

# Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Executive held on Tuesday, 5 March 2024 in the Council Chamber - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 10.30 am  
Adjourned 11.55 am

## Members of the Executive – Councillors

<b>LABOUR</b>
Hinchcliffe (Chair)
I Khan
Ross-Shaw
Ferriby
Jabar
Duffy

Observers: Councillors Poulsen, Pollard, Loy, Majkowski

## 84. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In addition to the disclosures circulated with the agenda in which Executive Members received a dispensation it was added that Councillor Duffy was a trustee for Café West in Allerton, which was a voluntary organisation in Allerton that had received funding.

## 85. MINUTES

**Resolved –**

**That the minutes of the meetings held on 9 January 2024, 11 January 2024 and 6 February 2024 be signed as a correct record.**

## 86. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

## 87. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE

There were no recommendations to the Executive.

## LEADER OF COUNCIL & CORPORATE

(Councillor Hinchcliffe)

### 88. COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS ON LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES AND SECOND HOMES

The report of the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources (**Document “AO”**) made recommendations for changes to Council Tax premiums for long term empty homes and second homes to incentivise occupation of property in the district and increase the housing stock to support delivery of the Council’s Housing Strategy 2020-30 following the introduction of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The report was summarised, and Members were told that the proposed changes would align with Council priorities.

The Leader stated that Councils’ nationwide were considering similar options and waiting for guidance from Government about how exceptions could be applied. It was confirmed that proposed exceptions were set out in the report but had not yet been finalised by Government.

**Resolved –**

**That it be recommended to Council:**

- (1) **That Option 2 is the preferred option. That the Council introduce increased Council Tax Premium Charges as enabled by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. This would:**
  - **Reduce the minimum period for the implementation of a 100% Council Tax premium for empty and unfurnished properties from 2 years to 1 year from April 2024 and**
  - **Introduce a Council Tax premium of 100% in respect of second homes (properties that are empty and furnished) from April 2025.**
- (2) **Following a consultation on proposed exemptions, the Government is yet to publish the final list of exceptions. That the Executive delegate the responsibility to implement the exceptions once finalised to the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources.**

**To be actioned by: Director of Finance / Strategic Director, Corporate Resources**

Overview and Scrutiny Area: Corporate

**Note:** The Executive voted on all the recommendations separately after considering all of the budget reports.

### 89. THE COUNCIL'S REVENUE ESTIMATES FOR 2024-25

The Head of Finance advised the Executive that it would be necessary and beneficial to present all budget items in conjunction with one another prior to taking questions. The Leader acknowledged that all items would be presented prior to questions and added that items would be voted on at the end of the meeting before adjournment for items to be considered at the Council meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

The Head of Finance outlined the contents of (**Document “AL”**) which provided Members with details of the Council’s Revenue Estimates for 2024/25. The report also outlined feedback that had been received through the consultation undertaken on the budget proposals that Council Executive approved for consultation at their meeting of the 11 January 2024. Members were told that reports were submitted to enable the Executive to make recommendations to budget Council in order to set a 24/25 budget. The Head of Finance explained that Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) was approved on 29 February 2024 which amounted to £140m and would allow for the Council to balance the budget. The figures contained within the report and the breakdown of costs and pressures were summarised by the Head of Finance. It was highlighted that the proposals would result in 113 redundancies and efforts would be made to redeploy the staff affected. The Council had developed a £60m asset disposal programme which would help fund the EFS and that plans were being developed to identify additional savings to enable the Council to return to a financially stable position.

The Equalities Impact and Consultation Feedback was outlined in Appendix G of Document “AL” and was summarised by the Senior Policy Officer who had coordinated the consultation. The means of consultation and the responses that had been received as part of the budget consultation, which closed on 17 February 2024, were outlined.

It was added that four petitions were received prior to the close of consultation and they were outlined in Appendix G. In addition, a late petition was also received that objected to the proposal to increase parking charges in Idle Village. It was summarised that the consultation feedback as a whole indicated that respondents were not in favour of the proposals, although it was acknowledged that this was expected.

