EPSOM AND EWELL BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2020 - 2024

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Section 1: MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's previous Medium Term Financial Strategy was prepared at the start of 2016, at a time when the Government was continuing to cut public spending with the aim of reducing the national budget deficit. During this last four years this Council has seen its Core Funding from Central Government cut from £2.3 million in 2016/17 down to £1.4 million for 2020/21, a near 40% reduction.
- 1.2 Since the last strategy was approved the Council has set up a wholly owned subsidiary company Epsom & Ewell Property Investment Company Limited (EEPIC) The company has acquired two properties out of Borough that provide revenue income to assist in providing services to the Council's residents and mitigate cuts in central government funding.
- 1.3 In July 2019 the independent Auditor stated that the Council has a robust budget setting process and demonstrated a record of budgetary and financial control. However, the Council's finances will continue to be challenged over the next four years with further significant reductions in Government funding anticipated, through a reduction in retained business rates income following the outcome of the Fair Funding Review expected in 2020.

Public Sector Funding

1.4 The Government has announced an end to austerity, however it remains unclear how funding within the public sector is going to be prioritised and from where any additional funding might be obtained. The Council's core funding from Revenue Support Grant and retained local business rates has already been reduced by £900,000 since 2016/17 and it is anticipated that following the Government's 'Fair Funding Review' it is expected to reduce further by another £0.5 million by 2023/24.

Looking Forward

- 1.5 Following the local elections in May 2019 the Council is in the process of agreeing new corporate priorities and preparing a new Corporate Plan for 2020-2024.
- 1.6 The Council's previous Corporate Plan had specific objectives for 'Managing Resources', a similar objective is expected in the new Plan including a target for reducing projected net expenditure by £1.8 million by 31 March 2024.
- 1.7 This is a challenging environment, with further substantial cuts in government funding expected. To meet this challenge a financial planning framework is essential:-
 - Residents will want to know council tax and service plans and understand the reasons for those plans;
 - In making decisions Councillors need to be clear that budget forecasts are based on reasonable resource forecasts,
 - Service changes need to be planned and implemented carefully with appropriate lead times;

- Charging decisions should be made against a backdrop of the likely financial position in future years;
- Areas of higher financial risk need to be identified to see how best those risks can be managed
- 1.8 The Council must retain a prudent level of reserves, this has become even more critical with further changes in the allocation of Central Government funding. Reserves enable the Council to manage the changes to services that will be required to deliver the level of savings required over the next four years to achieve a balanced budget.
- 1.9 The Financial Plan 2020-2024 provides a framework for spending plans over this period.

Key Components of the Medium Term Financial Strategy

- 1.10 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out the approach that the Council has agreed to manage its finances.
- 1.11 The Council will pursue the following objectives:-

Council Tax

• Ensure that Council Tax stays below the average of the Surrey Districts

Budget Position and Revenue Reserves

- Produce a balanced revenue budget each year
- Maintain a minimum working balance of £2.5 million at 31 March 2024
- Maintain a prudent level of strategic reserves and a minimum of £1 million in the Corporate Projects Reserve
- Utilise reserves pro-actively to manage major risks to the Council's finances
- Work towards reducing reliance on business rates income to fund the delivery of services by 2030

Income

- Increase income from fees and charges by 3% per annum
- Maintain clear charging policies for each service
- Manage risks to central government funding and business rate retention
- Maintain high collection rates for council tax and business rates
- Make prudent investment of reserves and cash balances
- Generate increased income from the external use of Council assets
- Optimise the use of Council assets, realise capital receipts from sale of surplus assets
- Identify new opportunities for generating income
- Identify and acquire properties that meet the Council's corporate objectives

Investment in Services

- Use Annual Service Targets to allocate resources to deliver the Council's Priorities
- Prioritise capital investment to ensure retained property is fit for purpose
- Maximise the use of external funding opportunities to deliver improvements to the community infrastructure, including affordable housing
- Deliver the three year capital programme of £2.7 m
- Maintain a minimum uncommitted level of capital reserves of £1 million at 31 March 2024
- By 2023/24 provide £0.5 million of funding from revenue to fund the annual capital programme
- Review criteria for capital investment to facilitate actions which will positively impact the environment

Efficiency

- Review services to ensure they continue to provide value for money
- Achieve a reduction in operating costs through smarter working
- Reduce the subsidy of Council occupied properties
- Increase the efficiency and resilience of the organisation through investment in staff and technology
- Deliver savings to improve the forecast budget position by £1.8 million by 2023/24.

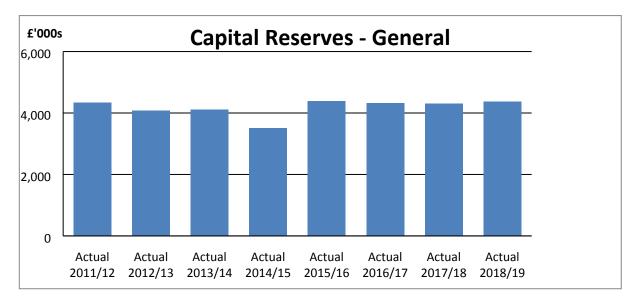
Section 2: CORPORATE PLAN: EFFECTIVE COUNCIL

- 1.1 The Council is in the progress of agreeing its new Corporate Plan which sets out the national and local context in which the Council delivers services and provides community leadership.
- 1.2 The Council will prepare service plans and agree annual service targets to deliver its corporate priorities.
- 1.3 The following strategies provide more analysis on how the Council will manage resources allocated for the delivery of Borough services:-

Supporting Strategies & Plans	Objectives
Financial Plan / Medium Term Financial Strategy	 Maintain sound Council finances. Allocate resources to Council priorities. Measure financial performance.
Asset Management Plan	 Ensure that operational property is fit for purpose. Optimise use of operational property for services to residents. Increase income generated from commercial property.
Capital Strategy	 Effective investment of capital resources (reserves and external funding) for the benefit of the community. Generate savings or income from spend to save projects. Ensure borrowing is proportionate and sustainable
Procurement Strategy	 Secure best value in purchasing goods and services. Realise financial and performance gains from high value procurement.
Team Strategy	 Investment in skilled workforce to maintain high levels of productivity and performance.
ICT Strategy	 Design and implement Information and Communications Technology to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of Councils operations and increase public access.
Treasury Management Strategy	 Maintain secure investment of reserves and cash balances. Generate a return on cash investments. Optimise borrowing
Climate Change Action Plan	 Implement actions to deliver reductions in CO2 where financially cost effective and viable

