London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

ECONOMIC REGENERATION, HOUSING AND THE ARTS POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE 17 JANUARY 2017



2017 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance

Report Status: Open

Classification: For review and comment.

Key Decision: No

Wards Affected: All

Accountable Director: Jo Rowlands - Lead Director for Housing, Growth &

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Cabinet will present their revenue budget and council tax proposals to Budget Council on 22nd February 2017. A balanced budget will be set in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- 1.2 This report sets out the budget proposals for the services covered by this Policy and Accountability Committee (PAC). An update is also provided on any changes in fees and charges.
- 1.3 Government resource assumptions, that are used to calculate LBHF's Government grant, model the council increasing council tax by 4% per year. However, in line with the administration's policy of lowering the cost of the council to residents, this increase has not been proposed. Instead, the budget proposes to freeze council tax for the year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Policy and Accountability Committee (PAC) considers the budget proposals and makes recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.
- 2.2. That the PAC considers non-standard changes in fees and charges and makes recommendations as appropriate.

3. SMARTER BUDGETING

- 3.1 Since January 2016 the Council has adopted a new way of looking at how it spends money providing services for residents. The 'Smarter Budgeting' programme has focussed on developing service and cost improvement ideas to bridge the budget gap created by a reducing Government grant, new unfunded pressures from Government, inflation and demographic changes.
- 3.2 Eight outcomes have been agreed with a team focussed on service improvements and efficiency opportunities for each outcome. The outcomes are:
 - Economic Growth
 - The best start in life for children
 - Resident involvement
 - Decent homes
 - Reducing homelessness
 - Supporting vulnerable adults
 - Safer and healthier place
 - Cleaner, greener, sustainable borough

A similar approach has been adopted for reviewing support services (enabling activities).

- 3.3 Budgets and spend has been mapped against each of the outcomes. The teams have worked together to: analyse their cost base and activities; identify new and innovative ideas; and, develop the ideas into business cases to help meet our financial challenges and improve services for residents.
- 3.4 Since Smarter Budgeting began brainstorming sessions have been held to generate new ideas for initiatives and money-saving exercises across the business involving staff as well as our partners. We've held workshops to investigate those ideas and ensure they were joined up across the council, eliminating duplication, increasing commercial acumen and putting collaboration at the forefront of our thinking.
- 3.5 For each outcome, a number of business cases have been developed. These include identifying new sources of income, service improvement and savings. Work is on-going to further develop and analyse proposals and the savings identified are included in this report. A case study from the Smarter Budgeting programme is set out below.

3.6 One of the proposals from the Decent Homes outcome group is the introduction of additional and selective licensing for private landlords. This will designate the whole borough subject to additional licensing for any non-mandatory "house in multiple occupation" (HMO) and designate all rental properties in certain streets subject to selective licensing. These licences are for a 5-year period, and this additional measure will help improve the standards in the private rented sector in the borough, providing safe homes for residents. By proactively improving conditions in the private rented sector, it will also reduce spend by the council dealing with the impacts of irresponsible landlords, which include inspections, emergency repairs and pest control, housing residents made homeless when unsafe properties are found and cleaning up fly tipping and other littering. In addition, fees for both types of licence will be set to recover the cost of providing the service, providing £0.3m towards existing staffing and overheads that will be used in the delivery of this licensing.

4. THE BUDGET GAP

4.1 The 2017/18 budget gap, before savings, is £14.4m, rising to £46.4m by 2020/21.

Table 1: Budget Gap Before Savings

Resources Assumptions

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
	£'m	£'m	£'m	£'m
Base Budget	160.4	160.4	160.4	160.4
Add:				
- Inflation (includes pay)	2.9	6.3	9.7	13.1
- headroom for future	0	3.0	6.0	9.0
pressures	0	3.0	0.0	9.0
- Growth	5.6	6.3	6.3	6.3
Budgeted Expenditure	168.9	176.0	182.4	188.8
Less:				
- Government Resources	(40.7)	(32.4)	(25.5)	(22.4)
- LBHF Resources	(111.8)	(114.8)	(116.8)	(118.0)
- Use of Developer	(2.0)	(2.0)	(2.0)	(2.0)
Contributions	(2.0)	(2.0)	(2.0)	(2.0)
Budgeted Resources	(154.5)	(149.2)	(144.3)	(142.4)
Cumulative Budget Gap	444	20.0	20.4	46.4
Before Savings	14.4	26.8	38.1	46.4
Risks	22.7	27.4	29.5	30.9

