REPORT TO COUNCIL Item 5

## 27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2007

#### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

Portfolio: STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

#### **BUDGET FRAMEWORK FOR 2007/08**

#### 1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Cabinet, at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2007 considered the feedback and findings of the comprehensive consultation exercise in regard to its initial proposals for the Budget Framework for the 2007/08 financial year. At the meeting the Cabinet made recommendations regarding its proposals to be considered by Council.
- 1.2 This report considers the implications of those recommendations in terms of total spending, rent increases and the increase required in the Borough's Council Tax for the coming year. Detailed account has also been taken of the Council's medium term financial plan, which sets out the framework for developing annual revenue and capital budgets over the medium term.
- 1.3 This report also identifies the precepting demands made on this Council by Durham County Council and the Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority and Town/Parish Councils. As the Durham Police Authority will only meet on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2007 to determine its precepting requirement on this Council, from a number of options to be considered at that meeting, it is not possible as yet to establish the overall level of Council Tax applicable at each Band, in each area of the Borough for 2007/08. As soon as practicable after the information is received from the Police Authority, further information will be sent out to members to confirm the overall levels of Council Tax for each area.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Budget Framework for 2007/08 and the recommendations as set out in this report, be approved.
  - **(NB)** Further recommendations incorporating the Police Authority Precept will be issued prior to the meeting.

#### 3.0 BUDGET FRAMEWORK 2007/08

#### **Background**

3.1 The Cabinet approved its initial budget framework for 2007/08 at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2007. All Members of the Council received a copy of that report, a summarised draft budget supporting it and additional notes giving background to the key budget decisions to allow full scrutiny of the budget to be undertaken. During the four-week consultation period all Overview and Scrutiny Committees considered their respective budget areas and the consultation also took place with a Council Tax Focus Group and Tenants Groups.

- 3.2 Cabinet considered the findings of the comprehensive consultation process at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2007, when it made recommendations representing its proposals for the Budget Framework for 2007/08. In accordance with Part 4(c) of the Council's Constitution, these recommendations are set out at Appendix A to this report.
- 3.3 The implications of those recommendations in terms of total spending, rent increases and the increase required in the Borough Council Tax for 2007/08 can be summarised as follows.

## General Fund (GF)

3.4 The Council's net spending requirement in 2007/08 after a use of balances of £700,000 will be £14,618,060 and the details of this and effect on the Borough's Council Tax is as follows:-

Portfolio	Budget 2006/07	Budget 2007/08
	£	Ł
Strategic Leadership	1,704,550	1,901,610
Healthy Borough		
Culture and Leisure	3,622,080	3,839,790
Community Health	155,230	141,460
Attractive Borough		
Environment	5,219,320	5,672,600
Planning and Development	467,750	499,240
Strong Communities		
Private Sector Housing	548,630	601,100
Safer Communities	822,000	829,150
Prosperous Borough		
Social Regeneration	1,953,750	2,030,320
Learning and Employment	232,210	207,790
Less Salary Savings	(260,000)	(405,000)
Contingency Sum	79,960	-
	14,545,480	15,318,060
Less : Use of Balances	500,000	700,000
Less:	14,045,480	14,618,060
Revenue Support Grant	9,133,274	9,601,288
Collection Fund Surplus	200,000	150,000
NET DEMAND	4,712,206	4,866,772

Equivalent Council Tax at Band D: £180.87 £186.11

Equivalent Council Tax at Band A: £120.58 £124.07

#### Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

3.5 No changes to the initial budget framework for the HRA are proposed by Cabinet and the increase in housing rents required is recommended to be:-

An increase in housing rents of 3.6%+0.5% with effect from 2nd April 2007, with the adjustment for rent restructuring set at up to +£2.00 per week. The range of rent increases will be between 2.58% and 7.59%, with the average increase being 5% taking the average rent from £53.57 to £56.25.

