

2025/26 BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX REPORT

Head of Service:	Peter Sebastian, Director of Corporate Services (S151)
Report Author:	Sue Emmons, Senior Accountant
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?	No
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 - Summary of 2025/26 Estimates Appendix 2 - Updated Financial Plan 2024-28

Summary

This report provides an update on the preparation of the budget for 2025/26. The report seeks any final guidance from the group prior to the preparation of the Budget and Council Tax report for the Council on 11 February 2025.

Recommendation(s)

The Group is asked to:

- (1) Provide the Chief Finance Officer with any further feedback needed to finalise the 2025/26 Budget and Council Tax report;
- (2) Note the provisional Local Government financial settlement for 2025/26 announced on 18 December;
- (3) Support that any surplus/deficit on 2024/5 business rates income, and any change in projected business rates income for 2025/26, will be offset by a transfer to or from the Collection Fund Equalisation Reserve, as set-out in Section 4;
- (4) Support a recommendation to Council of a council tax increase of 2.98% (£6.75 per annum for a Band D equivalent property) for 2025/26.

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The recommendations will assist the Council to meet its statutory duty to set a balanced budget for 2025/26.

2 Background

- 2.1 Service estimate reports for 2025/26 have been prepared for each of the four policy committees and circulated to all Councillors, via Members' News, in the draft Budget Book 2025/26.
- 2.2 The estimates have been prepared on the basis of the budget guidelines and targets agreed by Strategy & Resources Committee in July 2024, which included the following: -
 - 2.2.1 Ongoing review of existing asset utilisation to realise cost reductions in Council operational buildings and increased income from investment properties.
 - 2.2.2 Officers to be tasked with identifying further efficiencies in 2025/26, if possible, although these are becoming harder to achieve after over a decade of austerity.
 - 2.2.3 A base review, which entails reviewing the year end position for 2023/24, identifying any potential savings, additional cost pressures and areas where savings can be developed.
 - 2.2.4 Continue to investigate and bring forward income streams which maximise revenue from new and existing services, such as invest to save opportunities. Ensure any new powers are considered to generate additional income for the Council, such as any new charging policy for waste.
 - 2.2.5 Undertake a review of reserves to be reported to Financial Strategy Advisory Group to seek support for recommended minimum reserve balances.
 - 2.2.6 A target to increase fees and charges income by 6% in 2025/26 (as previously agreed at Full Council in February 2024), then by CPI+1% in the following years. Heads of Service review fees and charges annually to ensure increases are achievable and report fees and charges to policy committees for approval.
 - 2.2.7 To maximise external funding (e.g. Government Grants) and partnership opportunities (this could include any collaborative working opportunities which would result in cost savings).
 - 2.2.8 That any new revenue growth items (i.e. service enhancements resulting in increased net expenditure) supported by Policy Committees will need to be fully funded from existing budgets.

Financial Strategy Advisory Group

31 January 2025

- 2.3 The figures in this report reflect the latest outcome of the above workstreams, a number of which will continue into future years, and the provisional local government finance settlement for 2025/26.
- 2.4 The 2025/26 capital programme was considered and supported by Financial Strategy Advisory Group on 22 November 2024, subject to schemes being supported by policy committees in the January committee cycle.
- 2.5 The general fund summary position as contained in the 2025/26 Budget Book reflects the draft services estimates. There are, however, external financing income levels to be finalised: -
 - 2.5.1 The 2025/26 final local government finance settlement;
 - 2.5.2 The level of business rates income that will be retained;
 - 2.5.3 Revenue from council tax depending on the level of any increase for next year.
- 2.6 For pay inflation, the budgeted allocation is £514,000 to reflect an annual cost-of-living uplift in pay assumed to be 2.0%. This is subject to members approving in accordance with the options presented to Strategy & Resources on 28 January for recommendation to Full Council in February 2025. Members allowance budgets will be updated to reflect the scheme agreed at Full Council.
- 2.7 This report provides details of the local government finance settlement and seeks guidance from the Group on the presentation of the budget and council tax report for 2025/26.

