

Title: Budget Proposals – 2025/26 to 2029/30

Meeting: Council

Date: 20 February 2025

Classification: Part 1

Policy Context: All Corporate Priorities

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Director: Joe Chesterton, Finance and Resources

Report Author: Joe Chesterton – Executive Director (Finance and Resources) and s151 Officer

Executive Councillors: Councillor Cowan, Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Corporate Strategy.
Councillor Collins, Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 To request Council to approve the setting of a revenue budget and Council Tax level for 2025/26 and a Capital Investment Programme for 2024/25 to 2029/30 including the associated Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management arrangements.
- 1.2 To request Council to approve the setting of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget, recommended rent levels and associated service charges for 2025/26.
- 1.3 For Council to consider the comprehensive reports that were presented to Cabinet on 13 January 2025 and 11 February 2025 which set out the issues affecting the Council’s budgetary position for 2025/26 and provided an assessment over the medium term to 2029/30. This included the details of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. The final settlement was published on 3 February 2025, which was in line with the details of the provisional information, except for the following funding changes for Southend-on-Sea City Council for 2025/26:
- **an additional £0.081M** of Children’s Social Care Prevention Grant.
 - **confirmation that the Council will receive £1.417M** to support the increase in Employer’s National Insurance Contributions, an **increase of £0.765M** on the estimated amount which was based on the original methodology note that was published with the provisional settlement.

- The Department of Health and Social Care confirmed the level of Public Health Grant for local Authorities on 7 February 2025, Southend-on-Sea City Council will receive **£11.104M (ring fenced for public health activities) in 2025/26, an increase of £0.552M** compared to 2024/25.

- 1.4 For Council to consider the recommendations agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 11 February 2025. To approve a revenue budget (including the HRA), a Council Tax level, five-year financial projections and a package of initiatives for 2025/26 that includes investments and unavoidable cost pressures, savings and income generation proposals. To approve a comprehensive Capital Investment Programme and range of associated Prudential Indicators. The continued development and implementation of the Council's transformation programme based on a range of core guiding principles and including proactive management of demand for social care services should be noted.
- 1.5 To request Council to consider all matters and to give approval to the formal Council Tax setting resolutions contained within this report.

2. Recommendations

That Council considers the information contained in this report and the related reports to Cabinet on 13 January 2025 and 11 February 2025 to agree the following:

- 2.1 **The Section 151 Officer's statement on the robustness of the proposed budget, the adequacy of the Council's reserves and the Council's Reserves Strategy (Appendix 1).**
- 2.2 **A 2025/26 revenue budget (Appendices 2 and 3 (i) to (ii)) and**
- **a Council Tax increase of 4.99% for the Southend-on-Sea element of the Council Tax for 2025/26, being 2.99% for general use and 2.0% for Adult Social Care.**
 - **the use of £1.4 million of the collection fund surplus for the 2025/26 budget.**
 - **to note the increase in the Council Tax level of 5.99% for the precepting authority the Essex Fire & Rescue Services.**
 - **to note the increase in the Council Tax level of 5.66% for the precepting authority the Essex Police.**
 - **to note the increase in the Council Tax level of 2.90% for Leigh-on-Sea Town Council.**
- 2.3 **The final levy position for 2025/26 (Paragraph 6.13)**
- 2.4 **A Capital Investment Programme for 2024/25 to 2029/30 (Appendices 4 (i) and (ii)).**
- 2.5 **The recommendations from Cabinet 11 February 2025 for the HRA and associated rent levels, service charges & heating charges, Treasury Management, and Prudential Indicators.**

- 2.6 **The Statutory Budget Determinations and amount of Council Tax for Southend-on-Sea City Council (Appendix 5).**
- 2.7 **The Council's five-year financial forecast (Appendix 6) and associated Medium Term Financial Strategy.**
- 2.8 **The direction of travel for 2026/27 and beyond and endorse the approach to the ongoing implementation of the Council's transformation programme based on a range of core guiding principles and including proactive management of demand for social care services (Section 9).**