#### **Capital Spending**

3.6 No changes to the initial budget framework for capital spending are proposed by Cabinet and it is recommended that total capital expenditure be fixed at £20m and allocated to portfolios in accordance with the table set out at Appendix B. The programme has been set in line with the medium term capital investment plans contained in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

#### Treasury Management Strategy incorporating the Prudential Code

3.7 Treasury Management covers the borrowing and investment activities of the Council and the effective management of the associated risks in relation to these activities. This is an important aspect of the overall management of the Council's financial affairs. A separate report provides details of the strategy to be followed by the Council in relation to its Treasury Management activities, which takes into account the impact of the Prudential Code for Capital Finance. The report makes recommendations about the Council's borrowing, investment and treasury activities over the next few years, and has been developed taking full account of the Budget Framework for 2007/08.

## Robustness of Budget Estimates

- 3.8 Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires an authority's Chief Financial Officer reports to the authority when it is considering its budget and council tax. The report must deal with the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the reserves allowed for in the budget proposals, so that members will have authoritative advice available to them when they make their decisions.
- 3.8.1 The same section of the Act also requires Members to have regard to the report in making their decisions.
- 3.8.2 A prudent approach has been taken to the development of service budgets based on realistic and achievable spending and income targets with appropriate consideration of any risks and uncertainties that may be encountered.
- 3.8.3 Reasonable provision has been made for pay awards and inflation during 2007/08. The budgets have been prepared at outturn prices so there is no Contingency Sum available in 2007/08. Any unexpected demands on revenue expenditure will have to be met from savings or efficiencies in service delivery.
- 3.8.4 A full report on the revenue position of the current year's budgets will be considered by Cabinet on the 1st March 2007. In summary that report shows that spending on both the General Fund and the HRA is expected to be controlled within the original budget provision.

## **Balances and Reserves**

3.9 The Council has traditionally maintained a healthy level of balances and reserves and the table below shows the amounts expected to be held at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007:-

## Estimated Balance in Hand At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007

Earmarked Balances	£000	£000
Budget Support Fund	1,324.6	
Insurance Fund	1,186.6	
Training and Employment Services	431.4	
Asset Management Fund	401.8	
Private Sector Housing Fund	203.2	
Loan Debt Support Fund	256.1	
Other Fund Balances	67.3	3,871.0

#### Non-Earmarked Balances

General Reserve	2,240.3	
Housing Revenue Account	3,880.9	6,121.2
		9,992.2

**Budget Support Fund -** This was set up to provide support to the General Fund to allow spending levels to be adjusted over the medium term. The Budget Framework 2007/08 provides for the use of balances of £700,000 to support revenue spending.

**Insurance Fund -** Established to cover the Council's self-insured risks. Whilst the revised balance will fall as claims continue to be met, the current level of funding is regarded as satisfactory in the medium term.

**Training and Employment Services -** This fund is used to support the Council's training schemes, which have provided training opportunities to thousands of people over many years. This has proved extremely successful, however it is anticipated that there will be an operating loss of around £27,000 in 2006/07, which will be met from the Training Fund.

**Asset Management Fund -** This fund is available to provide support to meet the Council's commitments under the Asset Management Plan. There is no planned use of this fund next year. The 2007/08 Capital Programme assumes the use of £100,000 to finance Asset Management works to various Council's buildings.

**Private Sector Housing Fund** – This Fund was established some years ago, when housing association loans were repaid, to provide support to private sector housing initiatives. A sum of £100,000 will be used during 2007/08 to support private sector housing regeneration initiatives.

**Loan Debt Support Fund -** This fund is used to support the costs associated with managing the Council's debt portfolio. It is expected that around £150,000 will be utilised in 2007/08 to assist in rescheduling the Council's capital financing costs.

**Other Fund Balances -** This covers a range of small balances, which are used for technical accounting purposes.

**General Reserve -** The balance on this reserve of £2,240.3m represents around 15% of net revenue spending, which is well above the minimum level advised by the Audit Commission of 5%. Having said that, the Council has always held a significant reserve reflecting its tradition of being an active Council, prepared to respond to new initiatives.