4.2 A cash cut in **central government funding** of £8.2m from 2016/17 to 2017/18. By 2020/21 a further reduction of £18.3m is forecast.

- 4.3 **A Council Tax freeze** is modelled with no use of the adult social care precept. Authorities can opt to levy a maximum adult social care precept of 3% in 2017/18 and up to 6% by 2019/20. A 3% precept would raise £1.65m for LBHF. Central Government grant assumptions are based on LBHF raising council tax and the precept by a combined 4% per year to 2019/20. The administration, however, has a commitment to reduce the cost of the council to residents and will be resisting this.
- 4.4 **Business rates** are modelled to increase with inflation with allowance made for the Westfield expansion. The Westfield expansion is expected to open in October 2017 with floor space increasing by 40%. An allowance of £3m per annum (£0.75m in 2017/18) is made for the potential Hammersmith and Fulham share (30%)¹ of the extra business rates income.
- 4.5 A business rates revaluation, undertaken by the Valuation Office (central government) is effective from 1 April 2017. Gross Rateable Value in Hammersmith and Fulham is expected to increase by a total of 36% our current baseline is £428m. The Council is deeply concerned about how this will impact local businesses. In addition, the rate increase will disadvantage the council, as it has to pay extra rates on its properties and will need to set aside extra sums for appeals from businesses. The Council gets no benefit from the extra income generated as it is redistributed to other parts of the country. The implications of the revaluation continue to be worked through.
- 4.6 **Property developments** have placed increased pressure on council services in recent years. The budget strategy provides for use of £2m of developer contributions to support relevant expenditure arising from developments.
- 4.7 As part of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement the Government have allocated the Council a new one-off **adult social care grant** of £0.9m. An additional **better care grant**, for work with the NHS, of £0.8m was also confirmed. These grants, pending further clarity on their use from government, are not incorporated within the current budget proposals.

5 GROWTH, SAVINGS AND RISKS

5.1 The growth and savings proposals for the services covered by this PAC are set out in Appendix 1 with budget risks set out in Appendix 2.

Growth

5.2 Budget growth is summarised by Service Area in Table 2.

¹ Under the current rates retention scheme Hammersmith and Fulham retains 30% of business rates growth. 50% is payable to Government and 20% to the Greater London Authority (GLA). In 2017/18 the Hammersmith and Fulham share will remain 30%. The split between the GLA and Government will change as the Government devolves more funding streams to the GLA. The GLA share will become 37% and the Government 33%.

Table 2: 2017/18 Growth Proposals

Service Area/ Outcome	£'m
Adult Social Care	2.660
Children's Services	0.739
Environmental Services	0.238
Housing	0.230
Enabling/Council wide	1.711
Total Growth	5.578

Savings

- 5.3 The council faces a continuing financial challenge due to Central Government funding cuts, unfunded burdens, inflation, and growth pressures. The budget gap will increase in each of the next three years if no action is taken to reduce expenditure, generate more income through commercial revenue or continue to grow the number of businesses in the borough.
- To close the budget gap for 2017/18 savings (including additional income) of £14.9m are proposed (Table 3).