**Resolved –**

**In light of the Governments’ positive response to the Councils request for Exceptional Financial support, that it be recommended to Council:**

**(1) REVENUE ESTIMATES 2024-25**

- (a) That the Base Revenue Forecast of £575.265m for 2024-25 be approved as set out in Appendix A to Document “AL”.**
- (b) That the existing pressures of £48.7m in 2024-25 as set out in Appendix B to Document “AL” be approved.**
- (c) That the investment of £42.1m in 2024-25 into the Bradford Children & Families Trust be approved.**

- (d) That the prior agreed savings in Appendix C to Document “AL” be noted.
- (e) That new savings of £15.810m in 2024-25 as set out in Appendix D to Document “AL” be approved.
- (f) That the Capital Financing and Central budget adjustments of £4.430m in 2024-25 as set out in Appendix E to Document “AL” be approved.
- (g) That time-limited Transformation costs and additional contingencies of £50m 2024-25 as set out in Appendix F to Document “AL” be approved.
- (h) That the comments of the Director of Finance set out in the Section 151 Officer’s Assessment of the proposed budgets on the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of reserves taking account of the recommendations made at 1.1(a) to (g) above be noted
- (i) That the consultation response outlined in Appendix G to Document “AL” be noted.

**(2) PROPOSED COUNCIL TAX 2024/25**

- (a) That it be noted that the projected council tax base and expenditure forecasts outlined in this report together with the 2024-25 resources and the budget variations approved in 10.1 produce a proposed Band D council tax of £1,701.86 for 2024-25. This is a £80.88 (4.99%) increase from 2023-24.

**(3) PAYMENT DATES FOR COUNCIL TAX AND NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES**

- (a) That the first instalment date for payment of National Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax shall be specified by the s151 Officer.

**(4) DELEGATION TO OFFICERS**

- (a) That for the avoidance of doubt and without prejudice to any of the powers contained in Article 14 of Part 2 of the Council’s Constitution on the Function of Officers, the s151 Officer shall have full delegated powers to act on behalf of the Council on all matters relating to the Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Accounts Receivable Debtors including (without prejudice to the generality of the delegation) entry into any business rate pools, pilots,

**assessments, determinations, recovery, enforcement and, in accordance with the statutory scheme, full delegated powers to act on behalf of the Council with regard to all aspects of the granting of Discretionary and Hardship Rate Relief to qualifying ratepayers.**

**(5) HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

- (a) Approve the HRA budget as set out in section 5.**

**(6) PREPARATION OF ACCOUNTS**

- (a) That in preparing the Final Accounts for 2023-24, the s151 Officer be empowered to take appropriate steps to secure the best advantage for the Council's financial position.**
- (b) That the s151 Officer be empowered to deal with items which involve the transfer of net spending between the financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25 in a manner which secures the best advantage for the Council's financial position.**
- (c) That the s151 Officer report any action taken in pursuance of 10.5(a) and 10.5 (b) above when reporting on the Final Accounts for 2024-25.**

**(7) COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT 2024-25**

- (a) That the council tax base figures for 2024-25 calculated by the Council at its meeting on 9th January 2024 in respect of the whole of the Council's area and individual parish and town council areas be noted.**
- (b) That the only special items for 2024-25 under Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 are local parish and town council precepts and no expenses are to be treated as special expenses under Section 35(1) (b) of that Act.**
- (c) That the Council Tax Requirement, excluding parish and town council precepts, be calculated as follows:**

<b>Gross expenditure</b>	<b>£1,454,259,600</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>£1,204,095,315</b>
<b>Council Tax requirement (inc Parish precept)</b>	<b>£250,164,285</b>
<b>Council tax base</b>	<b>144,890</b>
<b>Basic amount of council tax</b>	<b>£1,726.58</b>
<b>Adjustment in respect of parish and town council precepts</b>	<b>£ 24.72</b>
<b>Basic amount excluding parish and town councils</b>	<b>£1,701.86</b>

