



BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF JONATHAN NOBLE, FINANCE PORTFOLIO HOLDER

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**DRAFT BUDGET SETTING REPORT AND ASSOCIATED FINANCIAL STRATEGIES - 2023/24-2027/28 –
FOR CONSULTATION**

FOREWORD TO THE BUDGET FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN NOBLE - FINANCE PORTFOLIO HOLDER

The creation of next year's budget has been most challenging. It has been set within a background of unprecedented inflationary pressures and significant changes in resident, customer and business needs. Despite these challenges, the Council's financial position means that it is well placed and able to take a considered approach to mitigating these exceptional challenges.

The Government has provided a one-year settlement which has taken some uncertainty away regarding certain grants, however, the uncertainty remains significant and into the medium-term.

Boston Borough Council remains sovereign in terms of its constitution and budget, as do the Councils we partner with, and our BBC priorities are to ensure that the Council remains financially resilient, able to deliver services it has to by law, and to provide support to the District's most vulnerable residents. Secondly, to continue the process of redressing the imbalances created by the COVID-19 pandemic by appropriately focussing on the provision of financial support to underpin economic recovery for the District and seeking to invest in our places.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic over the past few years, work to develop new opportunities, efficiencies and income streams to support the Council's revenue budget have continued.

A significant element of the Council's budget is the Drainage Board Levy. Like the Council, the drainage boards are also experiencing increased cost demands. The Council is liaising with the Boards, who are attempting to limit future increases, where possible. This is proving increasingly difficult with significant increases in power costs being experienced. Representations to government have been made and continue to be made due to the substantial loss of income to the Council (as the levy was previously funded through Revenue Support Grant (RSG) but this is no longer the case).

Another key component of the council's budget is its share of business rates income which is currently being reviewed and will be updated before the budget is finalised. In addition, inflationary pressures have been seen across all areas of the council's budget, particularly pay, contracts, utilities and fuel.

The proposed council tax increase for 2023/24 is an annual increase of £6.03 for a band D property.

A series of short and medium term mitigations have been identified to balance the budget and these will be detailed further once the final budget for 2023/24 is produced.

The Council's revenue budget already provides for some annual contributions towards capital investment and we are delivering on our commitment to increase these by operating in a more commercial and business-like way to increase our ability to generate future capital receipts.

The Council has maintained a capital resource base commensurate with our capital delivery ambitions.

The Budget for 2023/24 proposes:

- A Council Tax increase of £6.03 per year (for Band D homes this is equivalent to 11p per week).
- To continue with the generation of additional efficiencies, shared services and income from commercial activities guided by our Delivery Plans.
- Increased capital investment in Council assets to help generate new income streams, reduce running costs and help deliver services more efficiently.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

	2022/23	2023/24
Boston Borough Council Precept	£4.068m	£4.235m
Council Tax Increase	2.50%	2.97%
Council Tax Band D	£202.86	£208.89
Government Funding	£1.416m	£1.387m
Retained Business Rates used to support budget	£0.769m	£4.208m
Boston Town Area Committee Special Expense Account (3.95% increase proposed)	£0.733m	£0.764m
Earmarked Reserves (at 1 April)	£18.348m	£10.283m

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This appendix sets out the draft combined 2023/24 budget estimates and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28 for the Council's General Fund. The Medium Term Strategy sets out the current and forecast future costs of the Council and is linked to the Corporate Plan and Delivery Plan, which sets out the aims and ambitions of the Council...
- 1.2 The MTFS establishes a set of financial policies and principles which aim to provide a sound basis for maintaining the financial integrity of the Council over the medium term.
- 1.3 This Appendix sets out:
- The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28.
 - The 2023/24 General Fund Revenue Budget & Financing.
 - The General Fund Reserves Position.
 - The General Fund Capital Programme and Financing.
 - Risks, key issues, sensitivity and monitoring.
 - Treasury management policy and investment strategy (to follow in final budget report).
- 1.4 The unprecedented challenges faced by all of us in 2021/22, 2022/23 have continued into 2023/24, with significant inflationary pressures. The government settlement delivered in mid December for Boston included New Homes Bonus (£288k) and 3% funding guarantee (£472k).
- 1.5 In 2023/24 a budget is proposed that allows expenditure to be financed through the use of reserves in order to smooth the impact of the council's ongoing pressure, significant savings are required going forward as a result of increased inflationary costs and other cost pressures, including substantial pressure from the IDB levy. This means that the Council can continue to provide services whilst also supporting its overall objectives. The Council will continue to strive to be as efficient as possible in all its work, building on the South and East Lincolnshire Council's Partnership with its partners at East Lindsey District Council, South Holland District Council and PSPS, whilst ensuring it maximises the income it receives

2. BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS

Table 1 – Assumptions which influence the five year financial strategy

Assumption	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Budgeted inflation ¹	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Pay costs increase ²	2%	5%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Full Time Equivalent Employees ³	234.99	244.71	242.60	235.74	230.74	230.74
Staffing levels ⁴	99%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
Pension contribution rate – current service cost ⁵	17.7%	23.6%	23.6%	23.6%	23.6%	23.6%
Pension contribution cash amount to fund deficit on scheme ⁵	£745,000	£687,000	£713,000	£741,000	£741,000	£741,000
Return on cash investments ⁶	0.10%	3.90%	2.80%	2.10%	2.00%	2.30%
Return on property funds ⁷	3.60%	3.10%	3.10%	3.10%	3.10%	3.10%
Utility cost rises ⁸	30%	150%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Fuel cost rises ⁹	5%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Tax base ¹⁰	2.2%	1.1%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%

Notes to Assumptions

These assumptions reflect, where known, future changes which may arise from the implementation of the council's organisational development plans including the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership with South Holland District Council and East Lindsey District Council (see Section 7).

1. Although inflation does affect the price of supplies and services that the Council procures, because services are given cash limited budgets they have to absorb the cost of inflation within the resources they have – as such the net impact of inflation is reduced to zero within the estimates. The only exceptions are those contracts which have an agreed inflationary arrangement built into them, we expect that contract costs will substantially increase on renew.
2. The nationally agreed pay award ended on 31st March 2022. An award for 2022/23 was agreed November 2022 averaging 7% across the pay spine. For 2023/24 onwards a 5% award has been prudently assumed.
3. Increase in FTE is as a result of Fixed Term contracts and transferred posts from previous shared arrangements?
4. An annual General Fund saving in staff costs (£353k) is built into the budget (equivalent to 4% of the staff budget) due to anticipated staff vacancies during the year.

5. Based on the Pension Triennial Valuation the pension contribution will be 23.8% in 2023/24 with an additional lump sum amount payable towards the deficit on the pension scheme – this rate is applied only to those staff in the local government pension scheme. A further review will take place which could change the amount from 2027/28 onwards. Any vacant posts are assumed to be within the pension scheme. The pension contribution rate is assumed to stay at 23.8% throughout the life of the MTFs. The lump sum towards the deficit is confirmed for 2023/24.
6. These are the estimated returns on cash.
7. These are the estimated returns on the Property Fund that the council holds.
8. Utility costs have been inflated by 150% for 2023/24 as a result of increased wholesale prices. These will need to be kept under review, as it is an area that could be subject to future inflationary pressures.
9. Vehicle fuel costs are predicted to increase by 25% due to national trends.
10. The tax base projections for 2023/24 has provided for a growth of 223 band D equivalent properties. Future growth has been projected at 1.5% (see section 4.6 and Table 3).

3. RESOURCES

- 3.1 The following section of the Appendix outlines the resources that will be available to the Council under 6 headings, Business Rates, Council Tax, Revenue Support Grant and other Government Grants, New Homes Bonus, Fees and Charges and Other Income.
- 3.2 On 19th December 2022 the Local Government Finance Settlement 2023/24 was delivered. The papers included a continuation of New Homes Bonus for 2023/24 and a new grant stream called Funding Guarantee, replacing the Lower Tier Service grant.
- 3.3 As part of the policy statement it was confirmed there would be no review or business rates or funding formula for at least 2 years.
- 3.4 As a result of this announcement it makes planning the years from 2025/26 onwards very difficult as many things could change because of these planned reviews and resets. As and when further announcements are made Members will be kept up to date accordingly and the financial impact assessed.