Table 3: 2017/18 Savings Proposals

Service Area	Savings
	£'m
Enabling services (back office costs)	(7.108)
Increased income from Adult Learning and Skills	(0.095)
Children's Services	(1.870)
Libraries	(0.382)
Housing	(1.256)
Adult Social Care	(1.885)
Environmental Services	(0.290)
Public Health contract efficiencies	(2.000)
Total All savings	(14.886)
Less savings accounted for in the grant/resource	0.475
forecast ²	
Net Savings	(14.411)

Budget Risk

5.5 The Council's budget requirement for 2017/18 is £154.5m. Within a budget of this magnitude there are inevitably areas of risk and uncertainty

² The council has undertaken business intelligence projects that have generated extra grant and council tax income of £0.475m. These are shown within the resource forecast.

particularly within the current challenging financial environment. The key financial risks that face the council have been identified and quantified. They total £22.7m. Those that relate to this PAC are set out in Appendix 2.

6 FEES AND CHARGES

- 6.1 The budget strategy assumes:
 - Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Parking, Libraries and Housing charges frozen
 - A standard uplift of 1.8% based on the August Retail Price index
 - Case by case review for commercial services that are charged on a for-profit basis. These will be varied up and down in response to market conditions, with relevant Member approval.

For this PAC **there are no proposed increases for Libraries.** Other proposed exceptions to the standard 1.8% increase are set out in Appendix 3.

7 2017/18 COUNCIL TAX LEVELS

- 7.1 The administration proposes to freeze the Hammersmith and Fulham's element of 2017/18 Council Tax. This will provide a balanced budget whilst recognising the burden on local taxpayers.
- 7.2 The Mayor of London's draft budget is currently out for consultation and is due to be presented to the London Assembly on 25th January, for final confirmation of precepts on 20th February.
- 7.3 As part of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement the government announced that authorities can charge a 3% adult social care precept. Council does not wish to apply this tax to residents, so it does not form part of the 2017/18 budget proposals.
- 7.4 Following last year's council tax freeze, the current Band D Council Tax charge is the 3rd lowest in England³. The Band D charge for Hammersmith and Fulham is the lowest since 1999/2000.

8 Comments of the Executive Director for Housing & Regeneration on the Budget Proposals

8.1 The Housing & Regeneration department provides services funded by both the Housing Revenue Account and by the General Fund. This report only considers those services provided from General Fund budgets.

Housing Revenue Account Budgets

8.2 A separate report on the Financial Plan for Council Homes that set out the 2017/18 Housing Revenue Account budget was presented to the Economic

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³ Excluding the Corporation of London

Regeneration, Housing and The Arts Policy & Accountability Committee on 13th December 2016. This included the impact of the second year of a 1% decrease in rents for Council Homes required by central Government. It also covered how, although initially this looked like good news for tenants, this has an impact on the ability of the Council to carry out repairs and improvements on Council homes. The Financial Plan for Council Homes report, including the 2017/18 Housing Revenue Account budget, is scheduled to go before Cabinet on 6th February 2017.

General Fund Budgets for Housing and Regeneration

- 8.3 Resources have been focused on:
 - the significant challenge of delivering the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings proposals that are needed because of cuts in funding from Government;
 - ensuring much needed front-line services are maintained and enhanced in the face of increasing demand;
 - enabling the service to respond to the major changes brought about by the Government's programme of Welfare Reform, including:
 - supporting residents into work,
 - providing mitigating action to protect vulnerable people,
 - responding to housing need and
 - protecting the Council's financial interest and reputation.

Growth

- 8.4 The H&F Link team (part of the Housing Solutions service) deliver a programme of work addressing the impact of the Government's programme of Welfare Reform on households living in the private rented sector, temporary accommodation and permanent Council properties. Growth of £0.23m is requested to enable the team to;
 - carry out essential intervention work which ensures the best possible outcomes for our most vulnerable residents in temporary accommodation and the large number of private rented sector households.
 - protect our temporary accommodation income,
 - prevent potential homelessness which would result from the unmitigated impact of Welfare Reform.

The overall risk to the Council should the H&F Link team cease to operate is £0.662m for 2017/18, rising to £5.2m by 2019/20.