Section 3: THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL STANDING

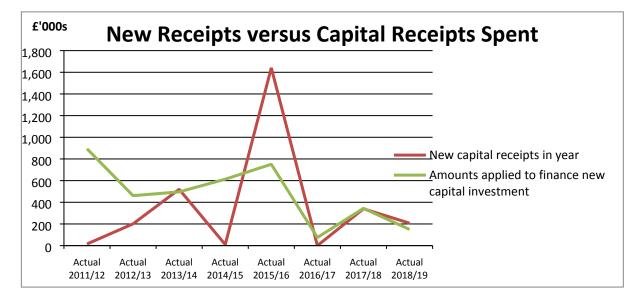
- 1.4 The Council finances its expenditure on services from income received during the year. Any shortfalls need to be financed from reserves and any surpluses can be used to strengthen reserves. The Council aims to achieve a balanced budget although the financial strategy should be flexible to allow a planned use of reserves where this is prudent and sensible.
- 1.5 Under local authority accounting rules expenditure on the delivery of services is charged to the General Fund Revenue Account.
- 1.6 Investment in community assets and Council infrastructure is charged to the General Fund Capital Account.
- 1.7 The level of Council reserves is a key measure of the Council's financial standing and its ability to manage future liabilities and commitments.



Capital Account

1.8 The following tables trace the level of capital reserves since March 2012.

- 1.9 The Council has managed to retain capital reserves at around £4 million since 2011/12. However, there will be significant pressure on these reserves over the next four years, with over £2m provisionally earmarked to be spent on the capital programme by 2021/22. To mitigate this projected reduction in capital reserves, the Council plans to fund £500,000 of the annual capital programme from revenue funds by 2023/24, although,, other funding options may also need to be considered to finance any additional capital spending plans that arise during this period, unless there is a major development or sale of property.
- 1.10 The Council has generated £2.9 million in new capital receipts in the last 8 years through the sale of property and land to fund the capital programme. £1.6 million was realised through one sale; excluding this disposal the Council generated £1.3 million in new receipts since 2012/13. The Council required use of £2.9 million of its capital receipts over the same period to finance its capital programme.
- 1.11 The Council has managed to limit its use of capital reserves during the last four years with the implementation of a strict qualifying criteria for bids to be included within the annual capital programme. However, it is likely that pressure will increase to use a higher level of reserves over the next four year period as bids deferred in previous years become more critical to the organisation.
- 1.12 The Council also has the capacity to finance affordable housing schemes through the generation of planning gain receipts. These Section 106 funds will be used to fund housing schemes during the four year cycle. Additional funds may be available from Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus.



- 1.13 Since 2016 the Council has acquired a number of commercial properties both within and outside the Borough through borrowing. As at the end of 2018/19 had debt totalling £64.4 million and the actual cost of servicing this debt in 2018/19 was £1.6 million.
- 1.14 These recent commercial property acquisitions deliver significant income streams for the Council which are used to finance the cost of servicing the debt as well as making a contribution towards overall running costs of the Council.

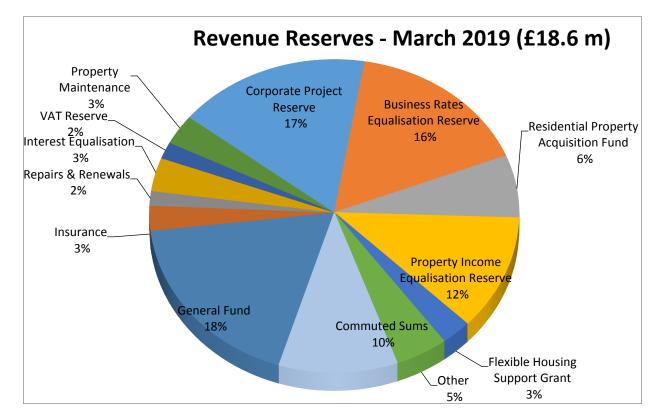
£'000s **Total Revenue Reserves** 20,000 18,000 16,000 14,000 12,000 10,000 GENERAL FUND 8,000 STRATEGIC RESERVES 6,000 COMMUTED SUMS 4,000 2,000 0 Actual Actual Actual Actual Actual Actual Actual 2012/13 2013/14 2014/15 2015/16 2016/17 2017/18 2018/19

Revenue Account



	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000	2018/19 £'000
General Fund	3,323	3,417	3,333	3,171	3,334	3,348	3,416
Strategic Reserves	3,902	4,956	4,379	5,325	7,388	10,886	13,289
Commuted Sums	1,965	1,965	1,965	1,965	1,965	1,965	1,941

- 1.16 The Council has maintained its level of general fund working balances at just over £3 million for the last four years despite significant cuts to its core funding from central government.
- 1.17 Strategic reserves have increased over the same four year period principally due to oneoff gains from New Homes Bonus and other grants and the financial benefit achieved from being part of the Surrey Pilot for Business rates in 2018/19.
- 1.18 In the last four years the Council has taken on external borrowing to finance the acquisition of several investment properties that provide valuable rental income to support the running of Council services. It has been agreed to mitigate risks associated with these acquisitions that funds are set aside that cover 1 year's rental income for each of the properties, a target of (c£5 million). The balance on this reserve as at the end of the financial year 2018/19 was £2.2 million.
- 1.19 The following Chart identifies the significant revenue reserves held as at the end of March 2019.



1.20 The Council reviews its financial reserves annually to:-

- manage financial and service risks
- assist medium term planning and decision making
- help finance services to residents
- provide greater certainty over future investment

1.21 The following reserves and provisions were held at March 2019:-

	Purpose of Reserve
CAPITAL	
CAPITAL RECEIPTS - general	Funds raised by the past sale of Council property assets. Used to fund capital programme where external funding not available. Unspent balance invested and interest generated used to help finance the General Fund Revenue Account provision of services.
CAPITAL RECEIPTS - hospital cluster	Transferred sums to fund development of hospital cluster site.
SECTION 106 - unapplied capital reserves	Planning Gain Receipts set aside for capital infrastructure schemes fulfilling terms of agreement with developers
REVENUE	
COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP	Support for partnership community safety work in the Borough.
PARTNERSHIP FUND	Partnership reserves held to provide funding to support specific partnership initiatives.
HIA HARDSHIP FUND	Fund exists to provide funding for the Home Improvement Agency Service.
SPORTS & LEISURE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FUND	External funding set aside to support sports & leisure development projects
HISTORIC BUILDINGS	Earmarked to fund historic building repairs
HOSPITAL CLUSTER INTEREST	To manage the risk of repayment of Horton chapel funds including interest if a viable community use cannot be established.
INSURANCE	Provision for self-insured liability claims.
CORPORATE PROJECT RESERVE	Contingency for unplanned projects, including additional one-off costs. The reserve is also used to finance revenue and capital 'spend to save' initiatives.
VAT RESERVE	Reserve against liabilities for unrecoverable VAT payments including breach of partial exemption rule.