4. SPENDING PLANS

- 4.1 Under the current arrangements for retained Business Rates, where a Council collects rates above an assessed baseline level set by the Government, a 50% levy is applied that is paid to the Government. In order to avoid this 50% levy a business rates pool was adopted with the County Council and other districts within Lincolnshire.

- 4.2 A revaluation exercise for business rates will take effect from 1 April 2023. The Council is expecting a number of appeals against the revaluation. A provision has been put aside based on intelligence from the Council's advisors to hopefully cover any effects from this but there still remains a large amount of uncertainty in this area.
- 4.3 Table 2 provides details of the anticipated business rates figures for 2022/23 and provisional figures for 2023/24 through to 2027/28.
- 4.4 It is important that members note that the potential changes to the retention of Business Rates from 2023/24 presents a significant uncertainty around future funding levels. It is very likely that as part of the ongoing reassessment of Area Needs the Government may significantly change the current baseline levels. As such the current amount of retained business rates that the Council is experiencing could be significantly reduced under these new arrangements.

Table 2 – Business Rates (Subject to Review)

	Budget 2022/23 £'000	Draft 2023/24 £'000	Draft 2024/25 £'000	Draft 2025/26 £'000	Draft 2026/27 £'000	Draft 2027/28 £'000
Retained Business Rates	-7,427	-7,658	-7,811	-7,967	-8,127	-8,290
S31 Grants relating to Business Rates	-2,018	-2,645	-2,698	-2,752	-2,807	-2,863
Tariff	5,141	5,247	5,352	5,459	5,568	5,679
Pre- levy income	-4,304	-5,056	-5,157	-5,260	-5,366	-5,474
Renewable Energy (100% retained by Boston BC)	-203	-189	-193	-197	-201	-205
Levy payment to Lincolnshire Pool	237	298	304	310	316	323
Estimated (Surplus)/Deficit) on Collection Fund	3,501	739	-	-	-	-
Net Retained Business Rates Income	-769	-4,208	-5,046	-5,147	-5,251	-5,356

*The unusually high deficit is mainly as a result of retail reliefs granted to businesses because of the COVID-19 pandemic. These reliefs have been fully funded by the government and the income received in 2020/21 and 2021/22 therefore is covered by a reserve contribution shown in table 8.

- 4.5 As well as the potential for the authority to attract additional income through retained business rates there is also the risk of uncertainty through a reduction in the amount of business rates that it collects, this has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This coupled with uncertainties relating to appeals against rateable values for business premises, with the potential for successful appeals being backdated makes estimating income accurately extremely challenging and potentially volatile.

Council Tax

- 4.6 The MTFS assumes a Council Tax increase in line with the maximum allowed under the Local Government Settlement. In the case of BBC for 2023/24 this is a £6.03 (2.97%) per annum increase (for band D properties). The increase is reflected through the life of the MTFS. See Table 3 below for the estimated changes in the tax base and council tax collected.

Table 3 – Council Tax

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	No. Of properties	No. Of properties	No. Of properties	No. Of properties	No. Of properties	No. Of properties
Council Tax base (Band D equivalents)	20,051	20,274	20,578	20,887	21,200	21,518
Council Tax Band D	202.86	208.89	213.84	218.79	223.74	228.69
Annual Increase £	4.95	6.03	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95
Annual Increase %	2.50%	2.97%	2.37%	2.31%	2.26%	2.21%
Gross Council Tax collected	£4,067,546	£4,235,036	£4,400,423	£4,569,819	£4,743,307	£4,920,971
In year Surplus / (deficit)	£86,654	-£28,346	£0	£0	£0	£0
TOTAL	£4,154,200	£4,206,690	£4,400,423	£4,569,819	£4,743,307	£4,920,971

- 4.7 The tax base for 2023/24 has been increased by 1.11% and by 1.50% per annum thereafter. This is based on the latest projected house building trajectory.