Savings Proposals

- 8.5 Housing & Regeneration plan to deliver a savings target of (£0.956m) from the Housing Solutions team as set out in Table 4⁴ by:
 - Temporary Accommodation reducing budget through longer term contracts (£0.956m). Changes to the housing procurement strategy will deliver a reduction in the Council's overall budget on temporary accommodation. A full service review will begin in January 2017 with an implementation date of April 2017 to enable a greater emphasis on preventing homelessness and delivering a more targeted service. The Property Procurement Team will also review the current procurement processes to focus on acquiring properties on longer term leases to reduce expenditure while ensuring that adequate supply continues to be available.
- 8.6 In addition, savings of (£0.095m) are expected to come from income generating opportunities in the Adult Learning and Skills Service.

Risks: Housing Solutions

- 8.7 The main risks affecting Housing & Regeneration relate to managing the impact of the Government's programme of Welfare Reform;
 - the loss of suitable tenancies in the private sector, arising from welfare reform measures some of which some are already fully in place, leading to a risk of increased homelessness and the greater use of expensive temporary accommodation such as Bed & Breakfast (B&B);
 - changes in the temporary accommodation subsidy system, leading to the loss of existing Council-managed temporary accommodation and increased B&B usage;
 - reduced viability for temporary accommodation currently managed by Housing Associations, leading to loss of income for the Associations and potential knock-on effects for the authority in the need to provide alternative temporary accommodation;
 - loss of tenancies in the private sector or direct loss of income in Councilmanaged temporary accommodation arising from the direct payment of benefits to claimants under Universal Credit and, again, with the potential risk of increased homelessness and the use of B&B;
 - inflationary pressures on costs due to increased demand for B&B and other forms of temporary accommodation across London;
 - loss of income for the Council due to the removal of the temporary accommodation management fee from housing benefit subsidy entitlement from April 2017;
 - increase in staffing and procurement costs due to the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Bill which places additional duties on the Council to prevent homelessness;

⁴ The total Housing savings in Table 4 of (£1.256m) includes a £0.3m saving to be delivered by Environmental Services

- loss of Council homes due to the Government's high value void sales policy form 2018/19 onwards leading to the risk of increased demand for temporary accommodation.
- 8.8 The potential financial impact can be summarised into the following main areas for Housing Solutions:

Impact of Benefit Cap and Direct Payments

- 8.9 Overall Benefit Cap: It is anticipated that the risk relating to the Overall Benefit Cap will be up to £0.45m from 2017/18 onwards as a result of the Government's reduction of the Overall Benefit Cap from a maximum of £26,000 per annum to £23,000 per annum for single parents and couples with children.
- 8.10 Direct Payments: The Government's programme of Welfare Reform is expected to have a significant impact on the Council's ability to collect rental income and will result in increased bad debt charges to the General Fund. All new benefit claims are now subject to Universal Credit (since November 2016) and it is anticipated that from July 2019 the Government will begin migrating all remaining existing benefit claimants to Universal Credit. This part of the process is intended to be completed by March 2022.
- 8.11 This means that in 2017/18 all new claimants will be entitled to benefit to cover their housing costs which may potentially impact on rent collection rates. Estimated 2017/18 rental income from B&B and Private Sector Leasing is £12.4m. There is a risk that the budgeted bad debt provision will not cover the full year potential effect on the collection rate in 2017/18 onwards. Based on the phased implementation outlined above, the predicted risk of an unbudgeted bad debt charge to the General Fund increases from £0.6m in 2017/18 to £1.2m in 2018/19 and £1.7m in 2019/20.

Welfare Reform - potential impact on B&B costs

8.12 Increased B&B costs: the budget assumption is that the number of households in B&B will be 119 by March 2017. On the assumption that the number of households in B&B reaches 149 by March 2018, and rises to 179 by March 2019 and 209 by March 2020, and that a third of all households in B&B are comprised of large families, the net cost would increase by £0.4m in 2017/18, £0.5m in 2018/19 and £0.7m in 2019/20.

Local Housing Allowance and increases in PSL and B&B costs

8.13 The current subsidy entitlements, which are calculated based on the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) at January 2011 will change from April 2017 to be based on the LHA at April 2015 and will be frozen for four years. This, combined with the risk of inflationary pressures on costs because of increased demand for B&B and Temporary Accommodation across London, results in risks of a further £1.9m in 2017/18, £2.4m in 2018/19 and £2.8m in 2019/20.