(d) That the precepts of parish and town councils are noted and the resulting basic council tax amounts for particular areas of the Council be calculated as follows:

<u>Parish or Town Council Area</u>	<u>Local Precept</u> £	<u>Council Tax Base</u>	<u>Parish/Town Council Tax</u> £	<u>Whole Area Council Tax</u> £	<u>Basic Council Tax Amount</u> £
Addingham	109,000	1,771	61.55	1,701.86	1,763.41
Baildon	316,908	6,305	50.26	1,701.86	1,752.12
Bingley	238,290	8,587	27.75	1,701.86	1,729.61
Burley	278,944	3,034	91.94	1,701.86	1,793.80
Clayton	71,944	2,513	28.63	1,701.86	1,730.49
Cross Roads	46,340	1,016	45.61	1,701.86	1,747.47
Cullingworth	49,730	1,326	37.50	1,701.86	1,739.36
Denholme	60,550	1,212	49.96	1,701.86	1,751.82
Harden	54,795	844	64.92	1,701.86	1,766.78
Haworth and Stanbury	64,107	1,377	46.56	1,701.86	1,748.42
Ilkley	399,414	7,246	55.12	1,701.86	1,756.98
Keighley	1,136,626	15,243	74.57	1,701.86	1,776.43
Menston	131,152	2,342	56.00	1,701.86	1,757.86
Oxenhope	55,360	1,050	52.72	1,701.86	1,754.58
Sandy Lane	15,588	867	17.98	1,701.86	1,719.84
Shipley	189,135	4,702	40.22	1,701.86	1,742.08
Silsden	123,500	3,237	38.15	1,701.86	1,740.01
Steeton with Eastburn	91,261	1,786	51.10	1,701.86	1,752.96
Wilsden	112,500	1,772	63.49	1,701.86	1,765.35
Wrose	36,250	2,198	16.49	1,701.86	1,718.35
<b>Total of all local precepts</b>	<b>3,581,394</b>	<b>68,428</b>			

- (e) That the council tax amounts for dwellings in different valuation bands in respect of the Council's budget requirement, taking into account parish and town council precepts applicable to only part of the Council's area, be calculated as follows:

	Council Tax Amount for Each Valuation Band							
	<u>Band A</u> £	<u>Band B</u> £	<u>Band C</u> £	<u>Band D</u> £	<u>Band E</u> £	<u>Band F</u> £	<u>Band G</u> £	<u>Band H</u> £
All parts of the Council's area other than those below	1,134.57	1,323.67	1,512.76	1,701.86	2,080.05	2,458.24	2,836.43	3,403.72
The parish and town council areas of:								
Addingham	1,175.61	1,371.54	1,567.48	1,763.41	2,155.28	2,547.15	2,939.02	3,526.82
Baildon	1,168.08	1,362.76	1,557.44	1,752.12	2,141.48	2,530.84	2,920.20	3,504.24
Bingley	1,153.07	1,345.25	1,537.43	1,729.61	2,113.97	2,498.33	2,882.68	3,459.22
Burley	1,195.87	1,395.18	1,594.49	1,793.80	2,192.42	2,591.04	2,989.67	3,587.60
Clayton	1,153.66	1,345.94	1,538.21	1,730.49	2,115.04	2,499.60	2,884.15	3,460.98
Crossroads	1,164.98	1,359.14	1,553.31	1,747.47	2,135.80	2,524.12	2,912.45	3,494.94
Cullingworth	1,159.57	1,352.84	1,546.10	1,739.36	2,125.88	2,512.41	2,898.93	3,478.72
Denholme	1,167.88	1,362.53	1,557.17	1,751.82	2,141.11	2,530.41	2,919.70	3,503.64
Harden	1,177.85	1,374.16	1,570.47	1,766.78	2,159.40	2,552.02	2,944.63	3,533.56
Haworth and Stanbury	1,165.61	1,359.88	1,554.15	1,748.42	2,136.96	2,525.50	2,914.03	3,496.84
Ilkley	1,171.32	1,366.54	1,561.76	1,756.98	2,147.42	2,537.86	2,928.30	3,513.96
Keighley	1,184.29	1,381.67	1,579.05	1,776.43	2,171.19	2,565.95	2,960.72	3,552.86
Menston	1,171.91	1,367.22	1,562.54	1,757.86	2,148.50	2,539.13	2,929.77	3,515.72
Oxenhope	1,169.72	1,364.67	1,559.63	1,754.58	2,144.49	2,534.39	2,924.30	3,509.16
Sandy Lane	1,146.56	1,337.65	1,528.75	1,719.84	2,102.03	2,484.21	2,866.40	3,439.68
Shipley	1,161.39	1,354.95	1,548.52	1,742.08	2,129.21	2,516.34	2,903.47	3,484.16
Silsden	1,160.01	1,353.34	1,546.68	1,740.01	2,126.68	2,513.35	2,900.02	3,480.02
Steeton with Eastburn	1,168.64	1,363.41	1,558.19	1,752.96	2,142.51	2,532.05	2,921.60	3,505.92
Wilsden	1,176.90	1,373.05	1,569.20	1,765.35	2,157.65	2,549.95	2,942.25	3,530.70
Wrose	1,145.57	1,336.49	1,527.42	1,718.35	2,100.21	2,482.06	2,863.92	3,436.70