BTAC expenses

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000
BTAC Expenses	733	764	762	784	808	808

Table 4 – Precepting Authority Band D charges

Authority	Proposed Band D amount (£.p)	Increase over 2022/23 £	Increase over 2022/23 %
Lincolnshire County Council	TBC	TBC	TBC
Police and Crime Commissioner	TBC	TBC	TBC
Boston BC	£208.89	£6.03	2.97%
Parishes (average)	TBC	TBC	TBC

Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Section 31 Grants

- 4.8 The table below currently builds in the assumption that RSG will continue throughout the MTF5 period until such time as we have more information regarding the outcome of the fairer funding review. Other than S31 grants for Business Rates (see table 2) the other main non-specific grants received by the Council relate to the Rural Services Delivery Grant (RSDG) and the newly announced Funding Guarantee grant. RSDG for 2023/24 is proposed to be £89k and the Funding Guarantee grant is £472k for 2023/24, the future of this grant into the longer term is not known however it now incorporates the previous Lower Tier Grant.

Table 5 - Revenue Support Grant and other Non-Specific S31 Government Grants

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Revenue Support Grant	323	433	433	433	433	433
Rural Services Delivery Grant	89	89	89	89	89	89
Lower Tier Services Grant	121	0	0	0	0	0
Services Grant 2022/23	186	105	105	105	105	105
Funding Guarantee (3%)	0	472	472	472	472	472
Total Received	719	1,099	1,099	1,099	1,099	1,099
Annual Change is resource	(398)	377	0	0	0	0

New Homes Bonus

- 4.9 New Homes Bonus (NHB) allocations were announced as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24 only as far as we are aware. The government has added a year of additional grant, as previously announced, the 2021/22 “in year” allocations did not have future years legacy payments nor has the 2023/24 allocation. If the scheme was to be continued in its current form next years payment would reflect just the growth in the previous year.
- 4.10 In light of current funding pressures and element of the New Homes Bonus is being used to support budgetary pressures (£288k).

Table 6 – New Homes Bonus estimates

	Draft 2022/23 £000	Draft 2023/24 £000	Draft 2024/25 £000	Draft 2025/26 £000	Draft 2026/27 £000	Draft 2027/28 £000
New Homes Bonus	(697)	(288)	-	-	-	-

Fees and Charges

- 4.11 The Council is dependent on direct payment for many of its services in the form of various fees, charges and rents. Fees and charges play an important role in the effective delivery of services; they not only raise income but can control access to services, help the council respond to competition, fund investment and guide client behaviour.
- 4.12 In some cases the levels of fees are set by the Government and the Council has no control over what is charged. Where the Council has had control it has not always increased these charges in line with inflation or other market conditions. Given future uncertainty around levels of government grant support and business rates income, the Council will have to develop policies for continually reviewing its fees and charges in order to maintain this income at current or higher levels. A review of fees and charges in light of inflationary pressures is currently underway.

Table 7 – Fees and charges income budgets

Budget Area	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Leisure income	918	820	820	820	820	820
Building control	170	170	170	170	170	170
Licensing	131	131	131	131	131	131
Land charges	78	78	78	78	78	78
Bereavement	900	934	934	934	934	934
Garden Waste	628	644	739	739	739	739
Trade waste	355	402	402	402	402	402
Planning fees	633	645	652	655	655	655
Parking	1019	1019	1019	1019	1019	1019
Markets	95	95	95	95	95	95
Other small areas	155	220	180	180	220	180
TOTAL FEE INCOME	5,081	5,158	5,220	5,222	5,262	5,222