Increased number of homelessness acceptances

8.14 Further, there is a risk that homelessness acceptances will increase in future years due to current and emerging Government policy. On the assumption that the number of new homelessness acceptances increases by 100 per annum on an ongoing basis, the net cost will increase by £0.3m in 2017/18, £0.9m in 2018/19 and £1.4m in 2019/20.

Loss of Temporary Accommodation management fee on housing benefit subsidy

- 8.15 There will be a potential loss of income for the General Fund due to the removal of the temporary accommodation management fee from housing benefit subsidy entitlement from April 2017. This is estimated to cost the Council £1.9m each year from 2017/18 onwards.
- 8.16 It is expected that Government will provide some compensation for the loss of the management fee for the first 3 years initially but the amounts are not yet known.

Homelessness Reduction Bill – potential increase in costs

8.17 This is anticipated to result in the need to place additional households in temporary accommodation and the potential cost is in the range of £1.2m to £3.7m per annum from 2017/18 onwards. Government has not yet made clear any funding we may receive to cover these additional responsibilities.

High value void sales policy

- 8.18 Although Government has yet to confirm the details of the policy, if forced sales meant that the Council's capacity to find accommodation was reduced by 10 family homes per annum, this exposes the General Fund to a cost increase of £0.106m in 2018/19, rising to £0.213m in 2019/20.
- 8.19 This represents a total overall exposure for risks for the housing solutions element of the service of £9.2m in 2017/18 (rising to £12.8m in 2019/20). The level of earmarked reserves for Temporary Accommodation is expected to be £3.1m at 1st April 2017.

Homelessness prevention and risk mitigation

- 8.20 The following activities that will help mitigate these risks are planned:
 - A full service review, to be completed by April 2017, placing a greater emphasis on preventing homelessness, improved engagement with the third sector and reducing rough sleeping.
 - A focus on acquiring properties on longer term leases as well as exploring procuring different accommodation types – e.g. shared housing where suitable for under 35 year olds.

- The Social Lettings Agency is intended to increase the supply of TA directly let accommodation and private rented accommodation, with the potential for revenue generation from providing management services, which can be used to subsidise other activity. However, any savings or income generation will only be realised after 2017/18 if it is successful.
- Exploring the use of buybacks in the Earl's Court regeneration area for use as Temporary Accommodation.
- Increasing the supply of social and affordable housing is crucial to the success of any strategic approach to managing the Temporary Accommodation process. The limited number of social homes has slowed the Temporary Accommodation move on process and resulted in more households remaining in Temporary Accommodation for longer periods – compounding the need for additional Temporary Accommodation units. The Council plans to increase affordable housing, reducing pressure on temporary accommodation budgets by providing permanent lower cost homes through direct delivery, partnership with housing associations and working with developers through the planning process.
- 8.21 However, there is a risk of a potential call on the temporary accommodation reserve (this is expected to be £3.1m on 1st April 2017) in 2017/18 to support the day to day base budget.

Risks: Economic Development and Adult Learning

- 8.22 The Economic Development service and the costs relating to the Council's housing joint venture vehicle are dependent on securing Section 106 funding. The housing joint venture is expected to facilitate the delivery of 106 homes for social rent and 27 affordable homes. The Economic Development service is responsible for the delivery of key elements of the Council's Economic Growth priorities. A paper has been submitted for approval by Cabinet in March 2017. The risk should funding not be approved is in the range £0.5m-£1.2m in 2017/18, rising to £0.9m-£1.6m from 2018/19.
- 8.23 During 2016/17, the Skills Funding Agency reduced its annual grant to the Adult Learning & Skills Service by £0.174m. It has been possible to fund the shortfall this year through the use of earmarked reserves. However, this will be a risk for 2017/18 onwards, which may increase in size and, although obviously other income streams will be looked for, it will impact on the ability of the team to deliver the £0.095m savings/additional income.

