

**a) Andrew Hill of Boyn Hill ward will ask the following question of Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot:**

Table 4.18.2 of the approved February 2020/21 budget included a line for the "Estimated Year End Reserves" for the next five years. What are the equivalent five figures for Estimated Year End Reserves under the (para 5.1) base savings assumptions of this evening's paper, and why is it not explicitly shown in the appendices?

*Written response: The MTFs published with the Budget in Feb 2020 supported the budget for the financial year 2020/21 and gave an indication of the assumed financial outlook for the following 4 years. When setting the budget the S151 officer has to report on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves, which leads to showing the figures for estimated year end reserves in the paper in February 2020.*

*The paper before Council tonight is effectively the start of the formal budget setting process for the financial year 2021/22 and consideration of the medium term financial outlook for the following four years. It lays out the assumptions that we are making around levels of funding we are likely to receive from national government alongside assumptions we are making at this time around inflation factors, service levels and potential on-going impacts that the current global pandemic is having on our financial sustainability.*

*The statement from the S151 is not required at this time, specifically because the council is not being asked to set a budget, but asked to agree the framework within which the council is working to manage its resources.*

*The main changes from the MTFs in February 2020 are the assumptions being revised for current circumstances. As detailed in the report there are significant changes as a result of the impact of COVID-19 on Council finances, in-year impacts have been regularly reported via cabinet budget monitoring reports this year and will continue to be for the rest of the year. There are also changes around some of the timing of revisions to how local government finances are calculated, again detailed in the report. Importantly, the revised MTFs indicates the Gap between Income and expenses that the budget will need to accommodate.*

*The 2020/21 budget is proving robust and the financial issues the Council now faces are as a result COVID 19 that has had a devastating effect on Councils up and down the Country.*

**b) Andrew Hill of Boyn Hill ward will ask the following question of Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot:**

Under the proposed principles, there are many uncoded and vague suggestions. For example, under paragraph 6.17 what specific assets are being considered for sale, and under paragraph 7.5 what "immediate service reductions or cessations" are you actively considering?

Written response: *The paper before Council tonight is effectively the start of the formal budget setting process for the financial year 2021/22 and consideration of the medium term financial outlook for the following four years. It lays out the assumptions that we are making around levels of funding we are likely to receive from national government alongside assumptions we are making at this time around inflation factors, service levels and potential on-going impacts that the current global pandemic is having on our financial sustainability.*

*This paper is not the Council's budget which is why it does not include costed information at this stage on proposals around specific asset sales or specific service reductions that have not already been agreed in prior years. This is a revision of assumptions to allow the Council to then understand the financial parameters within which it needs to work to set a balanced budget for 2021/22.*

*The draft budget will be presented at the December cabinet meeting and that will include fully costed proposals for any changes to services that will then be subject to public consultation and engagement. The full draft budget will be considered in January by the Council's scrutiny panels as part of that engagement process prior to the final proposed budget, incorporating any changes following that consultation process to be considered at Cabinet and then full Council in February.*

*We also await information on our financial settlement from Central government, the date of which has not been confirmed, but we are anticipating this between November and December. The outcome of this will mean we will have to revise some of the assumptions that we have made in this paper if they prove to be different from those that we have made. There is information included within the report to highlight this.*

*All council services are being asked to consider and model options to meet the identified financial gap over the medium term and that work is on-going.*

*In relation to your question about specific assets for sale, an Asset Management Review & Action Plan was approved by Cabinet in June 2020. This identified a number of assets, that in principle could be either sold or redevelopment. Further work is being undertaken by the Asset Management and Property Company teams, to bring back to Cabinet Investment reports for approval. This will only be done once all due diligence has been completed, and an understanding of the financial returns can be debated and then any implications included in the MTFs or revise previous assumptions.*

**c) Kirsty Brooks of Furze Platt ward will ask the following question of Councillor Rayner, Deputy Leader of the Council, Resident and Leisure Services, HR, IT, Legal, Performance Management and Windsor:**

Please stop incorrectly describing cultural services as 'discretionary' and 'nice to have extras'. Could you comment on your plans for the library and how you would provide its alternative services should you decide to close it. Free computer and internet access, books and learning possibilities are essential for the mental health of all and employment prospects for low income residents.

Written response: *The Royal Borough is aware that the provision of a Library Service is in fact a statutory duty, governed by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. This states that local council in England have a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all people working, living or studying full-time in the area who wish to make use of it.*

*We have been working hard to ensure that we can re-open our two main libraries, in Maidenhead and Windsor, in a way which protects both customers and staff during these difficult times. As well as the click and collect, select and deliver and home visiting services initially offered we have also now extended the service to re-open browsing and pc/internet access on a bookable basis. While we are ever mindful of changing government guidelines we have no plans to remove this access at this time and any permanent changes to the service would have to be subject to a public consultation and engagement exercise.*

*The Medium Term Financial Strategy will always make a differentiation between statutory and discretionary services as it highlights that fact that as a Council we have to be mindful of our legal duties to provide certain services and at a very minimum we have to show how we can afford to run those services at safe levels. We are very aware that the distinction between discretionary and statutory services should not place a judgment on their relative importance and in fact the inter-relationship between those services is also important.*