

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**CABINET – 23 FEBRUARY 2017
COUNCIL – 2 MARCH 2017****SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2017/18 TO 2019/20****REPORT OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR AND THE CHIEF FINANCIAL
OFFICER****LEAD MEMBERS CLLRS S. DAVIES AND L. CARTER****1. INTRODUCTION**

This report seeks approval of the Service & Financial Planning strategy for the three year period 2017/18 to 2019/20 with specific budget proposals for 2017/18. This overview report, along with other linked reports on the agenda covering:-

- The medium term Capital Programme
- The Treasury Management Strategy and
- Prudential Indicators

form the Council's overall Medium Term Service & Financial Planning framework and proposes the service priorities and budget for 2017/18. Most of the savings required in 2017/18 were approved by Council in March 2016 as part of a two year strategy. However, this report includes details of some additional savings proposals and investments for 2017/18 and sets out our approach to developing the further savings that will be required through to 2019/20.

The Council published its draft budget proposals for 2017/18 – 2019/20 on 5 January 2017 when they were approved for consultation by the Council's Cabinet. A one month consultation period on the Council's proposals commenced on 6 January 2017 and ended on 5 February 2017. The results of the consultation exercise are summarised in section 20 below with further information detailed in Appendix 14.

2. OVERVIEW.

When the Coalition Government was formed in May 2010 they committed to eliminating the national budget deficit. This remains an objective of the current Government although the target date for achieving a balanced national budget has slipped considerably. However, the Government has also protected many areas of public spending - but not local government. Councils have therefore faced very significant reductions and this is set to continue for

the duration of this Parliament so councils will continue to be hit very hard meaning that difficult choices about priorities have to be made.

Unlike the Government, the Council has a statutory responsibility to achieve a balanced budget each year. In order to achieve a balanced financial position this Council will have made savings of £96m pa by the end of this financial year, meaning that every year we now have £1,300 less to spend delivering services to each household in the Borough. The Council has sought to do this in ways that protect front line services as far as possible and where services to the public are affected to do this in as compassionate a way as possible. Despite the reductions that we have had to make, the Council is still a large organisation delivering many services to local people and it is essential that we use our remaining revenue and capital resources as effectively as possible to deliver the greatest possible benefit for local people.

The Council has consistently said that it will continue to protect the most vulnerable in our society and prioritised the protection of services to vulnerable adults and children in our community. The Council is committed to ensuring that we always meet the assessed needs of vulnerable people but this does not mean that we can continue to deliver the same services in the same ways. We have to make changes but will always place priority on these essential services and will not let financial pressures due to Government cuts mean that we fail to meet the assessed needs of the most vulnerable. To do this, we have also had to be innovative in identifying ways to generate more income to fund key front line services.

The Council has sought to generate income by adopting a more commercial approach whilst seeking to recognise and manage risks as far as possible. We were the second council nationally to open a solar farm and are currently investing in NuPlace a wholly owned company that will rent over 400 good quality homes, mainly at market rents. Both of these schemes generate a profit after paying the loan used to fund the investment and other operating costs. The profit from these and other commercial projects and from our participation in the West Mercia Energy Joint Arrangement is used to help reduce the amount of cuts that we would otherwise have to make to the services that the Council provides.

The Council is also committed to investing in the Borough's future. Ensuring that Telford & Wrekin is an attractive place to live, work and visit is essential if we are to attract new businesses that will create jobs and bring prosperity to the area and the people that live here. The Council also benefits from retaining a share of any additional business rates which helps to minimise the cuts that we have to make to services. Under Government proposals the share of additional business rates growth that is retained will potentially increase to 98% before the end of the current Parliament making growth of the local business rates base even more important for the future financial viability of Council services. As part of our "Business Winning, Business Supporting" Approach, the Council is investing an additional £50m in our Property Investment Portfolio which will largely be invested within the Borough in new and also existing industrial, commercial and property holdings. The

net return after debt charges will be used to support front line services as will additional retained income from business rates.

In March 2016, the Council set a medium term budget strategy with specific detailed proposals for both 2016/17 and 2017/18. Key features of which were:-

- Given the Government's decision, after 5 years, not to provide council tax freeze grants in future a decision to increase council tax by 1.2% each year from 2016/17 through to 2019/20.
- A decision to implement the Government's new "Adult Social Care precept" equivalent to a further 2% council tax increase each year from 2016/17 to 2019/20.
- To implement a package of savings totalling £30m over the two year period 2016/17 – 2017/18. This package of detailed savings proposals was consulted on last year, when we received over 4,000 comments, and as a result it is not necessary to consult on these savings proposals for 2017/18 again.
- A commitment to continue to work with partner organisations, including Town & Parish Councils and voluntary sector and community groups to seek to identify ways to mitigate the impact of some of the cuts to services that we can no longer afford to provide. These discussions have been very successful and the Council is committed to extending this approach further.
- Despite the unprecedented cuts in grants from Government, due to our strong financial management and our success in bidding for external funding, usually for specific capital projects e.g. to fund infrastructure rather than for revenue (or day to day running costs), the Council made a number of investments. These included:-
 - Over £50m being committed for transport and highways improvements over the medium term. These projects are funded by specific capital funding that the Council successfully bid for from the DfT, DCLG and from the Marches LEP as well as from Section 106 agreements that the Council has negotiated with developers together with some funding from the Council's own capital resources.
 - An investment of over £50m in NuPlace, the Council's wholly owned housing company with the profit being used to protect front-line services from cuts.
 - Investing over £25m in the Council's Property Investment Portfolio to improve and develop industrial, commercial or retail facilities in order to support new and existing businesses, create and protect jobs and generate increased business rates income and rental income (in excess of all associated costs) to be used

to help protect front line services from some of the impact of Government cuts. This scheme has been very successful and further funding of £30m has subsequently been approved by Council to extend the initiative further.

- Spending just under £4m over two years to roll-out Superfast Broadband to parts of the borough where there is no superfast broadband infrastructure and broadband suppliers are unlikely to invest.

Following the success of our Community Pride Fund in 2014/15, which was oversubscribed, a £1m Community Pride Fund for 2017/18 was included in the budget proposals.

- Identification of funding to campaign for the protection of services at the Princess Royal Hospital which is a key priority for the Council as well as other communication and marketing priorities.

The Cabinet remain committed to this medium term financial strategy which received widespread support during the very extensive consultation undertaken last year. This included consideration of 194 detailed savings proposals that met the need for savings in 2016/17 and the vast majority of what was required for 2017/18. The Council has therefore taken the opportunity to improve the way that future savings proposals are developed and consulted upon. This approach is set out in section 10.2 of this report.

The consultation process this year has therefore focussed in particular on whether local people think that the Council should implement the Adult Social Care precept at a faster rate than the Government originally proposed. When the Government announced the Autumn Statement in November and then published the local government finance settlement in December 2016 they did not make any additional ongoing funding available for adult social services despite the widely recognised severe funding challenges facing councils. However they did propose that councils could increase the speed with which the Adult Social Care precept (which is effectively an additional council tax) could be implemented. The Government had originally assumed that all eligible councils would implement the maximum 8% Adult Social Care precept over 4 years at the rate of 2% each year from 2016/17. However, in recognition of the funding pressures they offered the opportunity to implement the remaining 6% over 2 rather than 3 years.

This, when added to the general council tax increase proposed by the Council of 1.2% (to offset the impact of the Government's decision to cease paying any further council tax freeze grants), would mean a total council tax increase of 4.2% which would present local residents with a greater challenge when inflation and the rate at which people's incomes are increasing is generally much lower than this.

The consultation process included a survey of community panel members, an online survey and attendance at a number of forums including the Senior Citizen's Forum, Young People's Forum, Business Board and Town & Parish Council Forum etc. where the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnership and Commercial Services outlined the Council's financial challenges and the Cabinet's proposals to meet them.

The overall results of the consultation are summarised in section 20 below with further information detailed in Appendix 14. **However, having considered the responses to the consultation, it is now recommended that the Council should continue with its previously agreed strategy that Council Tax should be increased by 3.2% in total for 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20** as there is not sufficient support for the Government's proposal to accelerate the implementation of the Adult Social Care precept and despite the very significant financial challenges facing the Council, we are very aware of the financial challenges that are also being faced by many in our community.

Key proposals for 2017/18 include:-

- Managing a further reduction of 25.9% to our Revenue Support Grant from Government next year (based on the provisional settlement as at the time of drafting this report the final settlement has still not been received although it is not expected to be significantly different). However, if additional funding is received by the Council it will be used to support Adult Social Services and any further reduction would be offset by reducing the contingency. The reduction in the provisional settlement of 25.9% is in line with the 4 year settlement provided in principle by the Government last year although this "offer" was then subject to approval of the Council's "Efficiency Strategy". Confirmation that our Efficiency Strategy has been approved by the Government and therefore confirmation of the 4 year grant settlement was received in November 2016.
- Dealing with the reduction in our Revenue Support Grant from Government Whilst Maintaining Our Commitment to continue our existing policy of transferring grant to Town & Parish Councils in respect of Local Council Tax Support. In line with the agreement made in January 2013 the amount available to allocate to Town & Parish Councils in 2017/18 is £0.186m following the latest cut of 25.9% to the Council's (provisional) Revenue Support Grant next year.

Council Tax

- A Council tax increase for 2017/18 of 1.2% in line with the medium term strategy agreed last year.
- To again implement the Government's assumed "Adult Social Care Precept" in line with the Government's original plans, this is equivalent to a further council tax increase of 2%. (Therefore in total, that part of the council tax bill relating to this Council's spending would increase by 3.2% next year.)

Savings Proposals

- To continue implementing the package of savings and efficiency measures agreed in March 2016 but with the additional savings and efficiency measures for 2017/18 set out in Appendix 1.
- To develop detailed savings proposals for 2018/19 and 2019/20 to cover the expected budget shortfall of £15 - £20m over this two year period. Our approach to further savings will be closely aligned to the Council's "Being the Change" strategy and summarised in section 10.5 of this report. Work to develop these options for future service provision will be undertaken with partners, service users and the community in line with our co-operative working principles. The approach is explained in more detail in sections 10.2- 10.4 of this report.

Investment in Capital Projects

An updated proposed medium term capital programme (2016/17 to 2019/20) totalling over £280m is included in the Capital Programme report also on this agenda which details proposed capital investments. These include:-

Pride Programme-

- ❖ Funding for a further major investment in improvements to local roads and associated infrastructure of £20m as part of the Council's continuing Pride Programme of environmental improvements. This is scheduled over a two year period commencing April 2019.
- ❖ £1m to fund repairs to structures such as bridges and retaining walls in 2017/18 as a further extension of the Pride Programme. Many of these structures are now very old and this will ensure that they remain safe.
- ❖ £1m to fund investment in small scale Pride projects particularly local regeneration projects, over the years 2017/18 and 2018/19. A report detailing how this will be allocated will be brought forward to a future Cabinet meeting.
- ❖ The capital programme for 2017/18 already included £1m for in Community Pride Fund. It is now proposed to double this funding so that £2m is available. £1m will be for capital projects and £1m will be available to support revenue projects. Details of how this

funding will be allocated will be brought forward to a future Cabinet meeting.

Other

- ❖ Funding for further investment in NuPlace, the Council's wholly owned housing company of £13.4m. A report detailing the proposed use of this allocation will be brought to Cabinet in the near future.
- ❖ A doubling of the ICT capital programme from £1m to £2m pa for the three year period 2017/18 to 2019/20. This will enable investment to be made resulting in increased efficiencies and ongoing cost savings as well as ensuring that the Council's ICT network is robust.

Investment in Revenue Projects.

As well as the above new capital programme investments, it is proposed to use funding from a rigorous review of one-off resources to fund some one-off investments of a revenue nature. These include:-

Pride Programme

- ❖ Investment of £1.4m one-off resources over the 2 year period 2017/18 – 2018/19 to improve pavements across the Borough which is a further extension of the Councils comprehensive Pride Programme of environmental improvements.

Other

- ❖ Safeguarding vulnerable children and adults is our top Council priority. We continue to ensure that services have the financial resources to do this and are making available additional funding of £4.959m for Children's safeguarding in 2017/18 compared to what was originally planned. We are also making £2.122m more funding available in 2017/18 than originally planned for our Early Help & Support services to help phase in the cuts that we are being forced to make. We have also set aside funds to provide a £2.5m "draw-down budget" for Early Help and Support services in 2017/18 through to 2019/20 to protect and support vulnerable adults.
- ❖ Investment of £275,000 one-off resources over 2 years starting in 2017/18 in Destination Telford initiatives to promote Telford as a place to visit for leisure or to do business, for businesses to invest in and for people to come to live.
- ❖ £500k of one-off resources will be added to £195k previously identified to create a new £695k Partnership Capacity Fund to support the extension of new approaches to joint working with voluntary sector and other community groups aligned to the achievement of ongoing savings.

- ❖ In addition £1.5m of one-off resources will be transferred to supplement the Invest to Save/Capacity fund. This will partly be used to pump prime further “devolution” deals with partner organisations and community groups for example it may be possible to support groups to maintain/improve green space, pavements/walkways etc. where this helps to reduce Council expenditure in these areas and/or supports the Council’s “Green Guarantee”. This funding will also support the delivery of cost improvement plans across the Council but particularly in Safeguarding and Early Help & Support.
- ❖ £250k of one-off resources will be earmarked to fund organisation development initiatives. These will ensure that our smaller workforce are properly equipped to undertake their often new and much broader roles as we continue to shrink our workforce.
- ❖ The Council contribution to the Food Bank is now budgeted on an ongoing basis rather than from time limited funding recognising the critical support that this organisation provides to many local people. This represents a total commitment by the Council of more than £130,000 over the period 2016/17 to 2019/20.

The Government has also, exceptionally, announced that councils may use new capital receipts generated during the three year period starting 1 April 2016 to fund the one-off costs of transformation. Effectively the Government are recognising that councils now face extreme financial challenges and are having to make fundamental changes to the way that services are delivered necessitating massive change programmes often with significant upfront one-off costs. The Government relaxation does have an implication for ongoing debt charges as debt levels will be higher than they would otherwise have been but this is a pragmatic solution to the severe challenges faced by local authorities. This new flexibility, albeit temporary, has enabled a review of one-off resources to be undertaken and some funds to be identified that can now be invested to support priorities and budget pressures that would otherwise have had to have been used to fund these one-off costs of service transformation. This sum has been further supplemented by a rigorous review of all other one-off resources and a review of financial risks not offset by specific reserves or provisions. This review included consideration of the remaining £233k set aside from the sale of the Bucks Head public house for potential investment in community facilities in conjunction with AFC Telford. This funding has been set aside since December 2013 pending receipt of acceptable proposals from the Club. Other than the release of £45k as a loan to fund essential fire safety and other works at the ground no other acceptable proposal has been received and it is therefore recommended that the remaining funding is de-committed and used to part fund a replacement 3G pitch in Madeley, which was a financial commitment

facing the Council. Details of all reserves and provisions are set out in Appendix 9.

As well as consultation with the public and business community, the Council's cross party Finance & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee has also held a series of meetings to consider the proposals put forward by the Council's Cabinet and by the main Opposition group. A report prepared by the Scrutiny Committee summarising their conclusions is included as Appendix 12.

3. SUMMARY

- 3.1 Since 2010, Telford & Wrekin Council has faced cuts in the grant we receive from Government whereas prior to this date the grant would increase each year to recognise inflationary and other pressures. The scale of these cuts and the protracted period over which they continue to be made are unprecedented. The cuts in our grants are being made at a time when demand for many services, such as safeguarding children against harm or neglect and Adult Social Care have been increasing. These factors combine to place this Council, like most others, under extreme financial pressure.
- 3.2 However despite our severe financial constraints, Telford and Wrekin is a progressive Council with ambitions to improve the Borough and the lives of residents. We are tackling the impact of the Government's sustained grant cuts head on and finding new ways to deliver services and to generate income to help offset some of the grant cuts. We have a long track record of sound financial management and innovative solutions.
- 3.3 Our medium term service and financial planning strategy sets out how as a Co-operative Council, the organisation wants to take forward the Borough over the medium term. It is a vision which is centred on building a strong local identity and resilient and healthy communities by driving housing and economic growth whilst protecting and enhancing our reputation as a "green town".
- 3.4 Despite the severe financial challenges we face, our mission is clear. We are attracting new jobs and investment and promoting growth in the borough, whilst seeking to protect, as far as we are able to, priority front-line services and are working co-operatively with our residents and partners to deliver these.
- 3.5 **A Council working for, and together with, our Community:-**

<p>From our on-going engagement with local people over many years, we are clear that they and their families have some fundamental priorities</p>

which we as a Council are working alongside them and in partnership to achieve.