9. Comments of the Lead Director for Environment Services on the Budget Proposals

9.1 Additional and selective licensing for private landlords is to be introduced in 2017-18 in order to improve the private rented sector and ensure safe homes for our residents. The licence fees will be set to cover the full cost of providing the service. This is expected to contribute £0.3m towards

existing staffing and overheads that will be used in the delivery of this licensing.

10 Comments of Lead Director for Libraries on the Budget Proposal

Growth

10.1 No growth requested for 2017/18.

Savings Proposals

- 10.2 Savings for Libraries amount to £0.382m for 2017/18
- 10.3 A full Libraries Service Review has been completed, and LBHF's share of efficiencies across the shared service of £0.09m have been identified through reducing shared service management staff numbers. All three councils agreed to develop a new operating model to deliver the shared elements of the service. Changes include reducing the number of senior management posts, and creating more capacity for commercial and partnership working.
- 10.4 Further commercialisation is being undertaken in the service in order to achieve additional savings of up to £0.165m. There are significant opportunities to utilise the space available in Libraries buildings. Working with Property, the service is actively pursuing several opportunities for colocation or commercial hire of underused space. This would provide income, better use of library buildings and increased footfall, as part of our "sweating the assets" approach.
- 10.5 Currently £0.08m has been identified, including renting space at Hammersmith Library to Hammersmith & Fulham Law Centre (HFLC) (£0.015m), catering and café provision in Fulham Library (£0.012m), coworking spaces for business startups and microbusinesses (up to £0.03m), and basement rental at Hammersmith Library (£0.023m). Other opportunities are being considered with the Libraries space, including hire for larger scale events and meetings, particularly outside normal opening hours, using our heritage library buildings as film locations and holding film clubs and community activities. It is estimated these could earn libraries £0.085m upwards.
- 10.6 For the remaining £0.127m, there has been consideration of the use of volunteers and sponsorship, crowd-funding and crowd sourcing. Work will be undertaken with economic development officers to raise the profile of libraries with potential corporate sponsors. At a local level work could be set up with library friends and fundraising groups, possibly as part of the Council's Space Hive civic crowd-funding initiative income to be confirmed. Crowd-sourcing could bring local experts and champions into libraries. Volunteering and crowd-funding potentially could help to provide some of the services that local people value as well as things we can't currently provide. Examples include getting more young people

volunteering, better quality IT provision and help, more classes and events and community activities for libraries.

Fees & Charges

- 10.7 It is proposed that there are no increases to fees within Libraries.
- 10.8 Library fees are traditionally set on a cost recovery basis to support the service financially.
- 10.9 They are mainly made up of charges for hire on DVDs and CDs and overdue charges for items (including books). All are in long term decline as customers switch to downloads and other digital formats. An increase would be counter-productive and likely to lead to lower use and further reduced income. Hire of library spaces is under consideration separately as part of the "sweating the assets" work and this may result in changes separately to the charging structure.

Arts Service

10.10 Whilst there are no ongoing net revenue costs for the Arts service, a new Arts Officer post is included in the budget for 2017/18. This post will deliver the new Arts Strategy, aimed at making Hammersmith and Fulham a destination for Arts and Culture. In the first year, this is to be fully funded from confirmed external funding and so is provided at no additional cost to the Council. Beyond year one, it is expected that this post will be self-funded through new external contributions and sponsorship. The wider Cultural service (including Events, Filming and Lettings) is targeting efficiencies of £158k from 2017/18. These are predominantly concerned with generating new commercial income from Council assets and will be reported to the Community Safety, Environment and Residents Services PAC.

11 Equalities Implications

11.1 An Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) assesses the impacts on equality of the main items in the budget proposals relevant to this PAC. The draft EIA is attached (Appendix 4). A final EIA will be reported to Budget Council.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT

None.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Savings and Growth Proposals

Appendix 2 – Risks

Appendix 3 - Fees and Charges Not Increasing at the Standard Rate

Appendix 4 – Draft Equality Impact Assessment