

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE</b>
<b>Relevant Officer:</b>	Steve Thompson, Director of Resources
<b>Relevant Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Simon Blackburn, Leader of the Council
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	4 March 2020

## **COUNCIL TAX 2020/21**

### **1.0 Purpose of the report:**

1.1 Proposals for Blackpool Council's level of Council Tax for 2020/21 and the General Fund Revenue Budget 2020/21.

### **2.0 Recommendation(s):**

2.1 To consider all information received since the meeting of the Executive on 10 February 2020 including the Final Settlement Funding Assessment announced on 6 February 2020 and to determine whether or not to confirm the Executive's recommendation to Council regarding the General Fund Revenue Budget 2020/21.

2.2 To recommend to Council approval of a level of Blackpool Council's Council Tax for the year 2020/21 of £1,618.39 at valuation band D equivalent (an increase of 3.99% including the 2% Adult Social Care Precept).

2.3 To recommend to Council the level of net expenditure for the General Fund Revenue Budget 2020/21 of £142,084,000.

2.4 To note that the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire's precept for the financial year 2020/21 was agreed on the 20 February 2020 as £211.45 at valuation band D equivalent an increase of 4.96%.

2.5 To note that the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority met on the 24 February 2020 to set its precept for the financial year 2020/21, this was agreed as £70.86 at valuation band D equivalent an increase of 1.99%.

### **3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):**

3.1 The Executive is required to consider the outcome of consultation meetings and surveys before finalising its Budget proposals.

The setting of the General Fund Revenue Budget and the level of Council Tax is consistent with the principles approved by the Executive at its meeting on 10 February 2020.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? NO

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Not applicable – the report once approved will become the Council's new approved Budget

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

Although one of the eight guiding principles of the Council's Medium-Term Financial Sustainability Strategy 2016/17 – 2021/22 is "to keep Council Tax levels as low as possible", Government funding reductions alongside increasing service demands and inflationary pressures on the Council's Budget in 2020/21, in particular Children's Social Care pressures, prevent a Council Tax level any lower than the capped level being prudent or practicable.

The council tax level recommended balances all eight principles with the need to fund and maintain core services. Although the level of Council Tax at valuation band D that is recommended is £1,618.39, the profile of hereditaments in Blackpool with bands A and B comprising 74% of the total means that the average Council Tax payable per dwelling in 2020/21 is estimated at £841.

#### **4.0 Council Priority:**

- 4.1 The report covers both of the Council priorities:
- "The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool"
  - "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience"

#### **5.0 Background Information**

- 5.1 At its meeting on 10 February 2020, the Executive considered a report of the Director of Resources that recommended to Council approval of a net expenditure for the General Fund Revenue Budget of £142,084,000 that would result in a level of Council Tax for the year 2020/21 of £1,618.39 at valuation band D equivalent. This is an increase of 3.99% including the 2% Adult Social Care Precept.

- 5.2 The Final Settlement of Blackpool Council's 2020/21 Settlement Funding Assessment was announced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 6 February 2020. There were no changes to the Provisional Settlement Funding Assessment of £63,300,000 for 2020/21.
- 5.3 As part of the final Local Government Finance Settlement the threshold for 'excessive' Council Tax increases for 2020/21 was confirmed at 4%, an increase of 4% or more requiring a local referendum to be held. This 4% threshold includes the additional 2% allowed for expenditure on Adult Social Care and 2% for other expenditure. The level of Council Tax recommended in this report will not invoke this requirement.
- 5.4 Besides the ongoing dialogue with the trade unions throughout the budget-setting process, consultation has taken place via community engagement meetings and the Council has also undertaken two engagement exercises to seek comments and ideas on the Budget, one aimed at individual residents and staff which attracted 127 responses and the other aimed at stakeholder organisations which received 21 responses. Both sought views on Council priorities and services at a broad level and asked for comments on ways in which the Council could save or generate money. Wider consultation has taken place via the Council's extensive corporate communication methods which include media briefings. Also a Budget Scrutiny Panel was held on 24 February 2020 which considered the impact of the 2020/21 Council budget proposals. The minutes from that meeting will be circulated separately to members once produced.
- 5.5 The precepts of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire was agreed on the 20 February 2020 as £211.45 at valuation band D an increase of 4.96%. The Lancashire Combined Fire Authority's precept for the year 2020/21 was agreed on the 24 February 2020 as £70.86 at valuation band D equivalent an increase of 1.99%.