3 2025/26 Local Government Settlement

- 3.1 Details of the provisional local government finance settlement were sent to all councillors via Members News on 19 December 2024.
- 3.2 The 2025/26 settlement is set out in this report. Nationally there is an increase in national core spending power for 2025/26 of 6% in cash terms; however, this has benefited Unitary and Metropolitan Councils with additional funding prioritising social care and areas with higher levels of deprivation. For District and Borough Councils the average is 0.3%, for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, overall core spending power uplift is close to 0% when changes are rounded.

Financial Strategy Advisory Group

31 January 2025

- 3.3 It is likely that a range of policy changes will be made by government for the 2026/27 financial year, including the 'Fair Funding Review'. The Fair Funding Review is a review of the distribution of government and business rates funding between Councils, and when complete, it is expected to favour unitary and upper tier councils, ahead of districts such as EEBC.
- 3.4 The following table shows the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) provisional Core Spending Power grants for EEBC for 2025/26: -

2025/26 Provisional Settlement (Core Spending Power) MHCLG 19 December 2024	2024/25	2025/26 (Provisional)	Funding Change since 2024/25
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Retained Business Rates - Baseline	1,598	1,632	34
Compensation for under indexing the business rates multiplier	292	305	13
Funding Guarantee Grant	141	0	(141)
Services Grant	10	0	(10)
Recovery Grant	15	0	(15)
Funding Floor*	0	338	338
Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation	37	37	0
Subtotal - Recurring Government Funding	2,093	2,312	219
New Homes Bonus	498	6	(492)
Council Tax**	7,636	7,909	273
Total Provisional Core Spending Power (as per LG Finance Settlement)	10,227	10,227	0

Reconciliation to Budget (para 6.2)	10,227
Revenue Support Grant/ Rolled in Grants	72
Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation	(37)
January Forecast of Business Rates and Council Tax	14
Funding for 2025/26	10,270

*The Funding Floor represents a government commitment that no council is worse off than the previous financial year. This grant ensures that Epsom & Ewell does not lose out as a result of other funding changes.

**In its assessment of core spending power, government assumes that councils should increase council tax by the maximum permissible amount.

Financial Strategy Advisory Group

31 January 2025

- 3.5 The funding change compared to 2024/25 is below the rates of inflation from September (CPI 1.7%), which are commonly used for supplier contract uplifts, and next year's staff pay award budgeted at 2%. This means the spending settlement does not provide any additional funding to the Council to tackle inflationary, revenue and deficit pressures.
- 3.6 Should government make any changes to the provisional settlement, it is anticipated these would be reported to Full Council and met by an appropriation to or from the Corporate Projects Reserve.

4 Retained Business Rates

- 4.1 Government sets a level of business rates that should be collectable by a local authority each year and then, using a national formula, determines how much can be retained by the Council (the funding baseline).
- 4.2 Should the local collection of business rates exceed the government-set baseline, the Council retains a 50% share of the surplus above the baseline. However, should local collection of business rates fall short of the baseline, the Council is liable for a 50% share of the deficit.
- 4.3 The 2025/26 government settlement includes £1,560,000 for this Council as a 'settlement funding assessment' which is solely from business rates baseline funding.
- 4.4 The draft Budget Book estimated a retained business rates income for 2025/26 of £1,784,000 and also includes separate 'Additional Multiplier Cap' grant funding of £301,000 based on provisional figures.
- 4.5 The following table shows that EEBC can now expect to achieve business rates income in 2025/26 of £1,804,000 and £305,000 from 'Additional Multiplier Cap' grant:

Financial Strategy Advisory Group
31 January 2025

Retained Business Rates	2024/25			2025/26		Description
	Gov't Baseline	EEBC Budget (NNDR1)	EEBC Latest Forecast	Previous Forecast inc in MTFS	Final EEBC Budget (NNDR1)	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Rates Collectable	27,214	24,116	23,078		25,906	
Less: payable to central government	(13,607)	(12,058)	(11,539)		(12,953)	50% of total
Less: payable to SCC	(2,722)	(2,412)	(2,308)		(2,591)	20% of local share
NNDR Baseline	10,885	9,646	9,231	-	10,362	
Less Tariff	(9,343)	(9,343)	(9,343)		(9,454)	Tariff set by govt. to go to 'top-up authorities'
Retained Business Rates	1,542	303	(112)	-	908	
Less: loss of 50% of underlying growth	-	(207)	(196)		(243)	
Est. of Retained Business Rates	1,542	96	(308)	1,784	665	
Add back: S31 Grants	-	1,653	1,653	-	1,139	
EEBC Income including relief grants	1,542	1,749	1,345	1,784	1,804	
Multiplier Cap Grant		292	393	301	305	
Budgeted / Forecast EEBC Income including grants	1,542	2,041	1,738	2,085	2,109	