We know that the people of Telford & Wrekin want to live:-

- **In a safe community** – we work in partnership with West Mercia Police to ensure that Telford & Wrekin remains a low crime area. Our work to support and safeguard children from sexual exploitation has been recognised by Ofsted as amongst the best in the country. We have worked to get Telford designated as a White Ribbon Town where domestic violence is not tolerated. Our Public Protection team carry out a lot of unseen work to ensure that local services and facilities are safe, that nuisances are tackled and houses in multiple occupation are better managed. We have made a commitment as a Council to always look after the most vulnerable in our community.
- **In a clean environment** – we work in partnership with TWS and Veolia and also with many Town and Parish Councils and the Parish Environmental Teams to ensure that our streets, parks and public spaces are clean and tidy and that we have first class waste collection and recycling services.
- **In a place with good roads and pavements** – each year we invest in a major programme to repair and maintain our roads and pavements. We have also secured significant amounts of Government funding to improve many roads, roundabouts and junctions so that congestion caused by more cars using our roads in the future will be reduced or avoided. Through our 'Pride in Your Community' initiative we have also made lots of little improvements in communities and on estates that can make a big difference to everyday life.
- **Where there are first class schools and education facilities** – we work in partnership to support our primary, secondary and special schools and performance is amongst the best in the West Midlands
- **Where there are excellent and accessible hospital and GP services** – we are working with many GP practices and Health Services in our neighbourhoods to provide more joined-up health and care services that better meet people's needs there is support in the community to help people to stay healthy. We are also doing all we can to seek to retain full Accident & Emergency services at the Princess Royal Hospital as well as the Women's and Children's Centre.
- **Where they have a job and there is a thriving economy** – through our Enterprise Telford approach, we are attracting more new businesses to come to our Borough every year bringing new jobs. We have also supported many existing businesses to succeed and expand. Through our 'Pride in your High Street' initiative, we have sought to give local businesses the key skills to both survive and thrive in our town centres. We work to protect local jobs, we have lobbied Government to retain key activity in our town such as HMRC, Cap

Gemini and the Land Registry. We also work, through our Job Box and Apprenticeship schemes, to ensure local people, and particularly young people, have the skills they need to get a job.

3.6 While many other councils have focussed on making cuts while neglecting growth and stopped major development projects, we continue to invest to create jobs and safeguard the future prosperity of the Borough and its residents:

- The Council is investing over £50m in NuPlace a wholly owned Council Company for the development of around 400 properties for private rent and over £55m in expanding the Property Investment Portfolio. These initiatives will boost businesses, create jobs and generate additional income for the Council to help reduce the impact of Government cuts. Additional income from these initiatives is expected to arise from increased retained business rates, additional council tax and from New Homes Bonus and the sale of Council services to NuPlace as well as from direct profit (after funding all loan repayments and operating costs) from the projects. These capital investments also offer the Council the prospect of significant capital growth in asset values over the longer term.
- Our £250m Southwater scheme is now open, kick-started by Council investment this has created over 400 jobs, safeguarded a further 300 and created a vibrant heart to the town as well as a regional leisure attraction. The Southwater developments also directly contribute income totalling £1.18m from rental of council owned properties and income from the Multi Storey car park. A further £0.68m is generated from retained business rates income. The net surplus after loan repayments and operating costs is used to support existing front line services and to reduce the cuts that would otherwise have to be made. Work on a new hotel and commercial outlet as well as enhancing the public realm is to commence this year.
- The owners of The Town Centre Shopping Centre are progressing a major expansion programme set to create an estimated 2,000 jobs.
- We opened a new Town Centre library in the Southwater development with Wolverhampton University opening University Centre Telford within the same building.
- Nearly £200m has been invested in improving the infrastructure of our schools and community leisure facilities over the past 6 years.
- Through our 'Enterprise Telford' Strategy, we are making it easier for businesses to come here and grow, offering support to existing companies as well as attracting new firms and helping to create new jobs, supported by our new Growth Hub delivered in collaboration with businesses and the University of Wolverhampton.
- We have invested in land stability schemes along with the Government to protect the Ironbridge Gorge – the area's biggest tourist attraction and the West Midlands region's only World Heritage Site.
- Regeneration schemes completed in Hadley, Brookside, Oakengates, Hollinswood and St. Georges, a total investment of £14.4m

- The proposed medium term Capital Programme report also on this agenda totals over £280m.
- 3.7 On 25th November 2015, the Government announced the results of its Comprehensive Spending Review which set out expectations for economic growth, inflation and tax receipts for the remainder of this Parliament. The Comprehensive Spending Review also set out the Government's spending priorities. As expected the Government reiterated its objective to eliminate its budget deficit and to run a budget surplus by the end of the Parliament. The Government has also continued to protect spending on the NHS, Education and Overseas Aid in real terms and has also now committed to protecting spending on Defence as well as a number of other significant areas of public expenditure. As so many other parts of public spending are now protected, unprotected areas such as Local Government will continue to face significant reductions for the remainder of this decade.
 - 3.8 The Autumn Statement was announced by the Chancellor on 23 November 2016. This was against the backdrop of widespread international economic uncertainties arising from Brexit and the USA presidential election and lower Office of Budget Responsibility forecasts for UK Government tax receipts. Key announcements affecting the Council were summarised in the service and financial planning report considered by Cabinet on 5 January 2017.
 - 3.9 The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on 15 December 2016. However, despite the "4 year Grant Settlement", details of some funding and details relating to Business Rates were not released until January. These and other changes since the report to Cabinet on 5 January 2017 was prepared are summarised in Section 3.12 below.
 - 3.10 At the time of drafting this report, the final settlement had still not been received but limited change is anticipated. Authority to make any final changes to reflect the final settlement is requested in this report for the Chief Financial Officer after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial services by adjusting the additional contingency set aside within the strategy to cover any reduction whilst if additional funding is received adult social care will be prioritised. The Council will continue to make cuts on an unprecedented scale with a cut of around 25.9% in our (provisional) Revenue Support Grant next year alone.
 - 3.11 The Government's low priority for local government compared to other parts of the public sector and its subsequent significant transfer of risks to the local government sector including the introduction of local council tax support rather than centrally funded council tax benefits and local retention of business rates (including significant risks associated with outstanding appeals against business rates valuations prepared by the

Government's Valuation Office Agency) at a time when it is also radically reducing the grant that it gives to councils clearly all combine to increase the level of financial risk faced by councils. It is therefore essential that the Council has a medium term service and financial planning strategy in place that includes strategies to reduce reliance of government funding, that an appropriate level of reserves and contingencies is maintained by the Council and that financial performance across the Council is effectively controlled.

3.12 Key changes from the position considered by Cabinet on 5 January 2017 and the Council's overall service and financial planning strategy for the period 2017/18 to 2018/19 are summarised in the table below:-

	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m
Projected Budget Gap considered by Cabinet on January 5 (included £6.4m proposed cut to Revenue Support Grant in 2017/18 and the assumed savings approved in March 2016 assumed for 2017/18)	(0.692)	12.187	21.563
Additional Adult Social Care Pressures	0.778		
New Social Care Support Grant	(0.778)		
Additional Safeguarding Pressures	0.500		
Invest to Save Funding*	(0.500)		
Impact of changes to grants including New Homes Bonus, Housing Benefit Administration, Education Support Grant, Social Care Support Grant (one-off benefit in 2017/18 not previously taken in to account).	(0.696)	0.045	0.038
Additional business rates after completion of the statutory NNDR1 form which was issued late by the Government reflecting further benefits from growth in the Borough	(0.318)	(0.812)	(0.892)
Additional council tax following approval of council tax base at Council on 19 January 2017 again reflecting financial benefit from further growth and good collection rates			
Other changes	0.076	0.015	(0.003)
Less the council's assumption of 2% council tax increase relating to adult social care precept	(1.151)	(2.340)	(3.566)
Less 1.2% council tax increase	(0.691)	(1.404)	(2.139)
Updated budget gap	(3.472)	7.691	15.001
Add pressures – Appendix 1	5.803	4.645	4.063
Less additional savings adjusted for leakage	(1.779)	(2.380)	(2.723)

detailed in Appendix 1			
Further ongoing savings to be identified	0	(8.750)	(16.000)
Remaining shortfall to be covered from use of one-off resources as part of a planned strategy to deliver a sustainable ongoing budget position.	0.552	1.206	0.341

Notes:-

- The projections assume that all savings approved at Council in March 2016 and the additional savings in Appendix 1 are delivered in accordance with currently anticipated timescales.
- Projections for 2018/19 and 2019/20 will need to be refined as further information becomes available.
- The proposed use of £2.1m of balances over the 3 year period is £2.9m less than was required in the January 2017 report and is prudent following the comprehensive review of available one-off resources that has been undertaken
- The Council has not finalised the impact of the triennial revaluation of the pension fund although provision has been made for increased costs any additional cost will be funded from the additional one-off contingency.
- The Safeguarding Invest to Save Funding of £0.5m will generate ongoing savings but the position for 2018/19 and 2019/20 will be reviewed as additional information becomes available. The total additional investment in safeguarding in 2017/18 is now £5m including the £4.459m pressures included in the January report to Cabinet.
- The total additional investment in the Early Help & Support budget now totals £2.1m being the £1.344m pressures included in the January cabinet report and the benefit of the £0.778m Adult Social Care Support grant now allocated within the budget.

4. BASE BUDGET 2017/18.

4.1 The base budget (i.e. before savings are deducted and pressures are included) is summarised in the table below.

REVENUE BASE BUDGET - BEFORE SAVINGS AND INVESTMENTS

Service Delivery Unit	<u>2017/18</u> <u>GROSS</u> <u>EXPENDITURE</u> £	<u>2017/18</u> <u>GROSS</u> <u>INCOME</u> £	<u>2017/18</u> <u>NET</u> <u>EXPENDITURE</u> £
Health & Well-Being	18,495,218	16,911,593	1,583,625

Governance, Procurement & Commissioning	11,272,491	7,940,507	3,331,984
Customer & Neighbourhood Services	117,097,862	87,106,542	29,991,320
Business, Development & Employment	14,134,793	14,320,420	(185,627)
Commercial Services	37,416,050	33,939,100	3,476,950
Finance & Human Resources	8,570,690	7,177,510	1,393,180
Early Help and Support	58,147,127	15,644,178	42,502,949
Children's Safeguarding	21,460,605	624,961	20,835,644
Education & Corporate Parenting	130,766,719	118,283,879	12,482,840
Co-operative Council	3,515,897	2,008,407	1,507,490
Council Wide Items	5,626,306	8,116,298	(2,489,992)
Netting off of Internal Recharges included above	(35,617,107)	(35,617,107)	0
Total	390,866,650	276,456,288	114,430,362
Contributions To/From Balances	3,725,000	434,750	3,290,250
Net Total	394,611,650	276,891,038	117,720,612

5. ROBUSTNESS OF THE BUDGET STRATEGY

The Council is required to set a balanced budget and under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Council's Chief Financial Officer is required to give a view on the robustness of the Council's financial strategy including the use of balances and of the financial planning process.

Appendix 11 gives a more detailed view, but overall the conclusion of the

Council's Chief financial Officer is that, given the continued delivery of savings which now total over £96m, the long-term service redesign, particularly in relation to Adults and Children's services, the commercial approach being adopted and the investment being made in the borough, it is considered that the Council is pursuing a sound financial strategy in the context of the most prolonged and challenging financial position it has ever faced due to the combined effect of Government grant cuts and increased service pressures.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS.

Members are asked to approve the following recommendations for consideration by full Council on 2 March 2017:-

1. To consider the feedback from consultation summarised in Appendix 14 and from Scrutiny in Appendix 12.
2. To note the Impact Assessments contained in Section 23 and Appendices 2 and 15.
3. To approve the overall service and financial planning strategy set out in this report and the base budget in Appendix 7.
4. To approve a Council Tax increase of 3.2% for 2017/18 (including the new 2% Adult Social Care precept assumed by the Government) and a medium term strategy of increases at the same level for the two years from 2018/19 to 2019/20 to match the period of the CSR and 4 year settlement.
5. To approve the additional savings and pressures detailed in Appendix 1.
6. To note the commitment to continue to work with partner organisations, including Town & Parish Councils and Voluntary Sector and Community Groups to seek to identify ways to mitigate the impact of some of the cuts to services that we can no longer afford and the creation of the £695,000 Partnership Capacity Fund approved by Cabinet on 5 January 2017.
7. In order to support these discussions to note the transfer of £1.5m to the Invest to Save/Capacity Fund approved by Cabinet on 5 January 2017 which will provide further transitional funding for a Partnership Support Programme in line with the delegations and principles approved by full Council in March

2016.

8. To approve the policy framework for Reserves and Balances outlined in Appendix 9.
9. To approve the revenue implications of the medium term capital programme for the period 2015/16 - 2018/19 set out in the Capital Programme report also on this agenda.
10. Delegation of authority to the Managing Director after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services to allocate funding from the Destination Telford and Organisational Development reserves.
11. To approve the Pay Policy for 2017/18 included as Appendix 3 which has already been approved by the Personnel Committee.
12. To delegate to the Assistant Director Business, Development & Employment authority to agree the final details of the Telford Land Deal – including agreement of the Transfer of Liability/Residual Land package after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services.
13. That the Assistant Director: Legal, Procurement & Commissioning be authorised to execute all necessary contract documentation including the affixing of the common seal of the council as appropriate to enable the Council to finalise the Telford Land Deal – including documents required to give effect to the agreement for the transfer of HCA liability/residual land, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services.
14. That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director: Finance & Human Resources to action any virements required following the final allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant and other related Grants as long as they are within the budget and policy framework.
15. That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director: Early Help & Support, in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care, to enter into appropriate Section 256 and Section 75 Agreements under the NHS Act 2006

(as amended).

16. That the Assistant Director: Legal, Procurement & Commissioning be authorised to execute all necessary contract documentation including the affixing of the common seal of the council as appropriate to enable the council to enter into appropriate Section 256 and Section 75 Agreements under the NHS Act 2006.
17. The transfer of a further £2.9m of available one-off resources to the one-off contingency fund approved by Cabinet on 5 January 2017 to provide a total amount of £9.8m.
18. That should any late changes be announced as part of the final Revenue Support Grant settlement, authority to adjust the level of the £9.8m contingency fund to compensate be delegated to the Chief Financial Officer after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services.
19. That this suite of service and financial planning reports serve as the Council's Efficiency Strategy for 2017/18 to enable new capital receipts generated in the three year period starting 1 April 2016 to be used to fund the revenue costs of reform as assumed throughout these reports.
20. To note the CFO's robustness statement in Appendix 11.

