

Motion By Councillor Haslam, seconded by Councillor Rowley

This Administration delivers for the Borders. Since 2017 we have worked with our community planning partners to deliver new schools, new community infrastructure, delivered the award winning Inspire learning programme, which provided every child in the their 4th year of primary schooling to their sixth year in our secondary schools, with an iPad, enabling home schooling during lock down and transforming the delivery of Education.

We have supported the Borders effectively during one of the most difficult periods in our history, sustaining services such as care for our vulnerable and waste collections throughout the pandemic. But we have also assisted in the protection of our economy by supporting key suppliers in the transport, early years and social care sectors with their cash flow, providing over £70m of grants to local businesses affected by COVID-19, and supporting vulnerable families through our 5 Community Assistance Hubs.

We have delivered on tackling poverty and agreed a new anti-poverty strategy, sustaining local jobs through our contracts with local businesses, become a living wage employer.

We have delivered on protecting and prioritising our environment commitment, declaring a climate emergency, developing a climate change route map to guide our transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2045. We have already, diverted all our household waste from landfill, increased recycling rates, improved the energy efficiency of many of our buildings, and invested heavily in major infrastructure projects such as the Hawick Flood protection scheme and the associated active travel network.

We have delivered new community infrastructure through our play areas and outdoor community spaces programme in Peebles, Galashiels, Newtown St Boswells and Kelso and at Harestanes, opened the new Jedburgh Grammar school and supported community groups to deliver their own projects including the hugely successful Hawick Pump Track.

We have opened new tourist attractions in Duns through the extended Jim Clark Museum and in Galashiels through the new Great Tapestry Centre bringing visitors to the Borders and creating new jobs.

We have delivered on the commitment to offer 1,140 hours of annual free childcare to every two to five year old in the Borders.

With regards to partnerships, we have signed not one but two City Deals through the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Deal and the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. Both these major initiatives will bring additional jobs and prosperity to the Region, including a new Mountain bike innovation centre in Innerleithen and delivery of the Destination Tweed project.

We have achieved all this at a time of ongoing constraint in public finances and balanced the books, having to make £63.4m of savings over the last 5 years (including a projected £9.3m in the current year) since we took office. Our Council tax remains one of the lowest in mainland Scotland.

Our plans for next years' budget have been shaped by an extensive public consultation which generated 765 responses from local people. We have listened to their feedback and tried to address their priorities which include:- more money for roads and pavements, rural transport, our town centres, investment in education, social care, supporting health and wellbeing, sustainability, protecting the environment and the commitment to net zero.

Feedback also highlighted how we can best engage with local people in the future with a clear preference for electronic means of communication while ensuring face to face contact remains an option for those who need it.

Specifically this Administration's budget brought to Council for approval today delivers on the following priorities:-

- A £325m overall revenue budget for 2022/23;
- A £0.5m increase in funding to culture and sport trusts;
- A £103m capital budget for 2022/23 and a capital plan which totals £547m over the next 10 years;
- Additional, permanent investment to improve roads, bridges and pavements with an additional expenditure of £95.1m over the next 10 years. Increased focus on first and final fixes and piloting alternative technologies to reduce temporary patching and build resilience;
- A £1.350m increase to target high profile/high priority identified local road schemes in 2022/23;
- Spend to save investments in a range of energy efficiency measures designed to reduce our Carbon Footprint and make cashable savings;
- £4m capital investment over next 3 years on energy efficiency alone;
- £1.6m in 22/23 on play areas and outdoor community spaces including new facilities, committed in Duns, Jedburgh, Peebles, Reston, Earlston and Eyemouth with more to follow;
- A New Eyemouth Primary School, a new Earlston Primary Schools and new secondary schools in Galashiels, Hawick and Peebles by end of 2026/27, funded by £130.4m capital investment over the next 3 years in Education & Lifelong Learning;
- An increase of £30k in the core grant payable to BREST – Duns swimming Pool;
- Working with NHS Borders to ensure best value by facilitating the construction of a new GP surgery in tandem with the new primary school for Earlston;
- £2.9m to fund 49 additional teachers and 26 support staff in schools
- Delivery of two residential care facilities in Tweedbank and Hawick and upgrades to other existing facilities;
- £50,000 to fund Mobile CCTV to support the two Community Action Police Teams funded by the Council;
- £0.5m to support a new Borders Events Strategy and smaller local events,
- £250k to bring a major International Cycling event to the Borders;
- Opening Reston Railway Station on the East Coast Mainline,

- £320,000 to fund a new Demand Responsive transport scheme for Rural areas providing connectivity to the new Reston station;
- £0.2m for a new neighbourhood support fund, for area partnerships to target local priorities;
- £0.4m to support increasing work around sustainability and the transition to net zero;
- £0.2m so members can promote civic pride and address accessibility works in our towns;
- An £8.61m increase in funding Social Work and Social Care funding;
- £30,000 to extend the Respite Care pilot for a further year doubling the previous short breaks budget;
- Opening a further Extra Care Housing development in the old Kelso High school during 2022/23;
- Funding of Real Living Wage increase to Social Care staff;
- And working with CGI to further develop digital solutions and deliver service improvements and efficiencies Council wide;
- **A net increase of 64 in the jobs provided by the Council, mainly in Education.**

On Council tax the Administration is proposing a 3% increase in Council tax for 2022/23, with a band D equivalent rate of £1,291.53.

The council tax increase proposed from April is significantly below the rate of inflation and will result in an increase in the average annual Band D bill of £37.62, equivalent to £3.13 a month, £0.72 per week.

Council is therefore asked to approve:

- a) the Administrations financial plans from 2022/23 for revenue and capital set out at item 14;**
- b) the Council Tax charges to be paid in financial year 2022/23, from 1 April 2022 in respect of all chargeable dwellings in the Scottish Borders for Council Tax Bands A – H, as set out in the table below, with a Band D equivalent of £1,291.53**

Scottish Borders Council Tax applicable Charges from April 1 2022:

Council Tax Band	Applicable Annual Charge Per property £
A	861.02
B	1,004.52
C	1,148.03
D	1,291.53
E	1,696.93
F	2,098.74
G	2,529.25
H	3,164.25

c) Notes a one off reduction of £150 to be applied to each household Council tax bill in bands A-D utilising funding made available by the Scottish Government through the Barnett Formula, more than offsetting the 3% increase for those bands.

d) Notes that a one off reduction of £150 will also be also applied to all those households eligible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme to help with the cost of living, when confirmation of scheme eligibility is provided by the Scottish Government; and,

e) Approves the Fees and Charges for council services applicable from 1 April 2022 set out at item 14; and,

f) Requests that the Chief Executive bring forward a report to members within 6 months setting out the next phase of our Inspire learning programme including the potential for developing eSports provision in all our secondary schools.