I consider the level of balances to be adequate and appropriate for this authority and my advice is to regard £2m as a target to be maintained in the medium term.

**Housing Revenue Account** - HRA balances are also in a healthy state and are expected to total £3,880.9m at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007. There is an ongoing commitment to use a further £100,000 of HRA reserves during 2007/08 to assist with the implementation of the Service Improvement Plan

In line with previous years, the final funding position of the Housing Capital Programme for 2006/07, in terms of the actual use of revenue contributions to capital, could affect the final balance on the HRA Reserve. However, it is planned to make a contribution from HRA Reserves of £500,000 in 2007/08 and in 2008/09 in respect of the Housing Capital Programme to assist with the transition to a programme focused on meeting the Government's Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

**Equal Pay Claims –** Members have previously been advised that the Council faces a number of equal pay claims which will need to be met from either General Fund or the Housing Revenue Account reserves at some stage in the future. Experience at other Councils indicates that the cost of such claims continue to grow as claims are pursued through Employment Tribunals. Whilst it is difficult to assess the potential costs to be faced by the Council our reserves are being maintained at such a level which should allow the Council to meet its commitments without any impact on future service provision.

#### PRECEPTING AUTHORITIES

#### **Parishes**

3.10 In accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992, Parish Council precepts must be issued against the Borough Council's General Fund. Precept forms have now been received from all Parish and Town Councils. The figures for all Towns and Parishes, together with the resulting Council Tax at Band D, are set out in the following table:-

	Council Tax	Precept	Council Tax
	Base	For	At
	2007/08	2007/08	Band D
	1	£	C - n
Dishan Middleham	407		£ p
Bishop Middleham	427	41,344.00	96.82
Bradbury	54	1,262.50	23.38
Chilton	1,127	178,003.93	157.94
Cornforth	728	67,000.00	92.03
Eldon	114	9,000.00	78.95
Ferryhill	3,022	566,630.00	187.50
Fishburn	733	60,000.00	81.86
Great Aycliffe	7,748	1,506,763.00	194.47
Middridge	131	4,750.00	36.26
Mordon	108	1,480.00	13.70
Sedgefield	1,879	207,770.00	110.57
Shildon	2,837	553,090.00	194.96
Spennymoor	5,823	1,105,620.00	189.87
Trimdon	1,322	96,790.00	73.21
Windlestone	97	500.00	5.15
	26,150	4,400,003.43	168.26

- 3.11 The precepts for 2007/08 total £4,400,003.43 compared with £4,268,252.00 for the current year, an increase of £131,751.43 (3.1%). This equates to an average parish Council Tax of £168.26 at Band D, an increase of £4.43 (2.7%) over the current year. For details of the increases applicable to particular Parishes, Members should refer to Appendix C.
- 3.12 As Members are aware, the Council Tax for all Bands is fixed as a specified proportion of the tax at Band D. Appendix D shows the level of Council Tax for all Council Tax Bands for each Parish area.
- 3.13 The total level of Parish precepts is taken into account in determining the Borough's overall demand on the Collection Fund, which is summarised as follows:-

	Borough £	Parishes £	Total £
Budget Requirements	14,618,060.00	4,400,003.43.	19,018,063.43
Less	0.004.000.00	1	0.004.000.00
Revenue Support Grant	9,601,288.00	-	9,601,288.00
Collection Fund Surplus	150,000.00	-	150,000.00
NET DEMAND	4,866,772.00	4,400,003.43	9,266,775.43
Equivalent Council Tax at Band D	186.11	168.26	354.37

## **Durham County Council**

3.14 Durham County Council will meet to consider its spending plans for 2007/08 on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2007. It is expected to recommend a precept on this Council in the sum of £26,032,063.49 that equates to a Council Tax of £995.49 at Band D, an increase of £28.08 or 2.9 % over the current year.