	Purpose of Reserve
HOUSING & PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT	Provision for planning-related investments.
INTEREST EQUALISATION	Contingency provision for interest rate reductions to help manage variations in interest rates each year.
PROPERTY MAINTENANCE FUND	Provision for urgent unplanned backlog repairs and maintenance that cannot be funded within annual approved budgeted programme.
REPAIRS & RENEWALS	Provides for the replacement of plant and equipment where no revenue budget is available. Manages the risk of unplanned expenditure at all Council properties, including health and safety expenditures.
RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY ACQUISITION FUND	Provides funding to acquire residential properties to limit the impact on the cost of homelessness.
PREVENTION, PERSONALISATION & PARTNERSHIP FUND	Funding from ring fenced grant for local authorities to undertake their new public health functions.
PROPERTY INCOME EQUALISATION RESERVE	The reserve is to be maintained at a level to cover the potential loss of one year's rental income from each property acquired through the use of borrowing.
BUSINESS RATES EQUALISATION RESERVE	Reserve used to protect funding from the Council's share of localised business rates, used to smooth out the impact of annual changes in funding
GENERAL FUND REVENUE ACCOUNT WORKING BALANCE	Provision for unforeseen expenditure and used to support Revenue Budget in the medium term. Interest on balance used to finance the General Fund revenue account.
FLEXIBLE HOUSING SUPPORT GRANT	Grant funding used to support homelessness
RECREATION COMMUTED SUMS	Transferred payments ring-fenced for investment with returns used to finance grounds maintenance costs following transfer of Hospital Cluster Land

Section 4: THE STARTING POINT

1.1 The following table summarises estimated income and expenditure for 2020/21:-

	£m	£m	£m
INCOME			
General Grant and Taxes			
Revenue Support Grant	0.0		
Retained share of Business Rates Income	1.6		
Prior year Business Rates surplus	1.4		
Council Tax Income	6.7		
Sub-Total		9.7	
Service Income			
Fees and Charges	11.0		
Rents	3.8		
Grants and Subsidies	18.1		
Interest on Balances / Reserves	0.2		
Income from EEPIC	3.3		
Use of Reserves	0.3		
Internal Asset Credits	2.7		
Sub-Total		39.3	
Budgeted Income			49.0
EXPENDITURE			
Employee Costs	12.9		
Premises Costs	3.2		
Transport Costs	1.5		
Contracted Services and Supplies (incl. grants)	7.2		
Housing & Council Tax Benefits	16.3		
Interest on Borrowings	1.6		
Minimum Revenue Provision	0.9		
Contributions to Reserves	2.7		
Internal Asset Charges	2.7		
Sub-Total		49.0	
Budgeted Expenditure			49.0

Section 5: FOUR YEAR BUDGET FORECAST

- 1.2 The main focus for budget forecasts is the Councils net budget requirement which comprises service spending less income generated from those services.
- 1.3 It is a Government requirement that Councils provide residents with spending figures focused on the Council Tax Requirement. This is the amount of spending that will be funded from council tax payments in the Borough.
- 1.4 For 2020/21 the Council's spending can be analysed as follows:-

	£000	£000
NET EXPENDITURE		
Gross Expenditure on Services	51,707	
Less: Gross Income on Services -	39,295	
Sub-Total (policy committee net spend)		12,412
Less: Internal recharges (asset rentals)		- 2,669
Forecast Net Expenditure		9,743
FUNDING		
Retained Business Rates	1,617	
Council Tax	6,713	
Business Rates Prior Year Surplus	1,402	
Council Tax Prior Year Surplus	11	
Aggregate External Finance		9,743

1.5 The following table summarises the Council's four year budget forecast prepared in February 2020 for the 2020/21 budget report:-

	<u>2020/21</u>	<u>2021/22</u>	<u>2022/23</u>	<u>2023/24</u>
	<u>Budget</u> £000	<u>Forecast</u> £000	<u>Forecast</u> £000	<u>Forecast</u> £000
Net Cost of Service b/f	8,328	8,609	8,811	8,720
Pay & Prices Increases	+ 507	+ 598	+ 606	+618
Contingency for Service Changes and Pressures	+ 732	+ 150	+ 150	+ 250
Reduced contributions to the Property Income Equalisation Reserve	0	0	- 500	0
Increases in Fees & Charges	- 353	- 210	- 210	- 216
Changes to External Funding	+ 80	0	0	0
Star Chamber / Service Savings	- 685	- 336	- 137	- 215
Forecast Net Cost of Services	8,609	8,811	8,720	9,157
Interest on Balances	-130	- 175	- 240	- 270
Transfer to/(from) Business Rates Equalisation Reserve	1,380	- 200	- 150	- 100
Use of Flexible Housing Support Grant	-116	0	0	0
Transfer from Working Balance (-)	0	0	0	0
Forecast Net Expenditure	9,743	8,436	8,330	8,787
Retained Business Rates Forecast	1,617	893	925	959
Council Tax Income Forecast	6,713	6,934	7,158	7,385
Council Tax Surplus	11	0	0	0
Retained Business Rates Surplus	1,402	0	0	0
Collection Fund Income	9,743	7,827	8,083	8,344
Funding Shortfall	0	- 609	- 247	- 443

1.6 The following factors have been used to prepare the forecast.

ASSUMPTIONS USED	BASE £000	<u>2020/21</u> Budget	<u>2021/22</u> Forecast	<u>2022/23</u> Forecast	<u>2023/24</u> Forecast			
General Inflation - prices	9,500	2.0%*	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%			
Annual pay award	11,000	2.0%*	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%			
Fees & Charges allowance: annual increased yield on discretionary charges	-6,600	3.0%**	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%			
Interest rate used		1.25%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%			
Increase in Council Tax income	-6,525	Annual increase of £5 for a Band D equivalent property						

* assumes annual pay increases limited to 2% and allows for unavoidable inflation only

** increases to parking charges are applied every 2 years

1.7 The following table shows the financial impact of variations to the assumptions used.

	+/-	Impact on Each Year £000	Cumulative Impact (4 years) £000
Price Inflation	1%	95	380
Pay Inflation	1%	110	440
Fees & Charges	1%	66	264
Interest on Balances	0.5%	65	260
Council Tax	1%	65	260

- 1.8 The General Fund Working Balance was £3.4 million at 31 March 2019 and is forecast to remain at this level by the end of the financial year 2019/20.
- 1.9 Subject to delivery of targeted savings the working balance will be maintained at this level for the next four years.
- 1.10 In the light of the outcome of government's Fair Funding Review some flexibility will be required and the Council's policy is to maintain a minimum working balance of £2.5 million at 31 March 2024.

