

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Overview

- A.1. The Chief Executive's department comprises the Strategy and Economy, HR and Organisational Development, and Planning & Growth divisions.
- A.2. Strategy & Economy brings together the Chief Executive's office, the Leader's office, strategy and change, policy, performance and partnerships, communications, local economy and emergency planning. The division supports the Leader, Cabinet, Chief Executive and corporate management team in translating political vision into projects and programmes. This includes leadership of how we together with our community develop Southwark 2030, our shared vision for the borough. It leads on economic strategy and how we build a fairer, shared economy where everyone can play their part. The division includes the emergency planning team, ensuring the Council is best able to respond to emergency incidents and build community resilience. Most notably taking a lead role in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic on our community.
- A.3. HR and Organisational Development provides people-focused strategic and operational services, which are focused on enabling the council to achieve its goals. The function includes an important focus on delivering Southwark Stands Together and ensuring the council becomes an ever more inclusive, anti-racist employer.
- A.4. Planning and Growth brings together planners, project managers, regeneration and colleagues across the council dedicated to shaping place and investment to improve economic prosperity.
- A.5. The division leads on the council's delivery of regeneration and building strong local communities, bringing about thousands of new homes, jobs and opportunities across the borough and making our neighbourhoods places in which people are proud to live and work.
- A.6. The department has identified a number of efficiency savings and increased opportunities for income generation. Details of the individual savings options are reflected in the budget schedules (Appendices).
- A.7. The 2023-24 Fees and Charges for the department have been agreed at the January 2023 cabinet. Details are reflected in the Fees and Charges Appendix.

Equalities Analysis

- A.8. As specific proposals are brought forward the impacts on residents and staff will be assessed for equalities impact, although an initial equalities impact assessment has not highlighted any areas of concern. Any proposals affecting staff will be assessed in accordance with the council's reorganisation, redeployment and redundancy procedures.

CHILDREN'S AND ADULTS' SERVICES

Overview

- A.9. Children's and Adults' Services represents approximately two thirds of the council's budget. The department provides a wide range of services, including social care, education and public health, to all sections of the population in Southwark.
- A.10. The budget proposals for 2023-24 are made up of a combination of efficiencies that are a continuation of tried and tested approaches as well as proposals that relate to change in the way services are delivered to achieve better value for money. The proposals aim to ensure minimal impact on statutory and front line services and some of them focus on redesigning the back office functions as well as maximising income generation. However, there are also a number of items that are savings and are expected to impact on service provision. In the current economic climate, the cost of living crisis and higher than 'normal' inflation increases, these are difficult financial decisions to make, but are consistent with the Council's vision of a fairer future for all.
- A.11. For several years now, the Council, in partnership with the NHS and voluntary sector colleagues, have provided a safe social care service with good outcomes and within budget. In 2022-23, this has only been possible with the use of reserves as well as non-recurrent contributions from the NHS. The sector continues to struggle with the combined effects of austerity, demand pressures, workforce challenges, continued funding uncertainty, as well as taking on significant burdens as a result of the cost of living crisis. There is also a growing concern within the service that an increasing number of schools are falling into financial difficulties.
- A.12. In addition, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is also expecting an unfavourable variance which is largely driven by the pressures on the High Needs (HN) block. This will result in an accumulated deficit on the balance sheet of around £24.7m by the end of this financial year. The council is in discussions with the Department of Education (DfE) to eliminate this deficit within the support of 'Safety Valve' funding. In order to achieve this, the council proposed a deficit recovery plan to bring the High Needs block back onto a sustainable footing.
- A.13. The equalities analysis is currently being undertaken for each proposal. Consultations have been and will be undertaken for proposals relating to service changes where appropriate. The impact is mitigated by alternative offers of services, support or personal budgets, as per service user choice, in line with the Care Act eligibility and national legislative thresholds and government guidance.
- A.14. In line with our Public Sector Equality Duty, any changes to services arising from these proposals will be implemented in such a way so as to not impact disproportionately on any specific section or group in our community. The equality analysis is under way and will be collated to look for any cumulative impacts. In line with the process across the council, information on equality

analysis will be shared with decision-makers for consideration before any decisions are taken.

A.15. Southwark Council's Fairer Future Promises are reflected in the proposals set forth as is a shift upstream to prevention and early help, recognising the evidence base and the outcomes that can be achieved by offering our residents good universal services.

HOUSING AND MODERNISATION (H&M)

Overview

- A.16. The department comprises a diverse range of services funded from both the general fund and the ring-fenced housing revenue account (HRA) for landlord services. In delivering the council's Fairer Futures Commitments, the department aims to maximise investment in its housing stock, build new council homes at council rents, deliver consistently high quality services and continue to support the most vulnerable residents, particularly those in need of temporary housing.
- A.17. A high proportion of the housing general fund budget is either demand driven or of a fixed contractual nature, for example, temporary accommodation and the customer contact centre, which leaves relatively little scope to make any meaningful savings towards meeting the budget gap without having a detrimental impact on services.

Asset Management

- A.18. General fund services comprise aids and adaptations, handypersons, empty homes and private sector housing renewal and building safety. Corporate Facilities Management (CFM) is also within the division, bringing together housing and corporate buildings management, compliance and health and safety under one consolidated lead.

Central Services

- A.19. Budgets held within this activity are of a department-wide nature including corporate recharges and costs that are not specifically attributable to a particular service, for example, financing and depreciation charges. Other budgets held centrally include contingency against irregular or exceptional events.

Customer Experience

- A.20. The division is responsible for a diverse range of functions including the customer service centre (CSC), customer resolution, Freedom Pass (concessionary travel), registrars and citizenship, coroners and mortuary services.