#### **Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority**

3.15 The Fire and Rescue Authority will meet to consider its spending plans for 2007/08 on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2007. It is expected to approve a recommendation that will require a precept on this Council in the sum of £2,099,321.94, which equates to a Council Tax of £80.28 at Band D, an increase of £3.24 or 4.2% over the current year.

## **Durham Police Authority**

3.16 The Police Authority will meet to consider its spending plans for 2007/08 at 11.00am on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2007. As a number of options are to be considered by the Authority, it is not yet possible to identify the precepting requirements on this Council. Further information will be sent to Members as soon as practicable after their meeting to confirm the decision made by the Authority and its effect on the levels of overall Council Tax in the Borough.

## 4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1. That the Council's 2007/08 General Fund Revenue Budget, totalling £14,618,060 be approved.
- 4.2. That the Housing Revenue Account Budget be approved and that a rent increase of 3.6%+0.5% be applied to all rents with a rent restructuring adjustment of up to +£2.00, effective from 2nd April 2007.
- 4.3. That the council's 2007/08 Capital Spending Programme, totalling £20m, as set out in Appendix B to the report be approved.
- 4.4. That in accordance with Section 25(1) of the Local Government Act 2003, the comments of the Director of Resources, in relation to the robustness of the budget estimates being considered and adequacy of the financial reserves, be noted.
- 4.5. That the calculations required under Section 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992 be approved as follows:-

Aggregate of the calculations required under Section 32(2)(a) to (e) of the Act (i.e. gross expenditure of the Borough plus Parish precepts)

Aggregate of the calculations required under Section 32(3)(a) to (c) of the Act (i.e. income which will be credited to the Borough's General Fund)

Being the difference between the above calculations, in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act – the budget requirement for the year

4.6. That the calculation of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its General Fund be approved as follows:-

	£
Revenue Support Grant	9,601,288.00
Collection Fund Surplus	150,000.00
	9,751,288.00

- 4.7. That the calculation required under Section 33(1) of the 1992 Act, as the basic amount of the Council Tax for the year, i.e. the total in 4.5 above, less the total in 4.6 above, divided by the Tax Base 26,150 be approved as follows £354.37 (i.e. an average local Tax at Band D).
- 4.8. That the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish Precepts) in accordance with Section 34(1) of the Act, amounting to £168.26 be approved.

- 4.9. That the Council Tax for the year for those dwellings in the area to which no special items relates, calculated in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, be £186.11 (i.e. the Council Tax at Band D for Borough Council purposes).
- 4.10 That the amounts given by adding to the amount at 4.9 above, the amounts of the special items for those parts of the Council's area, calculated in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act be as set out under Band D in Appendix D to this report (i.e. Council Tax at Band D for Borough and Parish Councils in each Parish or part of the Borough).
- 4.11 That the amount to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands calculated in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, using as the base those amounts set out in 4.10 above, be as shown in Appendix D to the report.

#### 5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The financial implications are summarised within the body of the report.

#### 6. CONSULTATION

6.1 The Council's three Overview and Scrutiny Committees have been fully consulted on the Budget Framework proposals in accordance with the published timetable. In addition, consultation has taken place with a Council Tax Focus Group, the Tenants' Housing Services Group and Residents Federation representatives. Consultation also took place on all aspects relating to the Housing Revenue Account.

#### 7. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

## 7.1 Links to Corporate Objectives/Values

The Council's Corporate Objectives and Values have guided the preparation of the 2007/08 Budget Framework throughout. Resource availability has been fully re-assessed and directed to assist in achieving the Council's key priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. Particular emphasis has been placed on the following Corporate Values:-

- Be responsible with and accountable for public finances.
- Consult with service users, customers and partners.

#### 7.2 Risk Management

The Budget Framework 2007/08 has been prepared on a low risk basis to ensure that the Council effectively balances levels of service provision/spending on services with sustainable income levels to assist in achieving the Council's ambitions.

#### 7.3 Health and Safety

No additional implications have been identified.