- (f) That it be noted that for the year 2024-25 the Police and Crime Commissioner and West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (WYFRA) have notified their precepts to be:

<u>Precept Amount</u> £	<u>Council Tax Amount for Each Valuation Band</u>							
	<u>Band A</u> £	<u>Band B</u> £	<u>Band C</u> £	<u>Band D</u> £	<u>Band E</u> £	<u>Band F</u> £	<u>Band G</u> £	<u>Band H</u> £
<u>West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority</u>								
11,517,306	52.99	61.83	70.66	79.49	97.15	114.82	132.48	158.98
<u>Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire</u>								
36,118,179	166.19	193.88	221.58	249.28	304.68	360.07	415.47	498.56

- (g) That having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at (e) and (f) above, the Council set the following amounts of council tax for 2024-25 in each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

-	<u>Band A</u> £	<u>Band B</u> £	<u>Band C</u> £	<u>Band D</u> £	<u>Band E</u> £	<u>Band F</u> £	<u>Band G</u> £	<u>Band H</u> £
All parts of the Council's area other than those below	1,353.75	1,579.38	1,805.00	2,030.63	2,481.88	2,933.13	3,384.38	4,061.26
The parish and town council areas of:								
Addingham	1,394.79	1,627.25	1,859.72	2,092.18	2,557.11	3,022.04	3,486.97	4,184.36
Baildon	1,387.26	1,618.47	1,849.68	2,080.89	2,543.31	3,005.73	3,468.15	4,161.78
Bingley	1,372.25	1,600.96	1,829.67	2,058.38	2,515.80	2,973.22	3,430.63	4,116.76
Burley	1,415.05	1,650.89	1,886.73	2,122.57	2,594.25	3,065.93	3,537.62	4,245.14
Clayton	1,372.84	1,601.65	1,830.45	2,059.26	2,516.87	2,974.49	3,432.10	4,118.52
Crossroads	1,384.16	1,614.85	1,845.55	2,076.24	2,537.63	2,999.01	3,460.40	4,152.48
Cullingworth	1,378.75	1,608.55	1,838.34	2,068.13	2,527.71	2,987.30	3,446.88	4,136.26
Denholme	1,387.06	1,618.24	1,849.41	2,080.59	2,542.94	3,005.30	3,467.65	4,161.18
Harden	1,397.03	1,629.87	1,862.71	2,095.55	2,561.23	3,026.91	3,492.58	4,191.10
Haworth and Stanbury	1,384.79	1,615.59	1,846.39	2,077.19	2,538.79	3,000.39	3,461.98	4,154.38
Ilkley	1,390.50	1,622.25	1,854.00	2,085.75	2,549.25	3,012.75	3,476.25	4,171.50
Keighley	1,403.47	1,637.38	1,871.29	2,105.20	2,573.02	3,040.84	3,508.67	4,210.40
Menston	1,391.09	1,622.93	1,854.78	2,086.63	2,550.33	3,014.02	3,477.72	4,173.26
Oxenhope	1,388.90	1,620.38	1,851.87	2,083.35	2,546.32	3,009.28	3,472.25	4,166.70
Sandy Lane	1,365.74	1,593.36	1,820.99	2,048.61	2,503.86	2,959.10	3,414.35	4,097.22
Shipley	1,380.57	1,610.66	1,840.76	2,070.85	2,531.04	2,991.23	3,451.42	4,141.70
Silsden	1,379.19	1,609.05	1,838.92	2,068.78	2,528.51	2,988.24	3,447.97	4,137.56
Steeton with Eastburn	1,387.82	1,619.12	1,850.43	2,081.73	2,544.34	3,006.94	3,469.55	4,163.46
Wilsden	1,396.08	1,628.76	1,861.44	2,094.12	2,559.48	3,024.84	3,490.20	4,188.24
Wrose	1,364.75	1,592.20	1,819.66	2,047.12	2,502.04	2,956.95	3,411.87	4,094.24



