

Additional advice from the Director of Finance and Systems on Proposed Amendments to the 2024/25 Budget Report:-

As the Council's statutory chief finance officer under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, I have a duty as set out in section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 to report to the Council on "a) the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the (budget) calculations and b) the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves" as it relates to the 2024/25 budget.

Given that any amendments to the budget could become part of the 2024/25 budget calculations, I consider it necessary to provide written advice to the Council on the robustness of the estimates relating to the amendment in so far as they relate to the 2024/25 budget and the adequacy of our reserves.

While the proposed amendments were received on 13 February in accordance with the Council's Constitution, I received earlier drafts in good time to consider the robustness of the estimates relating to the amendments.

I have carried out an assessment of the proposed amendments and in doing so I have drawn on additional information provided and the views of Directors and senior officers of the Council responsible for the relevant service and budget areas.

I set out my general comments below, which relate only to the calculations of the amendments and their proposed financing. These comments do not relate to the merits of the proposals or to their broader impact.

Conservative Amendment

I have reviewed the details of the calculation of the amendment, which in total amount to a new capital investment of £640,000. This would be financed by reprioritising resources on proposed schemes within the 2024/25 Highway Structural Maintenance Capital Budget. This would mean several schemes would have to be deferred until sufficient new capital resources become available. The extent the proposal will save the Council money in the medium and long term, compared to the original programme cannot be quantified at this stage.

I have reviewed the proposal and have concluded that it would not undermine the adequacy of the Council's overall financial robustness and reserves.

Liberal Democrat Amendment

I have reviewed the details of the calculation of the amendment which would reduce the level of income to be received if charging was introduced at Thorley Lane, Timperley car park. It is proposed that this be offset by reducing the proposed increase in expenditure on the Council's Communications Team.

I have reviewed the proposal and have concluded that it would not undermine the adequacy of the Council's overall financial robustness and reserves.

Green Party Amendment

I have reviewed the details of the calculation of the amendment which includes new capital expenditure of up to £150,000 financed through borrowing. The cost of this borrowing would represent additional pressure on the revenue budget which, together with the cost of staff and running expenses, total £38,000 per annum. The proposal to meet this cost from any penalty charge income from the operation of the ANPR cameras, together with bringing forward a review, planned for 2025, of parking procedures and prices to 2024 which would be subject to consultation is expected to cover these costs. The timing of the introduction of the proposal would need to be aligned to the review of car parking charges to avoid any additional impact on the revenue budget.

I have reviewed the proposal and have concluded that it would not undermine the adequacy of the Council's overall financial robustness and reserves.