Section 6: ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

1.11 The Office for Budget Responsibility's Economic and Fiscal Outlook in March 2019 provided the following overview:-

UK	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Gross Domestic Product	1.4%	1.2%	1.4%	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%
CPI Inflation	2.5%	2.1%	1.9%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Average Earnings (all sectors)	3.0%	3.1%	3.0%	3.1%	3.1%	3.3%
Unemployment	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	4.0%	4.0%

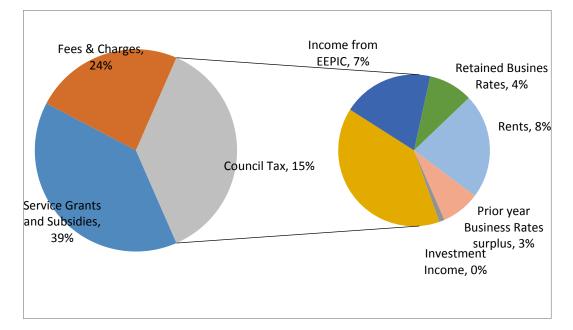
1.12 The table on the following page provided by the Council's treasury management advisers in December 2019 forecasts future interest rates.

UK Interest Rate Forecast

Bank Rate											
	NOW	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22
Link Asset Services	0.75%	0.75%	0.75%	0.75%	0.75%	0.75%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%
Capital Economics	0.75%	0.75%	0.75%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	-	-	-	-	-
5yr PWLB Rate											
	NOW	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22
Link Asset Services	2.31%	2.30%	2.40%	2.40%	2.50%	2.50%	2.60%	2.70%	2.80%	2.90%	2.90%
Capital Economics	2.31%	2.40%	2.40%	2.40%	2.40%	2.40%	-	-	-	-	-
10yr PWLB Rate											
	NOW	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22
Link Asset Services	2.53%	2.60%	2.70%	2.70%	2.70%	2.80%	2.90%	3.00%	3.10%	3.20%	3.20%
Capital Economics	2.53%	2.60%	2.60%	2.60%	2.60%	2.60%	-	-	-	-	-
25yr PWLB Rate											
	NOW	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22
Link Asset Services	3.11%	3.20%	3.30%	3.40%	3.40%	3.50%	3.60%	3.70%	3.70%	3.80%	3.90%
Capital Economics	3.11%	2.90%	2.90%	2.90%	2.90%	2.90%	-	-	-	-	-
50yr PWLB Rate											
	NOW	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22
Link Asset Services	2.97%	3.10%	3.20%	3.30%	3.30%	3.40%	3.50%	3.60%	3.60%	3.70%	3.80%
Capital Economics	2.97%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	-	-	-	-	-

Section 7: RESOURCES

- 1.13 The Council's budgeted turnover for 2020/21 is £49.0 million.
- 1.14 The following chart shows the main sources of income to fund the General Fund revenue budget:-



FUNDING SOURCES 2020/21 BUDGET

1.15 The most significant income sources are service specific funding from Central Government:-

- Housing Benefits Subsidy is a reimbursement of benefits paid locally
- Housing and Council Tax Benefit Administration Grant is a contribution towards administrative costs
- Homelessness Prevention Grant provides funding for housing initiatives
- 1.16 A total of £18 million is estimated to be received from these sources and £1.6 million from retained Business Rates to help fund the general provision of services.
- 1.17 The Government's latest provisional funding settlement covered only 2020/21. Due to recent political uncertainty the Government announced a delay in the Fair Funding review and the outcome for Epsom and Ewell

Borough Council will not be known until 2021/22. As a result the settlement for 2020/21 is not indicative of the levels of funding that will be available in the future.

- 1.18 It is anticipated that the outcome of the Fair Funding review will result in a redistribution of retained business rate income from district councils to those councils with Social Care responsibilities.
- 1.19 These changes will have a significant impact on the Council's turnover and have an impact on the Council's resources for providing services to residents.
- 1.20 Central government specific grants provide reimbursement for services that are determined at a national level. The Council provides a mix of other services which need to be funded locally. This includes those services for which the Council has a statutory duty, such as waste collection and street cleansing, as well as those which the Council decides to do, such as social and leisure venues. The level of local services that the Council can provide depend on the amount of income raised from council tax, fees and charges, rents and retained business rates.
- 1.21 In 2019/20 Council approved to remove any reliance on New Homes Bonus grant funding to support services and that this funding is set aside in the Corporate Projects Reserve to finance the cost of one-projects and initiatives.
- 1.22 Resources are considered in more detail in the following sections:-
 - Section 8: Government Grants and Business Rates Retention
 - Section 9: Council Tax
 - Section 10: Fees, Charges, Rents and Interest earned on balances
 - Section 11: Property related income, including income from the Property Company (EEPIC)

Section 8: GOVERNMENT FUNDING / BUSINESS RATE RETENTION

- 1.23 The Funding Settlement comprises any Revenue Support Grant and the baseline level of funding from retained business rates
- 1.24 The headline core funding is used as an equalisation of resources between local authorities and is allocated to councils by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- 1.25 MHCLG introduced localisation of business rates in 2013/14 and this represented a significant change in funding for local councils.
- 1.26 Under the local retention scheme councils enjoy gains or suffer losses from the variations to the business rates collected, whether that is due to changes in collection rates or more /fewer businesses.
- 1.27 In February 2016 this Council agreed to the Government's Four Year settlement covering the financial years 2016/17 to 2019/20. Included within the settlement figures for 2019/20 was negative revenue support grant payments of £625,000, which the Council would have to make to MHCLG.
- 1.28 The Government subsequently announced that it was removing the negative RSG payments from the 2019/20 settlement and this has been repeated for 2020/21. However, there is significant risk that these payments will feature as part of future financial settlements following the conclusion of the Government's Fair Funding Review, which will impact funding levels from 2021/22.
- 1.29 The Government's provisional funding settlement announced in December 2019 provides the Council with details regarding the potential income from this source of funding for 2020/21. The settlement identified an increase in core funding for this Council next year of £23,000, an increase of 1.65%. However, it provided no indication of future settlements for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council beyond 2020/21.
- 1.30 The Council's provisional central government funding settlement for 2020/21 is £1.42 million, which is shown in the following table together with the forecasts used for the four year MTFS:-

	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Provisional Settlement	2021/22 Forecast	2022/23 Forecast	2023/24 Forecast
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Revenue Support Grant	0	0	0	0	0
Retained Business Rates - Baseline	1,397	1,420	893	925	959

Government Baseline Funding	1,397	1,420	893	925	959
Surplus retained business rates	188	197	0	0	0
Total Funding included in Financial Plan	1,585	1,617	893	925	959

- 1.31 The Council's underlying position on business rate collection fund is that its share of retained business rates is around £200,000 higher than the income stated in the 'baseline' position. The 'baseline' reset due for 2021/22 will remove the surplus income the Council currently retains.
- 1.32 The 2021/22 position assumes a reduction in core funding following the Fair Funding Review, to reflect the expected re-introduction of negative revenue support grant payments through the business rates baseline level.

