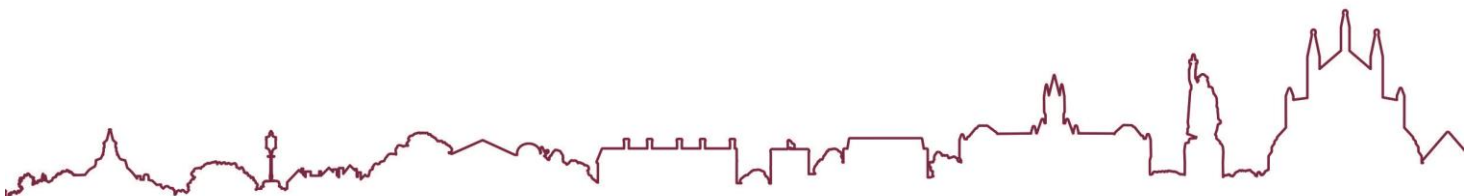


At its meeting on the 27 February 2025, full Council made the decision set out below following recommendations of Cabinet. In line with Part 4.5 of the Winchester City Council constitution - Budget and Policy Framework Rules (Para 2.4), the Council's decision will become effective on the expiry of five clear days after the publication of this notice of decision, unless the Leader objects to it in that period.

**Agenda item: General Fund Budget 2025/26 (CAB3494)**

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the level of General Fund Budget for 2025/26 be agreed and recommend the summary as shown in Appendix A of report CAB3494.**
- 2. That the Greener Faster and carbon investment proposals be approved, used as the basis of this budget and as set out in the CAB3483 including:**
  - a. £135,000 additional budget per annum for the ongoing costs of providing the food waste collection service.**
  - b. £460,000 one-off budget to fund the phased roll out of the food waste service from October 2025, without government funding.**
- 3. That, in relation to the Healthy Communities priority of the new Council Plan:**
  - a. Approve the revised income bands for the Council Tax Reduction scheme for working age applicants (set out in appendix E) that ensure claimants continue to receive the appropriate level of support after the DWP's increase in Universal Credit rates with effect from 1 April 2025.**
  - b. Approve the amendment of the Council Tax Reduction scheme for working age applicants to include all additional support and new disregards with effect from 1 April 2025, as set out in this report.**
  - c. That £15,000 from the Cost of Living Reserve be used to extend the Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund into 2025/26.**
- 4. That in relation to the Good Homes for All priority, additional investment of £300,000 per annum be approved to fund increased demand for temporary accommodation to prevent homelessness.**
- 5. That an additional £50,000 per annum be included to fund additional pressures on council contracts.**
- 6. That service income annual budgets be amended as follows, in response to revised estimates:**
  - a. Garden Waste income increased by £30,000 (to reflect increases**



subscriptions, although partly off-set by increased contract costs of delivering the service to more households).

- b. Planning fee income reduction of £200,000 (to reflect the current reduced levels of applications received)

7. That following a review of earmarked reserves that they be amended as follows:

- a. £200,000 of the Transitional Reserve be re-allocated to the Thriving Places Reserve to invest one-off resources into planning enforcement.
- b. £2m of the Transitional Reserve be re-allocated to the Property Reserve to fund maintenance requirements of corporate properties.
- c. £902,000 of the Exceptional Inflation Reserve be re-allocated to the Car Parks Property Reserve to fund maintenance of and investment in parking.
- d. £425,000 from the Major Investment Reserve be re-allocated to the Local Development Framework Reserve to fund Local Plan requirements.
- e. An additional £100,000 per annum be set aside into the Car Parks Reserve to fund maintenance of and investment in parking.

8. That the sum of £1,364,045 be treated as Special Expenses under Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 in respect of the Winchester Town area as set out in section 16 and Appendix D.

9. That the Council Tax for the Special Expenses in the Winchester Town area at Band D for 2025/26 be increased by the maximum allowed under the referendum limit of 2.99% combined between the town and district.

10. That the deficit balance on the Council Tax Collection Fund for distribution to this Council, calculated in January 2025 of £142,787, be approved.

11. Recommend the level of Council Tax at Band D for City Council services for 2025/26 be increased to £163.66, an increase of £4.30 reflecting an average Council tax increase of 2.7%.

12. The approval of a Second Home premium for Council Tax which will take effect from 1 April 2026 (12 months' notice is required to implement this premium), and the adoption of exceptions (listed at Appendix F) in respect of properties included in the Council Tax Premium schemes.

## **Reasons:**

The purpose of report CAB3494 is to consider and recommend to Council the 2025/26 General Fund Revenue Budget.

The report details the proposals for additional savings, spending and investment for the year ahead in order to support core council services and enhance delivery of the priorities in the newly adopted Council Plan 2025-2030. The Medium-Term Financial

Strategy (report CAB3483 in November 2024) set out the forecast position for the medium term. Projections have now been updated and the new Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is shown at Appendix A. This shows that, although the council's immediate financial position to 2027 is stable, there are increasing forecast deficits in the longer term. To address these future pressures, the Council has a well-established, organisation wide transformation programme to close the £3m gap in funding within 3 years. Transformation Challenge 2025 (TC25) has identified ongoing savings of £1.29m per annum which have been removed from the baseline budget. Transformational changes over the next few years are underway, focusing on digital redesign to enhance service delivery while producing savings; income generation; and contracts review.

*At its meeting on the 27 February 2025, Council asked questions and then debated the recommended minute of Cabinet and details within the corresponding report (CAB3494). There were no amendments to the recommendations proposed.*

**Date of Publication of notice:**

28 February 2025