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Part I  
Item No:  
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All Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
SPECIAL CABINET – 21 JANUARY 2025  
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION)

## **Budget Proposals and Medium-Term Forecasts 2025/26**

### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to re-present to Cabinet the budget proposals for recommendation to Council, following consideration at Overview and Scrutiny in relation to:
- Revenue Budgets 2025/26
  - Capital Programme 2025/26 – 2029/30
  - Use of Reserves 2025/26
  - Fees and Charges for 2025/26
  - Medium Term Strategy and Governance Framework 2025/26 – 2028/29
- 1.2. The budget was previously considered at Cabinet on 7 January 2025, for referring to OSC for consideration.
- 1.3. It should be noted that the Council has not yet received Final Settlement, and that any changes made by the Government between the Provisional Settlement received and Final Settlement, will be accounted for before the final budget is approved, or if not confirmed by the publication date, as part of the Councils budget monitoring process for 2025/26.
- 1.4. It should also be noted at this stage, the following numbers in the papers remain as estimates, which will be confirmed prior to the final stage of budget approval:
- Parish Precepts
  - Business Rates Deficit
  - National Insurance Grant

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. That Cabinet consider the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.2. That Cabinet note the updates to the budget proposals as set out in this report.
- 2.3. That Cabinet recommend the budget proposals to Council.

### **3. Explanation**

#### **3.1. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Recommendations**

- 3.1.1. In line with previous practice, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) set up a Budget Task and Finish Panel.
- 3.1.2. The panel met three times between November 2024 and January 2025.
- 3.1.3. The panel recommended to the committee that the council should respond to the government consultation on the Local Authority Funding Reform, and should have particular focus on the response regarding nationally set fees and charges.
- 3.1.4. In particular that the response should ask the Government to devolve fee setting wherever possible, to provide councils with the ability to set fees and charges appropriately.
- 3.1.5. It should also ask that for any charges that continue to be set nationally, legislation be updated to include provision for annual inflationary increases, which is not currently the case for all nationally set charges.
- 3.1.6. OSC agreed to these recommendations and recommended them onto the Cabinet.
- 3.1.7. The deadline for the response to the consultation is 12 February 2025, and the Chief Financial Officer will draft a response to the consultation for the council, which will be circulated to Cabinet for comment before submission.
- 3.1.8. In addition to the recommendations from the Task and Finish Panel, members discussed the work being undertaken on the licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and noted that any changes that may be considered in future would go through a formal process via licensing committee.
- 3.1.9. OSC recommended to Cabinet that it take on board any recommendations from the Licensing Committee on this topic, after considering the evidence presented, implications, and officer advice as required.

#### **3.2. Amendments to the budget proposals**

- 3.2.1. The budget papers were issued on 24 December 2024, following the announcement of the provisional settlement on 19 December 2024, providing a very short turnaround time for the papers.
- 3.6.1. The budget will be updated, in line with practice in previous years for the Parish Precepts, Business Rates Deficit and National Insurance Grant once these are confirmed. In addition, some other minor amendments have been made to the budget papers, which will go onto full Council, including:
  - Minor typos in the covering report and MTFs
  - Inclusion of service charges for properties tenanted during 2024/25. These fees are already in place but were not shown in the proposed HRA charging schedule presented to Cabinet on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025.
  - Re-wording some fees to provide more clarity over the fee
  - A reduction to the fee for 20 visitor permits from £21.50 to £21.40

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1. Financial implications are contained in the recommendations and explanations to the main budget report. [Agenda item - FP2093 Budget Proposals and Medium Term Forecasts 2025/26 – Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council](#)

#### **5. Link to Corporate Priorities**

- 5.1. The Council's budget proposals directly support all of the Council's Corporate Priorities.

#### **6. Legal Implication(s)**

- 6.1. Legal implications are contained in the recommendations and explanations to the main budget report. [Agenda item - FP2093 Budget Proposals and Medium Term Forecasts 2025/26 – Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council](#)

#### **7. Security & Terrorism Implication(s)**

- 7.1. There are no implications for security and terrorism arising from this report.

#### **8. Procurement Implication(s)**

- 8.1. There are no direct procurement implications arising from this report. Any procurement implications associated with specific budget proposals will be considered as part of the implementation of those proposals.

#### **9. Climate Change Implication(s)**

- 9.1. The budget includes retention of the balance of the Climate Change earmarked reserve which will help the Council to continue to deliver strategic climate change actions.

#### **10. Human Resources Implication(s)**

- 10.1. There are no direct Human Resources arising from this report. Any human resources implications associated with specific budget proposals will be considered as part of the implementation of those proposals.

#### **11. Communication and Engagement Implication(s)**

- 11.1. A press release is being prepared and will be published alongside the budget. A communications plan is also in place to raise awareness on the councils budget, and for communicating fees and charges increases.

#### **12. Risk Management Implications**

- 12.1. Risk Management implications are contained in the recommendations and explanations to the main budget report. [Agenda item - FP2093 Budget Proposals and Medium Term Forecasts 2025/26 – Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council](#)

#### **13. Equality and Diversity**

- 13.1. Any equality and diversity implications associated with specific budget proposals will be considered as part of the implementation of those proposals, and equalities assessments undertaken as appropriate.

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