Other Income

4.13 The Council also receives other forms of income, as shown in the following table.

Table 8 – Other Income

	2022/23*	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Interest on Investments	960	1597	1597	1597	1597	1597
Housing Benefit Subsidy	11,618	11,210	11,210	11,210	11,210	11,210
Housing Benefit/Universal Credit Overpayments	120	120	120	120	120	120
Council tax and Housing benefit administration grant	285	285	285	285	285	285
Specific Government Grants	720	736	707	297	297	297
Court Income & Council Tax Penalties	251	251	251	251	251	251
Rental income	696	967	967	966	965	964
NNDR admin grant	92	92	92	92	92	92
Other Contributions (from external bodies for sharing of services and posts)	1,392	1,522	1,527	1,543	1,565	1,588
Other Income	1,250	1,241	1,241	1,201	1,201	1,201
Use of Reserves	5,182	(15)	(210)	(304)	(304)	(113)
Total Other Income	22,564	18,005	17,787	17,257	17,278	17,491

- Use of Reserve values will change as and when new schemes are approved for inclusion within the programme.
- Reductions in the Housing Benefit Subsidy income is due to a realignment of the budget to reflect current anticipated levels of activity – especially with the roll out of Universal Credit. There is a corresponding reduction in expenditure in section 4 below.

Summary

Table 9 – All sources of income

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000
Business Rates	769	4,208	5,046	5,147	5,251	5,356
Revenue Support Grant	323	433	433	433	433	433
Lower Tier Services Grant	121	-	-	-	-	-
2022/23 Services Grant	186	105	105	105	105	105
Funding Guarantee (3%)	0	472	472	472	472	472
Rural Services Delivery Grant	89	89	89	89	89	89
New Homes Bonus	697	288	-	-	-	-
Council Tax	4,154	5,490	4,400	4,570	4,743	4,921
Funding subtotal	6,339	9,802	10,545	10,816	11,093	11,376
Fees, Charges, Rents	5,081	5,158	5,220	5,222	5,262	5,222
Other Income	22,564	18,005	17,787	17,257	17,278	17,491
Fees, Charges & Other Income subtotal	27,646	23,163	23,006	22,479	22,541	22,713

4. 2023/24 SPENDING PLANS

- 4.14 Table 10 below shows the estimated Council spending plans for the next 5 years. It shows expenditure analysed by the CIPFA Standard classification. The paragraphs below the table provide explanations for the main variances across the MTFS.
- 4.15 The table below summarises the main changes in expenditure budgets between 2022/23 and 2023/24. The ongoing delivery of the Council's Efficiencies and Transformation Programme may introduce further changes in the year ahead and over the Medium Term.

Table 10 – Spending Plans

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000
Employees	9,768	10,595	11,214	11,230	11,432	11,689
Premises	1,605	2,415	2,419	2,424	2,414	2,433
Transport	335	406	400	401	403	404
Supplies and Services	6,969	6,947	6,326	6,037	6,116	6,187
Third Party Payments	159	164	164	164	164	164
Drainage Board Levies	2,150	2,350	2,350	2,350	2,350	2,350
Parish Councils' Precepts	509	520	530	540	551	562
Transfer Payments	11,618	11,210	11,210	11,210	11,210	11,210
Direct Revenue Financing of Capital	1,888	0	0	0	0	0
Interest Payable on Borrowing	494	494	494	494	494	494
Minimum Revenue Provision	15	15	15	15	15	15
Gross Expenditure	35,511	35,114	35,122	34,864	35,148	35,507

Employee costs have been prepared in accordance with the Council's Pay Policy. Pay generally has been increased by salary increments due to staff, and by an estimated 5% increase in 2023/24 and 2% thereafter. Pension cost estimates have been prepared on the basis of current staff in the pension scheme at October 2022/23, and all vacant posts assumed to be within the pension scheme. There have been some staffing changes which are mainly grant funded as a result of successful bidding to government departments. The employee costs also include the latest results of the Pension Triennial Review.

Premises budgets have increased in 2023/24. The main increase being the cost of utility wholesale increases in the price of gas and electricity. There has been an assumption of a 150% increase in the cost of utilities.

Transport costs have increased from 2022/23 levels due to the 25% increase in Fuel and additional maintenance costs associated with the vehicle fleet.

Supplies and Services budgets have increased slightly mainly due to increases in audit Fees, banking charges, agreed increases in council contracts in relation to RPI, additional inflationary costs in Environmental services and Homelessness.