Surplus / (Shortfall) In Funding v Budget / MTFS	(303)	24
---	--------------	-----------

Financial Strategy Advisory Group

31 January 2025

- 4.6 The business rates collection fund has a surplus balance brought forward from prior years of £132,551 (EEBC's share); and a projected deficit of £415,481 for 2024/25, resulting in a carried forward deficit of £282,930. The deficit on the collection fund is partially due to continued additional mandatory business rates reliefs awarded to eligible business, as instructed by central government. The Council should be compensated for these reliefs with additional grant funding and EEBC is now expecting to receive an additional £100,367.
- 4.7 Due to the reduction in expected income for 2024/25 the Council can also expect to make reduced levy payments to central government of £11,361.
- 4.8 The safety net threshold for 2025/26 is set at £1,443,193 compared to £1,803,898 income used for the 2025/26 estimates, this limits the exposure to losses to £360,705.
- 4.9 This table summarises the main changes to the Business Rates forecast and the impact on the Council's General Fund budget for 2025/26:

	EEBC's Share	
<u>2023/24</u>		
Prior Year surplus (2023/24 final outturn vs forecast outturn)		132,551
<u>2024/25</u>		
Forecast Share of Deficit for 2024/25	(415,481)	
Anticipated Reduced Levy	11,361	
Forecast Additional Multiplier Cap	100,367	
		(303,753)
Prior Year Deficit on Business Rates to be Charged to the General Fund in 2025/26		(171,202)
<u>2025/26 Income Forecast</u>		
Additional Business Rates for 2025/26	19,898	
Additional Multiplier Cap	4,426	
		24,324
Reduced Funding from Business Rates		(146,878)
Less Current Deficit on Prior Year Retained Business Rates in Draft Budget Book		18,400
Increased contribution from Collection Fund Equalisation Reserve		(128,478)

- 4.10 This table shows the impact of the updated Business Rates forecast, carried out in January. It provides a:

Financial Strategy Advisory Group

31 January 2025

4.10.1 A final outturn position for the 2023/24 year and an updated forecast for the 2024/25 year, both of which are charged to the General Fund for the 2025/26 year. This is done to ensure that the Collection Fund is updated as a result of the latest known position at the point the budget is set.

4.10.2 An updated forecast for the 2025/26 year

4.10.3 The Draft Budget Book already contained an £18k deficit. This forecast shows an overall worsening of £128k. This will be funded from the Collection Fund Equalisation Reserve.

4.11 For 2025/26, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has not been invited to be included within a pooling arrangement with Surrey County Council, London Borough of Sutton and other Surrey district councils.

Collection Fund Equalisation Reserve

4.12 The Council holds the Collection Fund Equalisation Reserve to mitigate the impact of changes to planned funding from business rates income. Any compensatory grants from government are set-aside in the Collection Fund Equalisation Reserve and used to fund the deficits that arise due to government business rate reliefs, in accordance with collection fund regulations. This reserve essentially helps the Council to mitigate timing differences across financial years, as well as any reductions in income relative to budget.

4.13 The funding position on retained business rates income for 2025/26 and the prior year remains provisional, pending submission of statutory collection fund returns to MHCLG at the end of January. Any changes in the overall level of funding will be included in the Final Budget Book and offset by a contribution to or from the Collection Fund Equalisation Reserve. It should be noted that this reserve is expected to be equivalent to around [10%] of the total income budgeted for the 2025/26 year and is deemed to be at a sufficient level.

5 New Homes Bonus, Services Grant, Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging and Homelessness Grant

5.1 The Council has benefited in the past from New Homes Bonus (NHB), which is awarded by Government based on the number of new residential properties built in the borough in the preceding year, with a supplement for affordable housing.

5.2 The award methodology means that NHB is volatile and as one-off funding, it cannot be relied upon as a funding source for recurring day-to-day services. As such, since 2019/20, the Council's budget has removed any reliance on NHB as a source of funding to support on-going services. Instead, the grant has been transferred to the Corporate Projects Reserve to ensure funding is available for one-off projects and Council initiatives.

Financial Strategy Advisory Group

31 January 2025

- 5.3 For 2025/26 the level of funds will be just £6,160, a significant decline from 2024/25 of £498,000 as set out in the Local Government Settlement. There is not expected to be any future NHB funding for Epsom & Ewell.
- 5.4 In the 2024/25 year, the Council received £10 in Services Grant. This grant has not been continued for the 2025/26 financial year.
- 5.5 New funding from Defra for the Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR) for Packaging Scheme is being provided from 2025/26 on an annual basis. The funding is for new regulations from January regarding recycling consumer packaging. The details are complex and still being worked through by the Council and with further guidance from Defra. The funding allocated to the Council in 2025/26 is £671,000 net.
- 5.6 The grant is being used in full to contribute to the funding of Waste Services, but as the level of future grant funding is determined by performance against criteria we are unable to as yet determine, the level of funding for 2026/27 and beyond has been assumed at 50% of the 2025/26 level.
- 5.7 New obligations may require changes to waste collection and household bins and funding will need to be made available for any statutory requirements.
- 5.8 Homelessness and rough sleeping the Government is awarding £829,925 (Rough Sleeping Prevention £42,790 and Homelessness Prevention £787,135) of grant funding for 2025/26. The Homelessness grant 49% of the funding must be ringfenced to be spent on prevention, relief and staffing. The 49% within this ringfence may not be spent on temporary accommodation.
- 5.9 National Insurance Increase. The Government has confirmed it will allocate formula funding for the NI increases arising from the October budget changes. The estimated cost of this increase for Epsom & Ewell is £269,000 but only £120,000 of this is expected to be covered by the Government funding. An allowance for the balance of £149,000 has been made within the 2025/26 budget. The Government papers has only stated funding for 2025/26.
- 5.10 The minimum wage increase is also expected to cost the Council an additional £60,000 and will need to be funded from the pay inflation allowance.

6 Budget Overview

- 6.1 The service estimates are contained in the draft Budget Book 2025/26.
- 6.2 The draft Budget Book currently shows a balanced budget position for next year:

Financial Strategy Advisory Group
31 January 2025

General Fund Budget Summary	2025/26 Draft Budget
	£'000
Net Cost of Services (as per draft Budget Book)	10,398
Less increased contribution from Collection Fund Equalisation Reserve	(128)
Updated Net Cost of Services	10,270
Funded by:	
Council Tax (based on 2.98% annual increase)	7,884
Retained Business Rates*	1,804
Govt compensation for under indexing the business rates multiplier	305
Revenue Support Grant	72
Funding Floor Grant**	338
Surplus on prior year council tax	38
Deficit on prior year business rates*	(171)
Sub-Total Funding	10,270
Budget position for 2025/26	0

*See section 4 – Retained Business Rates

**The Funding Floor represents a government commitment that no council is worse off than the previous financial year. This grant ensures that Epsom & Ewell does not lose out as a result of other funding changes.

- 6.3 The Budget Book includes a £475,000 contribution from revenue to assist in funding the annual capital programme and a contingency of £210,000 to mitigate the impact of inflation and the cost-of-living crisis on services next year, especially the anticipated increase in energy prices
- 6.4 The Strategy and Resources Committee budget currently includes a £200,000 general contingency to mitigate any unforeseen costs in implementing changes to services identified as part of the 2025/26 budget process, or due to unforeseen expenditure on agreed policies and priorities. In addition, the budget includes a contingency of £100,000 for unscheduled property related costs or maintenance; these contingencies reduce the need for services to hold their own individually.
- 6.5 The funding position included within the draft Budget Book reflects a provisional estimate of business rates income and the prior year deficit, which are still being finalised as part of statutory collection fund returns to be completed by 31 January. Any changes in business rates funding will be met by an appropriation from the Collection Fund Equalisation Reserve.

