

Report To: **JOINT MEETING EXECUTIVE CABINET / OVERVIEW PANEL**

Date: 14 February 2024

Executive Member / Reporting Officer: Cllr Jacqueline North –First Deputy (Finance, Resources & Transformation)

Ashley Hughes – Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer)

Subject: **BUDGET 2024/25**

Report Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the information required to set a balanced budget for 2024/25 as required by law under the Local Government Finance Act (1992). The report sets out the detailed revenue budget proposals for 2024/25 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan for the 5-year period 2024/25 to 2028/29, including the proposed council tax increase for 2024/25.

The budget report proposes a balanced net budget of £266.984m for 2024/25. To deliver this balanced net budget, all budget reductions proposed must be delivered in full in-year and Council approves a maximum increase in Council Tax.

Government has provided another one-year financial settlement for Local Government, including some increases in funding. Whilst the additional funding is welcome, growth in cost and demand pressures continues to significantly exceed funding levels. As a result, the budget can only be balanced with further budget reductions and the maximum 2.99% increase in Council Tax plus 2% Adult Social Precept.

There remain a number of significant financial risks for 2024/25 and beyond which the organisation will need to manage during the forthcoming years.

Recommendations:

This report and the following recommendations will be considered by Executive Cabinet during February 2024, but will require approval by Full Council.

Full Council are asked to **APPROVE:**

- 1) The budgeted net expenditure for the financial year 2024/25 of £266.984m as set out in section 4 and **Appendix 1**, noting the significant pressures outlined in **Appendix 2**.
- 2) The proposed budget reductions to be delivered by management outlined in section 5 and **Appendix 3**.
- 3) The uplifts to fees and charges as set out in **Appendix 15**.
- 4) The proposed resourcing of the budget as set out in section 6.
- 5) a 2.99% increase to Council Tax and an increase of 2% in respect of the Adult Social Care precept for 2024/25.
- 6) The Director of Resources' assessment of the robustness of the budget estimates and adequacy of reserves as set out in **Appendix 4**. Following this, determine that the estimates are robust for the purpose of setting the budget and that the proposed minimum General Fund Balance is adequate.
- 7) The proposed minimum General Fund Balance of £27.537m set out in **Appendix 5**.
- 8) The Reserves Strategy and note the projected reserves

- position as set out in **Appendix 5**.
- 9) The Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25, which includes the proposed borrowing strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy (**Appendix 16**).
 - 10) The Capital Strategy 2023/24 (**Appendix 18**).
 - 11) The Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 as set out in section 12 and **Appendix 19**.
 - 12) Delegated authority to the Directors (in consultation with the Section 151 officer) to agree any uplifts required to other contractual rates from 1 April 2024 which Directorates will manage within their approved budgets for 2024/25.

Full Council are asked to **NOTE**:

- 13) The significant financial challenges and risks set out in this report.
- 14) Note that the budget projections set out in section 6 assume a 1.99% per annum increase in general Council Tax from 2025/26 through to 2028/29. The budget projections also assume that there is no reduction to current levels of Government funding.
- 15) Note the position on the Capital Programme (Section 12 and **Appendix 17**) previously approved by Executive Cabinet, and the forecast future investment requirements.

Policy Implications: Budget is allocated in accordance with Council.

Financial Implications: As contained within the report.

(Authorised by the Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)

Legal Implications: As set out in **section 15**.

(Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

Risk Management: Associated details are specified within the presentation.

Failure to effectively manage and monitor the Council's budgets will lead to service failure and a loss of public confidence. Expenditure in excess of budgeted resources is likely to result in a call on Council reserves, which will reduce the resources available for future investment. The use of, and reliance on, one-off measures to balance the budget is not sustainable and makes it more difficult in future years to recover the budget position.

Background Papers: Background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting: Stuart Munro, Senior Finance Manager

 e-mail: stuart.munro@tameside.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 Tameside Council's Corporate Plan and underpinning strategies are the guiding line for decisions taken around prioritisation of resources and how the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Capital Strategy are built. The MTFS sets the framework for a balanced and sustainable revenue budget, which is a key duty for the Council.
- 1.2 The financial position set out in this report is based on the 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS), for which the provisional settlement was received on 18 December 2023, with announcement of a further £600m for the sector on 24 January 2024 following consultation. Of the £600m, £500m has been provided to top-up the Social Care Grant to support Adults and Children's Social Care pressures. The remainder is balanced through a Services Grant top-up, Rural Services Delivery Grant top-up and Core Spending Power Guarantee before local tax policy decisions rising to 4% from 3%. The final settlement, setting out the changes above was provided 8 February 2024 with changes reducing the use of the Collection Fund surplus and supporting further emerging pressures in Social Care.
- 1.3 As reported to Budget Overview and Scrutiny on 15 January 2024, the provisional LGFS was worse than anticipated for Metropolitan Districts. Whilst it provided for an uplift in Social Care Grant, further supplemented in the 24 January 2024 announcement, it was more than offset by a sharp reduction in general grants that supported universal services. Changes in the headline rate of inflation of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from 4.6% to 4% alongside additional resources from the Trailblazer Devolution Deal (which has extended the 100% business rates retention principles), have enabled the presentation of a balanced budget for 2024/25.
- 1.4 Research from the Local Government Association has identified that the local government sector as a whole requires £4 billion additional funding to help deliver good quality services against a backdrop of rising costs from inflation and demand. In Tameside, if this £4 billion was distributed using current relative needs formulae, similar to the Social Care Grant, the Council would be in receipt of £19.232m of additional funding. Furthermore, the single-year settlement is the 5th in an eight-year period. Single-year settlements, along with the funding gap make planning and setting balanced budgets more difficult.
- 1.5 In line with the one-year finance settlement this report sets out a balanced one-year budget for 2024/25 and estimated position for the years 2025/26 to 2028/29. The medium and longer-term implications have been considered, alongside a strategy to deliver financial sustainability over the longer term. The report sets out risks, uncertainties, and the approach the Council is to take to deliver financial sustainability.
- 1.6 The report not only contains the considerations in relation to the one-year LGFS. It also covers recommendations and decisions on Council Tax and business rates.
- 1.7 The Executive have considered officer recommendations, feedback from Overview & Scrutiny Committees and listened to the outcome of the Big Budget Conversation that ran from 19 December 2023 to 2 February 2024.
- 1.8 The 'golden thread' running through to the proposed budget flows from the Council's Corporate Plan. The proposals for the 2024/25 budget continue to reflect the Council's priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan.
- 1.9 The budget must be delivered within the resources available to the Council. This is a statutory requirement laid out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Therefore, this report must consider the resources available from Central Government as well as those raised locally through taxation and fees or charges. This report must consider unavoidable cost pressures that require funding and where to invest funding to meet Council priorities. This report brings all this together alongside the Council's statutory duties, recent funding announcements and

consultation responses.