7. **SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific priorities?	
	Yes	<i>The service and financial planning strategy is integral to ensuring that available resources are used as effectively as possible in delivering all corporate priority outcomes.</i>
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	<i>The proposals contained in this report may impact on specific groups of people. Initial impact screening on the additional 2017/18 savings proposals,</i>

		<p><i>has highlighted potential equalities, environmental and economic impacts which are included in Section 23. Where a potential impact relating to our equality duty was identified further analysis has been carried out. Information relating to this analysis is show in Appendix 15 and have identified that there is little or no impact on the General Equality Duty.</i></p>
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE		<p><i>A series of borough wide public consultation activities have been undertaken during January and early February. The proposals contained in the report were also subject to Member scrutiny during this period. Final proposals will be considered by full Council on 2 March 2017. The final agreed recommendations will be implemented during 2017/18 and future years.</i></p>
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	<p><i>This report sets out the service and financial planning strategy for the council for 2017/18 and the medium term.</i></p>
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<p>The Council's budget setting process is governed by the Local Government Finance Acts, 1988, 1992, and 2012, and the Local Government Act 2003 (as amended) and supported by secondary legislation and guidance. This report presents the proposed budget which has been consulted upon in accordance with the Council's Policy Framework & Budget Procedure Rules as contained in the Constitution to meet its Public Sector Equality duty as mentioned in the report.</p> <p>It is a legal requirement that the Chief Finance Officer must report on the robustness of estimates made for the purpose of final budget calculations, and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.</p> <p>The Council is required by law to agree its budget for the financial year 2017/18 and to set its Council tax levels for the year 2017/18 before the</p>

		<p>11th March 2017.</p> <p>The approval of the Council's Pay Policy Statement must, by law, be approved by full Council.</p> <p>In Accordance with regulations any vote taken at a budget decision meeting of an authority must be a recorded vote.</p>
<p>OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><i>This report sets out the strategy framework which includes consideration of corporate risks – particularly in relation to the availability of balances.</i></p> <p><i>Environmental assessment is a procedure that ensures that the environmental implications of Council decisions are taken into account. The principle is to ensure that plans, programmes and projects likely to have significant effects on the environment are made subject to an environmental assessment.</i></p> <p><i>The Environmental Assessment aims to provide a level of protection to the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation of projects, plans and programmes with a view to reducing their environmental impact. The environmental assessment detailed in Appendix 2 provides information on the environmental impacts of the budget proposals. Overall, on balance the environmental assessment of the budget proposals is positive.</i></p> <p><i>The economic impacts of the proposals are also detailed in Appendix 2 and are broadly neutral in 2017/18 given the reduction in spending by the Council, much of which will reduce economic activity within the Borough although this is broadly offset by the continuation of initiatives funded from one-off resources and the capital and</i></p>

		<i>revenue investments outlined in the report.</i>
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes/No	<i>Borough-wide impact.</i>

8. PREVIOUS MINUTES.

- Full Council 5 March 2015 – Service & Financial Planning 2015/16 – 2017/18
- Cabinet 5 January 2017 – Service & Financial Planning 2017/18 – 2019/20.

9. OUR ORGANISATIONAL FOCUS

9.1 A large organisation delivering for local residents, businesses and visitors:

Telford & Wrekin Council serves a population of 172,000 people which is forecast to grow to around 196,900 by 2031. As our population grows, it is also ageing and becoming more diverse. The Borough is a key growth hub in the West Midlands in terms of both housing and the local economy and jobs. We have a strong track record at attracting inward investment from both the private and public sector including £70m from the Ministry of Defence and in excess of £80m from Magna (automotive supply chain manufacturing). Manufacturing provides 16.7% (8% England) of jobs in the Borough.

Telford is the focus for much of our housing and economic activity, with the historic market towns of Newport to the north, Wellington to the West and the UNESCO world heritage site of Ironbridge to the south on the banks of the River Severn. Although at face value it is a successful and attractive place to live, Telford & Wrekin is an area of contrast with 15 neighbourhoods ranked in the 10% most deprived nationally bringing very real challenges as to how we ensure that all of our population shares in the prosperity which our growing economy generates.

Despite the significant Government cuts faced by the Council, Telford & Wrekin Council is still a large organisation with a significant revenue budget and capital programme and delivers a wide range of essential services to the local community. These include universal services delivered to residents across the Borough such as waste collection and disposal, household recycling, grass cutting, road maintenance, sports and leisure facilities, strategic planning and development control, economic development etc. to more targeted services such as support for the homeless, adult social services provided to older members of the community and those with physical or sensory disabilities and services to protect vulnerable children from harm, neglect and abuse.

The Council is clear about its focus for the next 4 years. Through our Co-operative approach, we will continue to work to meet the needs of the local community and businesses within the resources we have. Because of the cuts to the grant we receive from Government, this will mean that we have to develop new delivery models and target our resources at those individuals, families and communities in greatest need. Equally, we will not be able to continue to deliver all of the services which we currently do. In this context, our priorities are to:

- Put our children and young people first
- Protect and create jobs as a 'Business Supporting, Business Winning Council
- Improve local people's prospects through education and skills training
- Protect and support our most vulnerable children and adults
- Ensure that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained
- Support neighbourhoods most in need and work to ensure that local people have access to suitable housing
- Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities

9.2 "Put our children and young people first"

Over the past 4 years we have made significant progress in "putting children and young people first". Central to this has been the implementation of "Family Connect" – a single, multi-agency front door for children, young people and families. This has meant that we have enhanced information sharing for safeguarding multi-agency child enquiries. Supporting this we have developed a single, common case management system across children services. The development of this way of working will continue as it is critical to ensuring that children and families receive the "right help at the right time".

The Council has also invested in creating new modern learning environments as part of the "Building Schools for the Future" programme.

9.3 "Protect and create jobs as a 'Business Supporting, Business Winning Council"

A strong local economy is essential to increasing the prosperity of the Borough. We want a thriving, growing economy. Since 2011, the Council has worked successfully to attract and support inward investment into the Borough and to support the retention and growth of our existing businesses. The local economy has grown faster than the national average and we have designated the whole Borough an "Enterprise Area" with incentives for business expansion and investment across all economic sectors.

Under Enterprise Telford we offer a more competitive “investment offer” tailored to individual business requirements than our competitor locations.

As well as creating jobs and driving prosperity in the Borough, this has brought additional revenue to the Council through business rates which has supported our budget for front line services.

In exceptional cases, the Council will negotiate some flexibility around business rates, mainly for major new inward investors but currently these can only extend through to 2019/20. It is now proposed that this deadline is replaced by a rolling 5 year maximum life for any future business rates deals.

9.4 “Improve local people’s prospects through education and skills training”

To ensure that all residents can access the benefits of our growing economy, we need to make sure that they have the right skills to meet the needs of local employers.

Supporting people into work, whatever their age, is a key priority for the Council. To deliver this, our focus is on working better, working smarter with Job Centre Plus and local training providers, to make the most effective use of these resources – both to support people finding work but also to ensure that the skills needs of local employers are met. Our “Life Ready, Work Ready” initiative is focused on ensuring that all young people when they enter the labour market are work ready and in possession of basic employability and life skills.

Educational attainment in the Borough has improved significantly over recent years and standards in our primary schools are now in line or above national averages. The performance across our secondary schools is more variable and several schools now have refreshed leadership teams in place. GCSE results are starting to show improvement but are currently below the national average, whilst 86% of schools in the Borough are classified as good or outstanding by OFSTED, we will continue to support and challenge those schools, which need to improve further.

9.5 “Protect and support our most vulnerable children and adults”

Two thirds (65%) of the authority’s budget is spent on supporting and protecting children and adults. The financial challenges which we face have meant that we have already started to look at different delivery models and to ensure that these services are delivered as effectively as possible to have a positive impact on the lives of people who need support. Ways in which we have done this include:

- Delivered more timely placement of children for adoption.

- Increased the number of foster carers from within the Borough to reduce agency and out of Borough placements.
- Ensured a sharp focus on supporting parents to care for children, especially teenagers, and returning children in care back home where it is deemed to be safe.
- Development of “MyLife”- a web based resource to provide information and advice for residents needing social care support.
- Development and launch of the “Personal Assistants Register” to help residents access the right home support.
- Development and sign off of an “Information & Advice Charter” with the voluntary sector.

As our resources reduce, however, we will need to ever more focus our resources on those in greatest need. Equally, we want to do everything we can to prevent children and adults requiring the most intensive support and interventions. Core to this will be working hard to support people to be able to continue to live in their homes, in their local neighbourhoods – this means working better, more effectively with families, community groups and local organisations to provide appropriate support to enable this to happen.

We have made a start adopting a new approach to working with adult social service users, details set out in Right Help, Right Time to Promote Independence, published in 2015. Promoting independence now sits at the heart of adult social care. We have established a structured and fair system which works to make the very best use of the limited resources that we have. We will promote health and wellbeing through the effective development of universal services ensuring that we have “something for everyone”

We recognise that people want to remain in their own home for as long as possible and we will continue to co-ordinate support around individuals to this end. We have effective systems in place to support carers and will continue to support carers to care for family and friends for as long as they wish to.

We are working with the NHS to support safe and effective discharge from hospitals and avoid inappropriate admissions. This does however pose significant risk to the local authority as the Health system continues to be under significant pressure.

Early signs show that this approach is working, we now need to consider how we integrate locality based services for children, young people and adults.

If we are to successfully reduce the present dependency on public services we must build resilient communities which can help to improve health, and reduce inequalities. We must mobilise assets within

communities, promoting equity and increasing peoples control over their own health and lives by:

- Strengthening communities and building community resources
- Promoting volunteering and peer roles
- Establishing collaborations and partnerships
- Signposting access to community resources

9.6 “Ensure that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained”

Having neighbourhoods which are safe, clean and well maintained is an essential part of making the Borough a great place to live and to attract inward investment.

Over the past 3 years we have invested significantly in our “Pride in our Community” programme to improve the quality of the environment in neighbourhoods along with retendering the household recycling service – saving £30m over the lifetime of the waste contract, delivering a simpler household “purple top” recycling collection service for residents and provision of new household recycling centres which are open 7 days a week. We have also seen local people take on responsibility to improve their neighbourhood with the recruitment of 246 volunteer snow wardens and 416 street champions to date.

We continue to explore new delivery models for neighbourhood services through working with the community and Town and Parish councils which has seen the development over the last 2 years of 12 Parish Environmental Teams (PETs) which has generated an extra £300k per annum of additional funding to enhance the Environment. We are also utilising the Community Payback Teams who have saved the council £175k per annum through the provision of additional labour. This report also includes proposals to use £1.4m over the next two years to improve our borough’s pavements and our £5.2m capital investment into LED lighting right across the borough will see a new contract commence from February 2017 and a LED replacement programme completed over the next 2 years delivering a further £250k per annum in energy savings as a result.

Our priority for next year will be a key focus on Enforcement ensuring a more robust response and consequences for those who commit environmental crime in our borough. Our work to retender for a new Grounds and Cleansing and Highways provider from 2019 will ensure we secure best value as a result of that procurement process.

9.7 “Support neighbourhoods most in need and work to ensure that local people have access to suitable housing”

Across the Borough, there are currently 15 neighbourhoods ranked among the 10% most deprived nationally – areas with deprivation which are comparable to the most deprived inner-city estates. In recent years, the Council has invested in the physical regeneration of local and district centres including: Hollinswood, Madeley, Leegomery,

Malinslee, Hadley, Brookside and Oakengates Centre. The total value of this is £38m. Moving forward, we will place greater focus on the social regeneration of our neighbourhoods most in need.

Whilst we look to ensure that Council services are joined-together to achieve this, our approach will be community-led. We will better engage with local residents and community groups to understand their challenges and to develop new ways in which they can be empowered to overcome the challenges in their neighbourhoods.

Whilst the housing stock of the Borough continues to grow (we expect to deliver well over 1,000 new homes in 2016/17). We want to ensure that all residents can live in good housing. The Council has worked hard through 2016/17 to tackle empty properties through a support package and loan facility in place. To support the ever growing demand for private rented accommodation, we have established and launched a Landlord Accreditation Scheme to support and set minimum standards for private landlords within the Borough and launched “Telford Home finders” a web based lettings agency for accredited landlords. For our most vulnerable, we have significantly reduced dependency on bed and breakfast for temporary housing accommodation.

We have established “NuPlace” a private company building new homes for both market and affordable rent – with 129 of the 132 first phase properties at Randlay and Woodlands now let and over 100 of these now occupied with the others being occupied during December. Phase 2 properties at Matlock Avenue and Madeley are also now being reserved. NuPlace continues our goal to improve quality housing choices for local residents, support the regeneration of a number of neighbourhoods, and create income for the Council to support the delivery of front-line services.

9.8 “Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities”

Good health and wellbeing is crucial because it allows people to maximise their potential and enjoy a fulfilling life. A positive sense of wellbeing is vital for a prosperous and flourishing Telford & Wrekin.

Although there have been some improvements in the health of the population, there remain real health inequalities in the Borough – that is people in the most deprived parts of the Borough live fewer years than people in the least deprived parts.

To address these challenges our new Health & Wellbeing Strategy is focussing on encouraging healthier lifestyles, improving mental health and mental wellbeing and strengthening community resilience and community based support. We are working with local GPs and other partners to develop models of neighbourhood working to support

people to stay healthy and keep well. We are leading the way in developing peer-led approaches to improving health particularly for those on their journey recovering from drugs and alcohol addiction.

10. MOVING FORWARD: OUR MEDIUM-TERM 2017/18 TO 2019/20 SERVICE & FINANCIAL PLANNING STRATEGY

10.1 The medium term service and financial planning strategy approved at Full Council in March 2016 agreed the majority of the detailed savings that were required for 2017/18. Some additional savings proposals are included in Appendix 1 together with details of further pressures. The medium term service and financial planning strategy also set out the proposed medium term approach to Council Tax increases i.e. that these should be 1.2% each year through to 2019/20 plus the application of the Government's new "adult social care precept" - that the 2% figure assumed by the Government should be implemented in full. Views on the proposed total Council Tax increase of 3.2% (or whether the Government's additional 1% increase in the Adult Social Care precept should be implemented) and the additional savings proposals in Appendix 1 were sought during the consultation process.

10.2 A New Approach to Developing Savings Proposals and Community Consultation

10.2.1 Having previously agreed a medium term service and financial planning strategy at Council in March 2016 for the two year period 2016/17 to 2017/18, it is now possible to focus on longer-term planning. In an organisation that will have already delivered £96m of ongoing annual savings by the end of this financial year it is essential that a longer term view is taken as future savings will be more challenging and time will be needed to consult with stakeholders about options and ways to minimise impacts. Therefore a new approach to consultation and the development of savings for the years 2018/19 and 2019/20 will be taken with proposals being developed as soon as opportunities arise and capacity allows rather than co-ordinating through an annual process as historically was the case when resources were not so tight and the need to implement change not so urgent.

10.2.2 The service and financial planning report to Council in March 2016 set out detailed proposals relating to specific savings and the outcome of extensive public consultation relating to these proposals. The 4 week programme of consultation outlined the high level messages in relation to the Council's financial position and also specifically sought views on 32 proposals (out of a total of 194) that were likely to have greatest impact on the community. Following approval of the Council's budget in March 2016, consultation on the implementation of these proposals has continued as appropriate, including consultation during the Summer relating to the future management of a number of libraries and markets within the Borough. We have also been working closely with a

number of community groups and Parish Councils in relation to future management of the Council's community centres.

10.2.3 Based on current estimates, further savings will need to be made during 2018/19 and 2019/20 totalling between £15m and £20m. As the majority of savings until 2018/19 have already been identified this provides us with an opportunity to take a different approach in terms of finalising and consulting on the Council's medium-term Service & Financial Planning Strategy. Although there is a need to bring forward a number of additional savings for 2017/18 (detailed in Appendix 1), consultation has already taken place on the vast majority of savings that are likely to have the greatest impact upon the community in 2017/18. Equalities, Environmental and Economic Impact assessments on the additional savings proposals have been carried out and are summarised in sections 23 and 24 and Appendices 2 and 15.

10.2.4 Our previous approach to budget consultation means we have been able to raise awareness of the Council's financial position amongst partners and the community and to reach a large number of people, however by developing a defined list of savings and consulting on the potential impact of implementing them, we miss the opportunity to develop a wider range of solutions. This can be seen in the work that has been done to secure the future of a number of libraries and community centres. By working with Town and Parish Councils and residents we have been able to develop alternative ways of delivering these services. It is therefore proposed to adopt this approach with those savings to be delivered in 2018/19 and 2019/20 that have the potential to impact directly upon our residents. We will therefore start an earlier dialogue with a range of partners and service users who could assist in developing alternative service solutions.

10.2.5 This report identifies where we need to make savings under the headings of 'Being the Change'. We will proceed to identify where we intend to enter into a dialogue with the community and our partners in relation to service re-design or savings that will impact upon the community. Our approach will involve communication in relation to the Council's strategy for Service & Financial Planning and will identify where we intend to start a dialogue regarding those savings that have the potential to impact directly upon the community. We have also invited Town and Parish Councils to come forward with their own proposals. This dialogue will be supported by the programme of community capacity building that will be delivered across the Council and coordinated by the Community Participation Team. This will enable the community and potential partners to have a greater level of input in developing solutions to some of our most difficult financial challenges. This approach supports our ethos as a Cooperative Council and will ensure that our financial strategy aligns with the themes of 'Being the Change'.