(h) That Council notes the movement in Band D equivalent charges for 2024-25 over 2023-24 as set out in the table below.

	Council Tax 2024-25	Council Tax 2023-24	Percentage change 2023- 24 on 2024-25
	Band D Equivalent	Band D Equivalent	
Bradford Metropolitan District Council	1,701.86	1,620.98	4.99%
West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority *	79.49	77.18	2.99%
West Yorkshire Police Authority *	249.28	236.28	5.50%
<b>Local (Parish Council) Precepts:</b>			
Addingham	61.55	56.26	9.4%
Baildon	50.26	48.83	2.9%
Bingley	27.75	27.74	0.0%
Burley	91.94	88.00	4.5%
Clayton	28.63	27.32	4.8%
Crossroads	45.61	New	100.0%
Cullingworth	37.50	34.39	9.0%
Denholme	49.96	45.00	11.0%
Harden	64.92	58.00	11.9%
Haworth etc	46.56	44.52	4.6%
Ilkley	55.12	54.33	1.5%
Keighley	74.57	52.50	42.0%
Menston	56.00	54.00	3.7%
Oxenhope	52.72	40.00	31.8%
Sandy Lane	17.98	18.40	-2.3%
Shipley	40.22	35.00	14.9%
Silsden	38.15	28.70	32.9%
Steeton/ Eastburn	51.10	48.46	5.4%
Wilsden	63.49	54.01	17.6%
Wrose	16.49	15.50	6.4%

**To be actioned by: Director of Finance**

Overview and Scrutiny Area: Corporate

## 90. ALLOCATION OF THE SCHOOLS' BUDGET 2024-25

The report of the Director of Finance (**Document "AM"**) sought Executive approval of the recommendations of Bradford's Schools Forum in allocating the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2024/25 and subsequent recommendation to Full Council. The report summarised the recommendations of the Schools Forum from 10 January 2024. Members were informed that a balanced Dedicated Schools Grant allocation was being set through the use of reserves although it was estimated that £23m of carry forward reserve would be used due mainly to demand pressures within the High Needs Block. The Executive were told that the

forecasted overspend indicated a structural High Needs Block budget issue going forward, the Business Advisor briefly detailed the potential implications of this. It was highlighted that overspends in the High Needs Block were a common reason why authorities were recording cumulative and increasing deficits in their DSG accounts.

The Business Advisor stated that once the budget was set by Council, officers intended to contact the Department for Education funding agency to discuss the financial position and how it could be managed moving forward.

The Leader and Deputy Leader thanked schools and the Schools Forum for the valuable work they undertake in difficult financial times.