3. Background Information

- 3.1 The current national operating environment, particularly for upper tier local authorities continues to be financially challenging. The unprecedented levels of additional demand and huge increases in costs of maintaining statutory service provision over the last few years, particularly for support and intervention for vulnerable children and adults has been at such a pace that discretionary universal services have been continually squeezed and, in some areas, have been forced to be significantly reduced to ensure these local authorities remain financially viable. In this context the various fiscal and operational challenges, budget development plans, business uncertainty concerns and associated matters of Southend-on-Sea City Council have been considered at the Cabinet meetings of 13 January 2025 and 11 February 2025.
- 3.2 The overall package of budget proposals was launched for consultation with local residents, businesses and relevant stakeholders on 6 January 2025. The relevant reports were also presented and considered at the Council's Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 30 January 2025 and discussed at the Business and Voluntary Sector consultation meeting on 9 January 2025, as outlined below:
 - *Draft Budget Proposals 2025/26 to 2029/30*
 - *Housing Revenue Account Budget and Rent Levels 2025/26*
 - *Treasury Management Policy 2025/26 (Treasury Management scrutinised at Audit Committee on 27 January 2025 and not at Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee)*
- 3.3 Based on feedback received during the consultation and updated financial performance information, some changes to the original package of budget proposals presented on 13 January were included in the Cabinet report on 11 February. The Cabinet has listened to the feedback that was received from the budget engagement and consultation exercises and are proposing a budget that responds sensibly and pragmatically to the financial challenges that have been experienced locally and replicated right across the local government sector. The final overall budget package proposed also takes account of the confirmation received on 3 February 2025 of the final Local Government Settlement for 2025/26 and has been assessed as robust and deliverable, despite the current challenging fiscal and operating environment.

3.4 The Cabinet recommends to Council that it: -

Approves the proposals for the Revenue Budget and Council Tax Level as set out at **Appendices 2 & 3** and approves the Capital Investment Programme as set out at **Appendix 4**. Other recommendations requesting approval include the HRA Budget and associated rent levels and service & heating charges for 2025/26, Treasury Management arrangements and Prudential Indicators. Details of all these items and relevant recommendations are all contained in the suite of Cabinet reports presented on 11 February 2025.

3.5 The Council must set its revenue budget and Council Tax by 11 March of the preceding year. If, for whatever reason, the Council cannot agree a budget and Council Tax level on 20 February 2025, Members should be aware that it is unlikely that the Council Tax bills could be sent out on time for the 1 April instalment date (considering the necessary notice period and the time required to print the bills and the accompanying leaflet). Such a delay will increase costs significantly by circa **£150k - £250k** and will need to be built into the budget. It is also highly likely that this will also translate into a higher level of un-collectable debt and increased debt collection costs which will have a significant negative impact on a range of local Council Tax performance indicators.

3.6 In setting its budget, the Council is required to approve a full Council Tax resolution which includes the Adult Social Care, Police, Fire and parish precepts, including any recommendations for special expenses. The Statutory budget determination to set the amount of Council Tax for Southend-on-Sea City Council for all valuation bands from A to H is shown in **Appendix 5**.

4. Adequacy of the Council's reserves and robustness of the proposed budget

4.1 The Chief Finance Officer is required to make a statement on the adequacy of reserves and the robustness of the budget. This is a statutory duty under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 and a key requirement of CIPFA's Financial Management Code.

4.2 The assessment of the Council's reserves is addressed within the S151 Officer Statement as set out in **Appendix 1**. In addition, further detail was also contained in the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2029/30, which was presented to Cabinet on 11 February 2025 (Appendix 1 of the Budget Proposals 2025/26 to 2029/30 report).

4.3 The Chief Finance Officer is under a statutory duty to issue a formal report if they believe that the council is unable to set or maintain a balanced budget. This is often known as a 'section 114 notice' as it refers to section 114 of the Local Government Act 1988. The Local Government Act requires billing authorities to complete and approve their budgets and set a council tax before 11 March immediately prior to the start of the financial year on 1 April. If the Council cannot agree a balanced budget before that date, the Chief Finance Officer would be under a statutory duty to issue a section 114 notice.

4.4 This would be significant as, after a section 114 notice is issued, a local authority may not incur new expenditure commitments, and the full Council must meet within 21 days to discuss the Chief Finance Officer's report. It would significantly increase the Council's risk of potential Government inspection and direct intervention and cause major reputational damage.

5. Corporate Considerations

5.1 For 2025/26, within the proposed revenue base budget that was considered at the Cabinet meeting on 11 February 2025, the overall level of contingency not earmarked for a specific purpose was **£0.2M** (representing just 0.05% of the City Council's gross expenditure). Given the various fiscal and operational challenges faced by the Council over the last few years, the corporate contingency budget has been used to right-size some service budgets where appropriate. It is therefore prudent to use the additional funding of **£0.85M** (see paragraph 1.3) confirmed within the final Local Government Finance Settlement to increase the level of contingency not earmarked for a specific purpose to **£1.05M for 2025/26**, (which is similar to the original level for 2024/25 of £0.9M).