Resident Services - Temporary Accommodation and Housing Solutions

- A.21. Southwark is a leading authority on homeless prevention recognised nationally. However the cost of TA remains unremitting, driven by the growing national homelessness crisis, unaffordable private sector rented accommodation and government restrictions on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates meaning welfare benefits no longer cover the cost of private rented accommodation. These factors along with the unprecedented fallout of the pandemic has had a very significant impact on the council's TA budget. Furthermore, the Housing Solutions service is under similar budgetary pressure with the need for additional staff resources to cope with the demand and the rising cost of upfront incentives

payable to landlords to support homeless households into private sector leased accommodation.

Equalities Assessment Summary

- A.22. The department undertakes equality analysis/screening on its budget proposals ahead of final decisions being taken. This helps to understand the potential effects that the budget proposals may have on different groups and whether there may be unintended consequences and how such issues can be mitigated. Analysis is also undertaken to consider any cross-cutting and organisation-wide impacts and continues through the cycle of planning and implementation of these proposals
- A.23. In line with our Public Sector Equality Duty, any changes to services arising from the proposals in Appendices B-E will be implemented in such a way so as to not impact disproportionately on any specific section or group in our community. Where necessary, consultation will be undertaken alongside mitigating actions where necessary. In line with the process across the council, information on the equality analysis will be shared with the relevant cabinet members so it can be considered when decisions are taken.

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

A.24. The Environment and Leisure department delivers services that make a real difference to the everyday lives of all residents and visitors. The department is focused on providing high quality services to the borough's residents and shaping those services to support the wellbeing of our residents and support the objectives of other parts of the Council.

A.25. The department aims to make Southwark's neighbourhoods great places to live, places that are clean, safe and vibrant and where activities and opportunities are accessible to all. As well as our front-line environmental services we are proud to work with partners to improve health and wellbeing for all our residents through a rich leisure and cultural programme.

A.26. Many of the operational activities of the department are frontline services for the benefit of all residents: they physically improve the environment; they provide opportunities for health and enjoyment, support knowledge and learning or help improve safety and confidence. The department has four directorates, Environment, Leisure, Communities and Climate Change.

2023-24 Savings

A.27. For the forthcoming year, 2023-24, the department has identified a number of savings options and these are reflected in the detailed budget schedules for the department.

Fees and Charges

A.28. The 2023-24 Fees and Charges for the department have been agreed at the January 2023 cabinet. Details are reflected in the Fees and Charges Appendix.

Equality Analysis

A.29. As specific proposals are brought forward the impacts on residents will be assessed for equalities impact, although an initial equalities impact assessment has not highlighted any significant concern. Any proposals affecting staff will be assessed in accordance with the council's reorganisation, redeployment and redundancy procedures.

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

Overview

A.30. The Finance and Governance Department includes the Director's office, which provides strategic leadership for the department and Section 151 responsibilities; Exchequer Services, which encompasses revenues and benefits and housing rent collection, as well as the financial transaction processing teams; the Law and Governance division responsible for electoral, constitutional, governance and legal services and the Professional Financial Services.

A.31. In supporting the Fairer Future promises of the council, the department's vision is to "make a positive difference everywhere we engage" and to be "efficient and effective in all that we do". Specifically, Finance and Governance endeavours to help the council to "manage every penny as carefully as local families look after their own household budgets".

Efficiencies, Income generation and other savings

A.32. Over 70% of the departments expenditure budget is staffing costs and we are continuously reviewing services to ensure they are operating efficiently and are adapting to changing demands and caseloads so as to ensure they are fit for the future. The majority of savings and efficiency proposals for 2023-24 focus on streamlining processes, channel shift and optimising digital delivery.

A.33. Income generating proposals include increased legal fees within Law and Democracy.

A.34. Other savings across the division include a proposal to cease the annual revenue contribution to the Brexit reserve, and a remodelling of the Local Support offer.

Commitments

A.35. The department is proposing a small number of commitments to cover additional costs arising from changes to elections and health and social care legislation and an increase in external audit fees set by the PSAA.

Equality Analysis

A.36. As specific proposals are brought forward, and at each stage of implementation thereafter, the impacts on different categories of staff will be assessed in accordance with the council's reorganisation, redeployment and redundancy procedures.

CORPORATE

Overview

A.37. The Corporate budgets include technical accounting budgets such as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), treasury income and costs, pension related costs and budgets which impact across the wider council. The £4m contingency budget also sits within corporate to support the wider budget risks.

Commitments

A.38. The council is required to contribute a proportionate share to cover the costs of the London-wide Freedom Pass scheme. The annual value of this contribution is based on usage estimates and dropped significantly in recent years due to the pandemic. Whilst 2023-24 estimates still show a reduction of £250k in the council's contribution, forecasts show that over the following two years the amount will increase back to pre-pandemic levels and beyond, resulting in a net growth requirement over the three year period.

A.39. A nation-wide business rate revaluation takes place with effect from 1st April 2023. The overall rateable value of the borough will increase by over 10% (compared with 0.5% across London), reflecting the significant investment the council has made in the local economy. However, the council is also liable for business rates on its own properties (including offices, libraries and leisure centres) and a commitment has been added to the budget for 2023-24 to accommodate this growth.

A.40. The council continues to pursue its ambitious capital programme; however this has an impact on the revenue budget via interest costs and Minimum Revenue Provision on borrowing. Recent economic circumstances have pushed up interest rates and this necessitates an increase in the council's General Fund financing budgets of £4.2m in 2023-24.

Equality Analysis

A.41. As specific proposals are brought forward, and at each stage of implementation thereafter, the impacts on different categories of staff will be assessed in accordance with the council's reorganisation, redeployment and redundancy procedures.