#### 7.4 Equality and Diversity

No material considerations have been identified.

#### 7.5 Legal and Constitutional

The Budget Framework has been prepared in accordance with the Council's Constitution and full account has been taken of new statutory requirements. No other legal or constitutional implications have been identified.

## 7.6 Other Material Considerations

No other material considerations have been identified.

#### 8. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 As mentioned above, full consultation and engagement was undertaken with all three Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

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#### **Background Papers:**

- 1. Local Authority Finance Settlement 2007/08
- 2. Housing Subsidy Settlement 2007/08
- 3. Reports to Cabinet 11<sup>th</sup> January 2007 and 15<sup>th</sup> February 2007 Budget Framework 2007/08
- 4. Local Government Finance Act 1992 and Associated Regulations
- 5. Local Government Finance Act 1988 and Associated Regulations
- 6. Local Government Act 2003 and Associated Regulations
- 7. Treasury Management Strategy 2007/08

EXAN	MINATION BY STATUTORY OFFICERS	YES	NOT APPLICABLE
1.	The report has been examined by the Council's Head of the Paid Service or his representative	✓	ATTEIOABLE
2.	The content has been examined by the Council's S151 Officer or his representative.	✓	
3.	The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	✓	
4.	The report has been approved by Management Team.	✓	

#### **BUDGET FRAMEWORK FOR 2007/08**

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET TO COUNCIL

In accordance with Paragraph 2(b) of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules, Cabinet is required to make recommendations to Council as its firm proposals for the Budget Framework for 2007/2008.

At its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2007, Cabinet made the following recommendations:-:

- 1. That insofar as General Fund Services are concerned, the Budget Framework previously agreed by Cabinet on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2007, be confirmed and as a consequence it is proposed that:
  - The net revenue budget is set at £14,618,060 for 2007/2008.
  - The increase in the Borough Council Tax be 2.9%, taking the Band D Tax from £180.87 to £186.11.
- 2. That insofar as the Housing Revenue Account is concerned, the Budget Framework previously agreed by Cabinet on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2007, be confirmed and as a consequence it is proposed that:
  - An inflationary increase of 3.6% plus 0.5% be applied to all rents, with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007.
  - The Government's rent re-structuring methodology continues apply to bring basic rents towards target rents at the maximum level of +£2 per week. This will have the impact of increasing the average rent on the Housing Revenue Account by 5%.
- 3. That insofar as the Capital Spending Programmes are concerned, the Budget Framework previously agreed by Cabinet on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2007, be confirmed and as a consequence it is proposed that the Capital Programme be set at £20m.

#### **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2007/08**

## PROPOSED TARGET SPENDING LIMITS

	<u>£000</u>	<u>£000</u>
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP		1,400
HEALTHY BOROUGH	715	
<ul><li>- Culture &amp; Leisure</li><li>- Community Health</li></ul>	715 70	_ 785
ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH		
<ul><li>Environment</li><li>Planning &amp; Development</li></ul>	20 120	_ 140
STRONG COMMUNITIES		
- Council Housing (see details below)	8,400	
- Private Sector Housing	2,335	40.005
- Safer Communities	100	_ 10,835
PROSPEROUS BOROUGH		
- Social Regeneration	400	
<ul> <li>Learning &amp; Employment</li> </ul>	200	
<ul> <li>Major Regeneration Initiatives ( see details below )</li> </ul>	6,240	6,840 -
		20,000
		,

## Note:-

(1) The above table only shows the use of this Council's resources. The total level of capital spending will be substantially higher when external funding is taken into account - for example from Lottery Grant, Single Capital Programme Grant etc.