Internal Drainage Board (IDB) increases, in total average 10% for 2023/24. Post 2023/24 increases have been estimated at this time, with an increase of 0% p.a. assumed thereafter until further information has been provided by the Internal Drainage Boards. At a time of significant increases in rising energy cost it would be safe to assume that increases will be greater than in previous years. The Council is liaising with the local Internal Drainage Boards to work towards limiting future increases where possible. Lobbying of government is also underway with the impact of this loss of revenue to the Council due to the embedded levy having an impact every year that passes.

Transfer Payments – There is a reduction to reflect the current estimated expenditure on benefits, there is a reduction in the budget for rent allowance payments (with an offsetting reduction in benefits income – see table 10 above)

Capital Charges – Changes in capital charges relate to revisions to the capital programme between years which do not affect the General Fund bottom line as they funded from reserves.

Third party payments - These budgets reflect payments to Public Sector Partnership Services and other outside bodies.

5. BUDGET REQUIREMENT

5.1 The budget requirement is formed by comparing resource prediction and spending plans.

Table 11 – Requirement Budget

	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Fees, Charges & Other Income (table 9)	(27,646)	(23,163)	(23,006)	(22,479)	(22,541)	(22,713)
Gross Expenditure (table 10)	35,511	35,114	35,122	34,864	35,148	35,507
Efficiency Target	(282)	(866)	(278)	(244)	(155)	(47)
Net Budget	7,582	11,085	11,837	12,141	12,452	12,746
Funded By						
Retained Business rates	(769)	(4,208)	(5,046)	(5,147)	(5,251)	(5,356)
Revenue Support Grant	(323)	(433)	(433)	(433)	(433)	(433)
Lower Tier Services Grant	(121)	0	0	0	0	0
2022/23 Service Grant	(186)	(105)	(105)	(105)	(105)	(105)
Funding Guarantee (3%)	0	(472)	(472)	(472)	(472)	(472)
Rural Services Delivery Grant	(89)	(89)	(89)	(89)	(89)	(89)
New Homes Bonus	(697)	(288)	0	0	0	0
BTAC	(733)	(764)	(762)	(784)	(808)	(808)
Parish Precepts	(509)	(520)	(530)	(540)	(551)	(562)
Council Tax	(4,154)	(4,207)	(4,400)	(4,570)	(4,743)	(4,921)
Total Funding	(7,582)	(11,085)	(11,837)	(12,141)	(12,452)	(12,746)

5.2 Based on current assumptions the Council has a significant efficiency target for 2023/24 which plans are already underway to address. With uncertainty around Business Rates after 2023/24 as mentioned earlier it is very unclear at this stage what the financial impact will be.

5.3 Boston Area Town Committee

- 5.3.1.1 Boston Town Area Committee (BTAC) special expenses are a separate charge to the residents of Boston for services provided in their town and are charged as a supplement to the main council tax. The BTAC budget for 2023/24 is estimated at £763,636 (2022/23 - £732,864).

6. OTHER BUDGET ISSUES

In order to meet its obligations, equality impact assessments will be carried out when the nature of proposed changes to services and the potential mitigation (if any) is clear, so that the implications of decisions are fully understood as they affect specific groups and communities. These have been, and will continue to be, regularly undertaken and considered as part of the decision making process.

7. RESERVES

- 7.1 In order to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, the Authority must undertake a review of the level of reserves as part of annual budget preparation. A review of the reserves has been undertaken to make sure that they have a defined purpose, identified and approved values for additions to and usage of each reserve, and that they are set at an appropriate value which identifies the current and future requirements and risks the Council might face. This has included an assessment of risk registers, pressures upon services, inflation and interest rates and any underwriting arrangements. The proposed budget has been developed on the basis of not requiring any long term support from reserves for the revenue budget

General Reserves

The General Fund balance is estimated to stand at £2.0m for the next five years, which the Council's Section 151 Officer believes to be prudent for the Council at this time.

Specific Reserves

Specific reserves are set up to provide funds for known future commitments or provide resources for unexpected events. Given the risks and uncertainties facing both the local and national economy the Council is committed to retaining robust levels of reserves, whilst ensuring resources are available to enable efficient service delivery.