1.10 The Corporate Plan was reviewed in 2023. The key strategic themes are:

- Best Start In Life
- Opportunity to Learn & Earn
- Safe, Green and Supportive Communities
- Healthy & Active Lives

The budget is aligned to the Corporate Plan as outlined in the 2 charts below:

Chart 1: Net Budget by Corporate Plan Priority

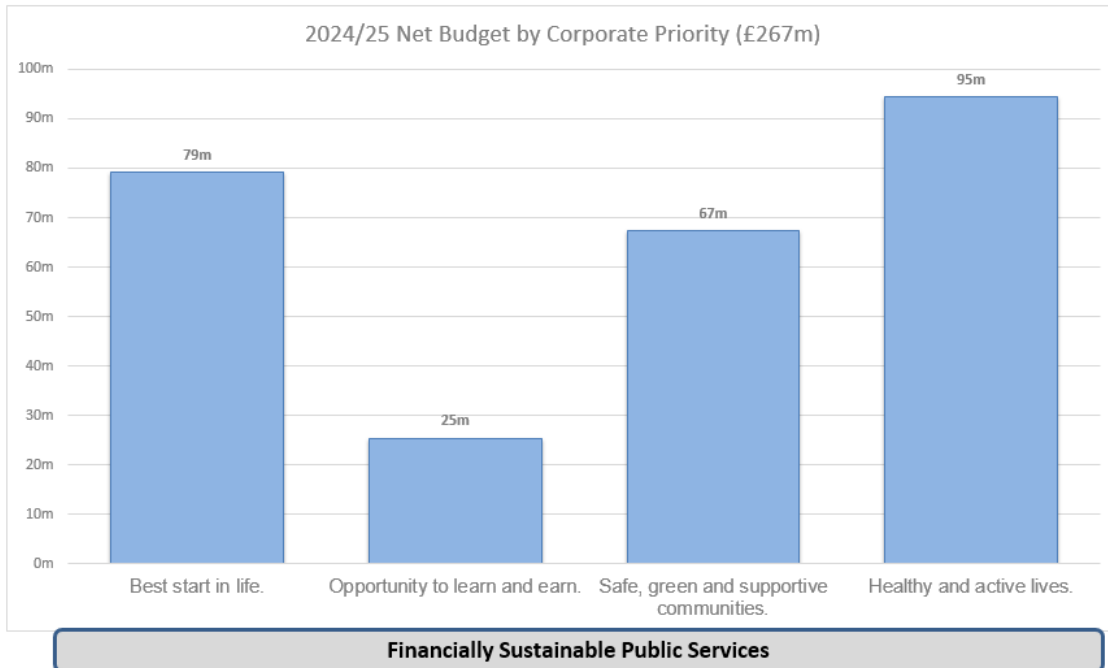
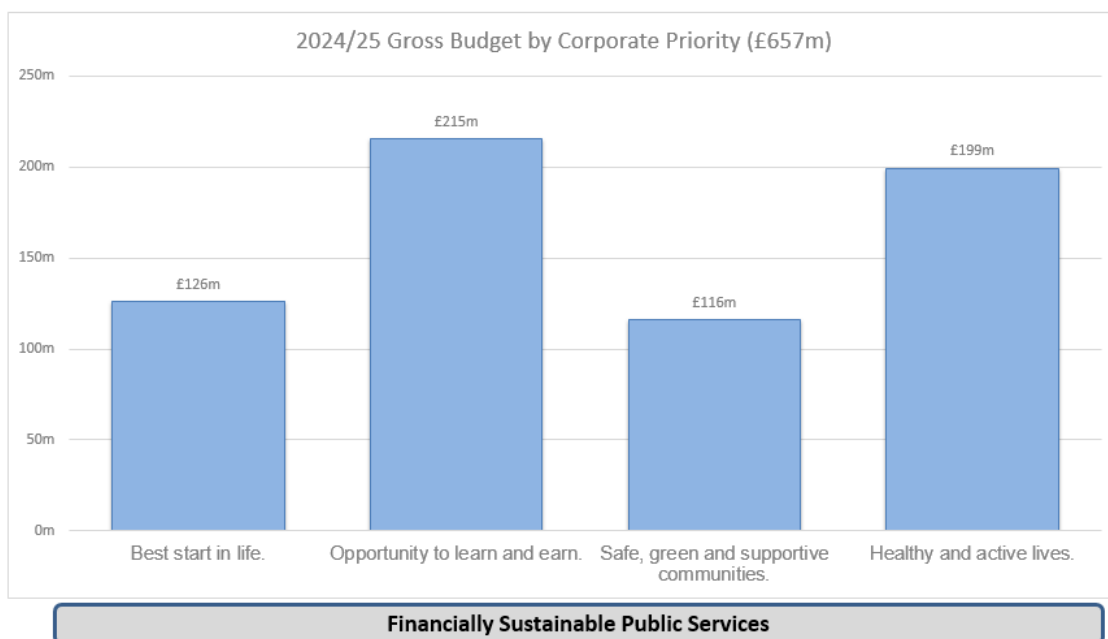


Chart 2: Gross Budget by Corporate Plan Priority*



*Opportunity to learn and earn includes the Dedicated Schools Grant and Safe, green and supportive

communities includes Housing Benefits both of which are passported through to schools and resident respectively.

1.11 **Financial Context:** The Council's revenue budget can be financed from five sources – Council Tax, Business Rates, Government Grant, Reserves and Fees & Charges. Since 2010/11 funding from central government has reduced and retention of business rates introduced; this means the ability to grow and maintain the locally raised resources is more important than ever to ensure financial sustainability. The Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy is the foundation of the Council's ambitions to grow locally raised resources and is a key plank of the Corporate Plan. It is, therefore, integral to longer-term financial planning. The charts below show the Council's resource make-up in 2010/11 and for 2024/25:

Chart 3: Resources 2010/11

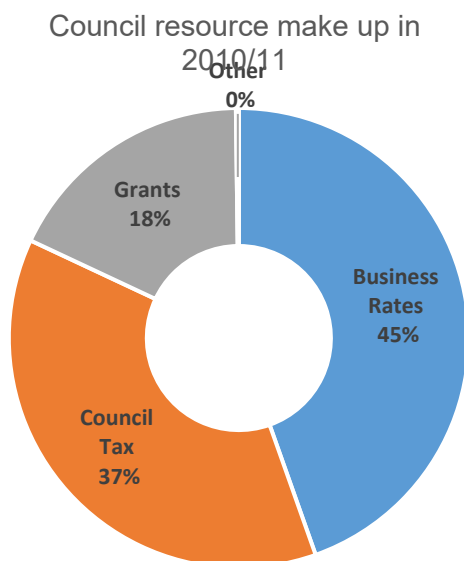
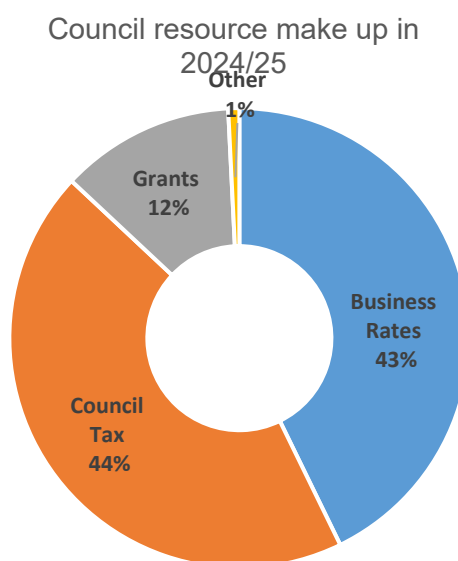


