89	382.78	441.67	530.00
Ayot St Peter	176.67	206.11	235.56	265.00	323.89	382.78	441.67	530.00
Essendon	176.67	206.11	235.56	265.00	323.89	382.78	441.67	530.00
Hatfield	176.67	206.11	235.56	265.00	323.89	382.78	441.67	530.00
North Mymms	176.67	206.11	235.56	265.00	323.89	382.78	441.67	530.00
Northaw & Cuffley	176.67	206.11	235.56	265.00	323.89	382.78	441.67	530.00
Welwyn	176.67	206.11	235.56	265.00	323.89	382.78	441.67	530.00
Welwyn Garden City	176.67	206.11	235.56	265.00	323.89	382.78	441.67	530.00
Woolmer Green	176.67	206.11	235.56	265.00	323.89	382.78	441.67	530.00

- 2.6 That having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 2.4(h) and 2.5 (a) and (b) above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables below as the amounts of Council Tax for 2025/26 for each part of its area and for each category of dwellings.

Part of the Council's Area (£)								
	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Ayot St Lawrence	1,517.59	1,770.51	2,023.46	2,276.38	2,782.25	3,288.11	3,793.97	4,552.76
Ayot St Peter	1,534.69	1,790.47	2,046.26	2,302.04	2,813.61	3,325.17	3,836.73	4,604.08
Essendon	1,605.45	1,873.02	2,140.61	2,408.18	2,943.34	3,478.49	4,013.63	4,816.36
Hatfield	1,583.73	1,847.68	2,111.65	2,375.60	2,903.52	3,431.43	3,959.33	4,751.20
North Mymms	1,547.43	1,805.32	2,063.24	2,321.14	2,836.96	3,352.76	3,868.57	4,642.28
Northaw & Cuffley	1,572.01	1,834.00	2,096.02	2,358.01	2,882.02	3,406.02	3,930.02	4,716.02
Welwyn	1,580.85	1,844.31	2,107.80	2,371.27	2,898.23	3,425.17	3,952.12	4,742.54
Welwyn Garden City	1,527.80	1,782.43	2,037.07	2,291.70	2,800.97	3,310.24	3,819.50	4,583.40
Woolmer Green	1,544.63	1,802.07	2,059.52	2,316.95	2,831.83	3,346.71	3,861.58	4,633.90

3 Special items - Parish Precepts

- 3.1 In accordance with the legislation under the Local Government Finance Act 1992, all Parish Precepts have to be charged to the Council's General Fund.
- 3.2 For 2025/26, the total parish precepts will be increased by £167,098 (7.5%). The table below shows the precepts for each of the town/parish councils in 2025/26 and year on year change.

Parish Councils	2024/25 Parish Precept (Net of Council Tax Support Grant)	2025/26 Parish Precepts	Change	Change
	£	£	£	%
Ayot St Lawrence	800	800	0	0.0%
Ayot St Peter	3,750	4,250	500	13.3%
Essendon	50,582	61,181	10,599	21.0%
Hatfield	1,183,220	1,283,600	100,380	8.5%
North Mymms	227,952	252,690	24,738	10.9%
Northaw & Cuffley	274,213	280,658	6,445	2.4%
Welwyn	446,330	468,647	22,317	5.0%
Welwyn Garden City	-	-	-	-
Woolmer Green	30,278	32,397	2,119	7.0%
Total	2,217,125	2,384,223	167,098	7.5%

4 Special items – Special Expenses

4.1 The Council meeting held on 3 February 2025 agreed the amounts to be included in the “Special Expenses” scheme for 2025/26 as £662,653.

5 Billing Authority Precepts

5.1 The Borough’s Council Tax requirement for 2025/26 including the parish precept will be £13,212,787.

6 Hertfordshire County Council

6.1 The Hertfordshire County Council precept for 2025/26 is expected to be formally approved on 25 February 2025. The band D council tax will be £1,769.87 and the County precept is £78,317,455.45 for 2025/26. This is a 2.99% increase in the Band D council tax, and a 2% increase in the adult social care precept.

7 Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

7.1 The Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire’s precept for 2025/26 was formally approved on 6 February 2025. The band D council tax will be £265.00, and the precept is £11,726,356.00 for 2025/26. This is a £14 (5.58%) increase in their Band D council tax.

8 Overall average band D council tax

8.1 To summarise, after taking into account the precepts from Parish Councils, Hertfordshire County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, the average band D Council Tax for the borough area for 2025/26 is £2,333.46, this is an increase of 4.88%. However, the band D council tax varies from £2,276.38 to £2,408.18 and the table below also shows that the tax change for 2025/26 will range from 4.47% to 5.66%.