5.2 Due to the prudent financial management of the Council over the last decade or so, this has enabled the building up of a level of reserves that if the contingency is insufficient 'in year' it will allow for reserves to be utilised (only if absolutely necessary) in difficult and unforeseen circumstances. The unearmarked contingency is therefore now considered to be at a more reasonable level given the prevailing circumstances and challenges to help to deal with any additional minor unforeseen/emergency issues that may arise during the year. This extra flexibility is also important given the Government's commitment to undertaking a Comprehensive Spending Review for the period 2026/27 – 2028/29.

5.3 For major and/or extensive exposure to additional financial volatility, particularly in connection with the regularly reported national and local challenges of social care pressures then the Council is also able to utilise 'on a one-off basis' its specific earmarked reserves to protect the Council's budget. It is the s151 Officer's intention to replenish the specific earmarked Social Care Risk Reserves for Children's and Adults back to a combined total of £5M for 2025/26 as part of a review of all Council reserves when finalising the 2024/25 outturn. The outcome of this exercise will be reported to Cabinet in June 2025.

5.4 The position on Council Tax capping was amended by the introduction of the Localism Act in December 2011. The provisions in the Localism Act 2011 abolished Whitehall capping in England and instead provides local residents with the power to approve or veto excessive council tax rises. The new provisions require the Secretary of State to propose principles defining an excessive increase in council tax for any financial year. The main principle to be determined relates to the increase in the Band D council tax level (subject to certain adjustments) from one year to the next.

5.5 A Council Tax referendum will only be required to be held in relation to an authority's council tax increase in 2025/26 if the amount set by the authority exceeds the council tax excessiveness principles applying to that year. For 2025/26 the position is as follows:

- The Secretary of State has set the council tax referendum principles for 2025/26 as part of the Local Government Finance settlement. As a minimum, local authorities can increase their relevant basic amount of council tax by up to 3% without having to hold a referendum. In addition, Councils with responsibility for Adult Social Care can increase their council tax by an additional 2% Adult Social Care Precept.
- This means that a referendum will be required if an authority sets an increase of 5% (comprising 2% for Adult Social Care Precept and 3% for other expenditure) or more than 5%.

5.6 In agreeing a proposed increase of 4.99% for the Southend-on-Sea element of the Council Tax for 2025/26, being 2.99% for general use and 2.0% for the Adult Social Care precept, the Council is in line with the requirements from the Secretary of State and therefore no referendum is triggered.

5.7 Therefore, in my view as the Council's Chief Financial Officer, I can confirm that the budget for 2025/26, as reported in the suite of Cabinet reports in January and February 2025 and considering the issues highlighted in this report, is challenging to deliver in the current circumstances but is also sufficiently robust to be recommended for approval by the Council. My opinion on the Council's future financial sustainability is predicated on the Council's commitment and intention to continue to implement and further develop the Transformation Programme and proactively and effectively respond to the pressures of managing social care demand which will be designed to ensure that the Council remains financially resilient over the medium term. I am also able to advise the Council that the current and future predicted level of Reserves are adequate and to recommend a Reserves Strategy which is achievable in 2025/26 and over the medium term in line with the factors outlined in my S151 Officer Statement (set out in **Appendix 1**).

6. Council Tax and Collection Fund 2025/26

6.1 The Council Tax Base for 2025/26 was approved by Cabinet on 13 January 2025 at **60,860.63** (equivalent Band D properties).

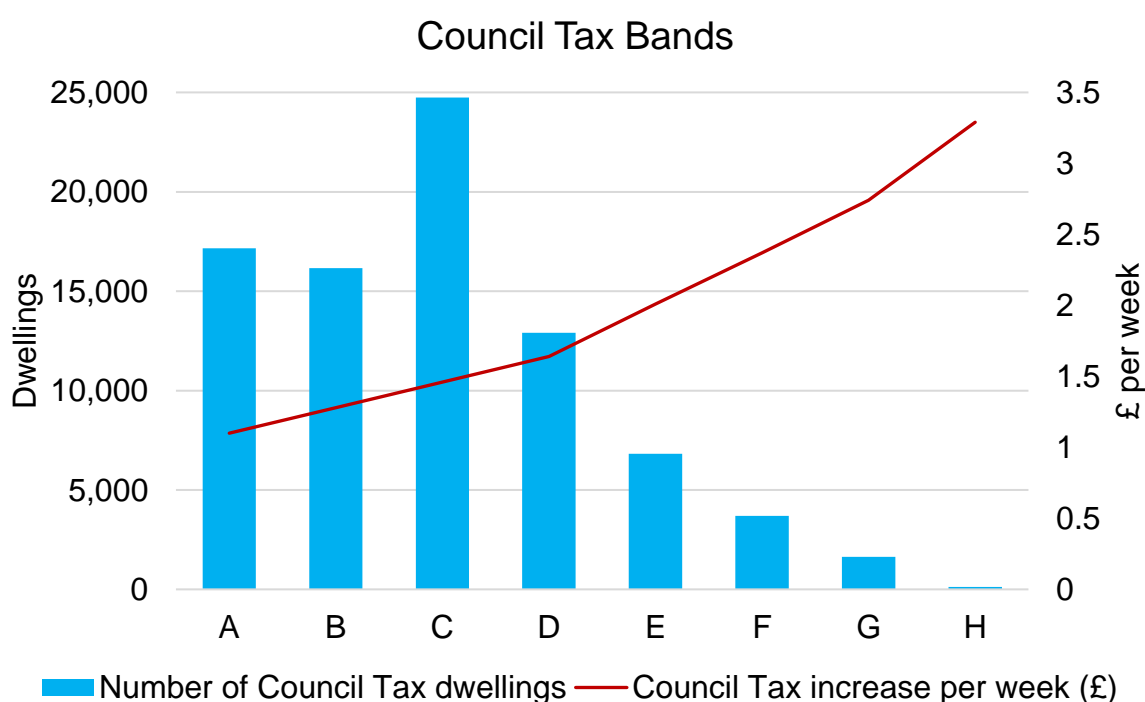
6.2 The estimated accumulated surplus on the Collection Fund at the end of 2024/25 is sufficient to allow **£1.4 million** to be attributed to the Council and which has been used in calculating the Council Tax, as statutorily required.

6.3 The proposed budget assumes a Council Tax **increase of 2.99% for general use** on the Southend-on-Sea element of the total Council Tax. In addition, no referendum limit will be breached by approving this level of increase for 2025/26.

6.4 Council may wish to bear in mind that a **1% change** in Southend-on-Sea City Council's element of the Council Tax is **£17.13** per annum for a Band D property. This equates to an amount of circa **£1.043 million** in the revenue budget for each 1% change.

- 6.5 The proposed Council Tax **increase of 2.99%** will mean a Band D level of **£1,516.35** per annum on the Southend-on-Sea element of the Council Tax. This equates to an annual increase of **£51.23** and a **weekly increase of 99p**.
- 6.6 This budget also includes the **Adult Social Care Precept at an increase of 2.0%** over the previous year. The proposed level equates to an annual increase of **£34.27** (from £248.12 to £282.39) equivalent to a **weekly increase of 65p** at the Band D Council Tax level.
- 6.7 The combined financial impact of these proposed council tax increases for 2025/26 across the range of properties in Southend-on-Sea is shown in the table and figure below, which is an increase per week of **£1.64** for a Band D property. It is worth noting that **70% of all properties in the City are in council tax bands A to C** who will have a weekly increase of **£1.10, £1.28 or £1.46** respectively.

Council Tax Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Number of Council Tax dwellings	17,163	16,168	24,744	12,900	6,814	3,698	1,638	128
24/25 Council Tax per week (£)	21.96	25.63	29.29	32.95	40.27	47.59	54.91	65.89
Increase per week (£)	1.10	1.28	1.46	1.64	2.01	2.38	2.74	3.29
25/26 Council Tax per week (£)	23.06	26.90	30.75	34.59	42.28	49.97	57.65	69.18



- 6.8 The total Council Tax payable by taxpayers consists of the Southend-on-Sea City Council precept, the Adult Social Care precept and the precepts for Essex Fire & Rescue Services and Essex Police. Where applicable it also includes Leigh-on-Sea Town Council precept.
- 6.9 The Statutory Budget Determinations and amount of Council Tax for Southend-on-Sea City Council is shown in **Appendix 5**.

Precepts

- 6.10 For Essex Police an increase in its Council Tax has been approved by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner. This represents a Council Tax of **£260.37** (2024/25 = £246.42) per Band D property, which equates to an **increase** on the respective 2024/25 level of **5.66%**.
- 6.11 For Essex Fire & Rescue Services an increase in its Council Tax has been approved by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. This represents a Council Tax of **£87.57** (2024/25 = £82.62) per Band D property which equates to an **increase** on the respective 2024/25 level of **5.99%**.
- 6.12 Leigh-on-Sea Town Council has declared its precept for 2025/26 at £484,790 (2024/25 = £466,656). Based on their council tax base of 9,104.04, there will be an **increase of 2.90%** in the Town Council element of the total Council Tax bill from £51.75 to **£53.25** at Band D. This only applies to the area covered by the Town Council.

Levies

- 6.13 The Council is required to pay relevant levying bodies, who have all now provided their required levy for 2025/26 and the position for 2025/26 compared to 2024/25 is identified in the table below:

	2024/25 Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	Percentage increase %
Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority	24.5	24.9	1.5
Flood Defence – Environment Agency	221.1	219.1	(0.9)
Coroners Court	594.7	621.3	4.5
Total	840.3	865.3	

The 2025/26 budget proposed at Cabinet on 11 February 2025 included a total sum for levies of £865,300. The final approved levies and year-end adjustments for 2025/26 total **£865,300**. Therefore, no amendment is required to the levies budget for 2025/26. However, if there are any final adjustments to the above levies for 2025/26 this will be funded through contingency.

Special Items (Sections 34 & 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992)

- 6.14 Parish and Town Councils can precept on the Authority for services provided in the Parish or Town Council area. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires these precepts to be deemed a special item. In the Council's geographical area, the only parished area is Leigh-on-Sea.
- 6.15 The cost of Southend-on-Sea's services are spread uniformly over the Authority's area. However, in some parishes, the Town Council may provide services which in other parts of the Authority are provided by the Council. Under Section 35 (2) (d) of the 1992 Act, the cost of these services is regarded as special expenses unless the Council has resolved otherwise. Special expenses are deemed to be included as part of the special items for Council Tax setting purposes.
- 6.16 The costs of special expenses are deducted from the council's total expenditure when setting the basic Council Tax and are charged as an additional amount to the areas receiving the benefit of these specific services.
- 6.17 At its meeting on 11 February 2025, the Cabinet considered the special expenses to apply in 2025/26 and recommended that there were no special expenses in addition to the Leigh-on-Sea Town Council's precept.
- 6.18 The proposed Band D Council Tax excluding and including Leigh-on-Sea Town Council is set out at **Appendix 2**.

7. Capital Investment Programme

- 7.1 The Cabinet also considered proposals for the Capital Investment Programme for 2024/25 to 2029/30 and referred the proposals set out at **Appendix 4 (i) and (ii)** to this report.
- 7.2 The Cabinet also agreed to refer to Council the approval of the Capital Investment Strategy and Prudential Indicators.
- 7.3 The full impact of the borrowing costs required to fund the proposed programme have been included in the Council's current financial planning for 2024/25 to 2029/30. The 2025/26 revenue budget incorporates the required borrowing costs as part of the budget requirement for 2025/26. In summary, it is my view, as the Council's Chief Financial Officer, that the 2024/25 to 2029/30 Capital Investment Programme is proportionate, prudent, affordable and sustainable.
- 7.4 To demonstrate compliance with these objectives a set of prudential indicators, as required by statute, is also recommended for approval.

8. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

- 8.1 Given the constantly changing events in 2024/25, together with the late publication by the Government of the provisional finance settlement on 19

December 2024 and final settlement on 3 February 2025, the updated MTFS to 2029/30 still requires some further development and confirmation of some outstanding elements. However, a comprehensive draft was included within the Budget Proposals 2025/26 to 2029/30 report to Cabinet on 11 February 2025 at Appendix 1. This updated strategy builds on what was approved in February 2024 and looks to provide an integrated view of the whole of the Council’s finances and outlook over the medium term and tries to illustrate some medium-term financial planning parameters using the best information and the most likely set of scenarios/assumptions that are currently available.

- 8.2 Any final cosmetic and background changes not impacting on the overall strategy and recommendations in the MTFS will be undertaken by the Executive Director (Finance & Resources) before final publication. This strategy will be kept under regular review and a formal annual refresh will be presented to Cabinet as part of the Council Tax setting proposals for 2026/27.
- 8.3 This strategy is the Council’s key financial planning document which informs business and resource planning and shows how spending needs to be balanced with the amount of available funding. It identifies budget gaps in the medium term to enable the Council sufficient time to address them in a considered, measured, and planned way.
- 8.4 It is good practice to update the rolling MTFS as part of setting the Council budget and Council Tax to ensure our financial planning is fully aligned and integrated.
- 8.5 The MTFS currently shows a projected further budget gap for the Council of £27.2 million for the following four financial years. This is set out in detail in **Appendix 6** and in summary as follows:

2025/26	£0.0 Million
2026/27	£6.5 Million
2027/28	£6.9 Million
2028/29	£7.0 Million
2029/30	£6.8 Million
Total	£27.2 Million

- 8.6 The estimated calculation of the future gap of **£27.2 million** needs to be considered with a degree of caution. Although all relevant information that the Council is currently aware of has been factored into this assessment, attempting to predict the future in the current set of constantly changing circumstances is incredibly difficult.
- 8.7 The outlook and any useful early assumptions from 2026/27 are difficult to determine and predict in terms of robust financial planning given the potential impact of the Government’s national funding and policy reform plans, together with their commitment to conducting a Comprehensive Spending Review (2026/27 – 2028/29).

8.8 Over the medium term it is too early to predict the financial implications arising from Greater Essex Devolution and potential Local Government Reorganisation, following acceptance of Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council and Thurrock Council to be part of the Government's Devolution Priority Programme.

8.9 We will continue to monitor developments and update our forecasts as more clarity over national policy choices becomes available. Other national and international events may also have a major impact on the Council's future operating environment and financial resilience challenge.

9. 2026/27 and Beyond

9.1 It continues to be important to reassess, understand and take responsibility for determining our financial future. We must remain proactive in the delivery of our agreed Corporate Plan priorities, evaluation of the local economic development progress and to provide the best possible value for money services to our local residents, businesses and visitors. Our financial sustainability will be enhanced by embracing the City's economic potential, growing our local tax bases and by increasing our income generating and commercial capabilities.

9.2 Our future financial sustainability will be reliant on a comprehensive programme of service redesign and transformation that considers how these opportunities can be integrated into a renewed, sustainable, operating model. The Council now operates a Transformation Programme to improve service efficiency, proactively manage statutory social care service demand, improve productivity and value for money, whilst also supporting the delivery of financial sustainability over the medium to long term.

The current programme is driven by the following guiding principles:

- **Resident Centric:** We will be resident centric, putting residents at the heart of everything we do and focusing on the experience of residents across all services. This is to ensure the best possible services for Southend-on-Sea residents, making sure their needs are met.
- **Efficient & Effective:** Working in ways that are streamlined, preventative, optimise resources, and prioritise the right things at the right times, providing the right results. This is to ensure staff are enabled to work in a proactive and productive manner, and that residents receive smooth and streamlined services.
- **Inclusive:** Promoting a positive culture within the Council and outside of it, accommodating the needs of all and creating a sense of true acceptance. This is to ensure there are no unspoken boundaries, and that everyone has equal opportunity and sense of belonging, regardless of who they are.
- **Evidence-Based Decisions:** We will make decisions based on reliable data and evidence to ensure the best possible outcome for residents and the Council. This is to ensure residents receive the best services, and staff are empowered by decisions backed by good and reliable evidence.

- **Digitally Enabled:** Digital by default, we will reduce our manual tasks and processes to optimise how we work and deliver services. This is to enable each service to use resources optimally and effectively to meet residents and staff needs.
- **Commercially Viable:** We will ensure that the Council is financially viable and sustainable for the future, taking a commercial approach and running as efficiently as possible to drive value for money whilst maintaining future viability.

9.3 An extensive and challenging approach, based on experience in other local authorities, is required to ensure a financially sustainable organisation in the longer term. This approach will need to question current ways of working which are embedded within the Council's prevailing culture, exploring different ways to achieve the same goals while forming clear 'As-Is' and 'To-Be' views and outlining efficiency and effectiveness to be gained. Service re-design is a necessity to support this process. To complement the Council's transformation programme a targeted series of zero based budget reviews will also be developed, to take a fresh look at understanding the resource requirements and performance of individual services.

9.4 The current transformation programme is overseen by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) Transformation Board and the current workstreams are as follows.

Foundation Projects

- MySouthend Replacement
- Business World
- Our Future Estate (incl. Locality Hubs)
- Workforce Modernisation
- Data Transformation

Service Transformation Projects

- Front Door
- Children's Social Care Demand Management
- Commissioning / Contract Management
- One Council

9.5 In addition to the CLT Transformation Board a new Members Resources Sub-Group has been established, which will provide regular oversight of the work of the CLT Transformation Board. It will also be used as a cross-party panel to actively challenge our approach, assess progress, comment on delivery performance, generate new ideas and to undertake an in-depth analysis around key risk areas of the budget and suggest mitigation options.

9.6 Traditionally, and particularly over recent years, the nature of Council activity has seen an increase in the level of directly delivered services for the local populace and for local businesses and visitors. Many discretionary services have been delivered on a universal basis and free or subsidised. These arrangements and service levels will need to be reviewed as greater pressure is being placed upon the core statutory services provided by the Council.

- 9.7 The Council will need to increase focus on the delivery of its services in a more targeted way, concentrating on delivering services to those residents who most need the Council's support. The Council will also need to review and change its approach to tailoring the delivery of its many statutory services. To underpin these new arrangements the Council will continue to reposition its role as one to work alongside the community, its residents and businesses, to try to improve the many contributing factors that affect people's lives.
- 9.8 The Council will continue to have a positive commitment to working, and delivering services, in partnership with other agencies, the voluntary and commercial sectors, and the community itself. As part of this approach the Council will encourage the sustenance of community services in collaboration with local communities, encouraging community capacity to operate effectively in appropriate circumstances and within a supported environment.
- 9.9 The Council will also seek to address critical issues such as equality, disadvantage, lack of attainment and poverty by working with communities themselves, seeking enhanced training support and opportunity. It will foster and promote the local economy and thereby enhancing local opportunities for aspiration, attainment, increasing household income and personal achievement.

10. Corporate Implications and Conclusion

- 10.1 The corporate implications of the proposed Council Budget have been set out in the relevant reports to the Cabinet meetings of 13 January 2025 and 11 February 2025.
- 10.2 In reaching decisions on budget proposals and Council Tax, Members will need to bear in mind all the detailed advice provided by officers both in reports presented to Cabinet and information supplied directly. Careful consideration must be made of the impact of decisions both in the coming year and subsequent years.
- 10.3 Members should also note that in approving the Council budget and setting the Council tax level that all the information, advice and recommendations contained in the full suite of reports presented to Cabinet on 13 January 2025 and 11 February 2025 represent part of the decision-making process. All that detailed report information needs to be fully considered and recognised alongside this Council report.
- 10.4 It should be noted that if the Council cannot agree a balanced budget the Chief Finance Officer would be under a statutory duty to issue a section 114 notice. It is therefore important for the City, the Council's reputation and for our medium-term financial sustainability that the Council reaches a consensus at this meeting and approves an overall 2025/26 Budget package and the required associated resolutions.

11. Background Papers

11.1 All background papers are listed in the reports detailed at paragraph 3.2 in this report.

11.2 In addition, Background Papers include:

- (i) Minutes of the Cabinet meeting 13 January 2025.
- (ii) Minutes of the Cabinet meeting 11 February 2025.
- (iii) Minutes of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 30 January 2025 and feedback from the Business Sector and Voluntary Sector consultation meeting on 9 January 2025.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1	Section 151 Officer's Statement on the Adequacy of Balances and the Robustness of the Budget
Appendix 2	Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2025/26
Appendix 3 (i)	General Fund Budget Investments and Unavoidable Cost Pressures 2025/26
Appendix 3 (ii)	General Fund Budget Savings and Income Generation 2025/26 to 2027/28
Appendix 4 (i)	Capital Investment Programme 2024/25 to 2029/30
Appendix 4 (ii)	Proposed Capital Investment 2025/26 to 2029/30
Appendix 5	Council Tax Resolution 2025/26
Appendix 6	Medium Term Financial Forecast 2025/26 to 2029/30

Report Authorisation

This report has been approved for publication by:

This report has been approved for publication by:		
	Name:	Date:
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	10/02/2025
Monitoring Officer	Susan Zeiss	12/02/2025
Executive Director(s)	Joe Chesterton	10/02/2025
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Daniel Cowan Councillor Paul Collins	12/02/2025 12/02/2025