# REPORT TO COUNCIL Item 6

# 29<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2008

# **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES**

# Portfolio: STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

# BUDGET FRAMEWORK FOR 2008/09

#### 1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Cabinet, at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2008 considered the feedback and findings of the comprehensive consultation exercise in regard to its initial proposals for the Budget Framework for the 2008/09 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, The Durham Police Authority, the Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority and Town/Parish Councils.

# 2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That the Budget Framework for 2008/09 and the recommendations as set out in this report, be approved.

# 3.0 BUDGET FRAMEWORK 2008/09

#### Background

- 3.1 The Cabinet approved its initial budget framework for 2008/09 at its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2008. All Members of the Council received a copy of that report which included a summarised draft budget supporting it and additional notes giving a background to the key budget issues 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 Residents and Tenants Groups.
- 3.2 Cabinet considered the findings of the comprehensive consultation process at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2008, when it made recommendations representing its proposals for the Budget Framework for 2008/09. 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 2008/09 can be summarised as follows.

# General Fund (GF)

3.4 The Council's net spending requirement in 2008/09 after a use of balances of £790,000 will be £15,005,440 and the details of this and effect on the Borough's Council Tax is as follows:-

Portfolio	Revised Budget 2007/08	Budget 2008/09
	£	£
Strategic Leadership	1,864,610	1,684,280
Healthy Borough Culture and Leisure Community Health	3,839,790 141,460	4,023,270 162,100
Attractive Borough Environment Planning and Development	5,629,880 494,240	5,791,450 546,520
Strong Communities Private Sector Housing Safer Communities	601,450 829,150	768,500 1,215,900
Prosperous Borough Social Regeneration Learning and Employment	2,036,550 207,790	1,901,840 261,140
Less Salary Savings	(385,000)	(480,000)
Efficiency Savings / Contingency	58,140 <b>15,318,060</b>	(79,560) <b>15,795,440</b>
Less : Use of Earmarked Reserves	700,000	790,000
Less:	14,618,060	15,005,440
Revenue Support Grant Collection Fund Surplus	9,601,288 150,000	9,791,296 157,000
NET DEMAND	4,866,772	5,057,144
Equivalent Council Tax at Band D:	£186.11	£190.02
Equivalent Council Tax at Band A:	£124.07	£126.68

# 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 3.9%+0.5% with effect from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008, with the adjustment for rent restructuring set at up to +£2.00 per week.

The range of rent increases will be between 0.03% and 7.00%, with the average increase being 5.6% taking the average rent from £56.25 to £59.40. BudgetFramework20082009ReporttoCouncil290208.0.doc Previous reports have shown that forecasts for the HRA for 2008/09 show that a contribution could be made back to the working balance. A number of reasons have been identified for adopting this prudent strategy revolving around the partnering agreement with Mears, outstanding equal pay issues and the Housing and Safety Ratings legislation for which a financial impact is likely to be incurred.

Since the last report the position on ER / VR arrangements relating to the transfer of staff and work to Mears has been resolved and costs have been incurred the current year that can be replenished in 2008/09 ensuring the HRA minimum balance is maintained.

Therefore, it is proposed that of the forecast £1.4m available £700,000 is returned to working balances and the remaining £700,000 is set-aside as a contingency for repairs and works to cover the bedding in period of the partnership agreement and the impact of the Health and safety Ratings.

Members will be kept informed of any additional issues that may yet become a call on the HRA working balance.

# 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 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 and Transition 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 for the 2008/09 financial year, and has been developed taking into account the Budget Framework for 2008/09.

# Robustness of Budget Estimates

- 3.8 Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires an authority's Chief Financial Officer Report 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 2008/09. The budgets have been prepared at outturn prices so there is no Contingency Sum available in 2008/09. 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 13th March 2008. In summary that report shows that spending on both the General Fund and the HRA is expected to be contained 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 2008: -

	Estimated Balance in Hand At 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2008			
Earmarked Balances	£000	£000		
Budget Support Fund	798			
LABGI Economic Development Fund	279			
Insurance Fund	1,181			
Training and Employment Services	485			
Asset Management Fund	302			
Private Sector Housing Fund	103			
Loan Debt Support Fund	106			
Other Fund Balances	200	3,454		
Non-Earmarked Balances				
General Reserve	2,240			
Housing Revenue Account	2,150	4,390		
		7,844		

**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 2008/09 provides for the use of the remaining balance on the fund of  $\pounds790,000$  to support revenue spending.

**LABGI Fund** – This fund was established from the proceeds of a Local Authority Business Growth Initiative grant, paid by the Government as a result of increased economic activity in 2005/06 and 2006/07. The fund has four streams all designed to stimulate economic growth throughout the Borough. It is anticipated that the balance on the fund will be fully utilised or committed by March 2009.

**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, it is anticipated that there will be an operating surplus of around £40,000 in 2007/08. During 2008/09 it is anticipated that the balance on the fund will be transferred to Bishop Auckland College as part of the merger proposals.

**Asset Management Fund -** This fund is available to provide support to meet the Council's commitments under the Asset Management Plan. The 2008/09 Capital Programme assumes the use of £200,000 to finance Asset Management works to various Council 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. The Capital Programme assumes the full use of the funds to support private sector housing regeneration initiatives within the Borough.

**Loan Debt Support Fund** - This fund is used to support the costs associated with managing the Council's debt portfolio. It is expected that the balance on the fund of £106,000 will be utilised in 2008/09 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, the majority of which will be spent by March 2009.

**General Reserve -** The balance on this reserve of  $\pounds$ 2,240.3m represents around 15% of net revenue spending, which is well above the minimum level advised by the Audit Commission of 5%.

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  $\pounds 2.150m$  at  $31^{st}$  March 2008. There is an ongoing commitment to use a further  $\pounds 70,000$  of HRA reserves during 2008/09 to assist with the implementation of the Service Improvement Plan.

# 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 Base 2008/09	Precept For 2008/09	Council Tax At Band D
	107	£	£p
Bishop Middleham	437	42,583.00	97.44
Bradbury	55	1,287.75	23.41
Chilton	1,143	183,891.84	160.89
Cornforth	740	74,500.00	100.68
Eldon	119	9,000.00	75.63
Ferryhill	3,027	584,030.00	192.94
Fishburn	748	61,000.00	81.55
Great Aycliffe	7,872	1,576,775.00	200.30
Middridge	130	5,500.00	42.31
Mordon	110	1,738.00	15.80
Sedgefield	1,928	218,000.00	113.07
Shildon	2,911	585,990.00	201.30
Spennymoor	5,960	1,165,600.00	195.57
Trimdon	1,334	110,000.00	82.46
Windlestone	100	500.00	5.00
	26,614	4,620,445.59	173.61

- 3.11 The precepts for 2008/09 total £4,620,445.59 compared with £4,400,003.43 for the current year, an increase of £220,442.16 (5.0%). This equates to an average parish Council Tax of £173.61 at Band D, an increase of £5.35 (3.2%) 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	15,005,440	4,620,445.59	19,625,885.59

Less			
Revenue Support Grant	9,791,296	-	9,791,296
Collection Fund Surplus	157,000	-	157,000
Net Demand	5,057,144	4,620,445.59	9,677,589.59
		I	
Equivalent Council Tax at Band D	190.02	173.61	363.63

# **Durham County Council**

3.14 Durham County Council will meet to consider its spending plans for 2008/09 on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2008 It is expected to recommend a precept on this Council in the sum of £27,262,849.30 that equates to a Council Tax of £1,023.38 at Band D, an increase of £28.89 or 2.9 % over the current year.

# Note: If the level of precept is changed at the meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> February an addendum report will be distributed at the Council Meeting

#### Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority

3.15 The Fire and Rescue Authority met to consider its spending plans for 2008/09 on 19th February 2008. They approved a recommendation that will require a precept on this Council in the sum of £2,198,848.68, which equates to a Council Tax of £82.62 at Band D, an increase of £2.34 or 2.9% 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 2008/09 General Fund Revenue Budget, totalling **£15,005,440** be approved.
- 4.2. That the Housing Revenue Account Budget be approved and that a rent increase of 3.9% + 0.5% be applied to all rents with a rent restructuring adjustment of up to + £2.00, effective from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008.
- 4.3. That the council's 2008/09Capital 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)

97,913,915.59

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

78,288,030.00

19,625,885.59

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	9,791,296.00
Collection Fund Surplus	157,000.00

9,948,296.00

- 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 26,614 be approved as follows £363.63 (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 **£173.61** 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 **£190.02** (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 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 2008/09 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 2008/09 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. 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

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

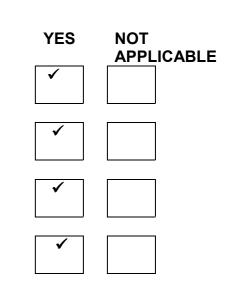
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#### **Background Papers:**

- 1. Local Authority Finance Settlement 2008/09
- 2. Housing Subsidy Settlement 2008/09
- 3. Reports to Cabinet 10<sup>th</sup> January 2008 and 14<sup>th</sup> February 2008 Budget Framework 2008/09
- 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 2008/09
- 8. Precept notifications from Precepting Authorities

# **EXAMINATION BY STATUTORY OFFICERS**

- 1. The report has been examined by the Council's Head of the Paid Service or his representative
- 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.



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#### **BUDGET FRAMEWORK FOR 2008/09**

#### **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 2008/2009.

At its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2008, Cabinet resolved: -

- 1. That insofar as General Fund Services are concerned, the Budget Framework previously agreed by Cabinet on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2008, be confirmed and as a consequence it is proposed that:
  - The net revenue budget is set at £15,005,440 for 2008/2009.
  - The increase in the Borough Council Tax be 2.1%, taking the Band D Tax from £186.11 to £190.02
- 2. That insofar as the Housing Revenue Account is concerned, the Budget Framework previously agreed by Cabinet on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2008, be confirmed and as a consequence it is proposed that:
  - An inflationary increase of 3.9% plus 0.5% is applied to all rents, with effect from 7th April 2008 as required by the Government.
  - The Government's existing rent re-structuring methodology continues apply to bring basic rents towards target rents at the maximum level of +£2.00 per week by 2001/12. This will have the impact of increasing the average rent on the Housing Revenue Account by 5.6%.
- 3. That insofar as the Capital Spending Programmes are concerned, the Budget Framework previously agreed by Cabinet on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2008, be confirmed and as a consequence it is proposed that the Capital Programme be set at **£20m**.

#### CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2008/09

#### **PROPOSED TARGET SPENDING LIMITS**

	<u>£000</u>
Housing Revenue Account	7,700
Regeneration Trust – Housing Market Renewal	6,000
Construction and Skills Centre	2,500
Spennymoor Arts Centre & Town Centre Redevelopment	1,300
Other Corporate Projects	2,500
	20,000

Note: -

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 Programme Grant etc.

With regard to other Corporate projects, should additional resources become available during 2008/09, a further report will be presented to Cabinet to seek approval to undertake specific projects.

# Appendix C

	Precept 2007/08	Precept 2008/09	Increas	ses
	£	£	£	%
				1
Bishop Middleham	41,344.00	42,583.00	1,239.00	3.0
Bradbury	1,262.50	1,287.75	25.25	2.0
Chilton	178,003.93	183,891.84	5,887.91	3.3
Cornforth	67,000.00	74,500.00	7,500.00	11.2
Eldon	9,000.00	9,000.00	-	-
Ferryhill	566,630.00	584,030.00	17,400.00	3.1
Fishburn	60,000.00	61,000.00	1,000.00	1.7
Great Aycliffe	1,506,763.00	1,576,775.00	70,012.00	4.6
Middridge	4,750.00	5,500.00	750.00	15.8
Mordon	1,480.00	1,738.00	258.00	17.4
Sedgefield	207,770.00	218,000.00	10,230.00	4.9
Shildon	553,090.00	585,990.00	32,900.00	5.9
Spennymoor	1,105,620.00	1,165,600.00	59,980.00	5.4
Trimdon	96,790.00	110,000.00	13,210.00	13.6
Windlestone	500.00	550.00	50.00	10.0

#### PARISH PRECEPTS

4,400,003.43 4,620,445.59 220,442.16 5.0

# COUNCIL TAX

and D Tax 2008/09	Inci	Increases		
£	£		%	

A	400.00	470.04	E 95	2.0
Windlestone	5.15	5.50	0.35	6.8
Trimdon	73.21	82.46	9.25	12.6
Spennymoor	189.87	195.57	5.70	3.0
Shildon	194.96	201.30	6.34	3.3
Sedgefield	110.57	113.07	2.50	2.3
Mordon	13.70	15.80	2.10	15.3
Middridge	36.26	42.31	6.05	16.7
Great Aycliffe	194.47	200.30	5.83	3.0
Fishburn	81.86	81.55	(0.31)	(0.4)
Ferryhill	187.50	192.94	5.44	2.9
Eldon	78.95	75.63	(3.32)	(4.2)
Cornforth	92.03	100.68	8.65	9.4
Chilton	157.94	160.89	2.95	1.9
Bradbury	23.38	23.41	0.03	0.1
Bishop Middleham	96.82	97.44	0.62	0.6

 Average
 168.26
 173.61
 5.35
 3.2

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#### 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							
	A 6/9	B 7/9	C 8/9	D 1	E 11/9	F 13/9	G 15/9	H 18/9
Area	£р	£p	£р	£р	£р	£р	£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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