10.2.6 The process of implementing the library savings has followed this approach and has involved the following steps:

- raising awareness of the need to reduce the cost of library provision to the Council
- working with Town and Parish Councils to develop a model of retaining library provision within the Borough
- negotiating a transitional funding support package to enable the movement of libraries to Town and Parish Councils
- carrying out statutory consultation relating to the revised model of library provision within the Borough

10.2.7 This approach differs to the way in which we have previously developed our budget strategy which has involved us developing a range of savings proposals and seeking the views of the community on these proposals. This approach limits the opportunity to work creatively and proactively with residents and other stakeholders such as Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary and community sector. We want to work more closely with these and other partners in identifying options and potential solutions to the budget challenges that we face. As we had already largely set our budget for 2017/18 in broad terms, we have a unique opportunity to take a more open and positive approach to developing our savings proposals for the following 2 years, which will enable us to develop a more creative range of solutions involving our communities and partners. This will include following a similar process to that outlined for libraries above; identifying areas in which there is a need to make savings, working with partners to develop a range of alternatives to make the savings, carrying out consultation on revised ways of delivering services where required, and providing some transitional support, where possible or necessary, to implement the agreed solution.

10.3 Support for alternative service provision

An important aspect of this strategy is ensuring that organisations within the Borough have the capacity to work with us to develop and deliver alternative sustainable service solutions. The budget for 2016/17 included £100,000 that has been set aside from a reserve budget to be invested in building the capacity of the voluntary and community sector in the Borough. The report to Cabinet on 5 January 2017 proposed that an additional £95,000 which is unallocated funding from the Corporate Grants budget is added to this to provide a one off pot of £195,000 that will be invested in building the capacity of organisations that are able to help the Council reduce its service costs and demand on Council services. Following the review of one-off resources that has been undertaken, it is proposed that £500,000 of additional one-off resources are added to create a total **Partnership Capacity Fund** of £695,000. It was recommended and agreed that the use of this one-off fund would include the following;

- grant will be used to build capacity and sustainability of the community or voluntary organisation
- organisations will support delivery of Council savings or reduce demand on council services
- funding will act as pump priming to secure additional external funding
- Allocations from the fund to be approved by the Managing Director after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services.

This fund will complement the existing Partnership Support Fund that is available to organisations that are taking on the delivery of services that can no longer be delivered by the Council. Support will also be provided to organisations to secure external funding via the new Funding Officer post within the Community Participation Team.

10.4 Approach to Future Development of Savings Proposals.

10.4.1 Our approach to Service and Financial Planning is underpinned and informed by our Co-operative Council ethos. This means that we are working together, with the community and partners, to collectively deliver the best we can for Telford & Wrekin with the combined resources we have. We are working to:

- Bring more public services together so that people get what they need at the right place and the right time;
- Involve local people and our employees more in planning and running services; and
- Support our communities better and encourage local people and organisations to do more to help their communities.

10.4.2 Central to this are our Co-operative values which are at the heart of all that we say and do as an organisation:

- **Openness and Honesty** - be open and honest in the way we work and make decisions and communicate in a clear, simple and timely way
- **Ownership** - be accountable for our own actions and empower others with the skills to help themselves
- **Fairness and Respect** - respond to people's needs in a fair and consistent way
- **Involvement** - work together with our communities, involving people in decisions that affect their lives and be prepared to listen and take on new ideas

10.5 Based on this ethos we have adopted 4 core elements for our medium term service and financial strategy set out in more detail in “Being the Change” to take the organisation forward and help us to deliver the

budget savings projected to be required over the medium term. In summary the 4 core elements are:-

- Focussing on Solving Problems and promoting Social Responsibility and action to manage and reduce demand for services
- Challenging & Changing, Reviewing and Reimagining the way we do things
- Reducing our Dependency on Government Grants
- Being a Modern Organisation with Modern Practices and Where we Always Get the Basics Right

10.5.1 Focussing on Solving Problems and promoting Social Responsibility and action to manage and reduce demand for services – Target for additional savings over 2018/19 and 2019/20 is £8m.

- **“Demand Management”** - ensure that resources are targeted at those residents most in need of help. This is about understanding why people use our services and keeping them out of high cost systems.
- **“Prevention”** – avoid problems which place demand on public services by encouraging people to help themselves to prevent needs developing in the first place. This is relevant to the majority of our population and has a lifelong all age focus.
- **“Early Help & the Right Help”** – when individuals and families do need help and support, we want to identify them quickly and identify the right, effective support first time to avoid issues escalating and requiring more intensive and expensive intervention but also to avoid long-term dependency on our services. Through a whole Council approach, we will improve the customer journey to provide a better seamless journey for clients.
- **“Think Family – Strengthening Families”** – to target our resources at those families most in need of support by taking holistic approach through a key worker model to “turning around” these families. This is a partner-wide agenda and is being led by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and is linked with Enterprise Telford through which we aim to deliver more jobs to promote economic independence.
- **“Working in Communities”** – to reduce demand by targeting our resources at areas in the greatest need of support and working more effectively with the resources which are already in place in our communities. Strong communities place the least demand on public services.
- **“Building Community Capacity”** – the need to harness the resources of the community, community groups and Town And Parish Councils, in helping to develop solutions to improve outcomes for our residents. This is core to our Co-operative approach, the Council doesn’t have a monopoly on the resources or solutions to resolving challenges in our communities. This approach will be strengthened by the new £695,000 Partnership Capacity Fund totalling referred to in section 10.3 above.

- **Community self-help** – building people’s social support networks by making best use of the resources and assets which are available in a local area – this helps people remain in and be an active part of their local community
- **Effective co-production** – supporting the development of service provision by communities and moving away from a narrow focus of meeting needs through practitioner provided services.

10.5.2 Challenging & Changing, Reviewing and Reimagining the way we do things – Target for additional savings over 2018/19 and 2019/20 of £5m.

We continue to evaluate the organisation to understand what is working effectively and efficiently and what needs to be changed. Through this we are able to create and seize opportunities. Examples of what we have done and will continue to deliver include:

- **Redesigning services and business process reengineering** to ensure that they are delivered in the most efficient and effective manner.
- **Redesigning and managing our “front-door”** to enable users to get the right service at the right time. Examples include “First Point for Business” and “Family Connect”.
- **Challenging Policies** – e.g. for calculation of Minimum Revenue Provision (changing debt repayment from equal instalments of principal to an annuity basis with cumulative revenue benefits of over £40m by 2019/20).
- **Working with the private sector** – including the Telford Business Board and major local employers, the management of the Telford Town Centre shopping centre, house-builders and our Universities to drive economic growth in order to generate jobs and increased prosperity for the residents of the Borough and to generate additional income for the Council from business rates and New Homes Bonus and council tax on new homes built in the Borough. Building on this progress, moving forward there are some major ways that we will change as an organisation:
 - **“Channel Shift”** by providing services and information in the most efficient way. For example, providing clear and robust information on the Council’s website will mean that residents can “self-serve” and not need to contact the Council in other less efficient, more expensive ways such as by telephone or face to face. Other examples include the use of smart phone “apps” such as our Everyday Telford App which allows people to report neighbourhood issues directly to the Council.
 - **“Improving Business Intelligence”** – we are a data rich organisation, but all services need to be better at turning this data into intelligence to understand who is using our services and the outcomes they receive. As we continue to change the organisation we need to understand the

impact of these changes both in terms of efficiency but also in terms of impact on budget and the community too.

- **“Developing new ways of delivering services”** – we will need to be working in an ever more integrated way with our partners including:
 - **Telford & Wrekin NHS Clinical Commissioning Group** – continue to explore how we can work better together to provide and/or commission more effective preventive services in communities and so take pressure off health and social care systems.
 - **Town & Parish Councils** – building on strong working relationships such as Parish Environmental Teams to improve local neighbourhoods and new arrangements for library services in some areas. Are there opportunities for Parish and Town Councils to manage and deliver other services at a more local level?
 - **The Local Strategic Partnership** have committed to making “Think Family – Strengthening Families” as one of their top priorities to drive better data sharing across organisations and more integrated and co-ordinated ways of working to improve outcomes and reduce costs.

10.5.3 Reducing our Dependency on Government Grants – Target for additional savings over 2018/19 and 2019/20 of £2m.

We have already taken significant steps to reduce our dependency on Government Grants and we will continue to drive these forward as grant continues to be rapidly withdrawn by the Government:-

- **“Increasing income through trading our existing services”** – there are many Council services that already “trade” outside the organisation and secure income. Primarily ICT, Finance and H.R. Services, Facilities Management and Cleaning, Property Management and Catering. A key purchaser of these services are schools – both those in the Borough and in the past 12 months an increasing number of schools from outside the Borough.
- **“New commercial development/projects”** – we have developed a track record on taking on new ventures to deliver income to the Council and protect front-line services:
 - A solar farm providing £4.4m profit over the next 25 years.
 - Established “NuPlace”, a housing company which will provide around 400 new homes for private and affordable rent, with the first homes now occupied.
 - Established a Growth Fund to invest in development of premises for businesses to encourage job creation and retention as well as generating additional rental income and business rates income

We will continue to research and develop new opportunities that can bring in an income stream to the Council. Our approach will always be business case-based.

- **“Maximising existing funding streams”** – there are 3 main areas which we are already progressing and will continue to drive:
 - ***Business Supporting, Business Winning*** – continuing to work to attract new investment and work to support the retention and growth of existing businesses. As well as being the right thing to develop jobs and growth in the Borough, the Council receives 49% of all new **business rates** rising to potentially 98% at some point in the future subject to clarification of Government proposals.
 - ***Growth Through Good Planning*** - this is a whole Council approach by which all services work to support and enable business investment in the Borough. Through this approach we have been ranked by the 2014 Core Cities Report in the top 3 local authorities for job growth and housing growth. Through this the Council will see **new Council Tax** and Business Rate receipts, as well as receiving the Governments’ **New Homes Bonus** for new homes – until any major changes to the local government finance system.
 - ***Property Investment Portfolio*** - a property investment portfolio delivering £5.1m income per annum from rental income.
- **“Securing external funding”** – again we have successfully driven this agenda, including £18.79m through the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership Local Growth Fund. In addition, we have also joined the ***West Midlands Combined Authority*** and are actively working through this to maximise future opportunities for the Borough.

To continue to reduce our dependency on Government Grants, building on our achievements to-date, we must continue to be creative, fast-acting and smart to identify and realise opportunities as and when we identify them.

10.5.4 Being a Modern Organisation with Modern Practices and Where we Always Get the Basics Right – Target for additional savings over 2018/19 and 2019/20 of £2m.

Core to being a modern organisation is continuing to reshape the Council’s relationship with its staff. We must continue to move towards a more flexible, more pragmatic and less bureaucratic approach to decision making. This means:

- Increased autonomy for managers and staff to take decisions
- Greater focus on development through workforce development programmes
- Greater flexibility including wider more flexible working and job descriptions for staff.
- Encourage creative thinking and challenge
- Focus on efficiency and reducing bureaucracy
- Increased staff engagement so that employee representatives will have a greater influence in the organisation

Whilst driving change and reshaping the relationship between the Council and its staff, we will continue to focus on getting the basics right, including:

- **Safeguarding our most vulnerable children and adults**
- **Procurement and purchasing** – ensuring that we maximise value from the services which we procure – this may be direct benefit or a wider benefit to the community for example, social benefit from capital projects including the employment of local people in new build schemes. It is not enough to be led by what the market will provide. We work to influence and shape the market to ensure that tax payers receive maximum value for money. We will improve further our robust contract management to ensure providers and suppliers meet their contractual obligations, review existing contracts to ensure they are fit for purpose and achieving value for money, widely advertise all contract requirements over £5k to achieve optimum market prices, make greater use of framework agreements and get added social value from procurement.
- **Contract management** – ensuring that we always receive the service or products which we have procured through effective monitoring of delivery and renegotiation of contracts.

11. SAVINGS ALREADY DELIVERED

11.1 The Council has faced truly unprecedented cuts to its grants from central Government which have now forced us to make ongoing annual savings of over £96m. The need for savings has increased each year due to Government grant cuts, inflation and other pressures. Ongoing savings delivered by year are detailed below:-

	£m
2009/10	4.156
2010/11	6.725
2011/12	11.659
2012/13	19.069
2013/14	11.306
2014/15	17.204
2015/16	10.237 (Includes in-year Public Health cut)
2016/17	15.743
Total	96.099

11.2 This is equal to a cut of around £1,300 pa in the cost of Council services for every household in Telford and Wrekin. In delivering these savings, we have applied the principle of 'as far as possible minimising the impact on priority front-line services'. This principle remains at the core of our current strategy although it is now inevitable that we have to put some savings proposals forward that do have significant consequences on front line services. Savings delivered to date include:-

11.3 Council Jobs

- Reduced the number of jobs by over 1,520 since April 2010, saving around £28m pa following major redesign and restructuring of the organisation to meet the challenges facing the Council. This has seen 645 vacant posts deleted and 875 redundancies (with a further 39 people under notice as at 31 January 2017 who will leave before the end of the financial year). Through effective redeployment only 104 of these have been compulsory redundancies.
- Redeployed over 3,100 people within the organisation as a result of restructuring with many employees now having been redeployed more than once.
- Since 2009 staff pay has increased by 4.2% while inflation (RPI) has risen by 24.8% cutting staff pay in real terms by 20.6%

11.4 Senior managers

- Reduced the size of the senior management team by 57% which is over twice the national average reduction of “Nearly 23.2%” as reported by the Municipal Journal in October 2015.
- Cut the pay of our most senior post by 30% in real terms.
- Cut the number of middle managers by 45%.

11.5 Back office costs

- Cut back-office costs by around 48% since 2009, saving £10.8m a year. This scale of reduction is significantly greater than what most authorities have achieved through outsourcing or sharing services and has been achieved much more quickly as protracted negotiations with other councils or third party providers have been avoided. Retaining full control of these services also allows maximum flexibility to drive further changes in future and, for some services, generate more income through trading.

11.6 Buying better value services

- Delivered £11.4m procurement savings over the past 8 years by renegotiating and re-tendering contracts for the provision of services.
- Secured savings of £30m over the lifetime of the waste collection and disposal contract.

11.7 Income through growth

- As part of our business winning approach, we expect to generate an extra £7.1m income by 2018, through growth in business rates and council tax since the introduction of the new local government finance system in April 2013.
- We will receive just under £6.5m in 2017/18 from the New Homes Bonus paid by the Government to reward councils for increasing

housing supply which is in line with figures issued as part of the provisional local government finance settlement.

- Increased income from more commercial approaches across our services over the past two years, including increasing income from schools outside of Telford & Wrekin.

11.8 New Commercial Income

As outlined earlier in this report, a major strand of our approach to dealing with the Government's cuts to our Revenue Support Grant has been to increase income. This additional income, after covering associated marginal costs makes a significant contribution to our fixed costs and as a consequence is now a very significant factor in reducing the cuts to front line services that we would otherwise have to make. Significant income streams include the overall positive impact from our investment in homes for rent through our wholly owned company, NuPlace, which is projected to exceed £0.6m in 2017/18, the profit from the solar farm which will exceed £0.2m, the net additional income from the Telford Growth Fund which is boosting the returns from our existing Property Investment Portfolio total income from which will exceed £6.5m in 2017/18 and the contribution made from our success in delivering high quality support and advisory services to schools – whether they be maintained schools or Academies and whether located within the Borough – or increasingly, outside the Borough. The gross income from trading with schools now exceeds £8.5m pa.