## **PARISH PRECEPTS**

	Precept 2006/07	Precept 2007/08	Increas	ses
	£	£	£	%
Dieben Middleben	40.440.00	44 244 00	1 204 00	2.0
Bishop Middleham	40,140.00	41,344.00	1,204.00	3.0
Bradbury	1,250.00	1,262.50	12.50	1.0
Chilton	172,910.00	178,003.93	5,093.93	2.9
Cornforth	66,000.00	67,000.00	1,000.00	1.5
Eldon	9,000.00	9,000.00	-	_
Ferryhill	549,910.00	566,630.00	16,720.00	3.0
Fishburn	58,000.00	60,000.00	2,000.00	3.4
Great Aycliffe	1,441,878.00	1,506,763.00	64,885.00	4.5
Middridge	4,000.00	4,750.00	750.00	18.8
Mordon	1,373.00	1,480.00	107.00	7.8
Sedgefield	202,007.00	207,770.00	5,763.00	2.9
Shildon	545,480.00	553,090.00	7,610.00	1.4
Spennymoor	1,079,014.00	1,105,620.00	26,606.00	2.5
Trimdon	96,790.00	96,790.00	-	-
Windlestone	500.00	500.00	-	
	4,268,252.00	4,400,003.43	131,751.43	3.1

## **COUNCIL TAX**

	Band D Tax 2006/07	Band D Tax 2007/08	Increas	es	
	£	£	£	%	
Di la Millia					
Bishop Middleham	92.28	96.82	4.54	4.9	
Bradbury	22.73	23.38	0.65	2.9	
Chilton	153.15	157.94	4.79	3.1	
Cornforth	91.67	92.03	0.36	0.4	
Eldon	78.95	78.95	-	-	
Ferryhill	182.21	187.50	5.29	2.9	
Fishburn	80.67	81.86	1.19	1.5	
Great Aycliffe	186.63	194.47	7.84	4.2	
Middridge	31.25	36.26	5.01	16.0	
Mordon	12.83	13.70	0.87	6.8	
Sedgefield	107.45	110.57	3.12	2.9	
Shildon	196.57	194.96	-1.61	-0.8	
Spennymoor	185.24	189.87	4.63	2.5	
Trimdon	73.10	73.21	0.11	0.2	
Windlestone	5.10	5.15	0.05	1.0	
Average	163.83	168.26	4.43	2.7	

# COUNCIL TAX FOR BOROUGH AND PARISH COUNCILS IN EACH PART OF THE BOROUGH

## IN ACCORDANCE WITH RECOMMENDATIONS 4.10 and 4.11

	Council Tax Bands							
	Α	В	С	D	E	F	G	Н
	6/9	7/9	8/9	1	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9
Area	£ p	£р	£ p	£ p	£р	£ p	£р	£р
Bishop Middleham	188.62	220.06	251.49	282.93	345.80	408.68	471.55	565.86
Bradbury	139.66	162.94	186.21	209.49	256.04	302.60	349.15	418.98
Chilton	229.37	267.59	305.82	344.05	420.51	496.96	573.42	688.10
Cornforth	185.43	216.33	247.24	278.14	339.95	401.76	463.57	556.28
Eldon	176.70	206.16	235.61	265.06	323.96	382.87	441.76	530.12
Ferryhill	249.07	290.59	332.10	373.61	456.63	539.66	622.68	747.22
Fishburn	178.65	208.42	238.20	267.97	327.52	387.07	446.62	535.94
Great Aycliffe	253.72	296.01	338.29	380.58	465.15	549.73	634.30	761.16
Middridge	148.25	172.95	197.66	222.37	271.79	321.20	370.62	444.74
Mordon	133.21	155.41	177.61	199.81	244.21	288.61	333.02	399.62
Sedgefield	197.79	230.75	263.72	296.68	362.61	428.54	494.47	593.36
Shildon	254.05	296.39	338.73	381.07	465.75	550.43	635.12	762.14
Spennymoor	250.65	292.43	334.20	375.98	459.53	543.08	626.63	751.96
Trimdon	172.88	201.69	230.51	259.32	316.95	374.57	432.20	518.64
Windlestone	127.51	148.76	170.01	191.26	233.76	276.26	318.77	382.52

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