

Explanatory notes on savings and additional recommendations

1. Zero-based budgeting

Value £300,000

In 2020/21 a saving was agreed at Full Council of £600k from Zero Based Budgeting exercise. This saving has not been achieved and is recommended to be removed in 2021/22. We believe that some of this saving is still achievable in 2021/22 and that the full pressure should not be removed. We recognise that officers are still working to support the pandemic and that there is less capacity, so we recommend that the exercise is phased. We think that half of this saving of £300k would be achievable in 2021/22.

2. Business Change Team

Value £500,000

The change programme has not yet been agreed, it is not yet known what this budget will be used for in 2021/22, so it cannot be verified whether this remaining value will be required. Therefore, we consider that an additional £500,000 can be made available for other purposes. This leaves a remaining annual non-staffing budget of £1.73m

In developing and implementing change projects, these projects should be scoped out in advance and the full cost of development and implementation taken into account when the benefits are calculated, and then only the net benefits included within any future budgets.

All Change Projects must be fully costed and budgeted with any overspends reported to a joint Officer Member Panel with the request to access centrally held reserves. Business Change professionals and Change Managers to become an internally Traded Service to future projects and programmes.

3. Remove the Brexit Reserve

Value £100,000

Included within the earmarked reserves is a reserve of £100k for activities associated with Brexit. We recognise that the funding received for Brexit from Government was ring-fenced, however we believe that this reserve could be charged against salaries and activities undertaken during 2020/21 that have been charged against core council budgets and that therefore this would release £100k that can be made available for other purposes.

4. Fund increased 21/22 requirement for Cemeteries and Crematoria from Government Covid Grant

Value £230,000

The 2021/22 fees and charges schedule includes details of increases of fees and charges in crematoria. Some of these charges are significant and we recognise that in response to the pandemic, the way cremations are conducted and attended has changed. We understand that costs have increased as a result of this different way of operation, but we feel that these costs can be charged against the Covid-19 Emergency Funding provided by the Government for 2021/22, rather than increasing the charges for the public to cover them.

5. New Council Model

Value £1,000,000

In 2020/21 a saving was agreed at Full Council of £5 million for the new Council Model. This saving has not been achieved and is recommended to be removed in 2021/22. We believe that some of this saving is still achievable in 2021/22 and that the full pressure should not be removed. We recognise that officers are still working to support the pandemic and that there is less capacity, so we recommend that £1 million is removed from this pressure and that Officers be authorised to utilise the EVR Reserve and / or any vacancies no longer required to support this initiative, if required.

We recommend to Policy and Resources Committee and Policy and Services Committees, to support the delivery of the 2021/22 budget and formulation of the 2022/23 budget, that:

(i) Carbon Net Zero Impact is introduced as a new criteria for awarding future contracts

The Committees note that in the current mechanism for awarding contracts includes criteria for quality, price and social value, no account is taken for a carbon net zero impact. As the Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019, Council believes that any contracts the Council awards from 2021/22 need to be assessed for their carbon net zero impact to contribute to the Council's Climate Emergency declaration and therefore recommends that officers are tasked with bringing forward proposals for amending the requirements for contracts so that the carbon net zero impact is included as part of the criteria for award.

(ii) A Joint Member Officer Business Change Panel is established

To establish a joint officer/member panel to monitor the performance of major change projects/programmes and to consider any overspends (over agreed contingency levels set out in business case) to change projects.

(iii) A 2022/2023 Budget Preparation Panel is established

To establish a Panel (working group) immediately following agreement of the 2021/22 Budget by Council, to commence detailed work in preparation for the 2022/23 budget cycle. The membership of the Panel to be agreed by Group Leaders.