11.9 Shared Services, Trade Union Facilities Time, Cabinet Member Allowances

The Council continually reviews delivery options for its services to ensure value for money. A number of services are provided in partnership with other local authorities and statutory agencies. Examples include:-

- The West Mercia Youth Offending Service (WMYOS) established in partnership with Worcestershire, Hereford, Shropshire, health, police and probation. The service is now managed by The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) with genuine integrated working practices ensuring improved outcomes at a lower cost.
- Membership of West Mercia Energy, a joint energy procurement consortium consisting of 4 upper tier authorities.
- We have for some years delivered a number of specialist services through a joint arrangement with Shropshire Council. Telford hosts sensory inclusion and portage whilst Shropshire provides a pan Shropshire adoption service. We are currently exploring a wider partnership arrangement for the adoption service.
- We also work with authorities across the West Midlands through our links to IEWM to put in place regional procurement contracts for agency foster care and residential accommodation.
- Working co-operatively with our Town and Parish Councils such as the Parish Environmental Teams and new arrangements for the delivery of some library services.

- Sharing the administrative costs of the pension scheme by participating in the Shropshire wide superannuation scheme.
- We continue to look for other opportunities for joint working where it can be demonstrated that service users will benefit at a lower cost.
- Trade Unions have agreed a 20% reduction in facilities time payments for directly employed staff.
- Cabinet Members voluntarily reduced their special responsibility allowances by 10% at the start of the previous Administration which the current Administration have continued.

11.10 Council buildings

- Disposed of 27 properties including the former Civic Offices building.
- Reduced the office space we use by a third, saving the Council £2m. p.a.

12. CAPITAL RECEIPTS AND DEBT CHARGES

12.1 The Council's programme of property rationalisation has not only reduced running costs but is also generating significant capital receipts enabling us to fund some investment from internal resources rather than from increased borrowing. To date, capital receipts total £26m. Debt clearly has to be repaid and adds to pressure on the revenue budget so the generation of capital receipts from the sale of surplus assets helps protect essential front line services. This reduces the amount of cuts that would otherwise have to be made.

12.2 The Council, unlike the Government, is not able to borrow to fund revenue services as the Council has to set a balanced revenue budget each year with any shortfall being funded by the use of balances – if available, or from further cuts to spending or increased income.

12.3 Debt repayments represent a long term fixed charge against the revenue budget which reduces the amount of funding available for the provision of front line services. "Good capital investment" can also fund assets which will increase in value over the longer term. Invest-to-Save schemes such as the solar farm or the Housing Investment Programme and investment in the Property Investment Portfolio represent "good capital investment" as they earn a surplus which can be used to help protect front line services as the surplus generated helps to reduce the impact on the revenue budget of Government cuts to our grants.

12.4 In Telford & Wrekin debt repayments in 2016/17 accounted for 6.9% of the net revenue budget (including payment to Shropshire Council in respect of pre-unitary authority debt). This compares to:-

- | | |
|--------------|-------|
| • Birmingham | 26.5% |
| • Shropshire | 9.2% |

- Unitary Authority average 10.0%
- Telford & Wrekin 6.9%

12.5 Debt repayments in the average unitary authority are almost 50% higher as a proportion of net revenue stream compared to Telford & Wrekin. A graph showing the percentage of the net revenue budget allocated to debt repayments in 2016/17 for all unitary authorities is included in Appendix 6. The External Auditor has not raised any concerns about the level of outstanding or planned debt, confirming this in response to a Member question at a meeting of the Audit Committee on 31 January 2016.

12.6 Our programme of asset sales totals £48.2m over the medium term. The planned profile of these receipts is shown below:

	£m
2016/17	7.398
2017/18	7.865
2018/19	12.635
2019/20	10.800
Later years	9.550
Total	48.248

12.7 Generation of these receipts is a key assumption within the service and financial planning strategy. The Council has a detailed schedule of asset disposals to address this and this schedule is regularly monitored by both officers and members of the Audit Committee and all the revenue consequences of temporary financing pending these scheduled disposals are built in to the Council's base budget projections contained in this report. This dependency will continue to be subject to close monitoring. If any delay is experienced in generating expected receipts, mitigation factors could include a combination of re-phasing some capital spending schemes, identification of other assets for disposal or additional borrowing on a temporary or long term basis although this would increase revenue costs and necessitate further cuts to other services or the use of additional one-off resources.

12.8 The Spending Review 2015 gave local authorities the right to use new capital receipts generated from 1 April 2016 for a three year period on the revenue costs of reform projects. The Government's guidance is unclear, suggesting that the Council needs an Efficiency Strategy that should be approved annually in advance of the year in order to make use of this flexibility. This report includes a recommendation to confirm that this suite of service and financial planning reports, including the treasury management strategy and prudential indicators reports comprises our efficiency strategy for 2017/18.

13. SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS

- 13.1 Planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), commonly known as s106 agreements, are a mechanism which make a development proposal acceptable in planning terms, that would not otherwise be acceptable. They are focused on site specific mitigation of the impact of development. S.106 agreements are often referred to as 'developer contributions'. The common uses of planning obligations are to; secure affordable housing, to secure financial contributions to provide infrastructure (for example relating to necessary highways works to provide access to the development) and to help fund new educational facilities for the children of families that move in to newly built houses. Careful negotiations are undertaken with developers in reaching the s.106 agreement which are legally binding and clearly state what the funding can be used for.
- 13.2 Legally a S.106 can only be requested when it is:
1. necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms
 2. directly related to the development; and
 3. fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 13.3 Negotiations have to ensure that developments remain viable and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states where obligations are being sought or revised, local planning authorities should take account of changes in market conditions over time and, wherever appropriate, be sufficiently flexible to prevent planned development being stalled.
- 13.4 The Council's Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee undertook a scrutiny review of Primary School Places during 2014 which considered s.106 agreements relating to education and it was agreed that details of these agreements would be included in the service and financial planning report in future years. Details are therefore included in Appendix 10 for the period 1st April 2016 to 31st October 2016 showing income and expenditure on each scheme relating to Education. Details of these and all other s.106 agreements will be included in the final accounts report which is considered by Cabinet in June of each year to show the year-end balance and in-year movement relating to each current s.106 agreement.

14. MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

14.1 Context

Throughout the last Parliament, the Government exercised very tight control over public sector spending but protected spending on education and the health service which together account for a large part of total public expenditure. Overseas aid was also protected with a commitment to spend at 0.7% of GDP. This means that spending on

other parts of the public sector faced disproportionate cuts with Local Government most severely affected. The cuts to local government have not been uniformly distributed across the country but have been targeted at areas of greatest social need which have historically attracted more grant from government to reflect their greater levels of deprivation. More prosperous parts of the country tend therefore to be less affected by the cuts to grants but also tend to have a higher level of council tax base and growth which increases income from council tax, new homes bonus and from retained business rates.

14.2 Comprehensive Spending Review 2015.

The Chancellor delivered his Comprehensive Spending Review on 25th November 2015. The Spending Review 2015 (SR15) report sets out the Government's spending plans for 2016/17 to 2019/20 and sets out expectations for economic growth, inflation and tax receipts for the remainder of the Parliament. The Comprehensive Spending Review also set out the Government's spending priorities.

14.3 Autumn Statement 2016.

Philip Hammond, Chancellor of the Exchequer made his 2016 Autumn Statement to the House of Commons on 23 November 2016. Announcements particularly relevant to local government and the Council within the Autumn Statement 2016 are summarised below:-

14.3.1 Government Spending

The Chancellor confirmed that the Government has abandoned its commitment to reduce public sector net borrowing to a surplus by the end of this Parliament. It is now planning for a deficit of £21.9bn in 2019/20, compared to the surplus of £10.4bn planned for at Budget 2016, an increase in public sector net borrowing for 2019/20 of £32.3bn. In total borrowing will be £122bn higher through to 2021/22 than previously assumed.

The Chancellor stated that the Government is committed to the existing overall plans for departmental resource spending until 2019/20, which were set out at Spending Review 2015. Departmental resource spending will grow with inflation in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

A new fiscal framework is intended to provide the opportunity for additional investment in the productive capacity of the UK economy, the centrepiece of which is a new National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF), which will provide for £23 billion of spending between 2017/18 and 2021/22. This fund will provide additional support in order to:-

- Accelerate new housing supply;
- Tackle congestion on the roads;
- Support the market to roll out full-fibre connections and future 5G communications;
- Enhance the UK's position as a world leader in science and innovation.

- The Autumn Statement sets out the priority areas and levels of funding up until 2020/21 across the four areas identified; but specific projects will only be decided in the future. The funding available across the four areas is £2.4bn in 2017/18; £3.8bn in 2018/19; £5.0bn in 2019/20; and £5.5bn in 2020/21. A further £7bn will be available in 2021/22.

At the time of preparing this report details of how the NPIF will operate were still not available.

14.3.2 Business Rates

The Government has announced a number of changes to business rates. The main changes announced are:

- From April 2017, there will be 100% business rates relief on investment in new broadband fibre infrastructure;
- From April 2017, rural rate relief will be increased to 100%;
- The Government has not yet stated whether local authorities will be provided with s31 grant to compensate for these reforms but on past precedent, it would be expected that they would do so although these announcements will have limited impact locally.

14.3.3 Regions

Measures announced included:

- The Government will award £1.8bn to Local Enterprise Partnerships across England through a third round of Growth Deals. £392m of this will go to the Midlands. The Chancellor announced that awards to individual LEPs will be announced in "the coming months";
- The Government will give mayoral combined authorities powers to borrow for their new functions, which will allow them to invest in economically productive infrastructure, subject to agreeing a borrowing cap with HM Treasury;
- The Government will also consult on lending local authorities up to £1bn at a new local infrastructure rate of gilts + 60 basis points for three years to support infrastructure projects that provide high value for money. This represents a 0.2% discount on the rates that we can generally borrow at from the PWLB.
- The Government will publish a Midlands Engine strategy shortly;

14.3.4 Other measures announced:

- A new Housing Infrastructure Fund of £2.3bn by 2020-21, to be allocated to local government on a competitive basis.
- The Government will increase the National Living Wage (NLW) by 4.2% from £7.20 to £7.50 from April 2017 – this had already been assumed within our projections.
- There will be no Autumn Statement in 2017 and beyond as the annual budget will be delivered in the autumn, rather than spring in future.
- Estimates for economic growth show revisions downwards compared to the budget in April 2016 - from 2.2% to 1.3% in 2017/18, from 2.1% to 1.9% in 2018/19, unchanged in 2019/20 and from 2.2% to 2.1% in 2020/21.

- Forecasts for CPI inflation were increased from 0.6% to 1.0% in 2016/17, from 1.6% to 2.5% in 2017/18 and from 2.1% to 2.5% in 2018/19 but unchanged at 2.0% in both 2019/20 and 2020/21.
- Forecasts for national projected receipts from Council Tax for England show increases of between £0.1bn and £0.2bn per annum between 2015/16 and 2019/20, but a decline of £0.1bn in 2020/21.
- Forecasts for national projected receipts from business rates show increases in receipts in all future years of between £0.6bn in 2016/17 to £1.6bn in 2017/18 and 2018/19. In part, this is due to higher assumptions for RPI.
- The national debt is forecast to continue to increase as a percentage of GDP peaking at 90.2% of GDP in 2017/18 whilst the absolute level of the national debt will continue to increase in to the next parliament.

14.3.5 Main Impacts of Autumn Statement Announcements on Council Budgets:-

- Unfortunately despite widespread concerns being expressed by many groups in recent months, there was no recognition of the funding pressures facing Adult Social Care or the wider financial pressures facing councils.
- An increase in Insurance Premium Tax of 2% from June next year will cost the Council around £25k pa.
- The Council has an assumed savings target from the benefit from salary sacrifice cars of £40k pa. This will need to be phased out from our budgets due to the changes to salary sacrifice schemes announced by the Chancellor.
- The increase in employer's National Insurance contributions may cost the Council around £20k pa
- No update on expectations for public sector pay were announced so it is assumed that despite higher rates of inflation that the Government would look to still cap pay awards at 1% pa nationally. If higher inflation results in higher pay awards this would impact on the Council's budget but some allowance has been included in current forecasts of our budget gap as explained later in this report.
- Higher levels of inflation and the living wage increase will impact on suppliers of services to the Council – particularly care providers resulting in upward pressure on prices.
- The living wage increase directly attributable to the Council will be covered from the funding set aside for implementation of single status. Further increases in the Government's "Living Wage" are also assumed to be funded from the single status ongoing budget provision.
- The Government confirmed that the previously proposed cuts to Education Services Grant. However, the Education for All Bill is not proceeding which would have removed Council's improvement duties. Therefore councils now have duties with no funding to pay for them. This position has therefore been discussed with schools in the Borough to agree a funding contribution for 2017/18. This position will need to be revisited for later years.

14.4 Social Care

Last year, the Government announced that councils with adult social care responsibilities would be able to raise an additional 2% pa through Council Tax to fund adult social care by introducing a new “social care precept”. This 2% would be in addition to the council tax referendum limit and would need to be used exclusively for adult social care only. The Government assumed that this would raise an additional £2bn per annum by 2019/20 and the Government assumed that all eligible councils would increase by the maximum 2% each year throughout this period in its projections of the funding available for adult social care in the CSR2015 and in the local government grant settlement.

Telford & Wrekin Council set a medium term strategy that reflected this Government assumption i.e. that we would pass this additional council tax increase on to council tax payers. This is a clear transfer of responsibility from central government tax receipts to council tax payers but the funding position for adult social services is such that almost all councils have had to follow this approach.

As part of the provisional Local Government finance settlement a one-off Adult Social Care Support grant for 2017/18 and the ability to accelerate the implementation of the adult Social care precept were announced. These are discussed in more detail in Section 14.7 of this report.

14.5 Local Government Funding Reform

Fundamental changes were made to the local government finance system from 2013/14 including the localisation of a share of business rates, the replacement of the national Council Tax benefit scheme with local council tax support schemes and the transfer of responsibility for public health services from the NHS to councils. This current local government finance system represented a significant transfer of risk from the Government to councils but also brought opportunities and incentives to encourage growth in local communities. This Council is well placed to benefit from the current financial system with an attractive environment, good motorway connections and ready to go development sites. We have grasped the challenge to become a “Business Supporting and Business Winning” Council.

The Government is committed to passing 100% of revenues from business rates to councils by the end of the current Parliament. In this area Telford & Wrekin Council would receive 98% and the Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service 2%. However at the time of drafting this report, the Government has still not clarified whether this will be with effect from the 2019/20 or 2020/21 financial years or how this system will operate.

However the Government has made it clear that they will not merely pass the additional funding to councils to make up for the cuts to our grants but rather, they will pass additional responsibilities to councils so

that the transfer is fiscally neutral at both a central and local government level.

What is very unclear at present is what additional responsibilities will be transferred and how much additional risk the Government are seeking to transfer for demand led services as well as 100% of the risk that relates to the collection of business rates which is likely to decrease during economic downturns when demand for many of our services also tends to increase.

Appeals against business rates are currently a significant issue as the Government's Valuation Office Agency takes a considerable period of time to process appeals. Currently around 2/3 of the total rateable value in the borough is subject to appeal. The Council has to estimate what proportion of these appeals will be successful and to what extent successful appeals will reduce the rates collected. Transferring 100% of business rates income to councils potentially doubles this exposure to the risk of appeals against Valuation Office Agency decisions on rateable values. The revaluation of the rateable value of all business premises that comes in to effect from April 2017 will result in further appeals which can take years for the Valuation Office Agency to determine and result in very significant back-dating costs in respect of successful appeals. The Government have stated that the new rates multiplier to be used for 2017/18 includes an element to cover the cost of appeals and in the absence of any other data this has been used to estimate the local provision required to cover new appeals against the April 2017 rating list. In the absence of any other information, this estimate is highly likely to be wrong and to safeguard the income stream from business rates in future years, a business rates equalisation reserve of £1.25m has been established within the Council's general fund accounts. This will be used to even out the benefit assumed from business rates within the Council's 3 year service and financial planning strategy which will be updated as experience of the impact of new RV appeals is gained over coming months.

The Government has also said that as part of their reform of local government funding they will also review the allocation of resources across the country taking in to account the need to spend on council services which should take in to account factors such as the population age profile of different areas and socio-economic factors. This review will also consider what resources are available locally to fund this assessed need to spend from council tax and business rates. It is therefore possible that some significant changes to the allocation of funding between parts of the country may occur which will probably be effected through changing the distribution of remaining revenue support grant and by changing the complex system of tariffs and top-ups within the business rates retention system. The Government would probably seek to phase in significant changes through a new damping mechanism with a system of floors and ceilings to limit the

year on year changes to a maximum percentage adding another layer of complexity to an already very opaque system.