	2024/25	2025/26	
	Band D £	Band D £	% Change
Ayot St Lawrence	2,172.28	2,276.38	4.79%
Ayot St Peter	2,194.07	2,302.04	4.92%
Essendon	2,279.11	2,408.18	5.66%
Hatfield	2,263.39	2,375.60	4.96%
North Mymms	2,211.71	2,321.14	4.95%
Northaw & Cuffley	2,257.20	2,358.01	4.47%
Welwyn	2,265.92	2,371.27	4.65%
Welwyn Garden City	2,184.15	2,291.70	4.92%
Woolmer Green	2,210.63	2,316.95	4.81%
Borough Area Council Tax	2,224.88	2,333.46	4.88%

Implications

9 Legal Implication(s)

- 9.1 The Council is required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to make estimates of gross revenue expenditure and anticipated income, leading to a calculation of a council tax requirement and the setting of an overall budget and Council Tax. The amount of the budget must be sufficient to meet the Council's legal and financial obligations, ensure the proper discharge of its statutory duties, and lead to a balanced budget. The Council should be satisfied that the proposals put forward are a reasonably prudent use of resources in both the short and long term, and that the interests of both Council Tax payers and ratepayers on the one hand and the users of Council services on the other are both taken into account.
- 9.2 Section 25 of the 2003 Local Government Act requires the Chief Finance Officer, Executive Director (Finance and Transformation), to make a formal report to the Council on the robustness of the budget and adequacy of reserves. This report was presented in the Budget report presented to Council at its meeting on 3 February 2025.

10 Financial Implication(s)

- 10.1 Financial implications are set out in the body of the report where relevant.

11 Risk Management Implication(s)

- 11.1 There are risks to the council's short and medium term budget strategy including continued government funding restrictions, the impact of the economic downturn, inflation and other changes in the national economy, spending exceeding budgets, pressures on existing budgets, legislative change demands for new spend and the delivery of challenging efficiency targets. The budget process includes the recognition of these risks in determining the 2025/26 budget and relevant risk provisions are set out in the body of the report.

12 Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

- 12.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

13 Procurement Implication(s)

- 13.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

14 Climate Change Implication(s)

- 14.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

15 Health and Wellbeing Implications(s)

- 15.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

16 Link to Corporate Priorities

- 16.1 The subject of this report is linked to the delivery of all of the Councils Corporate Priorities.

17 Communications Plan

- 17.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

18 Equality and Diversity

18.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been carried out in connection with the proposals that are set out in this report as there is no impact on services directly as a result of the recommendations.

19 Human Resources Implications

19.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

Name of author	Richard Baker
Title	Executive Director (Finance and Transformation)
Date	12 February 2025

Description	Original Budget 2024/25	Original Budget 2025/26	Variance
	£ '000	£ '000	£ '000
Customer Service and Transformation	1,183	1,634	451
Finance	5,430	6,953	1,523
ICT and Digital	1,792	2,037	245
Legal and Governance	2,280	2,145	(135)
Budgets controlled by the Director	1,168	1,255	87
Executive Director (Finance and Transformation)	11,853	14,023	2,171
Leisure, Community and Cultural Services	2,838	1,910	(928)
Planning	1,069	854	(215)
Regeneration and Economic Development	(3,108)	(3,363)	(254)
Budgets controlled by the Director	442	459	17
Executive Director (Place)	1,241	(139)	(1,380)
Homes	483	496	13
Public Realm	6,525	7,434	908
Budgets controlled by the Director	127	361	234
Executive Director (Resident and Climate Change)	7,135	8,290	1,155
Senior Leadership Team	509	463	(46)
Net Controllable Income and Expenditure	20,737	22,637	1,900
Net Recharge to the Housing Revenue Account	(6,145)	(6,530)	(385)
Net Cost of Services	14,593	16,107	1,515
Income from Council Tax	(12,642)	(13,213)	(571)
Plus/Less Council Tax collection fund deficit/(surplus)	388	19	(369)
Business Rates Income	(4,069)	(4,467)	(398)
Plus/Less Rates collection fund deficit/(surplus) (Estimate)	1,705	1,127	(578)
New Homes Grant	(165)	(224)	(59)
Services Grant and Other Government Grants	(1,095)	(613)	482
Homelessness, UKSPF and EPR Grants	0	(2,731)	(2,731)
National Insurance Grant (Estimate)	0	(100)	(100)
Interest & Investment Income	(450)	(350)	100
Capital Financing Costs	1,210	1,305	95
Borrowing Interest Costs	1,026	627	(399)
Parish Precepts (Estimate)	2,217	2,384	167
Net Total before movements in reserves	2,718	(128)	(2,845)
Contribution (from) / to Earmarked Reserves - Other	(615)	(668)	(53)
Contribution (from) / to Earmarked Reserves - Grants	0	2,731	2,731
Contribution (from) / to Earmarked Reserves - Collection Fund	(2,093)	(1,127)	966
Contribution from / (to) GF balances	10	808	799

Key of variance column = (Decrease in expenditure/increase in income), Increase in expenditure/reduction in income

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