**Resolved –**

**That it be recommended to Council:**

- a) **That the proposals for the allocation of the 2024/25 Dedicated Schools Grant, as set out in Document “AM” be approved and accepted.**
- b) **That the total amount of £759.852m to be appropriated in respect of all schools covered by the Bradford Scheme for the Local Management of Schools, so as to establish the Individual Schools Budget for 2024/25 be approved.**
- c) **That the forecasted High needs Block financial position as set out in the report be noted and that Council raise with central Government the need for additional future funding for this area.**

***To be actioned by: Director of Finance***

Overview and Scrutiny Area: Corporate

## **91. THE CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN 2024-25 ONWARDS**

The report of the Director of Finance (**Document “AN”**) proposed the Council’s Capital Investment Plan (CIP) from 2024-25 to 2027-28. The report also included for 2024-25: The Capital Strategy (Section B) and the Investment Strategy (Section C). The report was summarised, and it was highlighted that Section 4 set out the budgeted spend on long term assets over the next four years. One of the recommendations of the report was a further review of the Capital Investment Plan, which would focus on all schemes within the Capital Plan and look for the potential for deferral, reduction, or alternative funding options. The Executive were informed that any review of the Capital Investment Plan would look to reduce financing costs by reducing the amount of spend funded by borrowing.

Attention was given to the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts, and it was stated that in 2024-25 the Council was not planning on doing this as the benefits of these flexibilities were already part of the Councils Exceptional Financial Support request. The Council’s strategy would focus on the use of capital receipts to reduce the borrowing need for the capitalisation direction. It was acknowledged

that the Government were consulting on changes to the capital receipts flexibilities that are open to all Councils without the need to apply for Exceptional Financial Support, and if these proposed changes were proven to be financially beneficial then the Council would seek to take advantage of this.

**Resolved –**

**That it be recommended to Council:**

- (1) That the contents of Document “AN” and the information contained within be noted whilst considering the recommendations to make to Council on the CIP for 2024-25.**
- (2) That the updated Capital Plan for 2024-28, be approved; (Appendix A). Commitments against reserve schemes and contingencies can only be made after a business case has been assessed by Project Appraisal Group and approved by Executive.**
- (3) That it be agreed that the Council undertakes a review of the capital programme.**
- (4) The 2024-25 MRP Policy set out in Appendix 2 to Document “AN” be approved.**
- (5) That the Capital Strategy (including Prudential Indicators), set out at Appendix 3 to Document “AN”, be approved.**
- (6) That the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts policy (section 8) be approved. That authority be delegated to the Section 151 officer to have the option to adjust this strategy and fund transformation projects from capital receipts to ensure that the Council achieves the most advantageous financial position that derives from proposals that are not yet agreed by Government.**

***To be actioned by:* Director of Finance**

Overview and Scrutiny Area: Corporate

## **92. 2024-25 BUDGET PROPOSALS AND FORECAST RESERVES- S151 OFFICER ASSESSMENT**

The Director of Finance presented (**Document “AP”**) which assessed the adequacy of forecast levels of reserves, the risks associated with the budget, the overall financial position of the Council, the developing financial strategy and actions needed and being taken to secure the Council’s long term financial stability and the robustness of the proposed budget for 2024/25.

It was stated that reserves were at a minimum level and would need to be increased in future years. It was added that the Council were supported by Government through the Exceptional Financial Support (EFS), with £80m in 2023/24 and £140m in 2024/25, and this would need to be reflected in the

recommendations to Council to reflect the positive response from Government. The need for financial sustainability was addressed and measures such as revenue savings, reduction of borrowing, sale of assets, income increases, and expenditure control panels from 1 April 2024.

The Director of Finance summarised that the budget was robust and that a Section 114 would not be issued at this stage, although if the actions were undelivered then this would need to be considered in the future.

The Leader thanked the finance department for their work over the past year and acknowledge the difficulty of the budget. It was noted that Executive Members had considered the EQIA assessments alongside the consultation responses. The Leader welcomed the Exceptional Financial Support announced by Government but highlighted that this would need to be repaid, therefore it was necessary to become financially sustainable by identifying opportunities for savings.