This Council will however continue to take every opportunity through official consultation processes and other opportunities as they arise to lobby for a fair funding settlement for Telford & Wrekin residents. Despite some improvement recently. Whilst at the time of drafting this report the final revenue support grant settlement had not been received, based on the provisional settlement received in December 2016, the Council still has a significantly lower spending power per household (£1648.54 in 2017/18) than the national average (£1804.84). The Council is, however, pleased that the average reduction locally between 2016/17 and 2017/18 of 0.4% is better than the national average reduction of 1.14%. This still leaves the Council significantly below national average spending power although an adjustment for the costs of fire services needs to be recognised but is not easy to ascertain from the Government's published figures. Detailed responses to all official consultation opportunities offered by the Government to date have been sent by the Council but it now appears very unlikely that any significant methodology changes will be implemented by the Government until the fundamental changes required as part of the move to the much publicised 100% business rates retention system are implemented in either 2019/20 or 2020/21.

The Council sent a response to the provisional settlement which will be agreed by the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services. This response highlighted the wholly inadequate funding for Adult Social Care. The Local Government Association and other national commentators, as well as many councils have consistently drawn attention to the pressures facing this service. Adult Social Care is the largest council service and therefore in the face of continuing cuts to our grants has to make savings. Where-ever possible these will be efficiency measures rather than cuts to services as we will always meet the assessed needs of individuals.

The Government's proposal to allow additional funding to be raised from increasing the Adult Social Care precept more quickly than it had previously assumed simply transfers the cost of funding this essential service from national tax receipts to local council tax payers. It also favours areas that already have higher levels of council tax and/or higher value properties as a 1% council tax increase clearly raises more in these areas than in Telford & Wrekin which has a comparatively low rate of council tax and where the average property is in Band B compared to Band D nationally. Areas with higher value housing stock also tend to have lower levels of need as they tend generally to have healthier and wealthier populations with a consequent increase in the number of "self-funders" and fewer people requiring care and support for as long as in more deprived areas. The new one-off (2017/18 only) Adult Social Care Support grant does reflect need to spend although this is based on data that is at least 5

years old but it does not compensate areas that have less ability to raise additional income from a 1% additional council tax increase which may be easier for residents in wealthier parts of the country to afford, on average, than in areas with relatively low income levels.

Other key decisions to be taken by the Government as part of their overall funding review will include what proportion of growth from business rates income will be retained locally by tariff authorities, how often future resets will be undertaken and whether these are full or partial resets. Whether appeals will be managed solely at a local level or not. Whether councils would still benefit from a safety net system should they see an excessive decrease in rates income. How the needs formula will operate and the balance between the conflicting needs for as great a level of accuracy as possible against having as simple and transparent a system as possible.

A number of consultation papers have already been issued by the Government relating to aspects of this funding reform process which is broadly welcomed by the Council which has, as explained above, responded at all opportunities to date to ensure that our views are considered by the Government. Clearly the Council will continue to respond at all future opportunities to make its case for a fair deal for Telford & Wrekin. However, at present there is very considerable uncertainty about how the new system will impact on the Council and even whether it will be implemented within our current medium term planning horizon (i.e. in 2019/20) or not.

This high degree of uncertainty does nothing to assist with medium term service and financial planning. Despite the Government's offer of 4 year grant settlement this only relates to Revenue Support Grant which represents an ever-decreasing proportion of our total funding. Projections of what the council's budget gap might be in 2019/20 and beyond are currently extremely difficult and will be refined as and when additional information becomes available.

14.6 New Homes Bonus

The future operation of the New Homes Bonus scheme was subject to consultation in December 2015. The outcome of this consultation was not announced until a year later as part of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement on 15 December 2016 and the following significant changes are proposed:

- Funding is reduced by £241m in 2017/18 (this funding will be diverted to the new Adult Social Care Support Grant – see below).
- The number of years for which legacy payments are made will be reduced from 6 years to 5 years of payments in 2017/18
- This will reduce further to 4 years worth of payments from 2018/19 onwards
- From 2018/19, the Government will consider withholding payments from local authorities that are not “planning effectively, by making

positive decisions on planning applications and delivering housing growth”

- There are no plans to withhold payments for areas without a local plan in 2017/18; however this will be revisited in 2018/19
- The intention for a further consultation was announced regarding withholding payments for homes that are built following an appeal
- A national baseline of 0.4% of the council tax base for 2017/18 will be introduced, below which the bonus will not be paid as the Government has assumed that this reflects a percentage of housing that would have been built anyway. This baseline may alter in future years.
- The local growth, in terms of numbers of properties, above the baseline is then multiplied by the national average band D council tax for 2016/17 (£1529.56) to give the actual grant entitlement. An additional bonus of £350 for each affordable home is payable and is outside the baseline.
- 2017/18 allocations have been announced along with indicative allocations for 2018/19 and 2019/20 (which may alter pending any further changes to the scheme and actual housing numbers). As the indicative allocations are simply calculated as a percentage of the NHB control totals using the 2017/18 total payment as a basis, authorities could see significant variances between these and the eventual allocations they receive in future years. Indicative Amounts for Telford & Wrekin announced as part of the settlement were in December 2016 were:-

2017/18	£6.458m
2018/19	£4.937m
2019/20	£4.737m

However, these have now been updated using local data. Latest projections included in the budget model are:-

2017/18	£6.5m
2018/19	£5.7m
2019/20	£5.6m

Clearly these show a significant reduction in the benefit from New Homes Bonus although it is still expected to remain a significant source of revenue in future years.

14.7 Local Government Finance Settlement

In the 2016/17 settlement indicative Revenue Support Grant figures were also included for the following three years. The Government offered councils that submitted an acceptable “Efficiency Strategy” a firm 4 year grant settlement. This Council submitted its efficiency strategy and received confirmation that we are eligible for this 4 year grant settlement during November. To some extent this assists with medium term financial planning. However, it has to be recognised that the 4 year offer only relates to Revenue Support Grant which represents an ever decreasing proportion of our total funding.

Despite persistent requests from across the local government community over many years for an early settlement so that effective financial planning can be undertaken, the provisional settlement was not announced until 15 December 2016. This late announcement makes planning and forward projections extremely difficult and compresses the time available for consultation. As expected this settlement will force the Council to continue to make cuts on an unprecedented scale as it has a legal duty to set a “balanced budget”.

Whilst the Comprehensive Spending Review and Autumn Statements set the strategic financial overview for the Government as a whole over the medium term, the provisional local government finance settlement sets out the specific proposals affecting local government for 2017/18 with details for each council being provided. Key issues for the Council included:-

- A period of consultation was held on the provisional settlement with a final announcement not being made until after this report had been drafted. Therefore any changes affecting the overall strategy for 2017/18 will need to be accommodated by adjusting the additional funding being set aside in the additional contingency as part of this service and financial planning strategy.
- When the 2016/17 settlement was announced social care authorities were allowed to include a Social Care Precept of 2% per annum for the 4 years, up to and including, 2019/20. The settlement announced that local authorities will now be able to increase the Social Care Precept by up to 3% per annum in 2017/18 and 2018/19 - so providing funding earlier than previously anticipated - but cannot exceed 6% in total over this three year period. To ensure that income from the precept is used for adult social care, council's will be required to publish a description of their plans; further, those using the extra freedom to raise their precept by 3% must also show how they plan to use the extra money to improve social care.
- The referendum limit for unitary authorities was adjusted in line with the Social Care Precept flexibility above: i.e. 2% core threshold plus a maximum of 3% social care precept for 2017/18.
- As mentioned above, changes to New Homes Bonus were also confirmed as part of the settlement announcements. The changes have allowed £240m to be diverted from New Homes Bonus to a new “**Adult Social Care Support Grant**”. The allocation for Telford & Wrekin Council, based on the adult social care relative needs formula is £0.778m in 2017/18. This is a one-off benefit in 2017/18 only and is now included within the budget.
- Within the business rates retention system the NNDR baseline and top up/tariff amounts have been amended in the settlement to reflect the impact of the 2017 Revaluation. The adjusted amounts are intended to make changes in rateable values revenue neutral for individual authorities. The actual amount of business rates available for the budget strategy can only be confirmed when the NNDR 1 form is

completed and submitted in January 2017. However, the NNDR 1 form and associated methodology changes were not released until January creating considerable uncertainty over how much business rates funding would be available next year. The form has now been received and completed enabling the estimates for business rates to be updated

- Similarly, on 5 January when Cabinet considered the draft service and financial planning strategy, details of funding totalling over £3m expected for next year had still not been released by the Government and a significant degree of uncertainty over our actual position therefore remained. These estimates have now also been updated to reflect latest information.
- What was clear, however, **was that, as expected, the Council's Revenue Support Grant has been cut by 25.9% for next year in cash terms (based on the provisional settlement as the final settlement is still not available at the time of drafting this report but is unlikely to be significantly different).**

14.8 HCA Land Transfer Agreement

Under the terms of the Telford Land Deal between TWC and HCA which was approved by Council and signed in March 2016, TWC are required to take transferred ownership of HCA residual, non-developable land in Telford (Liability Sites). The 2016 agreement set out a timeframe of 12 months to enter a dialogue around transfer of liabilities to TWC subject to more detailed information on costs and an agreed funding mechanism. An initial assessment of between £3m and £3.5m was made at that point as to the potential costs to the Council should the Liability Sites require remediation.

Following detailed analysis of the sites to be transferred an in principle agreement has been achieved which will see HCA make a £3m full and final grant/dowry payment to TWC to cover the costs arising from the liability sites which will transfer in perpetuity. It is anticipated that sites will transfer in a number of tranches and payment from HCA will be received in two instalments of c.£1m at the end of 2016/17 and £2m at the end of 2017/18. This reflects the majority of sites transferring at the end of 2017/18.

The terms of this agreement have been agreed by the DCLG Endowment Committee but remain subject to Treasury sign off. This is anticipated to be completed by end of February/early March 2017. Delegations are therefore sought in the recommendations of this report to finalise the arrangements.

Under the agreed terms of the Land Deal Agreement TWC is anticipated to receive c.£19m of local profit share derived from the uplift of land values from sale of HCA land over 10 years (a proportion of which must be shared with the Marches LEP). The total value that the local area can receive from the Deal through reinvestment into site preparation/infrastructure and profit share is capped at £44.5m. The

profit share element may vary if more or less investment is required to successfully bring sites to market. The Agreement sets out the use that local profit share may be put to which can include investment into acquisition/preparation of additional sites, infrastructure and other investment that will directly support delivery of new homes and jobs contributing to the Land Deal targets. Under the 2016 Agreement the Telford Land Deal Board which includes representation from TWC, HCA and the Marches LEP sign off proposals for use of profit share (including those for which the LEP proposes to use its % of profit share). It is anticipated that first profit share will arise at the end of first quarter 2018/19. It is proposed that the Enterprise Telford Board chaired by the Leader and including lead Cabinet members responsible for business, development, employment, highways, infrastructure, housing and finance, will consider and approve TWC projects proposed to receive funding from local profit share to be then considered and approved by the TLD Board.

14.9 Future projections.

It is still very difficult to make accurate projections of the likely budget gap that the Council may face in the years beyond 2017/18 despite the Revenue Support Grant figures provided through to 2019/20. The Council faces many uncertainties, these include the:-

- Impact of successful appeals by ratepayers against the Valuation Office Agency's rateable values,
- Timing of the introduction of the new retained business rates retention system,
- Impact locally of the additional responsibilities that will be transferred to councils as part of the move towards 100% local retention of business rates,
- Impact of the new approach to assessing local needs within the new local government finance system,
- Impact of the new approach to New Homes Bonus in later years and the further consultations on the operation of the scheme in future announced by the Government in December
- The detailed arrangements for the "Improved" Better Care fund
- Trend of schools to move to Academy status and the consequent risk of loss of existing and potential council income for a wide range of services to academy chains.
- Whether uncertainty caused as the UK triggers Article 50 will impact on interest rates, business confidence or exchange rates with an impact on the rate of inflation – any of which could significantly affect the Council's medium term financial projections.
- Volumes of activity in demand led services which the Council cannot control e.g. the number of children that need to be taken in to care to protect them from harm, neglect or abuse.

However, it is clear that the Council faces further significant grant cuts in both 2018/19 and 2019/20. The 4 year settlement provided the following projections for Revenue Support Grant:-

	2016/17 £m	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m
RSG	24.899	18.457	14.147	9.812
% Reduction from Previous Year	-20.81%	-25.88%	-23.35%	-30.65%

It is therefore essential that we now use the best available information to estimate the likely level of budget shortfall in later years so that we can start to plan ahead now. After having delivered over £96m of annual savings already, it is clear that further cuts will be more challenging so we will start to discuss potential future service options and possible approaches to bridging the gap in these years whilst seeking to minimise impacts on our community with Town and Parish Councils, local community groups, service users, the voluntary sector and other partner organisations.

The Council's budget model includes many assumptions on factors that will impact on the anticipated scale of the budget shortfall that we will face in future years including assumptions on major income streams and spending. Using the best information currently available and therefore updated since the 5 January 2017 Cabinet report we currently anticipate that the Council will face the following budget shortfalls over the medium term. These projections will be regularly updated as further information becomes available:-

	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m
Expected budget shortfall before additional pressures or savings but after assumed increases in council tax*	(3.472)	11.163	7.310
Expected cumulative budget shortfall	(3.472)	7.691	15.001

* These figures assume that all savings approved at Council in March 2016 are delivered in full and according to currently assumed timetables.

The projections for years after 2017/18 are only intended as a broad indication at this stage for planning purposes and the estimates will be further updated as additional information becomes available.

It is with this medium term focus in mind that pressures and any developments need to be considered. The approach adopted in

preparing this strategy has been to maximise ongoing savings as far as possible whilst seeking to approve only unavoidable pressures as these have to be funded from further savings.

15. 2016/17 PROJECTED OUTTURN POSITION

As the Financial Management report also on this agenda shows, excellent financial control is being exercised and good progress is being made in delivering the overall budget for 2016/17 although there are some areas of significant pressure and the actual outturn will clearly be different as we are only part way through the year. The final outturn may be a better or worse position than that currently shown in the financial management report and it is clearly essential that all Cabinet Members and budget holders continue to exercise tight financial control and to deliver all planned savings. However, it is anticipated that the Council will have some one-off funding available at year end (currently estimated to be in the region of £3m) which will be used to support one-off costs associated with the delivery of this medium term service and financial planning strategy and key priority services and investments.

16. SAVINGS PROPOSALS 2017/18 AND LATER YEARS

Appendix 1 includes details of additional savings proposals and pressures for 2017/18. These savings proposals total £1.779m in 2017/18 but their full year impact increases to £2.38m in 2018/19 and by 2019/20 are estimated to generate £2.723m of ongoing savings.

However, Appendix 1 also details additional pressures for additional investment in safeguarding and re-phasing of Early Help & Support savings totalling £5.803m in 2017/18 but reducing to £4.645m in 2018/19 and £4.063m by 2019/20.

Savings net of these pressures and an allowance for the benefit from the savings that will leak to non-General Fund revenue budgets (mainly capital and Dedicated Schools Grant budgets) therefore total a shortfall of £4.024m in 2017/18, £2.265m in 2018/19 and £1.340m by 2019/20.

Further detail is included on the summary sheet of Appendix 1 which also analyses the new savings proposals by the nature of the saving and by Being the Change theme.

17. INVESTMENT IN PRIORTIES

The rigorous review of one-off resources detailed in the January report to Cabinet and very good performance in collection of council tax and business rates enables some one-off investments to be funded from available one-off resources.

Investment in Capital Projects

An updated proposed medium term capital programme totalling over £280m is included as a separate report within this suite of service and financial planning papers and details proposed capital investments. These include:-

Pride Programme-

- ❖ Funding for a further major investment in improvements to local roads and associated infrastructure of £20m as part of the Council's continuing Pride Programme of environmental improvements. This is scheduled over a two year period commencing April 2019.
- ❖ £1m to fund repairs to structures such as bridges and retaining walls in 2017/18 as a further extension of the Pride Programme. Many of these structures are now very old and this will ensure that they remain safe.
- ❖ £1m to fund investment in small scale Pride projects particularly local regeneration projects, over the years 2017/18 and 2018/19. A report detailing how this will be allocated will be brought forward to a future Cabinet meeting.
- ❖ The capital programme for 2017/18 already included £1m for in Community Pride Fund. It is now proposed to double this funding so that £2m is available. £1m will be for capital projects and £1m will be available to support revenue projects. Details of how this funding will be allocated will be brought forward to a future Cabinet meeting.