	2023/24 £'000
<u>Contribution To Reserves</u>	
<u>Capital Funding Reserve</u>	
Revenue contribution	
Bereavement fee increase payback	-12
RHI Investment payback	-124
Cont to replacement freighter	-8
Fleet payback	-200
<u>Transformation Reserve:</u>	
PSPS Contract Smoothing	0
<u>Repairs and Renewals Reserve:</u>	
CCTV R&R	-35
Contribution To Reserves Total	-379

	2023/24 £'000
<u>Contribution From Reserves</u>	
<u>Capital Funding Reserve</u>	
ICT Alliance	100
Minimum Revenue Provision	15
<u>Transformation Reserve:</u>	
Planning Assistant	20
Crowd Funding Annual cost	11
Env Services project staffing	5
Community Leadership - project manager role extended to 31.08.2023. Funded from EHCP underspend	128
District Council Elections 27.28	22
<u>Housing Reserve</u>	
DASH Subscription	2.5
Platform Housing	0
Health and Accessible Homes Lincs Lead	60
<u>Funding Volatility Reserve</u>	
NNDR deficit	
Contribution From Reserves Total	364
Net Contribution From / (to) Reserves	-15

8. CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT

Capital programme to be finalised

Table 17 – Treasury Assumptions

Treasury Assumptions	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Average Investment Balances	£30.8m	£21.0m	£18.4m	£18.3m	£18.2m
Investment return assumptions – on non cash balances	3.90%	2.80%	2.10%	2.00%	2.30%
Investment assumptions – property fund return (revenue return only)	3.10%	3.10%	3.10%	3.10%	3.10%
External Borrowing	£16.5m	£16.5m	£16.5m	£16.5m	£16.5m
Average Borrowing Rate	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%

8.1 These assumptions include:

The Council's available cash balances and investment returns will be influenced by the future development of the Council's Asset Management Plan and all decisions made regarding the use of the Council's Reserves for capital and revenue purposes.

9. CONSULTATION

8.1 Under the Gunning Principles, the following points are the golden rules of consultation:

- Proposals being consulted upon must be at a formative stage;
- Proposals must contain enough information for the respondent to provide intelligent consideration;
- Must give adequate time for a response;
- Responses must be conscientiously taken into account.

8.2 Using these principles, the budget consultation process for the 2023/24 budget comprised a number of elements. It was published on the Council's website for consultation by all stakeholders, including the local business community.

- 8.3 In addition to this the Council consulted through a number of Member forums including Cabinet and Scrutiny; and on the governance aspects of its preparation through the Audit and Governance Committee.
- 8.4 Following the budget consultation process, comments received through the Member forums, preceptors and the public exercise were taken into account in preparing and recommending the proposed budget for Cabinet review and formal Council approval on **22rd February and 6th March 2023** respectively.

9. SAVINGS TARGETS

9.1 The projected budgets recognise an increasingly challenging and uncertain position through the five year period of our financial strategy. A key factor is that the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and future finance reviews demand a significant transformation in the way public services are both paid for and provided, with an emphasis on business and housing growth to both improve economic development and maximise funding to the Council to help offset ongoing reductions in overall resources.

9.2 Based upon current budget assumptions the value of efficiency savings required to set a balanced budget for the next five years are as follows:

Table 14 – Savings Targets

	2023/24*	2024/25*	2025/26*	2026/27*	2027/28*
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Budget Savings Requirement (£'000) – annual	866	278	244	155	47

9.3 The ongoing delivery of a significant level of savings is recognised as a key challenge to the Council that will require both political and cultural direction to ensure it is met.

10. SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS' PARTNERSHIP PLANS

- 10.1 As we think of 2023/24 there is great uncertainty with the central funding which could be allocated to Boston. This is driven by several financial matters which remain unresolved such as the implications of the Fairer Funding Review, Business Rates baseline reset and a review of the Business Rates retention scheme. It should therefore be noted the Councils assumptions on future budget gaps whilst prudent could well be understated.
- 10.2 The Council is taking a positive response to this uncertainty by seeking to influence those matters raised above through both engagement and lobbying to ensure a fair deal is delivered for rural communities.
- 10.3 As we look forward into 2022/23 Cabinet will be promoting projects which aim to drive commercial opportunities, place the customer at the centre of everything we do and achieve as much as is possible through greater collaboration through the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership. Some of these key projects to be developed during 2022/23 include;
- Realising efficiencies working together with East Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council through the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership
 - Investment in infrastructure and facilities through the Towns Fund
 - A Council service modernisation programme through investment with PSPS and also in ICT
 - Investment in the Waste service
 - Building the case for investment in infrastructure
 - Empowering communities in the way services are provided
 - Commercialisation of services
 - Addressing Deprivation in the area
 - Tackling Climate Change through the Green Homes Initiative

11. RISK AND SENSITIVITY

11.1 The following table shows the key risks and how we intend to treat them through our risk management practices

11.2 Table 15 – Key Risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Action
Fairer Funding and Business Rate reset/changes	High	High	To lobby as required
Increased Interest Rates	High	High	Market advice and forecasting for continuation
Growth plans may require borrowing at some point in the future	High	High	Continue to closely monitor and prioritise the Council's Capital Financing Requirement.
Increased demand for Homelessness Support Services – relating to Homelessness Reduction Act	High	High	Monitor service demand and impact on costs. Optimise use of grant funding and closely monitor impact.
Lack of clarity for funding levels beyond 22/23 and spending review	High	Medium	Prudent budget set to provide best estimate. Transitional arrangements have been applied in similar previous changes imposed on funding arrangements.
Fluctuation in business rates	High	High	Growth plans and accurate monitoring
Fair Funding Review could take into account actual levels of commercial	Medium	Medium	Prudent budget set to provide best estimate.
Pension fund deficit	Medium	Medium	Close links with LCC pension fund
Additional bad debts as a result of economic circumstances	Medium	Medium	The Council has pro-active debt management and pre-pay fee policies.

Increased maintenance costs of ageing physical assets	Medium	Medium	Asset management plan. Pro-active rather than reactive maintenance programme
Inflation rises by more than budgeted projections	Medium	Medium	Budget assumptions kept up to date with most recent projections.
Court Income	High	Low	Court income projections are in line with budget. The budget has not been increased due to concerns over collectability of this income. A year-end review will be undertaken to inform future year's budgets.
PSPS may be unable to deliver an effective service within the agreed contract price.	Low	Medium	Reviewing Service Level Agreements, activity levels and service priorities, develop a suitable Transformation Programme
Fluctuation in business rates	High	High	Growth plans and accurate monitoring
Fee Income volatility	High	High	Early monitoring of deviations
Contract Cost volatility	High	High	To seek to pre-purchase where necessary
Lack of funding to partners causing displacement of service demand	High	High	Engagement and realism
Inadequate capital resources to finance future desired plans	High	High	Proportionate spending and sale of surplus assets
Central Government policy changes	High	High	Engagement in consultation and policy creation
Reductions in NHB impacting on future plans	High	High	Lobbying and service transformation
VAT – partial exemption	High	High	Close forecasting VAT partial exemption position
Failure to deliver the required transformation programme	Medium	High	Effective programme and project management

Reduction in Investment Values	Medium	Medium	Regular Monitoring, allocation of specific Reserve
Central Government policy changes	High	High	Engagement in consultation and policy creation
A poor settlement for rural councils	Medium	Medium	Lobbying as a special interest group
Increased demand for services in general	Medium	Medium	A robust performance management framework

13. OPTIONS

13.1 There are no alternative budget options presented, however if Council does not accept the proposed budget then any changes to income or expenditure which will produce a revised balanced budget must be presented and approved at the Council meeting.

14. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 To comply with the budgetary and policy framework.

15. RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 Recommendation – That Executive Board recommends to Council to approve the budget setting report 2023/24 and associated financial strategies 2023/24 to 2027/28 which includes the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy.