

# Amendment to the 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Budget

## Council notes:

1. Over a decade of Tory austerity has seen the government cut sixty pence in every pound of our Revenue Support Grant. This is about £1,000,000,000 of funding the Council has not been able to spend in Plymouth. It is impossible for the Council to deliver income that replaces this. We need a Council that stands up for a better Plymouth.
2. In May 2022 the Government published the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill which included proposals aimed at addressing the negative impact of second homes on the supply of homes for local people. The Bill is likely to become law from April 2024 at the earliest and allow for a 100% premium to be applied to the base Council Tax level. It is estimated that on the current numbers across the city this could generate a minimum additional council tax of £1m per annum from 2024/25 if these provisions were adopted before the end of this fiscal year.
3. That we are living in the middle of a Cost of Living Crisis.
  - a. Alongside the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement on 19th December 2022, the Government announced £100m of additional funding for local authorities to support the most vulnerable households in England. Recognising the impact of rising bills, the Government has allocated Plymouth the sum of £607,135 of new grant funding in 2023-24 to support economically vulnerable households in their area with council tax payments. This funding is to allow for a reduction in the council tax charge for current working age and pension age Local Council Tax Support claimants by up to £25.
  - b. One-off tinkering with the Council Tax Support Scheme for working age households is not an appropriate way of managing finances for the Council or for recipients, (the vast majority) of whom are in-work. The Council has not undertaken a substantive review of our scheme since before COVID and acknowledges that this is overdue given the marked detrimental changes in the national economy, many of which have been caused by actions of the government.
  - c. That there is not full take up of financial support available from the Council to local families and residents, such as Council tax Support and Free School Meals. In the past we have seen the take up levels rise when we have reviewed processes and looked at how to target communications to those who are missing out.
  - d. That there is now almost no access for residents to talk face-to-face with Council Officers about Council services, especially those linked to impacts of cost of living. Our libraries were meant to be providing this access and are now closed for many more hours than they are open.

- e. That there are existing cross sector partnership structures in place to address child poverty and the Cost Of Living Crisis that can be built on to help the Council tackle these issues.
4. That there is a current housing crisis in Plymouth.
- a. Our homeless numbers are at record levels; we lack appropriate supported housing for local residents who need it, leading to expensive out of city placements; the private rented sector is overheating; and our new housing pipeline is collapsing.
  - b. The award winning Plan for Homes introduced and updated by previous Labour administrations has driven a wide range of actions to improve Plymouth's housing stock and address our housing need.
  - c. That, despite support from the Cabinet Member, the Budget Scrutiny Select Committee decided not to recommend lobbying for an increase in the Local Housing Allowance to support those most in need of help.
5. That more work needs to be done to support the wellbeing and safety of Plymouth residents:
- a. Work has begun to tackle violence against women and girls and needs to be accelerated.
  - b. The City Centre Health Hub is a stalled project, this facility is urgently needed to address some of the worst health outcomes in the city (found in Stonehouse) and provide substantial relief to the pressures facing Derriford Hospital.
  - c. That poor health outcomes in the north of Plymouth need to be addressed.
  - d. That a recent OFSTED report identified that domestic abuse services in the city need to be improved to ensure that the needs of children and young people who are victims of domestic violence, or who witness it in their homes, are properly supported.
  - e. Safety in car parks continues to be a concern to many residents, especially women.
  - f. The impact of noisy vehicles on residents and businesses can be unacceptable and in some parts of Plymouth can now be described as persistent anti-social behaviour.
  - g. St Budeaux has needed replacement public toilets for many years. A scheme was developed and Labour ward Councillors made substantial allocations from the Community Grants to enable new toilets to be provided. The work has been stopped and the St Budeaux community been denied access to both the toilets they need and the benefit of Community Grants that they are entitled to.

6. The planet is facing a Climate Emergency, Plymouth City Council is taking action, but needs to do more and do it faster:
  - a. Wildflower meadows are important for biodiversity and support pollinators, but they need good management. Whilst we have seen an increase in our local wildflower meadows the management to support these is not fit for purpose.
  - b. At the last taxi licensing review Council agreed to take action on decarbonising the city's taxi fleet and bring forward the next review by 30 months in order to review progress. Since that time no substantive work has been undertaken to address this commitment.
7. Plymouth is a growing city and needs to keep people moving on roads that are in good condition:
  - a. There have been recent losses of whole bus routes in the city. Some services have seen shortening of operating times, others have seen reductions in frequency.
  - b. Increasingly planning permission for new housing assumes availability of bus services and therefore does not provide for any or much parking.
  - c. Plymouth does not have a coherent strategic plan for the development of a citywide sustainable mass transit system.
  - d. Plymouth residents continue to complain about potholes. Last year a budget amendment provided resource for innovation in tackling potholes more effectively – this work has not been delivered.
8. Historically we know that Plymouth's growth is underpinned by Council investment which supports local businesses to thrive:
  - a. The Council has substantial corporate estate and commercial holdings within the City.
    - i. The commercial estate is well managed although some parts need investment in order to become greener.
    - ii. The commercial estate supports job creation and skills development, but more could be done.
    - iii. The corporate estate is not managed with the same degree of entrepreneurship. During the 2022/23 budget process a scrutiny recommendation to have a scrutiny review of the corporate estate was agreed by Cabinet and Council, this has yet to happen.
    - iv. The Council needs to ensure that it 'milks its assets' in order to support services for the people of Plymouth.
  - b. Tourism is a key business sector for the city.
    - i. The Box is proving a hit; we are seeing more cruise liners visiting Plymouth; Brittany Ferries is currently celebrating 50 years of operation from Millbay and wishes to market Plymouth as a short break destination.
    - ii. We need to encourage more cruise ships to visit.
    - iii. We need to do more to sell Plymouth as a short break destination.

9. During the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee comments were made that the Council had not done much to celebrate. The plans for the Coronation of King Charles III are similar and have no budget behind them. As a proud city we should ensure that we celebrate this important time in the life of the nation.

**Council therefore agrees:**

1. Subject to it receiving Royal Assent by the 1 April 2023, that the Council introduce as of 1 April 2024 the proposed Council Tax Premium for dwelling occupied periodically (often referred to as empty or second homes) for all such properties in its administrative boundaries.
2. To implement the maximum Council Tax charge on empty properties for the Financial Year 23/24.
3. Should the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill receiving Royal Assent, Plymouth City Council commits to immediately explore the draw down a maximum of £500,000 from the Investment Property Voids Allowance Reserve in the 2023/24 Budget on the basis that it is replenished in 2024/25 from the additional income generated in by the Council Tax Premium in 2024/25, subject to any further statutory guidance. It is proposed this maximum allocation will be allocated:
4. To provide relief for local residents suffering because of the Cost Of Living Crisis by:
  - a. Subject to the implementation of 3 above, making an additional provision of £500,000 in 2023/24 in the revenue budget for the Council Tax Support Fund, recommending to Cabinet that it:
    - i. Undertake a full review of the Council Tax Support Scheme during 2023/24 for implementation in 2024/25; the review to develop costed options for public consultation and a detailed examination of final proposals by the Scrutiny Committee. This will have no additional resource requirements in 2023/24.
    - ii. Use the Government Council Tax Support Funding to ensure that a payment of £25 is made per eligible working-age household. Such support should be directed towards those who are in work and also in receipt of Universal Credit.
    - iii. To further use the allocation of £500,000 set out above to provide a further discretionary local payment of up to £25 per eligible working-age household. Such support should be directed towards those who are in work and also in receipt of Universal Credit.
  - b. Recommending to Cabinet that it seek to enhance access to Council services through libraries and review which of our other buildings can support this activity. This should form a key strand of the Plan for Libraries review utilising government grant funding to increase opening hours where appropriate to include later closing times. This review, including public consultation and member scrutiny, should be undertaken and implemented during 2023/24 using existing resources. The ensuing report will identify ongoing resource requirements and how these will be met from within the approved revenue budget for 23/24.

- c. Making an allocation of £25,000 in the revenue budget to support the work of the Cost of Living Working Group. It is recommended to Cabinet that this should be used to build on the existing Cost of Living Crisis webpage to ensure that all available financial support is clearly signposted. Additionally the mechanisms for supporting local residents through the Cost Of Living Crisis through practical support and campaigning should be reviewed.
- d. Making an allocation of £25,000 in the revenue budget to support the work of the cross-party Cabinet Advisory Group on Child Poverty and recommend to Cabinet that this fund be used to allow Plymouth City Council to build on its existing active commitment to tackling child poverty.

5. To address the housing crisis by:

- a. Making an allocation of £500,000 from Right-to-Buy receipts which shall be allocated so as to be utilised to enhancing the Plan for Homes Housing Investment Fund to enable £10m capital fund to accelerate delivery of new homes on PCC owned land allocated for housing.
- b. Making an allocation of £125,000 in the revenue budget and recommend to Cabinet that is it utilised to provide additional resource and support to accelerate Plan for Homes implementation.
- c. To recommend to the Leader that they lobby Government for an increase in Plymouth's Local Housing Allowance to more accurately reflect the strength of the rental market and recognise that many Plymouth residents struggle to find appropriate rented accommodation within the limits set by the valuation office.
- d. To recommend to Cabinet that it launch a commission on the cost, quality and availability of local supported accommodation for children and adults across the city, with work to be undertaken during 2023. The Commission's report should seek to propose a delivery timetable; define revenue and capital resource requirements; and identify how these will be met. The cost of undertaking the work of the Commission will be met from existing resources.

6. To support local residents' wellbeing and safety by:

- a. To recommend to Cabinet that it launch a review of domestic abuse services to improve access, availability and delivery of provision with work to be undertaken by October 2023. The resulting report should identify ongoing resource requirements and how these will be met. The costs of the review will be met from existing resources.
- b. Making an allocation in the revenue budget of £25,000 to be allocated to support action on Violence Against Women and Girls.
- c. Recommend to Cabinet that it will support and enable, in partnership with the NHS, to undertake a feasibility study for the provision of a health hub in the North of Plymouth.

- d. Allocating £20,000 from the revenue provision for pipeline capital projects for works to St Budeaux public toilets and recommending to Cabinet to ensure their reinstatement as a matter of urgency.
- e. To recommend to Cabinet that it seek to increase our CCTV provision by adding up to 10 cameras to enhance the current car park coverage and to include the funding for a noise camera to address vehicle related anti-social behaviour. The revenue cost to fund an estimated £100,000 capital investment to be met from the revenue provision for pipeline capital projects.

7. To tackle the Climate Emergency by:

- a. Making an allocation of £2,000,000 for the creation of a Green Investment Fund within the capital programme to ensure the PCC commercial estate meets minimum energy efficiency standards thereby protecting existing income streams and jobs. The fund will allocate spend on the premise of business cases demonstrating that the investment will at least cover the borrowing costs. All surpluses delivered through this programme will be reinvested in the fund for future environmental/green initiatives within our commercial estate.
- b. Making an additional allocation of £10,000 to the wildflower meadow maintenance budget.
- c. Recommending to Cabinet that it commence a project, working with experts and the trade, to undertake a review of revenue and capital resources required to decarbonise the city's taxi fleet and inform the 24/25 budget. The cost of the review will be met from existing resources.

8. To keep Plymouth moving by:

- a. Recommending to Cabinet that it urgently undertake a challenge review of the existing highways re-instatement programme specifically looking at using modern technology and kit to reduce costs and increase efficiency of the existing methodology. This recommendation is that this process be completed by the end of summer of 2023 with a report to Cabinet in the autumn.
- b. Making provision within the Capital Budget for a £500,000 allocation to be ringfenced for pothole repairs within the City.
- c. Committing to ring-fencing revenue and capital resources freed up by the review in 8a to the Pothole Repair Fund established in 8b.
- d. Making provision within the Revenue budget for an allocation of £115,000 to support reconfiguration of non-commercial bus routes to support residents without access to a bus service.
- e. Making provision within the revenue budget for a £25,000 allocation and recommend to Cabinet that the funds are used to commission a review to ensure a deliverable plan is developed to ensure that Plymouth has a sustainable mass transit system which includes public transport.

9. To invest in Plymouth's future by:

- a. Creating headroom in the Property Regeneration Fund to support job creation by accelerating delivery on PCC owned land assets such as the Language Freeport site and City Business Park.
  - b. Recommend to Cabinet that it urgently prioritises taking actions to unlock investment opportunities within the corporate estate to support job creation and skills development. This will include the vacation of Windsor and Midland Houses by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023.
  - c. Recommend to Cabinet that it seek to build upon Plymouth's Ocean City brand to promote the city as a tourist destination using new digital marketing methods and building on our relationship with Brittany Ferries to promote the city as an international destination.
10. To celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III by making provision within the revenue budget, for an allocation of £25,000 to cover costs of road closures, arrange a screening of the ceremony, dressing the city and support community volunteering activities.
11. To amend recommendation 1 of the report so as to read that Council approved a budget of £218.440m (increased by £1m from £217.440m)
12. That Council approve the drawdown of £1.000m of reserves
13. Council are also asked to note the resulting amendments to appendix 9 of the report as set out with this amendment and highlighted yellow

The impact of this amendment on the Budget figures as set out in the main report will be:

- 1) Cost neutral in 2023/24 with Resources increasing by £1,000,000 and Expenditure increasing by £1,000,000 (or 0.046%)

And for future years:

