

Notes to the SECOND DRAFT BUDGET for 2024-25, issued 6 December 2023

1. Two documents have been issued – a detailed budget by committee and a spreadsheet summary. The latter is obviously based on the former.
2. As has been mentioned previously, the budget is an ongoing process. We are now some three months into this process and therefore many estimates have been updated based on the latest information available and taking into account all the various decisions/recommendations made by the committees during the budget cycle.
3. The intention is that the precept is set at the extraordinary council meeting on 8 January 2024. In order to meet this timetable, the meeting of 11 December is now the last opportunity for Members to give direction to your officers – which may include adding in or deleting, increasing or reducing budget lines.
4. Your officers will continue to work on the budget until early January 2024. Budget lines will be checked in particular salaries/wages and costs in relation to grounds maintenance. The RFO does not anticipate that any further changes will materially affect the “bottom line”, but this cannot be guaranteed.
5. Your officers will also be reviewing the Council’s various earmarked reserves, details of which have been previously circulated. The revised budget for 2023-24 allows for funds to be transferred to earmarked reserves but no transfers from earmarked reserves, with one exception at cost centre 104, have been undertaken. This will mean that the final surplus of income over expenditure will be higher than that stated on the final page of the detailed budget papers.
6. Regarding capital – cost centre 800 – it should be noted that the only projections included in the papers at this stage are where there will be an impact on the revenue budget specifically increases in relation to vehicle and equipment renewals and PWLB loans for capital projects. Later in the cycle the cost centre will be updated to show projections and the non-revenue funding, which should not impact on council tax.
7. Regarding the proposal for funding part of the West Witney Sports and Social Club improvements and the relocation of the works depot as part of the Leys Masterplan, these have previously been considered by the Council but would in due course require formal approval. The loans are based on current rates over a 40-year period and would be met from drawing from reserves/ revenue income and would not be by way of precept. The figures will change as rates change and if a different payback period is decided.
8. The budget summary shows four different options for the council to fund the 2024-25 budget ranging from a council tax increase of 12.73% to 6.10% depending on the amount taken from balances.
9. The last time the council tax was increased was in April 2022. In the two-year period to the latest RPI issued by the government in October 2023 the RPI increased by 21.1%.
10. Members may also wish to look at the annual accounts to 31 March 2023 for details of balances held by the Council and the spreadsheets detailed revenue growth and capital published with the agenda for the last meeting of the PGF Committee.
11. Please e-mail the RFO at nigel.warner@witney-tc.gov.uk and copy in the Town Clerk/Chief Executive at sharon.groth@witney-tc.gov , ideally by 5pm on Friday 8 December but certainly ahead of Monday’s meeting, should you have any queries.

Responsible Financial Officer

6 December 2023