Other

- ❖ Funding for further investment in NuPlace, the Council's wholly owned housing company of £13.4m. A report detailing proposed use of this allocation will be brought to Cabinet in the near future.
- ❖ A doubling of the ICT capital programme from £1m to £2m pa for the three year period 2017/18 to 2019/20. This will enable investment to be made resulting in increased efficiencies and ongoing cost savings as well as ensuring that the Council's ICT network is robust.

Investment in Revenue Projects.

As well as the above new capital programme investments, it is proposed to use funding from a rigorous review of one-off resources to fund some one-off investments of a revenue nature. These include:-

Pride Programme

- ❖ Investment of £1.4m one-off resources over the 2 year period 2017/18 – 2018/19 to improve pavements across the Borough which is a further extension of the Council's comprehensive Pride Programme of environmental improvements.

Other

- ❖ Safeguarding vulnerable children and adults is our top Council priority. We continue to ensure that services have the financial resources to do this and are making available additional funding of £4.459m for Children's safeguarding in 2017/18 compared to what was originally planned plus £0.5m of invest to save funding. We are also making £1.344m more funding available in 2017/18 than originally planned for our Early Help & Support services to help phase in the cuts that we are being forced to make plus a further £0.778m from the Adult Social Care Support grant. We have also set aside funds to provide a £2.5m "draw-down budget" for Early Help and Support services in 2017/18 through to 2019/20 to protect and support vulnerable adults.
- ❖ Investment of £275,000 one-off resources over 2 years starting in 2017/18 in Destination Telford initiatives to promote Telford as a place to visit for leisure or to do business, for businesses to invest in and for people to come to live.
- ❖ £500k of one-off resources will be added to £195k previously identified to create a new £695k Partnership Capacity Fund to support the extension of new approaches to joint working with voluntary sector and other community groups aligned to the achievement of ongoing savings.
- ❖ In addition £1.5m of one-off resources will be transferred to supplement the Invest to Save/Capacity fund. This will partly be used to pump prime further "devolution" deals with partner organisations and community groups for example it may be possible to support groups to maintain/improve green space, pavements/walkways etc. where this helps to reduce Council expenditure in these areas and/or supports the Council's "Green Guarantee". This funding will also support the delivery of cost improvement plans across the Council but particularly in Safeguarding and Early Help & Support.
- ❖ £250k of one-off resources will be earmarked to fund organisation development initiatives. These will ensure that our workforce are properly equipped to undertake their often new and much broader roles as we continue to shrink our workforce.
- ❖ The Council contribution to the Food Bank is now budgeted on an ongoing basis rather than from time limited funding recognising the critical support that this organisation provides to many local people. This represents a total commitment by the Council of more than £130,000 over the period 2016/17 to 2019/20.

This is an affordable programme of investment in key priority areas. Much of this funding will help secure additional income or savings for the Council.

18. OVERALL PROJECTED BUDGET SHORTFALLS & STRATEGY

Key changes from the position considered by Cabinet on 5 January 2017 and the Council's overall service and financial planning strategy for the period 2017/18 to 2018/19 are summarised in the table below which brings the updated projections of the budget gap and the additional savings detailed in Appendix 1 and the pressures also included in Appendix 1 together:-

	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m
Projected Budget Gap considered by Cabinet on January 5 (included £6.4m proposed cut to Revenue Support Grant in 2017/18 and the assumed savings approved in March 2016 assumed for 2017/18)	(0.692)	12.187	21.563
Additional Adult Social Care Pressures	0.778		
New Social Care Support Grant	(0.778)		
Additional Safeguarding Pressures	0.500		
Invest to Save Funding*	(0.500)		
Impact of changes to grants including New Homes Bonus, Housing Benefit Administration, Education Support Grant, Social Care Support Grant (one-off benefit in 2017/18 not previously taken in to account).	(0.696)	0.045	0.038
Additional business rates after completion of the statutory NNDR1 form which was issued late by the Government reflecting further benefits from growth in the Borough	(0.318)	(0.812)	(0.892)
Additional council tax following approval of council tax base at Council on 19 January 2017 again reflecting financial benefit from further growth and good collection rates			
Other changes	0.076	0.015	(0.003)
Less the council's assumption of 2% council tax increase relating to adult social care precept	(1.151)	(2.340)	(3.566)
Less 1.2% council tax increase	(0.691)	(1.404)	(2.139)
Updated budget gap	(3.472)	7.691	15.001
Add pressures – Appendix 1	5.803	4.645	4.063
Less additional savings adjusted for leakage	(1.779)	(2.380)	(2.723)

detailed in Appendix 1			
Further ongoing savings to be identified	0	(8.750)	(16.000)
Remaining shortfall to be covered from use of one-off resources as part of a planned strategy to deliver a sustainable ongoing budget position.	0.552	1.206	0.341

Notes:-

- The projections assume that all savings approved at Council in March 2016 and the additional savings in Appendix 1 are delivered in accordance with currently anticipated timescales.
- Projections for 2018/19 and 2019/20 will need to be refined as further information becomes available.
- The proposed use of £2.1m of balances over the 3 year period is £2.9m less than was required in the January 2017 report and is prudent following the comprehensive review of available one-off resources that has been undertaken
- The Council has not finalised the impact of the triennial revaluation of the pension fund although provision has been made for increased costs any additional cost will be funded from the additional one-off contingency.
- The Safeguarding Invest to Save Funding of £0.5m will generate ongoing savings but the position for 2018/19 and 2019/20 will be reviewed as additional information becomes available. The total additional investment in safeguarding in 2017/18 is now £5m including the £4.459m pressures included in the January report to Cabinet.
- The total additional investment in the Early Help & Support budget now totals £2.1m being the £1.344m pressures included in the January cabinet report and the benefit of the £0.778m Adult Social Care Support grant now allocated within the budget.

19. COUNCIL TAX

Council Tax in Telford & Wrekin has historically been low compared to other councils. Appendix 4 is a graph comparing council tax levels across the Midlands region and demonstrates that in 2016/17 council tax in this area is the third lowest in the Midlands region at Band D (£1184.21) and is less than 1.2% higher than Dudley which is lowest (£1170.24). Appendix 5 compares our council tax to the other unitary authorities in England and shows that we have the sixth lowest council tax at Band D out of 55 unitary authorities being over £100 less pa at Band D compared to the average.

If Telford & Wrekin Council had levied a council tax at the average level of Midlands authorities (£1315.58 at Band D) in the current year, we would have generated an additional £6.39m p.a.

A further factor that has reduced resources in this area is “grant damping’ whereby grant that the Government has calculated should be paid to this council is withheld and used to support spending by councils that would otherwise receive less grant e.g. as a result of reducing population numbers. In the calculations used to establish the current local government finance system which came in to effect from 1st April 2013, £1.6m pa of this loss was perpetuated in the new baseline funding settlement for the Council and will be withheld from us for the foreseeable future.

The Council also continues to suffer from a population undercount. We believe that the Office for National Statistics undercounts our population by around 4,000 people which has resulted in a further loss of grant of around £1.2m pa. in recent years.

As well as a comparatively low level of council tax, this area also has comparatively low property values with the majority of our properties being in Council Tax Bands A or B. Whilst this is relatively good news for local residents in terms of their council tax bill and although we appreciate that council tax bills are still a significant cost for local households, it means that we do not have the same scope to generate income from council tax as many other parts of the country where levels of council tax are much higher and average property levels are also higher so a 1% increase raises considerably more per property than it does in Telford & Wrekin.

The Government made some important changes to local government funding last year affecting council tax last year. They announced that they would not provide council tax freeze grants in future. They also announced a new Adult Social Care precept equivalent to a 2% council tax increase and assumed that all “upper tier” councils such as Telford & Wrekin would implement this for the remainder of the Parliament. As part of the budget consultation process last year, three options for council tax increases were consulted on and a decision was taken at Council in March 2016 that increases of 3.2% (including the 2% Adult Social Care Precept assumed by the Government would be implemented through to 2019/20.

A specific issue that we consulted on is whether we should now accelerate the implementation of the Adult Social Care precept. In recognition of the extreme pressure facing Adult Social Care budgets the Government has offered councils the opportunity to accelerate the implementation of the Adult Social Care Precept with increases of 3% next year and in 2018/19 rather than their original assumption of 2% in each of the next 3 years. This would equate to a “one-off” benefit totalling £1.77m over the next two years for Telford & Wrekin Adult Social Care service users but would make no real long-term difference to the funding available for Adult Social Care. The two council tax options that we are consulted on were:-

- Apply the new 3% Adult Social Care precept in 2017 and 2018, giving a total increase in council tax of 4.2% for the next two years (74p per week in 2017/18 and 78p per week in 2018/19 for the average Band B property). In 2019/20, council tax would rise by 1.2% (23p per week for the average Band B property). This would give the Council an additional £1.77m in total over the next two years to help support Adult Social Care services.
- Spread the Government assumed 2% Adult Social Care precept over three years as currently planned instead of two and apply the Council's planned increase in council tax of 3.2% a year (an increase of 57p per week in 2017/18, 58p per week in 2018/19 and 60p per week in 2019/20 for the next 3 years for the average Band B home).

The results of the consultation exercise which drew to a close on 5 February are summarised in Section 20 below and detailed in Appendix 14 but in the light of the responses received, the Council will now proceed to increase council tax by a total of 3.2% (including the Adult Social Care precept) in 2017/18 and re-affirms its medium term strategy of increases at this level in both 2018/19 and 2019/20.

20. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION.

- 20.1 In March 2016 Council agreed a medium term service and financial planning strategy for the two year period 2016/17 to 2017/18. Extensive public consultation was carried on this strategy which included 32 savings proposals that were likely to have the greatest impact on the community. Engagement on this strategy has continued as appropriate, including consultation relating to the future management of a number of libraries within the Borough. There has also been ongoing engagement with communities and Town and Parish Councils on services that the Council can no longer deliver, including Council run Community Centres.

Communicating and engaging with the community and partners on our financial strategy continues to be an integral part of our budget process. Consultation on our Service and Financial Planning Strategy for 2017/18 to 2019/20 commenced on 6 January and closed on 5 February 2017. As the majority of savings for 2017/18 were agreed in March 2016 the focus of our communication and engagement activity this year related to communicating and seeking views on our priorities, such as protecting front-line services to vulnerable adults and children, helping residents to become healthier, feel safer and develop more skills to get better jobs. The consultation also sought feedback on our investments in our infrastructure, community funding and vulnerable adults and children and implementation of the Adult Social Care precept as outlined above.

Our communication and engagement plan outlined in Appendix 13 provides more detail on the first phase of budget engagement during January and February 2017. Opportunities for people to give their views included attendance at a variety of forum meetings such as the Parish Forum and Senior Citizen's Forum, on-line and paper based surveys to the wider community and community panel, and communication via social media. Direct email communication was sent to a wide range of partners and information including a budget 'video' was included on the Council's website. As outlined in 10.2 this is the first phase of engagement in relation to our financial strategy for 2018/19 and 2019/20.

20.2 Response to Communication and Engagement

Appendix 14 provides a more detailed breakdown on the response to this first phase of budget engagement for 2017. The majority of direct responses related to people completing the budget survey with a total of 801 being completed with 775 respondents expressing a preference for either Option A or Option B on the question of Council Tax increase. The majority of respondents (58%) were in favour of Option B and applying a total planned increase of 3.2% per year until 2019/20. As outlined in Appendix 14 we also received comments on the Council's budget plans and priorities and a number of suggestions relating to how the Council could make efficiencies. This information will be forwarded to the relevant area of the Council for further consideration and will be used during the next phase of our budget strategy.

A range of forum meetings provided an opportunity for a more in depth discussion relating to the Council's priorities and financial strategy. Approximately 97 people took part in specific budget focused forum meetings which were attended by a number of Cabinet Members, including the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services, and representatives from the Senior Management Team. Forum meetings involved a budget presentation and an opportunity for questions and discussion. In addition workshops were held with the Young People's and Senior Citizen's Forums which explored ways in which communities could be engaged in supporting local priorities. These workshops have provided useful information in relation to supporting our programme of community capacity building, and it is envisaged that further sessions such as this will be carried out over the next 12 to 18 months as we develop this area of work further.

20.3 Response To Consultation And Scrutiny

The Finance & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee is a politically balanced committee of eight non-Executive elected members and two co-opted members. The Committee is the main mechanism by which Cabinet consults annually with scrutiny on the budget proposals. The

Committee met 4 times during the service and financial planning consultation period and their response is included as Appendix 12 of this report.

The Cabinet are grateful for the professional manner in which the Committee gave careful consideration to the draft medium term service and financial planning strategy.

A key area of investigation was whether the Cabinet should recommend a further 2% or 3% Adult Social Care precept be applied in 2017/18. After weighing the arguments for both options, the Committee unanimously concluded that the precept should be implemented at a rate of 2%pa for three years (2017/18 – 2019/20) and the Committee's full response at Appendix 12 sets out the reasons for this conclusion.

This view was also in line with the response to public consultation and as a result, the Council is recommending in this report that the Council does not change its original plan to apply the Adult Social Care precept at 2% pa rather than taking advantage of the possible 3% increase now offered, although not assumed, by the Government.

The Cabinet have also noted the further comments made by the Committee and that there were differences of opinion amongst committee members on these points. One of these comments related to asking for a contribution towards the funding of street pastors. However, discussions have previously been held with the street pastors and no specific funding requirements have been identified. If, in future funding is required a request could be accommodated from within the Council's new £695k Partnership Capacity Fund which is potentially available to all voluntary and community groups working with the Council in the Borough.

In the absence of evidence being presented to support any further amendments to the Cabinet's original proposals and the differing views of Committee members, no further changes are therefore incorporated in this report.

21. BASE BUDGET, BALANCES AND CONTINGENCIES

21.1 Base Budget

A summary of the Base Budget position is included at Appendix 7 which shows a net base budget of £117.7m for 2017/18 before savings and investments giving a base budget funding surplus of £3.472m – before the pressures flagged above and detailed in Appendix 1 are reflected. Appendix 8 includes an analysis of the main changes in moving from the 2016/17 budget to the 2017/18 base budget.

21.2 Balances

Appendix 9 summarises the overall reserves and balances position of the Council after taking account of the various earmarked reserves and the risks faced by the Council. This currently shows around £15.85m available which could be taken in to account as part of medium term budget strategy considerations. However, this figure excludes the currently projected underspend in the current financial year as reported in the Financial Management report also on this agenda as this position will change before the end of the year. Any available underspend at year end will be used to fund priority investments and to support the delivery of the ongoing savings that the Council must make in later years.

A rigorous review of all reserves, provisions and balances was undertaken as detailed in the report to cabinet in January 2017. This benefitted from very good collection for council tax and business rates in recent years which has resulted in additional funding accumulating in the collection funds which can now be released. The Government's temporary relaxation of the rules for using capital receipts also enabled some one-off funds to be released. The Government have offered Councils the ability to fund the one-off costs of service reform projects from new capital receipts generated during a three year period commencing from 1st April 2016. This has enabled some funds previously committed to fund one-off invest to save initiatives and severance costs etc. to be released but will result in higher levels of debt than would have otherwise been the case and therefore higher debt charges than would otherwise have been the case as all capital receipts would otherwise be used to fund planned capital projects. However, whilst the debt charges are ongoing they will be more than offset by the ongoing savings generated from the invest to save measures. The service and financial planning strategy set out in this suite of reports will comprise the efficiency strategy required to facilitate the use of this flexibility.

The funding released from this review will be used to support the delivery of the medium term service and financial planning strategy as set out in this report and to fund some one-off investments.