Chart 4: Resources 2024/25



1.12 Since 2010/11, the Council has made local decisions about how much to raise Council Tax. Business Rates are set nationally, and Government have chosen to freeze multipliers and postponed ratings revaluations due to COVID-19. The impact of both these decisions has changed the quantum of how much is raised locally through Council Tax (increased as a percentage of income) and Business Rates (decreased as a percentage of income)

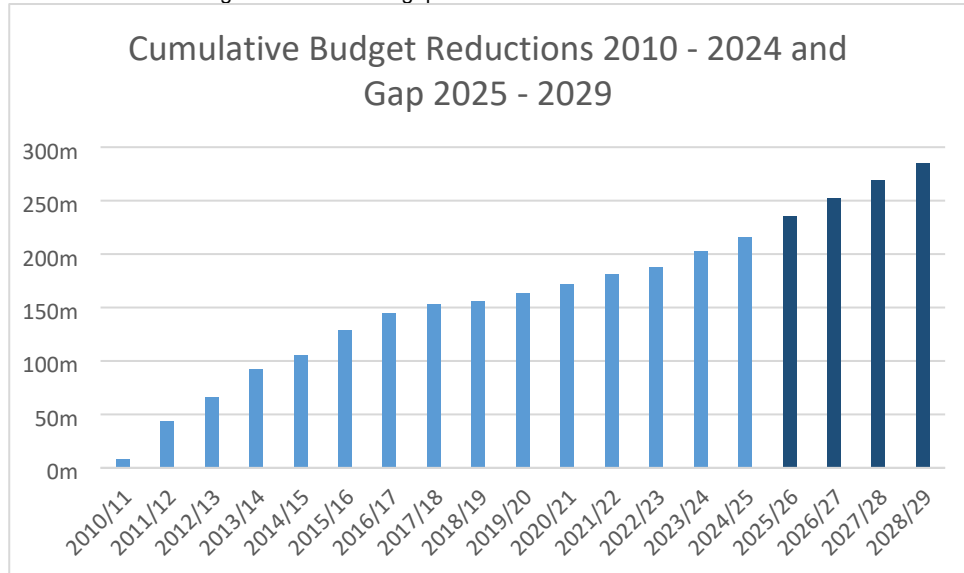
1.13 The budget for 2024/25 follows over a decade of austerity which began with the 2011/12 budget process. In that period, the Council's real terms spending power reduction is 22.4%, compared to an England average of 18.9%. This equates to a £700 per household reduction or a £318 reduction per head in real terms. The England average is a £581 per household reduction.

1.14 Tameside and similar authorities have been disproportionately impacted by the cuts in central government grants. This is because the methodology applied before 2016/17 didn't take into account the ability to raise Council Tax – penalising councils with a low Council Tax base who had historically been more dependent on central government funding. Tameside has 88% of its Council Tax base in Bands A – C. 75% are in Bands A – B. This constrains the Council's ability to raise funds from this source.

1.15 Nationally, the provisional LGFS for 2024/25 provided for a Core Spending Power (CSP) increase of 6.5%. Following the announcement on 24 January 2024, this rose to 7.5% in cash terms – a cash increase to the sector of £4.5bn. However, this assumes that every local authority will raise their Council Tax by the maximum permitted – 2.99% for the general uplift and 2% for the Adult Social Care precept.

- 1.16 The chart below outlines the cumulative budget reductions the Council has made since 2010. When setting the 2023/24 budget, the Council had had to deliver £180m of reductions already, with further reductions in 2023/24 and for 2024/25 taking this figure to £215m. A further £70m is currently forecast to be required to balance the budgets to 2028/29. This means that in the space of 19 years, £285m of reductions to budgets will have had to have been made. For context, the net expenditure requirement in 2024/25 is £267m.

Chart 4: Cumulative budget reductions and gap 2010 to 2029.



- 1.17 The Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy sets out the framework underpinning the MTFs to maximise revenue as a means to mitigate against budget reductions wherever possible. Whilst the strategy was approved in March 2021 by Executive Cabinet, it takes time to see and measure the impact it will have. The development at Godley Green will bring 2,000 new homes around Hyde; the Levelling Up Funds at Ashton-under-Lyne and Stalybridge are sparking regeneration in the respective town centres; and the creation of the Mayoral Development Zone (covering Ashton Moss and St Petersfield amongst other areas) all point to a future where both housing supply and new business will increase the availability of locally raised funding. Other means the Council has taken to become more resilient include:

- i. **BUSINESS RATES:** Tameside has been part of the Greater Manchester (GM) business rates 100% retention pilot since 2017/18. This is now subsumed in the ten-year Trailblazer devolution deal for Greater Manchester, allowing all parties to retain 100% of business rates growth locally since the start of the Business Rates Retention Scheme in 2013. The Council has benefitted by £15.768m to date with a further £3m forecast to be achieved in 2023/24.
- ii. **COUNCIL TAX:** Tameside has encouraged housebuilding where possible, despite the constraints of significant Green Belt land. The GM Places for Everyone scheme, as part of the borough's Local Plan, (will establish/has established) a requirement to deliver 8,245 new homes between 2022 and 2039 in Tameside. With potential to provide around a third of these through allocations at Godley Green and the South of Hyde, alongside significant capacity within the borough's existing urban area. New homes will be delivered across a range of types and tenures, with a focus on addressing specific needs including the provision of larger family homes, which would typically be in bands D-H. Council Tax collection has held up well in Tameside, with further investment in Exchequer to digitise and automate processes and procedures to free up staff to focus on proactive contact and financial vulnerability and prevention work. Despite this, the Council still has a low tax base from which to raise Council Tax.
- iii. **INVESTMENT INCOME:** The Council only holds shareholdings in Manchester Airport

Group (MAG). In 2019/20, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tameside earned £4.1m dividends from its MAG investments. Income at this level is currently nor expected to resume until 2027/28 at the earliest. The interest from loans advanced to MAG pre-2018, in 2018/19 and 2020/21 continue to contribute £3.137m each year to support revenue and capital financing budgets. The Council also holds significant cash balances as income and expenditure aren't always fully aligned. These cash balances are invested to ensure the funds work for the Council. In 2023/24, the Council adopted a short-term investment plan, allowing deposits to mature and be returned for overnight investment in high-quality money market funds. Owing to the higher interest rate environment this is forecast to deliver £5.4m in 2023/24 and similar levels in 2024/25.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council set a balanced budget for 2023/24 in February 2023, but the process was difficult. This was achieved through the utilisation of one-off funding, particularly challenging budget reductions targets and an increase in Council Tax. The budget assumed pay inflation, an expectation that services absorbed general inflation (but the Council funded known demographic and cost pressures in Adults and Children's Social Care) with a challenging budget reductions target for Children's Services.
- 2.2 Since setting the Council Budget in early February 2023, the economic landscape has changed, with significant inflationary pressures impacting both generally and in specific service areas. These changes present both cost pressures and challenges in delivering budget reductions and additional income budgets, and, without a robust, proactive response, the Council is facing significant presenting risks to the delivery of a balanced position in 2023/24.
- 2.3 The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) was published on the 18 December 2023, by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). The LGFS included changes to Tameside's Core Spending Power (CSP) which are detailed in this report and factored into the 2024/25 Budget. The final LGFS was published on 6 February 2024. The increase in Social Care Grant and small uplift to general grants translated into a CSP uplift of 7.45% - subject to Council taking the full 4.99% increase in Council Tax.
- 2.4 The Government's planned review of local authority funding, the Fair Funding review, has been delayed until 2025/26 at the earliest. This review was expected to allocate resources on the basis of refreshed need, which for Tameside could be of substantial benefit. This delay and lack of multi-year funding settlements makes it harder for the Council to develop its MTFS as the level of uncertainty introduces greater risk into the planning process.
- 2.5 Taking the above into account with the wider financial picture for Local Government, and the potential for MAG dividend income being delayed beyond 2027/28 leaves the Council's MTFS weaker than might have previously been planned for without taking positive and proactive steps to manage the financial position.

3 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to set out and seek approval for the setting of a balanced budget for the Council for the financial year 2024/25, including a proposed Council Tax increase and an adult social care precept increase. This report also sets out forecasts for the years up to 2028/29.
- 3.2 The Council is required by law to set a balanced budget for the upcoming financial year. Provisional Council funding for 2024/25 was announced in the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in December 2023 and is expected to be confirmed in February 2024. The Council must set the budget and agree the level of Council Tax by 11 March 2024 at the latest.

- 3.3 The proposals set out in this report and the detailed appendices propose a balanced Council budget for 2024/25 subject to the delivery of identified budget reductions, and agreement of a proposed increase in Council Tax. **Appendix 1** provides a summary of the Council budget for 2024/25 and forecasts for future years. Budget summaries for each Directorate are included in **Appendices 6 to 11**.
- 3.4 Balancing the 2024/25 budget has only been possible through the agreement of challenging budget reductions, income generation and demand management. Demand and cost pressures are forecast to continue to increase during 2024/25 and as a result the Council still faces a significant budget gap in future years.
- 3.5 This report makes reference to further detail in the appendices which cover the following areas:
- Appendix 1)** Revenue Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy Summaries
 - Appendix 2)** Budget Pressures
 - Appendix 3)** Budget Reductions
 - Appendix 4)** Section 151 Officers' Risk Assessment and Statement on the Robustness of the Budget Estimates
 - Appendix 5)** Reserves Strategy and General Fund Minimum Balance
 - Appendix 6)** Director of Adults
 - Appendix 7)** Director of Children's
 - Appendix 8)** Director of Public Health
 - Appendix 9)** Director of Place
 - Appendix 10)** Director of Resources
 - Appendix 11)** Chief Executive's Office
 - Appendix 12)** Dedicated Schools Grant
 - Appendix 13)** Corporate Charging Policy
 - Appendix 14)** Budget Conversation
 - Appendix 15)** Fees and Charges 2024/25
 - Appendix 16)** Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25
 - Appendix 17)** Capital Investment
 - Appendix 18)** Capital Strategy 2024/25
 - Appendix 19)** Pay Policy 2024/25

4 NET EXPENDITURE REQUIREMENT UPDATE

- 4.1 The Net Expenditure Requirement comprises the Council's running costs and related income streams. The Net Expenditure Requirement is net of income from fees and charges, revenue grants and interest earned.
- 4.2 The macro-economic environment continues to be challenging. Inflation in the MTFS is currently assumed to be at 4% for commissioned goods and services. On social care placements and utility costs the expectation is that these will increase by more than the 4% uplift, for these costs the Council is assuming a 6.7% increase. The inflation assumptions in the MTFS are detailed in Table 1a below.

Table 1a: Inflation Assumptions assumed in the MTFS

Annual Inflation Assumptions MTFS Update	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Non-Pay Inflation (%)	4.00%	3.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
Social Care Placements Inflation (%)	6.70%	3.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
Utilities inflation (%)	6.70%	3.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
Pay Inflation (%)	5.00%	5.00%	4.00%	3.00%	2.00%
Fees & Charges Uplift (%)	4.00%	3.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%

- 4.3 The assumptions around employee-related cost pressures arising from the Local

Government pay award have been adjusted in line with the most recent award. The Council have built in a 5% uplift for 2024/25 in the MTFS to reflect the overall impact of the latest award.

- 4.4 A budgetary increase for demographic pressures has been included in the MTFS. Demographic pressures include modelling on Adults, temporary accommodation, and SEN transport. As the MTFS is iteratively updated, further modelling of activity data is required to ensure a realistic multi-year model for the MTFS. Other service pressures include adjustments to correct for income budgets no longer achievable due to changes in offer from directorates. Details of the total pressures of £35.342m in 2024/25 is provided in **Appendix 2**.
- 4.5 Table 1b below shows the pressures and service reductions for the period 2024/25 to 2028/29.

Table 1b: Revision to total pressures and other reductions

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Previous Year's Net Budget	221.397	266.984	285.239	306.863	327.784
Budget adjustments ⁽¹⁾	27.010	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Opening Net Budget	248.407	266.984	285.239	306.863	327.784
Staffing related cost pressure	9.252	6.752	5.672	4.424	3.038
Demographic pressures	7.922	5.084	6.084	7.084	7.353
Inflationary pressures	14.885	11.881	10.801	10.868	10.938
Other service pressures	3.283	0.316	0.316	0.316	0.316
Total service pressures	35.342	24.033	22.873	22.692	21.645
Budget reductions	(11.828)	(3.123)	0.522	0.000	0.000
Budget resources redirected	(0.353)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Fees & charges	(3.605)	(2.656)	(1.771)	(1.771)	(1.771)
Service grants	(0.978)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total service reductions	(16.764)	(5.779)	(1.249)	(1.771)	(1.771)
Net Expenditure Requirement	266.984	285.239	306.863	327.784	347.659

⁽¹⁾The budget adjustment of £27m is to reflect that in prior year's grants in the LGFS were directly allocated to services. In 2024/25 these are held corporately with other resources such as Council Tax with service expenditure budgets remaining at 2023/24 levels plus growth and reductions.

- 4.6 General fees and charges have been assumed to increase by inflation, 4.0%. This will generate additional income for the Council that will offset increased rising costs from inflation. Table 1c below shows the increase in fees & charges assumed in the MTFS. Further work is required to move towards full cost recovery on fees & charges. A full schedule of fees & charges for 2024/25 is detailed in **Appendix 15**.
- 4.7 Social Care contributions are client contributions to their care following a financial assessment. The increases in client contributions will partially offset any increases in care package costs.
- 4.8 Parking charges were uplifted following a full parking review in 2023/24. At this stage, the MTFS does not assume any increase in parking charges in 2024/25 following the increases in 2023/24. Work undertaken on a wider Parking Strategy indicates the Council has the opportunity to extend parking charges to its on-street parking bays and is planned for the second half of 2024/25.

Table 1c – Fees & Charges increases assumed in MTFs

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Fees & charges inflation uplift	(0.839)	(0.582)	(0.388)	(0.388)	(0.388)
Social Care contributions	(2.766)	(2.075)	(1.383)	(1.383)	(1.383)
Total Fees & Charges	(3.605)	(2.656)	(1.771)	(1.771)	(1.771)

5 PROPOSED BUDGET REDUCTIONS 2024/25 TO 2028/29

- 5.1 The Council have been working on proposals to deliver suitable and sufficient budget reductions to bridge the gap in 2024/25 and to support delivery of the MTFs to 2028/29. As such, the budget reductions of £11.828m proposed in 2024/25, with further costed and planned budget reductions to 2026/27 are outlined in Table 2 below. Additional work will be undertaken to extend budget reduction proposals and transformation ideas to 2028/29 that are costed and considered to be deliverable.

Table 2: Budget reductions proposals by directorate

Budget reductions proposals by directorate	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m
Adults	(2.200)	(1.600)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Children's (including Education)	(4.107)	(0.350)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Place	(1.698)	(2.421)	(0.300)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Corporate	(3.679)	1.248	0.822	0.000	0.000	0.000
Population Health	(0.144)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total	(11.828)	(3.123)	0.522	0.000	0.000	0.000

- 5.2 A full list of budget reduction proposals are provided in **Appendix 3**.
- 5.3 The budget reduction proposals, as part of the wider budget, have been subject to public consultation since Cabinet in December 2023 and are going through both internal and external scrutiny with reviews with Political Groups, Scrutiny panels, Star Chamber sessions and Neighbourhood forums all in January 2024. In addition to this, work has been ongoing for confirmation of deliverability by officers as part of the assurance process to set a balanced budget.
- 5.4 As shown in Table 3, budget reductions totalling £14.429m have been identified, with £11.828m falling in 2024/25. Within Adults Social Care, a clear theme of maximising independence is key to the proposals proposed to transform the Service, with a strong commissioning focus and review of provision, including resettlement into the Borough.
- 5.5 Significant budget reductions are proposed within Children's Social Care for 2024/25, with a clear focus on supporting children in familial settings as part of the Children's Improvement plan, moving away from external residential settings and with the knowledge that better outcomes for children, cost less. In addition, a full review of transport options across the Council, including home to school transport with a view to build resilience and independence are underway with a theme of maximising independence for young people. Additional budget reductions are anticipated as a result of the ongoing Children's Improvement Plan for future years, however following the Ofsted inspection in December 2023, it is prudent to fully review and consider the quantum and phasing of potential budget reductions in Children's Social Care to ensure the Council adequately supports the long-term transformation of practice and care provided to the young people of the Borough. The phasing of future reductions is dependent on the speed of improvement, however it is clear that Children's Social Care must contribute to delivering a balanced budget over that period.
- 5.6 Within the Place Directorate, a range of budget reductions have been put forward with a view

to proactively addressing the rising demand for services, such as the increased demand for temporary accommodation (as a result of homelessness), through early intervention and prevention work as well as proposals to increase the sufficiency of suitable accommodation. In addition, the Directorate have reviewed fees and charges (with the exception of off-street car parking). The Parking Strategy will support the inclusion of on-street parking charges. The continuation of new contactless car parking payment machines will be fully rolled out, and standardised parking fees will be implemented across the Borough with the new machines.

- 5.7 Proposals within Corporate Services include the use of a proactive Treasury management strategy, to maximise benefit from higher interest rates in the market, locking in advantageous rates where available to increase the return on the Council's cash balances. Key focus on digital enhancements across the Directorate will enable different ways of working, to ensure that services are delivered in a cost effective and efficient way.
- 5.8 The full year effect of 2023/24 proposals relating to service reviews and contract negotiations within Population Health have enabled the delivery of a further £0.144m from the function in 2024/25.

6 GENERAL FUNDING SOURCES FROM 2024/25 TO 2028/29

- 6.1 Resources comprises: Council Tax, Business Rates, General Grants, and transfers from reserves. All these funding sources are general and do not have to be matched against a specific type of expenditure.
- 6.2 Council Tax and Business Rates are collected and managed in a ring-fenced account (called the Collection Fund). The Council's share of Council Tax and Business Rates is paid out of the Collection Fund over to the Council's revenue budget. The Council's share is always agreed prior to the start of each financial year, so the amount paid over is always an estimate. The estimate includes the Council's share for the next financial year as well as an adjustment for projected variances relating to previous estimates (the Collection Fund surplus/deficits).
- 6.3 General Grants mainly relate to the redistribution of funding between Local Authorities and are linked to Business Rates. Tameside Council's ability to raise Business Rates is less than its assessed funding need according to national formulas, so receives an additional Top Up grant.
- 6.4 General Funding can be increased by transferring unallocated balances from reserves. However, earmarked reserves can only be used once.
- 6.5 General Funding from 2024/25 to 2028/29 has been updated following the 2024/25 provisional LGFS. Table 3 below details the updated general funding. The proposed council tax requirement has been revised following Government's announcement to allow a general increase to council tax of 2.99%, an increase for Adult Social Care precept of 2%, an update to the Council Tax Base and the council tax collection rate. Business rates also has been updated following the LGFS and factors in an increase in the Business Rates multiplier. The LGFS provided for a 7.45% increase in Core Spending Power, however in arriving at this increase, the settlement assumes all Council's will take the maximum amount available in Council Tax percentage increases.

Table 3: Updated Resources 2024/25 to 2028/29 (Revised MTFs).

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Resources	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Business Rates	(114.040)	(115.180)	(116.332)	(117.495)	(118.670)
Council Tax	(117.867)	(120.666)	(123.529)	(126.457)	(129.454)
New Homes Bonus	(0.173)	(0.085)	0.000	0.000	0.000

Grant funding	(34.904)	(31.964)	(31.964)	(31.964)	(31.964)
Total resources	(266.984)	(267.895)	(271.825)	(275.916)	(280.088)

- 6.6 **Council Tax** income makes more than 44% of General Funding. Council Tax income is the result of the Band D Tax Rate multiplied by the Band D Equivalent Tax Base.
- 6.7 The Band D Tax Rate is set by the Council. It is a single average measure calculated according to regulations (the Local Authorities Calculation of Council Tax Base Regulations 2012). The starting point is the number of households in the district, approximately 105,000. These household numbers are then expressed as equivalent numbers by adjusting for discounts and the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme.
- 6.8 There are further adjustments. Each household is allocated a Council Tax Band from A to H, based on dwelling values. Each Council Tax Band incurs a Council is a fixed ratio of Band D, for the purposes of Council Tax Billing. These fixed ratios are shown in Table 4a below:

Table 4a Council Tax Bands fixed ratios to Band D

Band	Property Value at 1 April 1991	Fixed ratio to Band D
A	Up to 40,000	6/9ths
B	40,000 - 52,000	7/9ths
C	52,001 - 68,000	8/9ths
D	68,001 - 88,000	9/9ths
E	88,001 - 120,000	11/9ths
F	120,001 - 160,000	13/9ths
G	160,001 - 320,000	15/9ths
H	Over 320,000	18/9ths

- 6.9 It is because each band is a fixed ratio to Band D that household numbers, after discounts and CTS, can be averaged out as the Band D Equivalent Tax Base.
- 6.10 Council Tax income is summarised in Table 4b overleaf:

Table 4b: Council Tax Assumptions in MTFS

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Band D Equivalent Tax Base (250 growth from 25/26)	66,382.04	66,632.04	66,882.04	67,132.04	67,382.04
Collection Rate (Bad Debt Adjustment)	97.5%	97.5%	97.5%	97.5%	97.5%
Band D Equivalent Tax Base	64,722.5	64,966.2	65,210.0	65,453.7	65,697.5
Band D Council Tameside Precept*	1,557.99	1,594.23	1,631.19	1,668.88	1,707.32
Band D Adult Social Care Precept**	263.13	263.13	263.13	263.13	263.13
Band D Council Tax	1,821.12	1,857.36	1,894.32	1,932.01	1,970.45
Council Tax - subject to approval	117.867	120.666	123.529	126.457	129.454

* 2.99% in 2024/25 and 1.99% afterwards

** 2% in 2024/25 and no increase after then

- 6.11 Table 5b shows an assumption of a 2% increase in the Adult Social Care (ASC) Precept in 2024/25. Current Government announcements allow for ASC precept increases in 2024/25, although not for subsequent years, as the legislation is not in place to extend this. The Council did factor a continuation of current levels of increase into its scenario plans reported to Cabinet in the October 2023 update on the MTFS.
- 6.12 The MTFS also allows for a 2.99% increase in Tameside's precept for 2024/25, which again is allowed for by Government announcements. The percentage increases for the years after 2024/25 remain at 1.99% in line with current referendum limits.

- 6.13 The increases in the general precept and the ASC precept have a cumulative impact, so increasing Council Tax income for the years after 2024/25.
- 6.14 Table 4b also shows an increase in the Council Tax Base (CTB) for 2024/25, this represents the number of Band D equivalent households in Tameside following reductions for discounts and the CTS scheme as at September 2023. The tax base also includes an assumption that 437 new Band D equivalent households will be built and be liable for Council Tax. These are based on current growth projections provided through Planning and Exchequer. This equates to an additional £0.912m of Council Tax.
- 6.15 An increased collection rate of 97.5% has also been assumed in 2024/25, previously 96.5% in 2023/24. This 1% increase will be monitored throughout 2024/25 to track progress against the new collection target. This equates to an additional £1.152m of Council Tax. The Council has historically collected to 97.5% over a multi-year period and is investing in further improvements in Exchequer as part of the MTFs to support delivery of collection.
- 6.16 **Business Rates and Related Grants** are the other main element of General Funding. For background, Business Rates are calculated via a chargeable rate multiplied against the rateable value of commercial premises. The chargeable rate (multiplier) is set by the Government. Rateable Value is set by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA).
- 6.17 There is a related Top Up Grant because from 2013/14, the Business Rates system was also used to redistribute funding between Local Authorities. Funding is redistributed based on the difference between a Local Authority's assessed funding need and its ability to collect tax. Because Tameside's assessed need is higher than its tax collection, it will receive a projected Top Up grant of £33.447m in 2024/25.
- 6.18 There are Section 31 Grants because the Government helps businesses by providing discounts (called reliefs) and freezing the chargeable rate (the multiplier). These decisions reduce Tameside's share of Business Rates. It receives compensation via additional Section 31 Grants.
- 6.19 There are a number of postponed reforms of the way assessed need is calculated and the workings of the Business Rates system. These changes are now expected from 2025/26. The revised MTFs assumes that these changes will not make Tameside Council worse off, however there is a risk that the "reset" of Business Rates could be disadvantageous. As the Council understands the likelihood and impact of any reset, the MTFs will be updated accordingly.
- 6.20 Table 4c below details the assumptions for Business Rates in the MTFs. The Business Rates and Section 31 is based on the latest forecast and the LGFS that confirms the Business Rates multiplier rate will increase in line with inflation. The Top Up Grant the Council will receive was confirmed in the LGFS.

Table 4c: Updated Business Rates and Related Grants

Business Rates and Related Grants	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Business Rates	(57.158)	(57.730)	(58.307)	(58.890)	(59.479)
Top Up Grant	(33.447)	(33.782)	(34.119)	(34.461)	(34.805)
Section 31 Grants	(23.434)	(23.669)	(23.905)	(24.144)	(24.386)
Sub-total Business Rates Grants	(114.040)	(115.180)	(116.332)	(117.495)	(118.670)

- 6.21 Table 4d below details the total grant funding Tameside will receive following the final LGFS. The Services Grant is a general grant that was used to support homelessness pressures and the cost of running universal services such as waste and highways, Tameside have seen a significant reduction of £1.884m in this grant from 2023/24 where it was £2.277m. This has been offset by increases to Social Care Grant, ASC Market Sustainability and Improvement

Fund and Discharge fund.

Table 4d: Total Grant Funding

Grant Funding	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Services Grant	(0.393)	(0.393)	(0.393)	(0.393)	(0.393)
Social Care Grant	(26.521)	(26.522)	(26.522)	(26.522)	(26.522)
ASC Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund	(5.049)	(5.049)	(5.049)	(5.049)	(5.049)
Discharge Fund	(2.941)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total New Funding	(34.904)	(31.964)	(31.964)	(31.964)	(31.964)

7 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

7.1 The revised MTFS presents that the Council has balanced the 2024/25 budget. However, there is a budget gap in 2025/26 and future years.

Table 5 – MTFS

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Previous Year's Net Budget	221.397	266.624	284.999	306.623	327.544
Budget adjustments	27.010	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Opening Net Budget	248.407	266.984	285.239	306.863	327.784
Staffing related cost pressure	9.252	6.752	5.672	4.424	3.038
Demographic pressures	7.922	5.084	6.084	7.084	7.353
Inflationary pressures	14.885	11.881	10.801	10.868	10.938
Other service pressures	3.283	0.316	0.316	0.316	0.316
Total service pressures	35.342	24.033	22.873	22.692	21.645
Budget reductions	(11.828)	(3.123)	0.522	0.000	0.000
Budget resources redirected	(0.353)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Fees & charges	(3.605)	(2.656)	(1.771)	(1.771)	(1.771)
Service grants	(0.978)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total service reductions	(16.764)	(5.779)	(1.249)	(1.771)	(1.771)
Net Expenditure Requirement	266.984	285.239	306.863	327.784	347.659
Resources					
Business Rates	(114.040)	(115.180)	(116.332)	(117.495)	(118.670)
Council Tax Proposed *	(117.867)	(120.666)	(123.529)	(126.457)	(129.454)
New Homes Bonus	(0.173)	(0.085)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Grant funding	(34.904)	(31.964)	(31.964)	(31.964)	(31.964)
Total resources	(266.984)	(267.895)	(271.825)	(275.916)	(280.088)
Budget reductions to find - cumulative	(0.000)	(17.344)	(35.038)	(51.868)	(67.571)
Budget reductions to find - incremental	(0.000)	(17.344)	(17.695)	(16.830)	(15.702)

* Council Tax is subject to approval at Full Council.

8 ROBUSTNESS OF THE BUDGET ESTIMATES (APPENDIX 4) AND RESERVES (APPENDIX 5)

8.1 The Council is required by law to set a balanced budget for the upcoming financial year. This balanced budget must be based on sound and sustainable assumptions about income and expenditure, the delivery of budget reductions and use of reserves.

8.2 Under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Section 151 Officer is required to prepare a statement on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves and the robustness

of the budget estimates.

8.3 The Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) statement on the robustness of the budget estimates is set out in Appendix 4.

8.4 The statement concludes that:

In the light of the risk assessment and the details of the budget as set out in this report, which are based on the best information available at the time, and the strength of the Council's Internal Control Systems, it is the opinion of the Section 151 Officer as the Director of Resources that the budget estimates for 2024/25 are robust, and the level of reserves adequate for the time being.

However, the Council faces a significant budget gap beyond 2024/25, and this budget gap will increase if planned reductions and efficiencies are not delivered. The Council must ensure a relentless focus on delivery of reductions, to have any chance of closing the gap in future years. The Council has made use of reserves over the last few years, to provide services with the time to improve, but this is not sustainable in the long run and the Council needs to ensure robust and transparent transformation of services, and reduction of demand, to ensure the delivery of the improvement plans in place.

This statement is in compliance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003. This is not a guarantee that spending will be within every budget line, but it is reasonable to believe that the expenditure can be contained within the overall resource envelope agreed by the Council.

8.5 Section 26 of the Local Government Act 2003 places a duty on the Section 151 Officer to ensure the Council has established a minimum level of reserves to be retained to cover any unforeseen demands that could not be reasonably defined within finalising the proposed budget. The Director of Finance is recommending a proposed minimum level of general fund balances from 1 April 2024 at £27.537m, which is the same level as 2023/24. Keeping the level flat reflects the reduced level of financial risk facing the Council in respect of cost inflation, this is offset by an increased level of financial risk in relation to demand pressures and market fragility. There is also further risk associated with delivery of an ambitious budget reduction programme. Further information is set out in the reserves strategy in Appendix 5.

Targeted use of reserves

8.6 Reserves are a finite resource and continued use is equivalent to a household running down its savings. They should therefore be used strategically, and it is important that the Council holds a robust position on the level of reserves held. In 2024/25, the Council is reviewing all its reserves and balances in line with the Corporate Plan and a proposal to target reserves to drive better outcomes, revenue cost reductions and delivery of transformation will be presented to Full Council at the proper time. The MTFS is challenging, and the reserves held should be deployed strategically to deliver on planned outcomes such as Children's Improvement, Digitisation and Automation and Inclusive Growth. This targeted approach will allow services the time and opportunity to act to stabilise budgets and improve outcomes.

9 CORPORATE CHARGING POLICY AND FEES & CHARGES 2024/25

9.1 Appendix 13 is the Corporate Charging Policy which was adopted in February 2022. This Corporate Charging Policy establishes principles and a framework for setting and reviewing non-statutory fees and charges and has been used to review fees and charges during the year. No changes have been made to the policy since adoption.

9.2 Fees and charges are reviewed annually to ensure that they are set at appropriate levels, seeking to ensure costs are recovered, and that they are comparable to similar authorities

across Greater Manchester. Fees and Charges are usually uplifted annually by a minimum percentage, unless there are indications that the market conditions require a greater or lesser increase. In addition, a number of fees and charges are set nationally and cannot be influenced by the Council.

Fees and charges 2024/25

- 9.3 For 2024/25 the default position has been to increase fees and charges by the rate of CPI inflation in December 2023 or by adopting a full cost recovery methodology, as appropriate to the circumstances and in line with the Corporate Charging Policy. Uplifts of more or less than this percentage are applied where this does not reflect increases in costs or where the market determines a greater or lesser percentage is appropriate. **Appendix 15** sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 and the proposed increase for 2024/25 where relevant.

10 BUDGET CONVERSATION (APPENDIX 14)

- 10.1 It is important that Tameside Council understands the priorities of the public – local residents, businesses, and service users. A public engagement exercise was launched between 19 December 2023 and 2 February 2024 to understand their priorities for spending within the context of the financial challenges facing public services.
- 10.2 Members of the public were encouraged to fill out the online survey to have their say on what they feel our spending priorities should be for 2024/25, as well as any ideas for making budget reductions or efficiencies. The consultation was promoted on a number of different platforms:
- The Big Conversation, the authority's dedicated webpage where current consultation and engagement pieces are promoted based on relevance to the local community.
 - Internal engagement within the organisation through platforms such as the Chief Executive's Brief, Weekly Comms Round Up and Information Ambassador's Network.
 - Social media – the Council's X (formerly known as Twitter) and Facebook accounts have a combined followership of 60,000.
 - Neighbourhood Forums
- 10.3 A total **214 responses** were received on the online survey. Further information can be found in **Appendix 14**.
- 10.4 These suggestions will be considered as part of the Budget setting process and will continue to be considered as part of ongoing reviews of service delivery and spending.

Statutory Consultation.

- 10.5 The Council also has a statutory duty to consult with businesses and other representatives of non-domestic ratepayers on its annual spending proposals. Businesses have had an opportunity to take part in the budget conversation, and this is being supported by a further process of sharing the Executive Cabinet budget 2024/25 report when published with non-domestic ratepayers with a deadline of 19 February 2024 for them to provide any comments which can then be considered in the report to Full Council.

Council Scrutiny

- 10.6 Members of the Council's scrutiny panels were also invited to consider this year's budget position and the proposals set out in this report. Feedback has been collated and shared with the Director of Resources.

11 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024/25 (APPENDIX 16)

- 11.1 The Treasury Management service is an important part of the overall financial management

of the Council's affairs. On 31 December 2023, the Council had £121m of investments which need to be safeguarded and £139m of long-term debt, which has been accrued over the years to help to fund the Council's capital investment programmes. The significant size of these amounts requires careful management to ensure that the Council meets its balanced budget requirement under the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Generating good value for money is therefore essential, in terms of both minimising the cost of borrowing and maximising the return on investments.

- 11.2 Treasury management at the Council is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 Edition (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. This strategy is set out in **Appendix 16**.
- 11.3 The Treasury Management Strategy also sets out the estimated borrowing requirement for Tameside MBC, together with the strategy to be employed in managing the debt position. The costs of servicing the Council's long term debt balances, and the income earned on investment balances forms part of the Investment and Financing Budgets within Corporate Services.

12 **CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND CAPITAL STRATEGY (APPENDIX 17 and 18)**

- 12.1 The Council has limited resources available to fund Capital Expenditure and therefore has in place a thorough bidding process for the allocation of capital investment. In September 2021, Executive Cabinet approved the allocation of the remaining capital reserves to immediate priorities. Any additional priority schemes that are put forward for consideration and are not fully funded will need to be evaluated, costed and subject to separate Member approval. There will be a revenue cost for any new capital schemes that are not fully funded from external sources and the implications of this will need to be carefully considered, given the on-going pressures on the revenue budget. The current approved and earmarked programme is set out in **Appendix 17**.
- 12.2 The CIPFA Prudential Code (revised 2021) requires that the Council produces an annual Capital Strategy. The Strategy provides a long-term context in which capital decisions are made, the approach for governance for those decisions, and also information on the Council's approach towards treasury management and other investments. The Capital Strategy for 2024/25 is attached at **Appendix 18**.
- 12.3 The Capital Strategy is the Council's framework for the allocation and management of capital resources within the authority, which takes account of the Council's key priorities in the Corporate Plan. It forms a key part of the Council's integrated revenue, capital, and balance sheet planning with a view towards deliverability, affordability, and risk.
- 12.4 The Capital Strategy identifies the current capital programme and the processes that are carried out to maintain an ongoing investment plan together with the links between its objectives and that of the Corporate Plan. It also gives an insight into how the strategy might develop in terms of achieving the priority outcomes in the next 5-10 years and beyond.

13 **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 13.1 The Council is required to prepare a balanced budget for 2024/25. Wherever possible, the budget proposals seek to minimise costs and maximise efficiencies, whilst protecting public services. The Council has a specific equality duty to assess the likely impact of proposed policies and practices on protected groups under equality legislation to ensure that decisions are taken with due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality

of opportunity and foster good relations.

- 13.2 The budget proposals include a number of budget reductions proposals across service areas which may have a direct or indirect impact on groups of people with protected equality characteristics. When submitting budget reductions proposals, service areas were required to submit a detailed template assessing the budget reductions proposal, including the anticipated impact of the budget reductions and whether an Equalities Impact Assessment was required. Services have or will undertake Equalities Impact Assessments where they have determined that the proposals will have an impact on service delivery.
- 13.3 The proposed increase in Council Tax will affect every household in the borough. Each year the Council aims to set a fair level of council tax as part of the balance between protecting public services within the resources available to finance the budget. The Council continues to operate a Council Tax support scheme for those on low incomes and we are satisfied that the potential negative impact of a Council Tax increase (section 6) is minimal and will continue to be monitored.

14 PAY POLICY STATEMENT (APPENDIX 19)

- 14.1 The Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 is set out in **Appendix 19**. It sets out the Council's approach to pay policy in accordance with the requirements of Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011. This pay policy applies for the year 2024/25 unless replaced or varied by Full Council.
- 14.2 It does not cover teaching staff whose salaries and terms and conditions of employment are set by the Secretary of State. Academy Schools are an entirely separate legal entity from the Council and are covered by Academies Act 2010 and as a separate employer are responsible for setting salaries for their employees.
- 14.3 The purpose of the Pay Policy Statement is to ensure transparency and accountability with regard to the Council's approach to setting pay. The Pay Policy Statement has been approved by Council and is publicised on the Council's website in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 in March each year.

15 LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

- 15.1 The Council's legal obligations under Section 40(5) of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 mean that a council tax precept must be issued before 1 March 2024. The functions of calculating the council tax requirement and the basic council tax are the responsibility of full Council. The function of preparing estimates and calculations for submission to Council is the responsibility of the Executive Cabinet.
- 15.2 Under Section 106 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992, members who:
- (a) are present at a meeting of the Council or the Executive Cabinet and are at that time of the meeting an amount of council tax is payable by them and has remained unpaid for at least two month, and
 - (b) any budget or council tax calculation, or recommendation or decision which might effect the making of any such calculation, is subject of consideration at the meeting

In these circumstances, any such members shall at the meeting and as soon as practicable after its commencement disclose that such members the fact that Section 106 applies to them and shall NOT vote on any question concerning the matter in 15.2 (b) above.

Failure to comply with these requirements constitutes a criminal offence. Members can

seek advice from the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer if they have any concerns and should do so before the full Council meeting.

- 15.3 All Members are likely to have a pecuniary interest in relation to the setting of the Council Tax through their ownership / occupation of property in Tameside in common with any resident of the Borough or indeed anyone who stands as a Councillor. In the Monitoring Officer's opinion, the transaction of business relating to these matters would be impeded unless a dispensation was granted.
- 15.4 In these circumstances, the Monitoring Officer intends to grant dispensations to all members to allow members to participate in and vote on the setting of the Council Tax or a precept (and matters related to such decisions including the budget calculations). It will be necessary for all councillors to apply for dispensations to take part in the meeting at Full Council.

16 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 16.1 As stated on the front cover of the report.