Financial Strategy Advisory Group

31 January 2025

7 Fair Funding Review

- 7.1 The ongoing Fair Funding Review is a government review of the distribution of government and business rates funding between Councils, and when complete, it is expected to favour unitary and upper tier councils, ahead of districts such as EEBC.
- 7.2 Government has again postponed implementation of any 'Fair Funding Review' until at least 2026/27.
- 7.3 In 2016, government introduced Negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) as part of the Council's four-year settlement. The settlement identified that in 2019/20 the Council would have to make an on-going payment back to central government of £624,000, known as Negative RSG. However, after significant lobbying from affected councils including EEBC, the Government decided to remove Negative RSG from annual settlements since 2019/20.
- 7.4 The delay of the Fair Funding Review means that Negative RSG continues to be excluded from 2025/26's settlement, however, the risk still remains that Negative RSG will feature as part of the future Fair Funding Review calculation if this is eventually introduced.
- 7.5 The medium-term financial projections assume that Negative RSG will not be re-introduced until 2028/29 and that when introduced, a transitional period will be applied. Should the Fair Funding Review result in a funding reduction for EEBC prior to 2028/29, the Council holds the Collection Fund Equalisation Reserve, which can be applied to mitigate this risk and provide time for the Council to adapt to any new funding regime.
- 7.6 If government makes any changes in the finalised local government finance settlement, these will be communicated to FSAG or reported to all councillors if not available for the meeting.

8 Funding from Investment / Commercial Property (including EEPIC)

- 8.1 Epsom & Ewell Property Investment Company Ltd (EEPIC), the Council's wholly owned subsidiary, holds two commercial properties outside the Borough. The properties were acquired in 2017 to generate additional income for the Council, before the introduction of new statutory guidance in 2018, which restricted the ability to acquire further properties outside the Borough using borrowing.
- 8.2 For 2025/26, dividend income from EEPIC is expected to be £1.35m, an increase from 2023/24 and 2024/25, when a temporary 50% reduction in rental income from one tenant was in place (as agreed at S&R Committee in March 2023) and led to a lower annual dividend payment. Should income from EEPIC fall below budget for any reason, the Council holds the Property Income Equalisation Reserve which can be used to offset any impact on the revenue budget in the short term.

Financial Strategy Advisory Group

31 January 2025

- 8.3 The Council itself owns four other properties in the Borough which were acquired through the use of external borrowing – 64-74 East Street, Emerald House on East Street, 2 Roy Richmond Way and Parkside House. While 64-74 East Street has been identified as the new Town Hall site, the other three properties are budgeted to generate net rental income (including borrowing costs) of £648,000 in 2025/26. £448,000 of this income makes an important contribution to the funding of services, and the balance of £200,000 is transferred to the Planned Maintenance reserve to ensure the Council can fulfil all the maintenance needs across its property portfolio.

9 Council Tax Options

- 9.1 It was announced as part of government's provisional settlement for 2025/26 that District Councils will be allowed to increase their council tax by either £5 per annum (per Band D equivalent property) or up to 3% (whichever is highest) before needing to hold a referendum.
- 9.2 For financial planning purposes, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Budget Book assumes an annual council tax increase of 2.98%, which equates to an additional £6.75 per annum or 13.0 pence per week for a Band D equivalent property.
- 9.3 The proposed increase of 2.98% is the highest increase within the 3% increase limit that gives rise to an equal increase across all bands once rounding to the nearest penny has been applied. A 2.99% increase would result in a £6.78 increase which when multiplied across the other bands, would require rounding to the nearest penny, creating slightly different percentage changes for each band.
- 9.4 To the average band 'D' council taxpayer (those not receiving discounts or support), the annual charge for borough services would increase from £226.17 to £232.92 per property.
- 9.5 With CPI inflation at 1.7% (as of September 2024), this still represents a above inflationary increase for residents, and a real terms funding benefit for the Council.
- 9.6 For the Council's finances, revenue from council tax provides critical income to pay for services, assisting to replace funding lost from government revenue support grant and new homes bonus.
- 9.7 The Group may feel it appropriate for options of 0% and 2.98% to be included in the budget report to full Council, as set out in the following table:

Financial Strategy Advisory Group
31 January 2025

Council Tax Change	0% Freeze	2.98% Increase
Council Tax (Band D)	£226.17	£232.92
Increase per annum	£0	£6.75
Increase per week	£0p	£13p
Additional Income Generated 2025/26	£0	£228,467
Additional savings / reserve contributions needed to balance Draft Budget	£228,467	£0
On-going income received in future years	£0	£228,467

- 9.8 Surrey County Council is expected to implement the maximum council tax increase to help their future funding position.