NEW HOMES BONUS

- 1.33 The new homes bonus scheme was introduced in April 2011 and was designed by central government to provide financial incentives and rewards for councils and communities who wish to build new homes in their area.
- 1.34 Since the introduction of the new homes bonus scheme Government has made changes to the methodology for awarding the grant. This has subsequently resulted in a significant reduction in the award of grant for this Council.
- 1.35 As part of the provisional settlement for 2020/21 it was announced that legacy payments received for prior year performance will be removed from the grant allocation altogether by 2023/24.

1.36 The following table provides an analysis of the decline in new homes bonus grant the Council has been awarded since 2016/17.

NEW HOMES BONUS

	Actuals					Projecte	d
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
2011/12 Actual	108						
2012/13 Actual	500						
2013/14 Actual	344	344					
2014/15 Actual	595	595					
2015/16 Actual	411	411	411				
2016/17 Actual	158	158	158	158			
2017/18 Actual		46	46	46	46		
2018/19 Actual			219	219	219	219	
2019/20 Actual				21	21	21	21
2020/21 Actual					100		
Total Grant	2,116	1,554	834	444	386	240	21

1.37 The Council agreed as part of the 2019/20 budget to remove any reliance on this grant to provide funding towards the on-going costs of operating Council Services.

Section 9: COUNCIL TAX

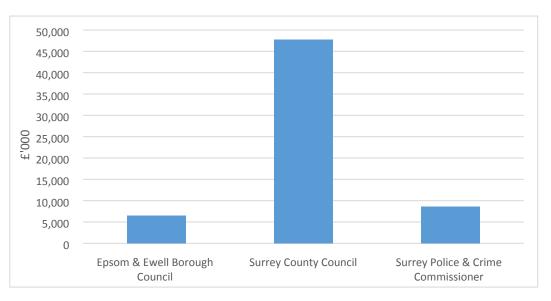
- 1.38 There are over 31,000 domestic properties in the Borough.
- 1.39 Council Tax levels are based upon the District Valuer's assessment of property bands for each home.
- 1.40 The Borough's council tax base as at December 2019 is illustrated below:-



- 1.41 Allowing for the different amounts payable for each property band, the average amount that is raised from Council Tax is equivalent to more than 33,000 properties at the headline Band 'D' charge.
- 1.42 Comparative annual council tax charges published for 2019/20 were as follows:-

Council Tax	Surrey (average)	Epsom & Ewell
Shire District only	£202	£198
Shire District including Parishes	£219	£198
Total Bill in Two Tier Areas	£1,933	£1,912

- 1.43 The Council collects council tax on behalf of Surrey County Council and Surrey Police who levy a precept on the Surrey District Councils (i.e. tell the districts how much they must collect on their behalf).
- 1.44 The amount of Council Tax due to be collected by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council in 2019/20 was £63 million:-



- 1.45 The Borough Council can only make decisions on its share of the bill which raises £6.6 million each year for Borough services which is calculated as follows:-
 - Council Tax Base (No. of Band 'D' equivalent Properties) x Charge for Band D Properties.
- 1.46 For 2020/21 the figures are as follows:-

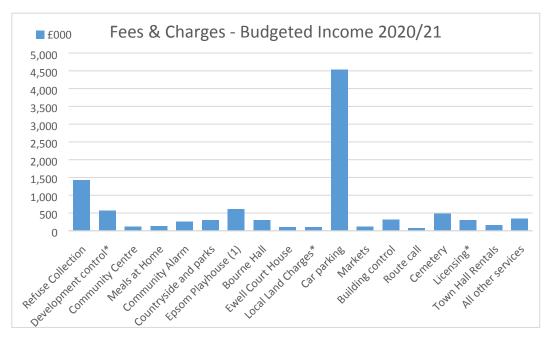
 $33,020 \times \pounds 203.31 = \pounds 6,713,000$

- 1.47 The Financial Plan for 2020-2024 includes a forecast of an additional yield the equivalent of a £5 per annum increase on a band D property from the Borough's share of Council Tax.
- 1.48 This will raise an additional £160,000 to £170,000 per annum to pay for Borough council services and cost the average Band D taxpayer an extra 10 pence per week. The increases are in line with the Government's capping limits set at the higher of £5 for a Band D property or 2%. These increases are close to the Government's target for inflation which is 2% and therefore broad aims to maintain council tax at current levels in real terms.

Section 10: INCOME FROM FEES, CHARGES, RENT & INTEREST

Fees and Charges

- 1.49 At around £11m per annum, the revenue from fees and charges significantly exceeds council tax income.
- 1.50 Some fees are determined by the Council and others are subject to central government regulation.



* fees subject to regulation

(1) Playhouse income is shown net of Box Office payments

- 1.51 Fees will be re-assessed annually as part of the budget review process:
 - To reduce the subsidy required to provide services and venues
 - To generate income to help fund other services
 - To recover costs incurred and maintain existing assets

Interest on Balances

- 1.52 The Council invests its revenue and capital reserves and cash flow balances and uses the interest generated to help fund services, in the short term by using the interest to finance the revenue budget and, in the long term, by allocating part of the interest earned to specific funds.
- 1.53 A proportion of the Council's cash balances are transferred to a fund manager who operates with a policy agreed by the Council as set out in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement.
- 1.54 Short term cash and treasury investments totalled £13.6m at 31 March 2019.
- 1.55 The level of investments is expected to increase gradually in the medium term as the Council sets aside Minimum Revenue Provision each year in preparation for the eventual repayment of its long term debt, the majority of which will mature in 2067.