21.3 Risk Management

As an organisation which provides a vast range of different services to the community and spends in excess of £400m per annum, the management of risks is an important consideration in the budget setting process. The Council has a strategic risk register which is used to identify the substantive issues which may impact negatively on the delivery of the Council's priorities and may also have a financial impact. This is regularly reviewed by Senior Management Team to manage risks and mitigate potential exposures both as part of everyday business and as part of decision making processes. The budget for 2017/18 also includes a number of risk-mitigating elements:

- Despite the financial challenges being faced, the Council has a clear goal to attract new jobs and investment and promote growth in the borough and is committed to an investment programme which will safeguard the prosperity of the borough – growth will result in additional council tax, new homes bonus and business rates pending any major changes to the system including the proposed introduction of 98% retention of business rates.
- A key focus of the budget is on income generation, thus reducing the Council's reliance on Government Grant in the future. All proposals are subject to a rigorous business case development process to manage and mitigate risks as far as possible.
- An Invest to Save and Capacity Fund and a Partnership Capacity Fund are in place to provide additional resources for priority areas and to assist with the delivery of savings, again bids are subject to a rigorous business case development process.
- Although very challenging, many savings have been phased over a number of years to allow adequate time for full consideration, consultation and implementation.
- The Council has a comprehensive employee restructuring programme which is used consistently and supported by clear, costed rationales to support reductions in ongoing costs whilst maintaining the delivery of essential services and minimising compulsory redundancies as far as possible.
- Contingencies have been built into the budget: a general contingency of £2.776m; and additional one-off ring-fenced funding for Early Help & Support of £2.5m.
- £4.459m investment in to Children's Safeguarding in 2017/18 to support Looked After Children plus £0.5m invest to save funding
- Creation of a Business Rates Equalisation Account of £1.25m to help smooth the benefit from additional business rates which can be exceptionally volatile given the significant number and value of appeals outstanding against rateable values and the uncertainties around the likely level of additional appeals against the new valuation list effective from 1 April 2017.
- A robust monitoring regime is in place to identify any adverse variances early so that corrective action can take place. Additional in year savings targets have been delivered in recent years to meet service pressures.
- The projected financial position for 2016/17 currently shows an underspend which will be available to support the 2017/18 budget strategy and the delivery of future savings.
- The Council has General Fund balances as a safeguard against unforeseen costs (prior to any increase as a result of the anticipated

favourable outturn for 2016/17). As explained in the report to Cabinet in January 2017, a rigorous review of reserves and balances has been undertaken which has released a considerable sum. This will be used to support the medium term service and financial planning strategy and to fund some one-off investments as well as creating an additional one-off contingency of £9.8m to provide additional assurance that this is a robust medium term strategy.

- In extreme emergency circumstances, general balances and some other funds that have been set-aside for specific purposes could be used and then replaced as part of a future strategy.
- The Council holds £11.92m set aside for one-off costs associated with the equal pay settlement. This is a significant sum which will be reviewed as modelling work on the likely settlement is firmed-up.
- Capital programme resources are available, in accordance with the Prudential Code of Borrowing and capacity may exist to capitalise expenditure planned to be funded from revenue in extreme circumstances.
- There is an effective Treasury Management Strategy also put forward for approval by Cabinet and ultimately full Council on this agenda which aims to maximise returns for the Council while minimising risks with a solid track record of exceeding targets set. This report was previously considered by the Audit Committee at their meeting held on 31 January 2017 and unanimously recommended to Cabinet for approval.
- Appropriate insurance arrangements are in place to safeguard the council's assets and protect against liabilities.
- Financial advice and support is provided by professional and experienced in-house finance staff, drawing on external knowledge for specific projects where appropriate.
- All reports considered by SMT and Cabinet are required to include financial and legal comments prepared by suitably qualified officers to ensure that financial and legal implications are clearly understood before decisions are taken.

These factors together with the Council's long track record of effective financial management over what has been an exceptionally challenging period of austerity, which is unprecedented both in scale and duration, provide comfort that the Council is in a sound financial position despite the further challenges that the Government have now presented with the latest grant announcement.

21.4 Inflation Assumptions and Contingencies

The Council's budget model includes an allowance for pay awards of 1.0% for 2017/18 and 1.5% for 2018/19 and 2019/20. If actual pay awards are lower than this the saving will be used to reduce the

savings requirements for these years. If they are higher the Council will need to find further savings. The Chancellor has announced an expectation that public sector pay increases will not be greater than 1% pa, however after 7 years of considerable pay restraint which have seen the pay of council employees cut in real terms by over 20% (and considerably more for the most senior staff) there is a risk that as the economy improves the Council may not be able to retain or attract suitably skilled staff to deliver services in what is now a very challenging environment. This slightly higher provision for potential pay awards is considered prudent given the OBR's estimates for rising inflation during this period following the devaluation of the pound.

In accordance with practice in recent years, no allowance has been built in for general inflation, although some provision for contractually committed inflation has been made and some provision for the additional costs that care providers will face as a result of the new national "living"/minimum wage.

The base budget for 2017/18 includes a revenue contingency of £2.776m and additional one-off ring-fenced funding of £2.5m for Early Help & Support. Recommendation 17 of this report also transfers an additional amount of £2.9m to the one-off contingency fund of £6.9m established from the review of one-off balances at Cabinet in January 2017 to provide further support of up to £9.8m in total if required.

21.5 Single Status

The Council is planning to implement a new job evaluation scheme during 2018/19 to meet the requirements of the single status legislation. An allowance for additional costs arising from this has been built in to the budget for 2018/19 of £1.37m. This includes the cost to the Council of the Government's new national "living"/minimum wage which is expected to be an additional £0.48m pa when fully implemented. This leaves around £0.9m for further costs arising from the implementation of the new scheme. This is after allowing for existing commitments against the funding previously earmarked e.g. to meet the costs of moving away from fixed point grades and some additional payments for social workers to reflect market rates. It is in the context of introducing a local job evaluation scheme that will have a lower on-going cost than previously assumed. In addition to the ongoing budgetary provision £11.92m one-off funding was set aside several years ago to meet any one-off costs associated with implementing the single status agreement.

22. EDUCATION FUNDING – DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT

The Dedicated Schools Grant is received in 3 blocks of funding:-

- Schools Block, which is mostly delegated to schools,

- High Needs Block (which funds Special Education needs placements and support, Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units and alternative provision) and
- Early Years Block which funds provision for 2, 3 and 4 year olds.

The DSG allocations for 2017/18 were announced on 20 December 2016 and are based on pupil numbers recorded in October 2016. The total Schools Block DSG after any recoupment for academies is £107.490m, which reflects an increase in pupil numbers of 538. During 2016/17 the Department for Education (DfE) carried out an exercise with each Local Authority to re-baseline the funding blocks to reflect the pattern of planned spending by authorities rather than the DfE allocation. The results of this exercise have been used when calculating the Schools Block and the High Needs Block in 2017-18.

In 2017/18 Telford & Wrekin's per pupil funding amount in respect of the Schools Block is £4,384 compared to £4,456 in 2016/17. The decrease is a result of the re-baselining exercise referred to above, which adjusted DSG allocations according to actual expenditure and as a result increased Telford & Wrekin's High Needs Block allocation with a corresponding decrease in the Schools Block allocation. This decrease in the Schools Block is partially offset by the transfer of the retained duties element of the Education Services Grant (ESG) to the Schools Block in 2017/18. This amounted to £0.4m for Telford & Wrekin. Individual schools funding continues to be protected by the national Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) for schools which means that no school's funding can reduce by more than 1.5% per pupil, per year.

The 2017/18 High Needs Block allocation is based upon the 2016/17 re-baselining exercise. Additional funds have then been added to reflect estimated population growth in each local authority. This resulted in a total allocation for Telford & Wrekin of £20.147m, including additional funds for population growth of £330,000.

With regard to the Early Years Block, from September 2017 there is a significant extension to the free provision for 3 and 4 years olds as working families become entitled to 30 hours free provision, a doubling of the current 15 hours entitlement. Alongside this and in the context of significant increases in the minimum (living) wage, early years funding will increase in 2017/18, both in funding per hour paid to local authorities and the number of hours funded. The hourly funding rate paid by the DfE to Telford & Wrekin for 2 year olds will increase from £4.85 to £5.20 and for 3 and 4 year olds from £4.03 to £4.36. The actual allocations of early years DSG funding in 2017/18 will be based upon data from the January 2017 and January 2018 censuses, but the DfE have provided estimated allocations which amount to over £11m for Telford & Wrekin in 2017/18.

The rates per pupil for pupil premium in 2017 to 2018 will be maintained at their current rates. The total allocation for Telford & Wrekin for 2017/18 has yet to be determined as it will be based upon January 2017 census data, but as an indication, the 2016/17 allocation for Telford & Wrekin's schools (including academies) is £9.5m.

In the 2015 Spending Review the Government announced their intention to remove the ESG general funding rate from 2017/18. Telford & Wrekin received £2m in respect of this funding in 2016/17. Following the first stage of the National Funding Formula for schools consultation, they set out their intention to provide transitional funding for local authorities from April to August 2017. After this date, the general funding rate will be removed. The allocation for the ESG transitional grant was announced on 20 December at a rate of £27.50 per pupil for five months, an uplift on the estimate of £20 the DfE announced on 30 November. However, based on the current number of maintained schools in Telford & Wrekin, this results in a 2017/18 allocation of £0.6m, a reduction of £1m compared to 2016/17. The grant will immediately be recouped if any school converts to academy status between April and August 2017, in proportion to the school's pupil numbers and the date of conversion.

The school improvement monitoring and brokering grant was announced on 30 November 2016. This grant of £30 million (pro rata of £50 million per annum) will be allocated to local authorities from September 2017. Local authorities will receive an allocation of at least £1,800 for each maintained school in their authority as at September 2017, subject to a total minimum allocation of £50,000 for each authority. Telford & Wrekin have 54 maintained schools currently so would expect to receive £97k in respect of this new grant, although there has been no final allocation notification.

The DfE have stated that they recognise local authorities will need to use other sources of funding to pay for education services once the general rate has been removed. They have revised the school funding regulations to allow local authorities to retain some of the school block funding to cover the statutory duties they carry out for maintained schools but any amount retained has to be agreed by the Schools Forum. Telford & Wrekin's Schools Forum agreed at the meeting held on 13 January 2017 to allow the local authority to retain £860,000 from DSG in 2017/18, to fund statutory duties carried out for schools.

23. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Equality Impact Assessment is a tool that is used to ensure our decision making takes into consideration the protected characteristics with regard to the General Equality Duty (GED). In short we must demonstrate that we pay due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of

opportunity and to foster good relations. We need to assess and analyse the practical impact on those whose needs are affected by cuts or changes. We have adopted a proportionate approach that takes into account the relevance of a proposal with regard to equality. This is a measured response recognising that our resources are best aimed at dealing with those proposals that could have the most significant impact. In order to accomplish this we have followed a process designed to screen proposals and ensure that they are fully explored.

An initial scoping exercise to determine which budget saving proposals require action or further investigation with regard to equality impact was completed. For proposals where implications have been identified and are at a sufficiently developed state a proportionate impact assessment has been undertaken. Where a proposal is still at an early stage of development an equality impact assessment will be undertaken during its development.

The 2017/18 proposals that have been identified for further work related to the equality duty are as follows;

No.	Description of Saving	Action
23	Increase in primary school meal prices from £2 to £2.30	Initial Impact Assessment to be completed, however:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The price has not been increased for 3 years, • The proposed increase would be phased-in over 3 years, • The proposed price would be in line with that charged other providers, • Additional promotion of Free School Meals will be undertaken to increase take-up by those eligible to claim.
25	Review of off-peak ice skating concessions	Initial Impact Assessment to be completed, however, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has a generous concessions policy, • An Off-Peak Concession price would still be available (the level of the concession would be reduced not removed), • Promotion of the wide range of the other leisure concessions available would be undertaken to help mitigate the impact

24. ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT.

Environmental assessment is a procedure that ensures that environmental implications of Council decisions are taken into account. The principle is to ensure that plans, programmes and projects likely to have significant effects on the environment are made subject to an environmental assessment. The Environmental Assessment aims to provide a level of protection to the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation of projects, plans and programmes with a view to reduce their environmental impact.

The environmental assessment detailed in Appendix 2 provides information on the environmental impacts of the additional savings now put forward for 2017/18. Overall, on balance the environmental assessment of the budget proposals is positive for example as the council will operate from fewer buildings energy use will be lower and lower employee numbers will result in decreased car journeys to and from work and potentially work related journeys as we redesign services and use communication technology differently.

An economic impact assessment has also been undertaken for those proposals that have a significant individual economic impact (and is also included in Appendix 2). Clearly reducing spending by the council will impact on the local economy for example through fewer people being directly employed by the council and less business being placed by the council with local suppliers as spending cuts are made. The Council adopts a proactive business supporting and business winning approach which will reduce the adverse economic impacts caused by the Government's continuing cuts to our grant.

25. PAY POLICY

The Council's Pay Policy for 2017/18 was considered at Personnel Committee on 2 February 2017. The Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to produce an annual Pay Policy Statement. The Act requires the statement to detail the Council's policies in respect of remuneration at various tiers within the Council. The Act does not apply to local authority schools.

The purpose of these provisions is to provide transparency with regard to the Council's approach to setting the pay of its employees by determining:

- The methods by which pay is determined.
- The detail and level of remuneration of its most senior staff
- The Committees responsible for ensuring consistent application of the provisions set out in the Statement.

The Council's Pay Policy Statement details

- pay negotiation bodies,
- initial allocation of pay points.
- lowest paid employees and the ratio comparison with the highest paid officers.
- Senior management remuneration.
- the recruitment of chief officers
- additions to chief officers pay
- termination payments
- where accountability and responsibility lies.

The Pay Policy for 2017/18 is included as Appendix 3 of this report.

26. ROBUSTNESS OF THE FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND LEVELS OF RESERVES & BALANCES.

The Council is required to set a balanced budget and under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Council's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is required to report on the adequacy of the Council's reserves and balances and on the Council's financial strategy including the use of balances and of the financial planning process and the Council must have regard to this report when agreeing the medium term financial strategy.

Appendix 11 gives a more detailed view, but overall, given the continued delivery of savings which now total over £96m, the long-term service redesign, particularly in relation to Adults and Children's services, the commercial approach being adopted, and the investment being made in the borough, it is considered that the Council is pursuing a sound financial strategy in the context of the most prolonged and challenging financial position it has ever faced due to the combined effect of Government grant cuts and increased service pressures.

27. NEXT STEPS & TIMETABLE.

Once the service and financial planning strategy for 2017/18 has been approved by full Council on 2 March 2017 and the council tax resolutions have been decided, it will be imperative that considerable resource is devoted to rigorous financial management and monitoring by all managers and budget holders. All managers need to effectively and proactively manage their business. The finance service will be restructured during 2017/18 which will inevitably reduce the amount of support that can be provided to service managers, the Administration and Opposition groups. Clearly, in terms of priority, capacity and time, this will be on supporting the preparation and monitoring of the Administration's budget. Managers will need to take an increased role in the financial management of their services through increased use of

the Agresso financial management system and appropriate training to facilitate and support this will be made available.

The Council faces many financial challenges over and above the obvious and very significant reductions in Government grant. There are many risks and uncertainties inherent in the new financial system that was imposed by the Government during 2013/14. However, the new local government finance system also presents many opportunities that this Council is ideally placed to be able to take advantage of.

As well as exercising tight financial control and effective financial management, managers and Cabinet Members will need to turn attention to the medium term financial strategy beyond 2018/19 in order to identify further savings and opportunities for additional income to bridge the significant projected budget shortfalls through to 2019/20. This will involve discussion with partner organisations, service users and the community. The Council will need to actively respond to the additional consultation opportunities offered by the Government during 2017/18 around the new local government finance system and ensure that the implications of the final changes are understood and opportunities are maximised and the associated risks are effectively managed.

28. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- LG Futures Autumn Statement briefing – November 2016
- LG Futures Local Government Finance Settlement briefing – December 2016
- BBC News Website
- Revenue Support Grant Settlement Announcement – CLG Website
- Service & Financial Planning Report to Council – 3rd March 2016
- Municipal Journal – 8th October 2015, article by Dan Peters, “Drop in Senior Numbers”.
- Service & Financial Planning Report to Council 3 March 2016.
- Service & Financial Planning Report to Cabinet 5 January 2017.

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