10 Capital Programme and Level of Capital Reserves

- 10.1 The Draft Capital Programme for 2025/26 recommended by Financial Strategy Advisory Group on 22 November proposes £1,664,000 of projects. These proposals, which were presented to relevant policy committees in January, included £785,000 for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding programme, for which the 2025/26 allocation has now been confirmed at £974,000. The programme that will be put forward to Full council for approval in February 2025 will include the DFG scheme at the higher figure and will therefore total £1.853. The recommended funding of the programme is £974,000 of Disabled Facility Grant, £475,000 from a budgeted planned revenue contributions and £404,000 from useable capital receipts.
- 10.2 Funding the capital programme in this way is expected to see the level of uncommitted capital receipts reserves drop to £1.56 million by the end of 2025/26.
- 10.3 The Council agreed within its current Medium-Term Financial Strategy to maintain a minimum level of capital reserves of £1 million.
- 10.4 The draft Financial Plan includes a contribution for revenue funding of the capital programme of £500,000 in 2026/27 to provide ongoing resources for a sustainable capital programme.

11 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

- 11.1 Equality Impact Assessment

Financial Strategy Advisory Group

31 January 2025

11.1.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

11.2 Crime & Disorder

11.2.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

11.3 Safeguarding

11.3.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

11.4 Dependencies

11.4.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

11.5 Other

11.5.1 The main financial risks will be presented to Full Council in a corporate budget risk assessment in February.

11.5.2 The highest service financial risks are the impact of the increased cost of living on the Council's costs and income streams, and the potential for increased demands for housing and homelessness prevention next year, and the reliance on commercial property income to fund services.

11.5.3 The Council holds both revenue and capital reserves and has set aside a £210,000 inflation contingency in next year's budget, which all act as contingencies against financial risk. Despite these contingencies, the level of overall revenue budget risk in 2025/26 is deemed to be high, due to continuing high levels of economic uncertainty within the UK.

11.5.4 Higher risk also remains for the financial outlook beyond 2025/26, due to the uncertainty on the outcome on the Government's 'Fair Funding Review' and the possibility of cuts in core funding for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council in future settlements.

11.5.5 The 'Fair Funding Review' – the mechanism used to determine individual authority settlements – may be used by Government to reduce funding for District Councils.

12 Financial Implications

12.1 The forecast budget position for 2025/26 is summarised in this report.

12.2 Council tax is an important and secure source of funding and provides income to support core services delivered by the Council. The referendum limits set by Central Government limits the annual increase that can be made to council tax without requiring a referendum to 3 percent.

Financial Strategy Advisory Group

31 January 2025

- 12.3 An increase of £6.75 for a Band D property, the maximum permitted without triggering a referendum generates additional income of £228,467.
- 12.4 The draft Budget Book 2025/26 is highly detailed therefore please can any queries be sent to relevant officers in advance of this Committee meeting wherever possible.
- 12.5 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** As detailed in this report.

13 Legal Implications

- 13.1 The Council is under a statutory obligation to produce a balanced budget and to comply with its policy on equalities.
- 13.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** Although there are no new direct legal implications arising from this report, decisions taken about the budget will impact the services which can be delivered. In the event of any impact, there will need to be an equalities impact assessment in relevant cases.

14 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 14.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged: Effective Council.
- 14.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.
- 14.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None arising from the contents of this report.
- 14.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None arising from the contents of this report.
- 14.5 **Partnerships:** None arising from the contents of this report.

15 Background papers

- 15.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- [2025/26 Strategic Financial Planning, Strategy & Resources Committee](#) - 23 July 2024.
- [Review of Reserves, Financial Strategy Advisory Group](#) – 12 July 2024.

Other papers:

- Policy Committee 2025/26 Budget Reports (January 2025 Committee Cycle).

Financial Strategy Advisory Group
31 January 2025

- Draft Budget Book 2025/26.