1.56 Interest rates are expected to remain low with minimal gradual increases over the next four years.

Section 11: PROPERTY RELATED INCOME, INCLUDING INCOME FROM PROPERTY COMPANY (EEPIC)

Commercial Property Related Income

1.57 During 2016/17 and 2017/18, the Council established two Commercial Property Acquisition Funds totalling £80m and £300m for the purchase of inand out-of-Borough commercial properties respectively, financed by prudential borrowing. The main purpose was to generate additional income to address budget deficits in the previous MTFS 2016-20, thereby protecting and enhancing services to residents where possible.

£300m Fund

- 1.58 To invest this fund and to meet the requirements of the Localism Act 2011, Full Council agreed to establish a wholly owned subsidiary company, Epsom & Ewell Property Investment Company (EEPIC), in September 2017. EEPIC subsequently acquired two out-of-Borough commercial properties for a combined £60.3m in late 2017 which, after deducting interest payments and contributions to reserves, will provide a budgeted net annual benefit to the Council's general fund of around £906,000 in 2020/21.
- 1.59 In April 2018, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) implemented new statutory local government Investment Guidance, restricting the ability of Councils to borrow to invest in commercial property purely for profit, through the following clause 46:

"Authorities must not borrow more than or in advance of their needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed".

- 1.60 The new guidance means that future acquisitions that are funded by borrowing and where the intention is purely to profit from the investment, would not meet the requirements of the guidance.
- 1.61 As such, in September 2018 Strategy and Resources Committee noted the suspension of further investment property acquisitions, where the purpose is purely to profit. Consequently no further out-of-Borough commercial property acquisitions have since been made by EEPIC (or the Council).
- 1.62 The guidance does not impact on the two out-of-Borough purchases already made by EEPIC in 2017, since they occurred before the new guidance took effect.

£80m Fund

- 1.63 This fund has been used by the Council to acquire three commercial properties, within the Borough and prior to April 2018, for a combined £24.4m.
- 1.64 It should be noted that under MHCLG's Statutory Guidance introduced in April 2018, there are circumstances where commercial property acquisitions

funded by borrowing are still acceptable, provided the main purpose for the investment is not purely for profit, but (for example) for regeneration. This would imply that future acquisitions would have to be within, or very close to, the Council's boundary, in order to demonstrate that they are not purely for profit.

1.65 The three in-Borough acquisitions, after deducting interest payments and contributions to reserves, will provide a budgeted net annual benefit to the Council's general fund of around £513,000 in 2020/21, as set-out in the following table:

Commercial Property Fund	Net Contribution to Council's 2020/21
Acquisitions	Budget
In-Borough	
2 Roy Richmond Way	£150,647
Parkside House	£248,965
64-74 East Street	£113,599
Sub-Total	£513,211
Out-of-Borough	
EEPIC Properties	£905,524
Total Net Contribution to	
2020/21 Budget	£1,418,735

1.66 The remaining balances on both Commercial Property Acquisition Funds are shown in the following table. It must be noted that the £80m and £300m funds are not reserves held by the Council; they are limits (approved by Full Council) up to which borrowing could be undertaken.

	Commercia	Commercial Property				
Commercial Property	In-Borough	Out-of Borough	Total			
Acquisition Funds	£000	£000	£000			
Opening fund balance	80,000	300,000	380,000			
Purchases during 2016/17	(19,206)	0	(19,206)			
Purchases during 2017/18	(5,148)	(60,293)	(65,441)			
Purchases during 2018/19	0	0	(0)			
YTD purchases during 2019/20	0	0	(0)			
Fund balances at 31/12/2019	55,646	239,707	295,353			

2020-2024

- 1.67 Looking forward to the period 2020-2024, due to the provisions of MHCLG's Statutory Investment Guidance outlined above, it is now considered appropriate for the Council to formally close the £300m Fund to future acquisitions (ie the remaining £239.7m will not be spent).
- 1.68 However, considering the Council's remaining projected budget deficit in this MTFS 2020-2024, and given that under the Statutory Investment Guidance there remain circumstances where commercial property investments funded

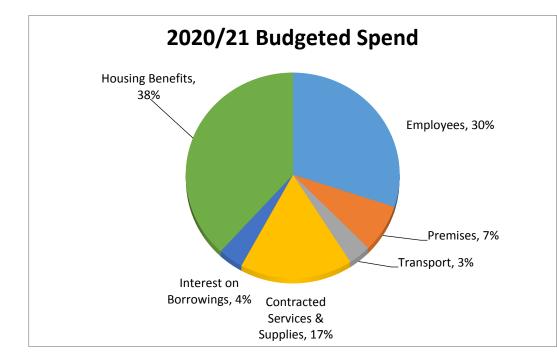
by borrowing are still acceptable, it is considered appropriate to keep the £55.6m Fund open for future potential acquisitions within (or close to) the Borough's boundary in the period 2020-2024.

1.69 The remaining £55.6m fund will continue to be governed by the Council's existing Property Acquisition Strategy.

Risk Management

- 1.70 All commercial property acquisitions are governed by the Council's Property Investment Strategy, and are robustly assessed by an Investment Property Group consisting of members and senior officers before completion.
- 1.71 To mitigate risks associated with the Council's reliance on income generated from commercial properties funded by borrowing, the Council holds a Property Income Equalisation Reserve. This reserve aims (as soon as practicable) to hold a balance equivalent to one year's rental income from each property acquired through borrowing.

Section 12: COST ANALYSIS



1.72 The following chart analyses forecast costs for 2020/21:-

- 1.73 During 2020/21 the main area of expenditure is on housing benefit payments which are made in accordance with government regulations. The Council effectively acts an administering agent for central government.
- 1.74 The level of housing benefit payments has reduced by c£6 million in the last four years with the implementation of Universal Credit (where housing benefits will no longer be administered by Councils). It is anticipated that the significant reductions in spend on this area will continue over the next four years with a falling number of claimants within the old housing benefit system.
- 1.75 The interest on borrowing of £1.6 million is as a result of purchasing commercial properties through external borrowing, these acquisition generate rental income for the Council which is used to service the debt and contribute towards the cost of providing services.

Section 13: CONTINGENCIES FOR SERVICE CHANGES

- 1.76 The following section sets out the main statutory service changes expected to affect the Council's finances over the next four years.
- 1.77 It was not possible to provide detailed estimates of the impact of central government funding reviews at the time that this Financial Plan was prepared.
- 1.78 The following additional contingencies have been made in the financial forecast.