- 2) Minimum additional council tax resources of £1m from April 2024

**Proposed by Cllr Tudor Evans OBE**  
**Seconded by Cllr Mark Lowry**

## Financial Implications

Proposal	Additional Resources / income	Additional Costs	Comment
	£m	£m	
<b>2023/24</b>			
Drawdown Investment Property Reserve	1.000		one-off drawdown 2023/24 only
Enhance Government's Council Tax Support Fund 2023/24		0.500	<b>one-off cost 2023/24 only; subject to legislation</b>
Cost of Living Working Group		0.025	one-off cost 2023/24 only
Child Poverty		0.025	one-off cost 2023/24 only
Violence Against Women and Girls.		0.025	one-off cost 2023/24 only
Health Hub feasibility study with NHS		0.025	one-off cost 2023/24 only
Creating a £2,000,000 Green Investment Fund		0.100	one-off allocation; projects to generate surpluses to repay / future investment
Wildflower meadow maintenance		0.010	recurring cost
Bus subsidy		0.115	recurring cost
Commission to ensure that Plymouth has a sustainable mass transit system		0.025	one-off cost 2023/24 only
Coronation of King Charles III		0.025	one-off cost 2023/24 only
Additional allocation to Plan for Homes		0.125	one-off for 2023/24
<b>Use of reserves to be replenished</b>	1.000	1.000	
Plan for Homes		0.500	from RTB receipts
Right to Buy (RTB) receipts	0.500		release current receipts
St Budeaux public toilets		0.020	one-off to supplement sums set aside by Ward Councillors
Revenue financing of pipeline capital projects	0.020		
Establishing a ringfenced Pothole Repair Fund - existing capital funds £500k			one-off for 2023/24
Increase our CCTV provision by adding up to 10 cameras £100k	0.005	0.005	revenue cost for capital investment from existing resources
<b>Existing Resources</b>	0.525	0.525	
<b>2024/25</b>			
Council Tax Second Homes Premium	1.000		on-going resource; subject to legislation
Replenish Investment Property Reserve		1.000	one-off charge
	1.000	1.000	



## Appendix 9 Amendment

### Council Tax Resolution

#### Implications of the proposed council tax for each band of properties

To note that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall and The Isles of Scilly has issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area, reflecting a Fifteen pounds (£15.00 or 6.08%) increase for 2023/24 for a band D property.

To note that the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority precepts have been confirmed reflecting a Five pounds (£5.00 or 5.45%) increase for 2023/24.

To use the Council Tax base for 2023/24 as 74,891 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]; calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Councils own purposes for 2023/24 is £131,299,650.

To note a contribution of £1,000,000 from reserves in order to balance the 2023/24 Council budget.

To agree that the following amounts are calculated for the year 2023/24 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:

- a) £556,753,539 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act (Gross Expenditure and Transfers to Reserves).
- b) £425,453,889 being the aggregate of the amounts which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act (Gross Income and Transfers from Reserves).
- c) £131,299,650 being the amount by which the aggregate at 9.5(a) above exceeds the aggregate amount at 9.5(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as it's council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in section 31B of the Act).
- d) £1,753.21 being the amount at 1.4(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1.3 above), calculated by the council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

## **Financial Implications – S 151 Officer’s Budget Robustness Statement**

The proposal to introduce and maximise the Council’s resources base with the additional Council Tax Premium for dwellings occupied periodically is welcomed, with a conservative estimate of £1m income each year. It must be noted that this is subject to it receiving Royal assent by the 1 April 2023 and that the additional income would commence from April 2024.

The majority of the amendments are reliant on this income becoming available. The proposal to enhance the Government’s grant for those in receipt of council tax support has to be, as stated, implemented only on the basis the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill receives Royal Assent. Without this, the proposal will not proceed. This negates any risk of allocating this sum of money.

Given the level of review into the Council’s reserves, this would not appear to be the best timing in terms of drawing down £1m from our balances. That said, as stated above, £500,000 is dependent on the necessary legislation passing into law. Without this, the proposal will not proceed in its current form. This leaves a further £500,000 to be “borrowed” in 2023/24. The reserve that is being used was subject to additional allocations in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the possible implications on our ability to meet our commercial property letting income targets. The drawdown of this amount will leave the reserve with an adequate balance. The proposal states a commitment to refund the £500,000 to the Investment Property Reserve, however any decision on the best use of the additional income will be considered as part of the 2024/25 Budget setting process.

The remaining proposals costed at £525,000 are recommendations on the reallocation of existing resources and ensure the overall budget remains in balance.

In the context of the above, the Section 151 Officer considers the proposed budget amendment as sound and that the resultant level of reserves are adequate for the next financial year given a clear understanding of the commitment to repay the monies in 2024/25.