



MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

UPDATE – February 2017

**To be revised following agreed action plan
arising from Strategic Review**

2016/17 – 2019/20

FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016/17 – 2019/20 WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Introduction

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is Waverley's key financial planning document which takes account of all the various factors and influences that may impact on Waverley for the next few years. These factors include economic conditions, Government spending plans, current expenditure patterns, inflation, planned changes to service delivery, changing demand for services, sources of income etc. It also includes an assessment of the risks faced by Waverley.

The MTFS includes a forward look over the next four years to anticipate the spending pressures faced by Waverley. Planning now to meet known changes in the future provides greater opportunity to phase in the impact of the changes. Planning for the future will mean that Waverley can ensure sufficient funds are held in balances to be in a position to react swiftly to changing demands and emergencies as priorities or policy demands changes. Anticipating forward pressures at an early stage, help ensure that limited financial resources are targeted to Waverley's residents' highest priorities.

Purpose

The purpose of this Strategy is to:

- Provide a framework for managing resources in medium term.
- Demonstrate that sufficient resources will be available to meet Waverley's objectives and priorities, particularly in the delivery of value for money.
- Look ahead to the longer term to protect and help plan sustainable services within an extremely challenging external economic and funding environment.
- Strengthen Waverley's financial resilience and manage volatility and risk, including maintaining an adequate level of reserves.
- Secure, maintain and develop Waverley's capital assets consistent with the Asset Management Plan.
- Anticipate financial pressures and identify potential ways to balance Waverley's budget including through efficiency measures and increased income

Delivering The Council's Priorities

The Council's Vision for 2016 -19 is:

To make Waverley a better place to live and work

The role of the council's financial planning process is to support the achievement of Waverley's Strategic Priorities and Corporate Plan.

Waverley has four main priorities that respond to residents' concerns and to ensure the delivery of high quality, cost effective services:

- Customer Service
- Community and Wellbeing
- Environment
- Value for Money

National Context

The problems of demography and caring for an increasing elderly population are well known as are increasing costs of pensions. Further significant reductions in public spending means that this period will continue to be extremely challenging for Waverley. Now, more than ever, Waverley needs to be clear about the priorities and focus on them to guide its decision making process.

Financial Strategy Key Risks

- Continued Government grant cuts – 52% reduction in Revenue Support Grant in 2016/17 and almost complete withdrawal in 2017/18 with negative grant beyond this.
- Funding uncertainty and impact of Comprehensive Spending Review – Waverley's core resource of business rates is being reviewed – early indications are that Waverley's resources will be cut further and additional risk transferred. New Homes Bonus has been significantly reduced under Government reforms
- Government proposals for Housing – 1% rent cut for 4 years and high value forced home sell offs will take £300million from forecast resources.
- How to focus resources on Corporate Plan objectives and priorities without impacting on other services.
- Responding to service demands, residents' and tenants' needs and Government legislation eg Homelessness.
- How to achieve further efficiency gains and generate additional income from grants and charging.

- Government restriction on council tax levels and key income streams.

Financial Projection – General Fund

The latest financial projections for the General Fund are shown in the table below which show a projected accumulative budget shortfall of £3m over the next 3 years after 2016/17.

	Original 2017/2018	Latest 2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	Total over 3-years
	Variance from 2016/2017 Base	Variance from 2016/2017 Base	Variance from 2017/2018 Base	Variance from 2018/2019 Base	Variance from 2016/2017 Base
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
External matters:					
Inflation - non-pay	150	50	150	200	400
Pension review	200	32			32
Government grant reduction	760	705	212	800	1,717
Benefit admin grant	50	14	50	50	114
Supporting people return to HRA	50				
Apprenticeship levy	70	70			70
New minimum wage (contractors)	20	20	10	10	40
Waste and recycling	50	104	50	50	204
Surrey County Council reduced waste funding		125			125
Interest on investments		92	100		192
Internal matters:					
16/17 Star Chamber savings not implemented		28			28
New O&S Post		35			35
Business as usual budget realignments		(120)	50	70	
Pay award - £120k per 1%		?	?	?	?
Total budget shortfall (before pay award)	1,350	1,155	622	1,180	2,957

Reserves and Balances

Waverley holds a number of balances and reserves for a range of specific and general purposes. These amounts must be used for their intended purpose and support Waverley's key objectives.

General Fund and HRA Balance – These balances are to cover variations in budgeted income & spending due to:

- Unexpected price increases
- Unbudgeted calls for spending e.g. major one-off inquiry
- Loss of income if offsetting savings can't be found
- Increased demand for services e.g. homelessness

In the light of major changes to the HRA by the Government which have a significant financial impact on Waverley's business plan, a comprehensive review was undertaken in 2016. The Council agreed a range of measures to balance the HRA revenue and capital budgets in the medium term and these have now been incorporated in the Business Plan.

Key policies are as follows:

- General Fund balances will be maintained at a prudent level of at least £ 3.2 million – This represents approximately 10% of running costs.
- The Housing Revenue Account balance will be maintained at a prudent level of at least £2.0 million.
- Business rate equalisation fund to balance the impact of fluctuations and between-year adjustments on the General Fund.
- The Revenue Reserve will be the principal funding source for the General Fund Capital programme, invest to save schemes and one-off items of revenue and capital expenditure.
- No dependency on reserves or one off uncertain funding sources to fund ongoing services.
- New Homes Bonus will be used to fund one off revenue projects and to support invest-to-save projects.
- Implement and maintain Community Infrastructure Levy in conjunction with the new Local Plan to provide capital infrastructure funding.

Key Actions 2017/18

- Continue the budget challenge process and the Foresight Programme to ensure budgets deliver good value for money and are aligned to Corporate Plan priorities.
- Cross cutting efficiency programme to be developed.
- Maximise income from fees and charges and property
- Develop borrowing strategy for General Fund Capital investment.
- Optimising return on cash surplus in times of low interest rates, balancing security, liquidity and return.

- Utilise General Fund and HRA asset strategies including disposals and acquisitions, including the Investment Advisory Board programme.
- Maximise invest to save opportunities to generate income, improve processes and/or make savings.
- Identify further efficiencies under the 'Foresight' Efficiency Plan including from reconfiguring IT systems procurement.
- Assess the benefit of accepting a 4 year grant settlement from Government.
- Secure new funding opportunities to help deliver priority services and projects.
- Model and monitor sensitivities on key budget areas e.g. inflation and interest.
- Rigorously test all capital proposals for relevance, timeliness and deliverability.
- Review procurement methods and contracts to identify efficiencies and cost savings including agency staff.
- Achieve social inclusion and providing accessible, affordable services for the Borough's most vulnerable residents.
- Support Service Managers to manage finances effectively.

Equality Impact Assessment

Waverley's Medium Term Financial Strategy aims to ensure that the Council can deliver all its services and target its resources on priority areas. These priorities were developed having regard to the Council's approved Equality and Diversity policy. This Strategy recognises Waverley's diverse population and its unique geography and is intended to have a positive impact on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable citizens by focusing resources on providing affordable and accessible services throughout the Borough.