5.6 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.7 **List of Appendices:**

Appendix 2a: Equality Analysis (EA)

6.0 **Legal considerations:**

- 6.1 There is a duty for major precepting authorities to issue a precept for 2020/21 before 1 March 2020. For other local authorities including Blackpool Council there is a duty to set 2020/21 budgets before 11 March 2020.

**7.0 Human Resources considerations:**

7.1 Human Resources considerations were outlined in the General Fund Revenue Budget 2020/21 report.

**8.0 Equalities considerations:**

8.1 In the course of developing this year's Council Tax proposal, officers have considered whether there could be unintended adverse impacts on people because of shared characteristics protected by the Equality Act.

8.2 The Council believes the policy will not have any adverse or indirectly discriminatory effects. In particular, we have analysed the impact on vulnerable groups and people who share the protected characteristics under the Equality Act.

8.3 A full Equality Analysis report into the detailed budget proposals within the Revenue Budget has underpinned this consideration. This analysis, together with other information available to us gives us a picture of the needs of a community that consistently is ranked at the top of the most deprived in England in terms of income, employment and health.

8.4 In regard, to impact, the Council believes the proposals are the best that we can do to continue to protect core services to vulnerable people and communities, together with the need to balance the budget and move to a greater self-sufficiency with regard to income and tax-raising given the future reductions in central government grant support outlined in the Medium-Term Financial Sustainability Strategy.

8.5 A summary of the Council's equalities analyses of the consequences of the budget proposals on services and their users is attached at Appendix 2a.

**9.0 Financial considerations:**

9.1 As outlined in this report.

**10.0 Risk management considerations:**

10.1 A Risk Analysis was produced for the General Fund Revenue Budget 2020/21 report to the Executive on 10 February 2020 - this remains applicable.

**11.0 Ethical considerations:**

11.1 In the context of a budget savings requirement of £19.65m in 2020/21 with inevitable reductions to some services, a Council Tax increase of 3.99% which will yield £2.31m is a necessary contribution to ensure that key Council services are maintained.

**12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:**

12.1 Consultation meetings on the broad budget position facing the Council have always been undertaken with the community equality groups. The Council's Director of Resources or his representative has often personally attended and briefed a number of these groups over this period.

12.2 Wider communication has also taken place via the Council's extensive corporate communication methods, which include website, social media, media briefings, press statements and interviews.

12.3 Once specific proposals were published in January 2020, detailed consultations with all affected stakeholders - amongst them staff, service users and communities of interest/equality groups – have taken place. The outcomes of these consultations have been considered by key decision makers and accordingly have informed the final proposals contained in the budget.

12.4 Consultation with the trade unions with regards to staffing issues has been embedded into normal working practices and has also met all formal consultation requirements.

**13.0 Background papers**

13.1 Budget working papers and above consultation minutes and feedback.

**14.0 Key decision information:**

- |      |   |         |
|------|---|---------|
| 14.1 | Is this a key decision?   | Yes     |
| 14.2 | If so, Forward Plan reference number:                               | 29/2019 |
| 14.3 | If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? | No      |
| 14.4 | If <b>yes</b> , please describe the reason for urgency:             |         |

**15.0 Call-in information:**

15.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

15.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**

**16.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):**

Date informed: 25 February 2020      Date approved: N/A

**17.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):**

17.1

**18.0 Executive decision:**

18.1

**18.2 Date of Decision:**

**19.0 Reason(s) for decision:**

**19.1 Date Decision published:**

**20.0 Executive Members present:**

**21.0 Call-in:**

**22.0 Notes:**

22.1

