

Motion by Councillor Jardine

Members this is a budget for the Borders which maintains services and delivers our commitments on major capital projects, despite rising costs.

In spite of significantly increased costs, particularly due to average inflation of 10 per cent, budget plans being presented today include a commitment to deliver all capital projects previously announced and protect frontline Scottish Borders Council services.

The draft revenue and capital budget proposals have been developed following collaborative work over a number of months by a cross-party group of Councillors. The 866 responses received through the annual budget survey and feedback from Community Conversations this summer have also shaped the plans.

Councillors across the Chamber have put aside political differences and have successfully come together to develop this single financial plan for 2023/24.

The impact of the rapid rise in inflation and associated costs cannot be overstated, and these hit the Council budget from all angles: catering in schools, energy prices and construction of our capital projects.

Despite the financial challenges we will still deliver what was an already ambitious capital investment plan, including new secondary schools in Peebles, Galashiels and Hawick and primary schools in Earlston and Eyemouth. We will deliver care facilities in Tweedbank and Hawick as previously set out, and we will still be able to invest in the regeneration of our town centres and support our communities and the most vulnerable.

We are also maintaining our roads maintenance funding and protecting frontline services, where savings would have been felt by all. Given the current financial climate that really is incredibly positive news.

The key aspects of our budget for the Borders are

- Following feedback from residents the budget proposals protect frontline services, including education, and social work and roads,
- Invest £21.9m over the next three years in the roads network
- Teacher numbers have been protected.
- Early Learning and Childcare partners have been supported with additional funding to pay staff the Real Living Wage
- Three new secondary schools (Peebles, Galashiels and Hawick), two new primary schools (Earlston and Eyemouth) and two care villages (Tweedbank and Hawick) – a total of just over £205m for these projects alone
- Ongoing investment in existing schools, further flood protection works and flood studies, and targeted town centre regeneration works
- Continued investment into the environment and to programmes aimed at helping the Council achieve its Net Zero target

- Protection of funding for third sector and voluntary partners across the region
- Funding for an extension of the Demand Responsive Travel pilot scheme while a regional transport review is carried out (£304k), and funding to sustain the 101/102 bus service in Tweeddale
- Commitment to a feasibility study into fixed CCTV provision in our main town centres (£80k)
- One-off increase of £178k in the Community Enhancement (Small Schemes) Fund to support priority local issues not funded through other budgets. This brings the total budget for this Fund to £378k for 2023/24
- Financial assistance for Live Borders, including postponing previously planned savings, in recognition of current financial challenges such as increased energy costs
- Continued investment into improved outdoor community spaces and play parks (£2.2m over the next three years)
- Additional one-off funding of £100k to enhance existing respite care
- One-off funding of £20k to enhance neurodiversity education and awareness in schools
- Commitment to working with key partners on refreshed sport, library and culture strategies for the region
- Investment into making back office processes more efficient
- Commitment to paying all staff the Real Living Wage, including Modern Apprentices
- Council Tax levels remaining one of the lowest in mainland Scotland

Council is asked to approve the revenue and capital plan budget for 2023/24 shown at item 11 on today's agenda and agree a Council Tax increase of 5% with the following rates applicable per band from 1st April 2023.

Council Tax Band Rates 2023/2024 (at 5% Council Tax Increase with effect from 1 April 2023)

Council Tax Band	Applicable Annual Charge per property £
A	904.07
B	1,054.75
C	1,205.43
D	1,356.11
E	1,781.78
F	2,203.68
G	2,655.72
H	3,322.47