Following consideration of all the budget reports, as per the advice from the Head of Finance, the Leader invited Executive Members, Councillors in attendance as well as lead petitioners to ask questions and speak on the items that had been presented to the Executive.

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Families stated that since the inception of the Bradford Children and Families Trust (BCFT) a good working relationship had been developed with the Council and this was constantly improving with systematic improvement evident. The work of the BCFT was praised and the demand pressures were acknowledged.

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Community Safety highlighted the importance of the Household Support Fund (HSF) due to the level of need within society. Partnership working to support people with the cost of living was summarised.

The Leader invited a Ward Councillor to speak on the Victoria Hall petition and it was stated that the Community Asset Transfer was progressing well which was promising. The Council were thanked for their engagement and collaboration with Queensbury Community Programme (QCP). Residents were thanked for their support.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Transport spoke positively about the collaboration between QCP, ward councillors, and Council officers and the progress this unlocked. It was stated that productive discussions were ongoing with QCP and that there was hope that a solution could be found to secure the future of the building.

The lead petitioner for Ford Hill Queensbury Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) addressed the meeting at the invitation of the Leader. The lead petitioner highlighted the level of interest in the petition and spoke about the impact closure of the facility would have. Concerns were expressed regarding gritting services which also operated from Ford Hill HWRC, and increased fly tipping if the HWRC closed. Members were urged to consider how revenue could be generated from the materials deposited at the HWRC sites across the district.

The Leader invited a Ward Councillor to speak on the Queensbury HWRC petition. The detrimental impact of the proposed closure was outlined, concerns were expressed regarding the discrepancies in running costs that had been provided; and the difficulty in obtaining these figures. The importance of accountability and transparency in relation to running costs and the expenditure of public funds was emphasised. It was further added that waste management practices must be financially prudent, and values of materials maximised.

The Leader highlighted the direction of travel set by Government and the subsequent need to cut services and become a smaller Council in light of the Exceptional Financial Support from Government. It was added that 87% of projected spend of the year was on Adult and Children's social care and this was a national funding issue that needed to be addressed.

The Portfolio Holder for Healthy People and Places acknowledged that difficult decisions must be made and highlighted the impact of austerity on Council services and facilities. The Portfolio Holder assured Members that best value was achieved on deposited materials and described the fluidity of the market.

The lead petitioner for Golden Butts HWRC addressed the meeting at the invitation of the Leader and stated that the level of concern regarding the closure of Golden Butts HWRC was evident as seen from the petition and the consultation responses. Concerns were expressed regarding the environmental impacts of the proposed closure, and it was asked if an environmental impact assessment had been completed as part of the consultation process.

A Member of the main opposition group asked what consideration had been given to alternatives to closure of HWRC sites.

The Strategic Director, Place stated that an assessment of the environmental impact of traffic movement was done using expertise from the Clean Air Zone Team and that this information could be circulated.

The Portfolio Holder for Healthy People and Places stated that the proposals were due to funding cuts from Government, combined with increasing demand in the district for Adult's and Children's social care which required a high proportion of the budget. The Portfolio Holder added that alternative mitigations had been considered although none were possible. It was stated that it was not possible to charge for the use of HWRC sites, unless on a commercial basis, and that Bradford were not alone in HWRC closures with other local authorities considering similar proposals.

The lead petitioner for Ingleborough Hall addressed the meeting at the invitation of the Leader and spoke about the importance of outdoor learning alongside the positive experiences of children and staff at Ingleborough Hall. Concerns were voiced regarding the £2.9m estimate to bring the building to standard and whether multiple quotes had been pursued. The lead petitioner argued that alternatives such as Buckden House would not be suitable for all schools due to a lack of catering and a smaller number of beds which would prevent larger year groups from visiting in one group. The alternative suggestions to the closure of Ingleborough Hall were outlined and the impact of closing Ingleborough Hall was highlighted.