	<u>2020/21</u>	<u>2021/22</u>	<u>2022/23</u>	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>Budget</u> <u>£000</u>	<u>Forecast</u> £000	<u>Forecast</u> £000	<u>Forecast</u> £000	<u>Forecast</u> <u>£000</u>
1. Loss of income from SCC at Bourne Hall	80	0	0	0	80
 Provision for major property maintenance / repairs work 	50	50	50	50	200
 Funding for projects within the capital programme 	100	100	100	100	400
4. Pension Fund Valuation	150	0	0	100	250
5. Increased cost of homelessness	391	0	0	0	391
Contingency for Service Changes and Pressures	771	150	150	250	1,321

1. Loss of income from SCC at Bourne Hall

The Council has made a provision within the budget to cover the potential loss of rental income from Surrey County Council at Bourne Hall. The County currently occupies a significant area within the Bourne Hall building and makes a contribution towards the cost of operating the venue. Surrey has indicated that it is in the process of reviewing its Libraries Service and as a result there is risk that they will withdraw or alter their service provision from Bourne Hall.

2. Provision for major property maintenance / repairs work

Upon the completion of the Council's new Asset Management Plan it is likely to highlight that there is insufficient funds available to carry out major repairs or maintenance to our properties when required. Previously this expenditure would have been funded through the capital programme out of capital receipts. However, due to the current levels of capital funding available we are unable to continue funding these works through the capital programme and need to provide sustainable funding for these potential projects through the revenue budget.

3. Funding for projects within the capital programme

The Council was made aware of diminishing levels of capital reserves when approving the last Financial Plan in 2016. The reliance on capital receipts being the main source of funding of the annual capital programme was unsustainable without bringing in regular significant new receipts to replenish balances. As part of the budget for 2019/20 it was agreed that £100,000 of revenue funding would be used to finance the annual capital programme and the MTFS provides funds to increase this by £100,000 year on year to enable funding of the sustainable core capital programme on an on-going basis.

4. Pension Fund Valuation

The Council's pensions are administered by Surrey County Council, as part of the Surrey Pension Fund.

The position on the Pension Fund was reviewed as at 31 March 2019 and showed that it was in deficit by £5 million and the funding level was 93%. The deficit needs to be addressed over the next 20 years and the budget for 2020/21 includes payments of £880,000 and increases in employer contribution rates to reduce the shortfall on the fund.

In context, the 93% funding level is lower than the target level of 100% but significantly better than most government pensions which are unfunded. The fund is still cash flow positive and the deficit is based on current assets plus a forecast of future contributions and an estimate of payments and other liabilities.

Past changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme has relieved pressure on employer pension costs and over the long term the changes are expected to reduce pension costs. Pension contributions are also affected by other factors such as investment returns. The Surrey Pension Fund will be next re-valued as at 31 March 2022.

5. Increased cost of homelessness

Since December 2018 the Council has experienced a significant increase in its homelessness numbers and as a result the budget has been increased to meet the additional demand for this service.

Section 14: COST REDUCTION

- 1.79 The Council is seeking to improve its forecast budget position by £1.8 million by 2023/24.
- 1.80 A programme has been implemented to deliver the necessary savings over the next four years.
- 1.81 The key features of the programme comprise:-
- A 'Star Chamber' exercise where Service Heads presented options for their services on how savings to the Council can be generated over the next four years.
- A number of Service Reviews to be undertaken over the next four years for services with the aim of increasing efficiency, effectiveness and cost.
- Property Related Review to realise cost reduction of Council operational buildings, increase income from investment properties and generate new receipts from surplus buildings/land.
- Income Generation Review to include analysis of charging powers and service utilisation and identify options for income generation.

Section 15: CAPITAL INVESTMENT

- 1.82 The Council's level of financial risk remains high due to the public sector funding cuts and increased urgency for major works to be carried out to existing Council properties.
- 1.83 The Council considered a number of bids totalling £0.5 million for works to Council properties which are excluded from the 3 year capital programme, however, the works will reviewed upon completion of the Council's new Asset Management Plan.
- 1.84 The full programme is set out in the Council's Capital Strategy 2020-2023 and summarised below:-

	Original Budget 2020/21 £'000	Proposed Budget 2021/22 £'000	Proposed Budget 2022/23 £'000	Total Provision 2020/21 – 2022/23 £'000
The Disabled Facilities Grant Programme	600	600	600	1,800
ICT Programme of works	250	0	0	250
Clocktower envelope repairs	100	0	0	100
Hogsmill streams and horse pond repairs	292	0	0	292
Hook Road Car Park replacement surface	80	0	0	80
Playhouse refurbishment	128	0	0	128
Bourne Hall Bungalow roof covering	35	0	0	35
Outdoor gym equipment in park	23	0	0	23
Total	1,508	600	600	2,708

1.85 The programme contains:-

- Core Programme of Priority 1 Works (funded by reserves or grant)
- Schemes to be progressed subject to external funding being achieved
- Spend-to-Save schemes only to be progressed where the business case is demonstrated

1.86 The programme will be funded as follows:-

FINANCED BY;	Budget 2020/21 £000	Budget 2021/22 £000	Budget 2022/23 £000	Total £000
Capital Reserves (Core Programme)	651	0	0	651
Revenue Reserves	234	0	0	234
Government Grants and other funding	623	600	600	1,823
TOTAL	1,508	600	600	2,708

- 1.87 Unlike the revenue account, capital funding is not constrained by financial years. It is likely that schemes will be carried forward into the programme from the 2019/20 budget and there will be rescheduling of the programme throughout the planning period.
- 1.88 Based on the programme recommended for approval by Council in February 2020, capital reserves are projected at £2.1 million at 31 March 2021:-

CAPITAL RESERVES FORECAST	£m	£m
Capital Reserves 1 April 2019		4.4
New capital receipts		0.1
Estimated use of Capital Reserves for 2019/20		- 1.7
Uncommitted Capital Reserves at 31 March 2020		2.8
Capital Programme 2020-2021	1.5	
Less: External and Revenue Funding	- 0.8	
Estimated Use of Capital Reserves 2020-2021		-0.7
Forecast Balance of Capital Reserves at 31 March 2021		2.1
Contingency for additional funding		- 1.1
Minimum Level of Capital Reserves		1.0

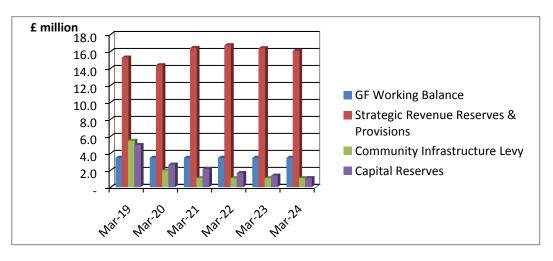
- 1.89 The Council's new Asset Management Plan is likely to identify significant future investment within our current properties. The Council will need to identify options on how any future investment can be managed in context of the Council finances.
- 1.90 The Council's capital programme includes the use of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts. These are earmarked for specific community infrastructure projects.

- 1.91 The Council's capital programme will be reviewed by the Capital Member Group and additional schemes brought forward where external funding including Section 106 or CIL funding is received.
- 1.92 The programme will be reviewed annually and the updated Capital Strategy Statement contained in the Budget and Council Tax Report.

Section 16: RESERVES FORECAST

- 1.93 The following analysis is covered in this report:-
 - Historic Levels of Capital and Revenue Reserves (Section 3)
 - Current level of Revenue Reserves and Provisions (Section 3)
 - Capital Reserves Forecast (Section 15)
- 1.94 The following is an overview of the forecast level of reserves and provisions.

	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	March 2024
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
GF Working Balance	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4
Strategic Revenue Reserves & Provisions	15.2	14.3	16.3	16.6	16.3	16.0
Community Infrastructure Levy	5.4	1.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Capital Reserves	4.4	2.8	2.1	1.6	1.3	1.0



- 1.95 This overview is based on the following assumptions.
 - **General Fund Working Balance:** See four year budget forecast (section 5)
 - Strategic Revenue Reserves & Provisions: Assumes that levels of each reserve are reviewed annually but overall the Council will maintain its current level of prudence.

- **Community Infrastructure Levy:** The forecast assumes that the Council retains a balance of £1 million of unspent CIL receipts.
- **Capital Reserves:** The forecast reflects the approved use of reserves to fund the three year capital programme (section 14).

Section 17: RISK MANAGEMENT

- 1.96 The Council's level of financial risk has increased in the last four years. Due to continued cuts in government funding, the Council has needed to secure alternative sources of funding to enable it to maintain services to its residents. These alternative sources of funding are not as secure as previous grant funding and are subject to changes in the economy and risk of default on payment of income.
- 1.97 With the impending Fair Funding Review the Council anticipates that existing retained business rate income is under threat and there is a likelihood of the outcome of the review resulting in a significant reduction in the Council's future funding from retained business rates.
- 1.98 The Council maintains corporate and operational risk registers.
- 1.99 A financial risk assessment will be completed annually as part of the Budget and Council Tax report. The assessment will provide the scale of financial risk. The following analysis covers the major funding risk anticipated between 2020 and 2024.

RISKS	CAUSES
Government Funding Cuts	Reduction in Government funding through retained share of business rates income Business Rate Negative Growth (appeals, collection rate) Specific Grants ended/reduced (e.g. discretionary grants)
Income from Fees and Charges below forecast	Drop in demand for services, local competition Reduced use of Town Centre (parking) Planning Fee changes not implemented New charging regulation (local land charges)
Income from Interest on Balances	Interest rates do not rise in future years Reduced level of Council reserves
Rent loss •	Reduced use of Council property by other organisations Loss of tenants and rental income to support services Downward rent reviews
Debt financing costs •	Capital resources exhausted requiring long term borrowing Insufficient income to finance debt repayments
Pension Costs •	Pension Fund performance below forecast Fall in Equity Market
Homelessness and Housing • Support Costs •	Cost of accommodating households Impact of Welfare Changes Lack of new affordable housing and temporary accommodation
Failure to deliver savings target•	Planned service changes not implemented Savings identified not achievable
Housing benefits •	Funding changes during transfer of housing support to Universal Credit Changes to benefits system create additional burden on council services (e.g. homelessness)
Tax Collection •	Recession / unemployment

(Council Tax and Business	•	Welfare benefit reform	
Rates)	•	Business contraction	
Salaries Expenditure	•	 Inflation increases higher than expected 	
	•	Risks on resilience	
Maintaining Council Fixed	•	Cost of major repairs affecting rent income	
Assets	•	Cost of urgent work/replacement or overspends on planned	
		works	

Section 18: ANNUAL REVIEW AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.101 The following table sets out the annual service and budget review process.

Service and Financial Planning Framework							
Annual Review	Service Planning	Financial Planning					
June – July	Performance Review	Financial Review					
	End of Year Performance	End of Year Financial Reports					
	Reports	 Agree approach for service & financial planning in the annual budget review Agree year end transfers to/from strategic reserves 					
August –	Service Review	Review of reserves					
September		Budget Targets for following year					
		Review of Income and Expenditure					
		Capital Funding Review					
		Financial Planning Brief					
October –		Capital Appraisals					
November		Capital Finances					
		•					
December	Draft Service Plans	Estimates and Budget Options					
	Cost Centre Targets	Capital Appraisals					
		Capital Finances					
January	Budget Book	Service estimates and investment plans					
	Performance Targets for the following year	for following year					
February	Finalise Service Plans	Determine Budget and Council Tax					
March	Annual Service Targets	Publish Budget					
		Council Tax Information & Billing					
April	Publish Service and						
	Performance Plans						

1.102 The following updates to the Financial Plan will be prepared each year during the four year period:-

Financial Standing:	Financial Statements – July	
	Treasury Management - July	
	Review of Reserves - September	
Budget Position:	Budget Targets Report – September	

Revenue and Capital Budget - February

Capital Programme:

Funding Position – December

Annual Capital Programme – February

1.103 The following finance documents are available on the Council's web site:-

Document	Contains	Where
The Budget Book	Budget Overview, Revenue Estimates and Capital Programme, Reserves, Performance Targets	Council Finance Documents
Council Tax Guide	Information on council tax charges an discounts	Council Finance Documents
Treasury Management	Approach to borrowing and	Council Finance Documents
Strategy	investment	
Annual Report for Council	Financial performance and	Council Finance Documents
owned subsidiary	future projections for Council owned Company	
Statement of Accounts	Published Financial Statements	Council Finance Documents
External Audit Reports	Audit plan, Annual Governance Report, Annual Audit Letter	Council Finance Documents
Financial Regulations	Financial rules of procedure	Constitution
Contract Standing Orders	Contract rules of procedure	Constitution

FINANCIAL PLAN 2020 - 2024

AND

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Further Information

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E-mail: <u>contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk</u>

Web Site: <u>www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk</u>

If you require a translation in your language, please contact:

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੀ ਜ਼ਬਾਨ 'ਚ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਰਾਬਤਾ ਕਰੋ: જો તમને પોતાની ભાષામાં ભાષાંતર જોઇએ છે, તો મહેરબાની કરીને સંપર્ક સાધો: Se necessitar de uma tradução, contacte por favor:

যদি আপনার নিজের ভাষায় অনুবাদ চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন: اگر آب کو ترجر این زبان میں چاہے تو برائے میر این ایر کار جر

