

Proposed Budget Protocol 2024/25

- 1.1 The proposed budget protocol for setting the 2024/25 Council Tax, General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Revenue and Capital Budget is as set out below.
- 1.2 For the February Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration Committee:
 - (i) Budget Amendments shall not be allowable at the February Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration Committee. For the avoidance of doubt this does not apply to reports referred to the SFCR Committee by Service Committees including any referred Fees & Charges reports, the HRA budget (recommended by Housing Committee), or any other decision referred or recommended to Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration Committee by another committee.
- 1.3 For Budget Council:
 - (i) Each recognised political Group shall be allowed a maximum of 4 Budget Amendments.
 - (ii) All proposed amendments must have been received by finance officers no later than 10 working days before Budget Council (i.e. by 12 noon on Thursday 8 February 2024).
 - (iii) All amendments will have had to have been assessed and evaluated by finance officers and the relevant Executive Director no later than 12 noon 5 working days before Budget Council. (i.e. by 12 noon Thursday 15 February 2024).
 - (iv) The Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer will have final sign-off and will not normally allow an amendment where a proposal is not considered to be robust or viable for one of the following reasons:
 - a. The proposal is legally unsafe and/or carries an exceptionally high risk of non-delivery;
 - b. There is insufficient evidence or information to assess the potential net saving;
 - c. The proposal is adding to, or bringing forward, an existing saving without further information as to how this can be achieved;
 - d. The alternative proposal requires one-off investment, additional organisation capacity, and/or loan financing that cannot be supported;
 - e. The alternative proposal is beyond the powers and duties of the local authority.
 - (v) The Mayor will refuse to accept any amendment that has not been “signed off” by the Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer.
 - (vi) All amendments will be treated in strictest confidence by finance officers and other such officers that the Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer or Monitoring Officer need to consult in order to assess and evaluate an

amendment. They will not be shared until the designated time detailed in (viii) below.

- (vii) All amendments will be shared **at 12noon on Monday 19 February 2024** between the Group Leaders by the Monitoring Officer or their nominated officer (usually the Head of Democratic Services).
- (viii) A Whips meeting will be arranged following the sharing of amendments for the afternoon of **Monday 19 February 2024** with the Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services so that any matters relating to the Budget Council meeting on the 22 February and the recently circulated amendments can be discussed.
- (ix) The Chief Executive shall have a “brokering” role if this would appear to facilitate agreement on particular amendments or proposals.
- (x) There will be a meeting of Group Leaders (attended by the Chief Executive, the Chief Finance Officer and other relevant officers) **at 3:00pm on Wednesday 21 February 2024** with a view to exploring the potential for any agreement on proposed amendments (i.e. the potential for amendments to be re-packaged as ‘composite’ or ‘All-Party’ amendments).
- (xi) Any variations to the amendments or any new amendments arising from the Group meetings shall be limited to grouping and repackaging of amendments or other changes providing that they do not, in the opinion of the Chief Finance Officer, involve significant costing or evaluation that cannot reasonably be done within the available timescale.
- (xii) In the event that Council fails to set the Council Tax on the 22 February 2024, a further meeting would need to be held prior to 10 March and a reserve date of **Tuesday 27 February 2024** is being held for this purpose.