The Strategic Director of Children’s Services noted the extensive estimated cost of repairs at Ingleborough Hall and stated that the value of outdoor learning was recognised, and this would continue to be offered at alternative facilities. The lead petitioner was assured that work would be completed with schools to transfer bookings and accommodate needs.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Education, Employment and Skills echoed the importance of outdoor education but stated that the financial situation impacted what could be offered. The fact that alternative provision was available was underlined and the interest in Ingleborough Hall from other parties was noted.

The Leader added that the financial strain the Council faced forced difficult decisions to be proposed such as closures of valued facilities across the district.

A further Member of the main opposition group commented that the CIPFA review was positive but noted that not all of the £350m of savings had been achieved, doubts were expressed surrounding whether budgeted savings could be achieved.

The Leader highlighted the inflation level and cost rises over the previous decade which made it more difficult to achieve savings. The Leader detailed the plans to achieve the savings and to build up the reserve levels of the Council.

The Director of Finance stated the importance of savings being achieved to enhance the financial resilience of the Council and informed the Executive that reserves were depleted with virtually no reserves to fall back on if savings were not achieved.

The Leader of the main opposition group thanked residents and petitioners for their engagement with the budget consultation. The importance and interest in alternatives to proposed closures of HWRC sites was detailed. Concerns were shared with the Executive about the increased cost of fly tipping following the closure of tips, alongside the unsuitability of some alternative sites. The Leader of the Opposition stated that despite previous discussions for Buckden House and Ingleborough Hall to move into a trust model, similar to Nell Bank, this did not transpire and asked why this did not progress.

The Leader addressed the cuts in funding faced by local authorities which consequently resulted in services and facilities being reduced.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Education, Employment and Skills stated that extensive work was undertaken that explored the option to place Buckden and Ingleborough into a trust and detailed why this had not been possible.

**Resolved –**

**That it be recommended to Council that:**

- (1) That Members have regard to Document “AP” in setting the budget, and in particular note the conclusions that provided that :**

- the current and planned actions are successfully concluded ie that the emerging financial strategy is agreed and implemented in full;
- the Government supports the Council with a “minded to” Capitalisation Direction and will agree to do so in future years;
- the recommendations in Document “AP” are agreed and actioned in full;
  - then, in light of a positive response from Government, the overall estimates are sufficiently robust for the Council to set a balanced budget for 2024/25.

**(2) That Members agree:**

- that the level of general reserves is inadequate at £33m and that reserves need to be replenished
- that there is accordingly no planned use of reserves to support the 2024/25 budget;
- to require implementation in full of the emerging financial strategy ie that the Council:
  - identifies an estimated £40m of revenue savings for 2025/26;
  - identifies assets to be sold to generate capital receipts;
  - undertakes a review of the capital programme;
  - considers increasing income;
  - operates expenditure control panels as set out in the report from 1 April 2024;
  - undertakes a full review of financial management and finances of the Council;
  - invests in core functions necessary and subject to business cases;
- any non delivery of planned 2024/25 revenue savings will need to be absorbed within existing cash limited Departmental budgets.

**(3) That Members note:**

- the assessment of the current financial position of the Council;
- that this assessment is the result of emerging and recent work. The situation will change and the estimated financial position and solutions will require continual development and refinement and will likewise vary as the year progresses;

- the s151 officer is not minded to issue a s114 notice at this point working on the basis that the above assumptions will be supported and seen through on time and in full;
- given the extremely challenging financial situation the Council finds itself in, which it has in recent months started to address, if the recommendations are not agreed, or if the assumptions are not delivered as assumed then very serious consideration will be given to the issuing of a s114 notice
- that the 2024/25 savings are being reviewed for deliverability;
- as with all budgets there is the potential for amendments to be proposed/agreed which could change the overall package of proposals. In that respect, it should be highlighted that this statement would have to be amended if a decision was proposed that leads to the Council's reserves reducing below their recommended General Fund balance level. In addition, any other amendments would be considered against the scale of the overall budget and depending upon the extent and nature, may result in a revised statement.

***To be actioned by: Director of Finance***

Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Corporate

Chair

**Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Executive**

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER