

COMMENTARY ON SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2022/23

Inflation

Ongoing price uplifts of £135,000 have been included in service budgets against specific contractual rises and areas of price pressure. In addition the IT software licences budgets have been reviewed and new and unavoidable increased contractual prices to the extent of £17,000 per annum across the services have been reflected.

Pay Award and National Insurance

The proposed pay award of 2% has increased general fund staff budgets by £222,000. Additional national insurance costs are £64,000. Budgets for fixed car allowances and member allowances have also been increased accordingly.

Investment Income

Income has continued to outperform the budget despite the challenges of Covid 19. The budget has been lifted by £750,000 to reflect the income that is likely to be achieved.

Temporary Accommodation

This has continued to be a pressure for the authority and additional costs of £450,000 have been budgeted for 2022/23.

Waste and Street Cleansing

These budgets have been increased by £75,000 to reflect property growth and the resulting uplift in costs. Fees for bulky waste have been increased to bring it in line with other authorities and an additional £24,000 of income is budgeted.

Staffing Changes

Some areas have been identified as requiring more resources as a result of increasing work and demands. A restructure in planning policy has resulted in growth of £20,000 (with some new posts funded via income streams). Additional resources of £20,000 have also been allocated to Legal Services and increased administration support of £11,000 each has been provided to Environmental Health and Planning. An additional £43,000 is included for pensions.

A new team has been set up for climate change. Additional contributions were not required as the team will utilise the environmental improvements budget and one existing post. A charge will also be made to the HRA for improvement initiatives relating to the housing stock.

Revenues and Benefits

Additional costs of £134,000 have been budgeted after an audit of activity levels across the shared service partnership showed increased activity for Dartford. This is mitigated by a budgeted saving on agency and support costs of £30,000 and expected grants of £179,000 from Kent County Council reflecting decisions on

Council tax discounts and exemptions regarding unoccupied dwellings and empty homes. Updates to central government administration grants have added £36,000.

Environmental Health

The full year effect of taking the service in house has resulted in additional salary growth of £47,000.

Bridge Project

As the development agreement comes to an end in March 2022, the contribution of £112,000 to costs is no longer receivable.

Parish Funding

The capacity building fund budget has been reduced by £20,000 with the residual budget to be used to supplement the green grants reserve fund.

Corporate Property

The rents budget has been reviewed in line with current and expected contracts resulting in an income reduction of £40,000 relating to a temporary site. .

Other Budget updates

The budget has been updated for various smaller items including increased Litter and Civil enforcement income £20,000, a £20,000 reduction in the corporate property maintenance budget and an adjustment to the Orchard Theatre budget of £26,000 to reflect the works the Council has paid for.