

Appendix D

Medium Term Financial Plan 2017/18 to 2019/20

Main Assumptions, Outstanding Matters and Potential Risk Issues

1. Table 1 below shows the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2017/20 before the use of reserves:-

Table 1: Medium Term Financial Plan 2017/20

	Budget 2016/17 £000	Forecast 2017/18 £000	Forecast 2018/19 £000	Forecast 2019/20 £000
Net Cost of Services	16,655	16,230	17,262	17,683
Corporate Income and Expenditure	(2,205)	(1,927)	(1,499)	(1,302)
BUDGET REQUIREMENT	14,450	14,303	15,763	16,381
Funding	(12,180)	(11,305)	(11,386)	(11,003)
Net Shortfall / (Surplus)	2,270	2,998	4,377	5,378

2. The key assumptions on which the MTFP 2017/20 have been prepared are as follows:-

General Issues

- a) **Business Rates Retention** – The assumption on retained business rates is that the Council's share of income will grow broadly in line with inflation; there is no assumption on tax base growth primarily as a result of the volume of outstanding appeals on existing ratable properties. No adjustment has been made at this stage for the 2017 revaluation – the impact *should* be neutral with any loss of rates from reductions in rateable value offset by a reduction in our tariff payment to DCLG.

	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Business Rates Retained	3,476	3,578	3,693

- b) **Business Rates – Payment of Levy** – As a result of being in the Lancashire Business Rates pool no levy obligation is assumed – any levy payment that would have been paid to Government will be retained locally and shared 90% (Pendle) and 10% (County Council). Decisions on whether to remain in the Pool are taken annually. Our Pool membership for 2017/18 was confirmed in late October. At this stage no account has been taken of the proposed reforms of NNDR and the Government's intentions for 100% of business rates to be retained locally by 2019/20.
- c) **Revenue Support Grant** funding – the MTFP reflects the allocations outlined in the final local government finance settlement for 2016/17:-

	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Revenue Support Grant	2,210	1,707	1,145

d) New Homes Bonus Allocations

The Government has consulted on technical reforms to the New Homes Bonus regime and their response is expected as part of the local government finance settlement for 2017/18. Currently the MTFP reflects allocations set out in the final local government finance settlement for 2016/17. These will be updated once the consultation outcome has been announced.

	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
New Homes Bonus	1,104	693	665

With effect from 2015/16, ***all NHB funding has been used to support of the Council's Base Budget.***

- e) For financial planning purposes **Council Tax** is assumed to increase by £5 per annum over the period to 2019/20. This is the maximum permitted increase for District Councils without the requirement to hold a referendum.
- f) **Localisation of Support for Council Tax (LCTS)** – The Executive has resolved not to reduce the maximum level of support for working age claimants in 2017/18 – this remains at 80%. At the present time no account has been taken of the changes resulting from aligning the council's local scheme with changes to the housing benefit framework in next year.
- g) **Technical Changes to Council Tax** – The Executive has resolved to introduce a discount for landlords of 100% for 4 weeks from April 2017 – the overall taxbase will be confirmed in December and will take account of this – currently the MTFP assumes an annual increase in the tax base of 0.75%.
- h) A **Pay award** of 1% has been assumed in each year over the life of the MTFP.
- i) No provision for **Staff Turnover** is assumed in any year of the Medium Term Financial Plan at this stage;
- j) For 2017/18 the Council's **Employers' pension contribution rate** will be determined by the outcome of the 2016 valuation of the Lancashire Pension Fund. This will set contribution levels for three years up to March 2020. Preliminary results indicate an increase in contribution rate of 3.3% from 12.2% to 15.5% from April 2017. However, the fixed cash sum that is paid in addition to the percentage based element is less than originally assumed in the May 2016 update of the MTFP. Discussions with the Fund are ongoing at this time and there may be further revisions to take account of. At this time the MTFP assumes a phased increase of 1.1% per annum from April 2017 with fixed cash sums of £1.34m, £1.39m and £1.44m in 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 respectively.
- k) **National Insurance (NI) Contributions** – The plan reflects known changes in the NI framework.

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- l) **Robustness of Fees and Charges** – General fees and charges are assumed to increase in line with inflation (2.5% for the purposes of the MTFP) but will be subject to annual review as part of the development of the budget in each year;
- m) **Council Tax Collection** – Reflecting Council Tax collection performance in recent years, it is assumed at this stage that there is a surplus on the Collection Fund for distribution to Pendle and the major preceptors over the life of the MTFP. This position is reviewed annually. The position on Business Rates (NNDR) is not favourable and the plan assumes a significant deficit in 2017/18 arising from actual performance in 2015/16 and 2016/17. The business rates retention scheme remains problematic to predict notably as a result of outstanding business rates appeals. The current assumptions for Pendle's share of each element is as follows:

	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Council Tax – Collection Fund Surplus (Pendle)	(200)	(100)	0
NNDR – Collection Fund Deficit (Pendle)	421	0	0

- n) A **Revenue Contribution to Capital** of £100k is to be made in 2017/18 only funded from a reserve – the reserve balance is fully used after this.

- o) **Net Contributions from reserves are as shown in the table below:-**

	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Use of Reserves – Specific	861	0	0
Use of Reserves – Budget Support	1,120	1,630	1,000

- p) **Capital Programme** – A summary of the Medium Term Capital Programme is provided elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting. It is not possible to provide funding for all commitments/known policy issues and therefore resources have been targeted to Council priorities. In the context of the General Fund Revenue Budget, it is essential that the agreed Capital Programme remains prudent, sustainable and affordable. Ultimately, this may mean the level of borrowing assumed in the Base Budget for 2017/18 and subsequent years has to be scaled back;

Specific Service Related Matters

- a) **Development Control Fees** – No locally determined fees regime has been assumed for Development Control fees. The medium-term plan currently assumes no variation in fee income levels from the £320k budgeted in 2016/17;
- b) **Land Charges** – The Government is still assessing the scope and role of the Land Registry in dealing with land charges. The specific implications of this and whether and when it will result in changes for the Council are not yet confirmed but it remains a matter which may have budgetary implications for the Council;

c) **Treasury Management Issues**

- **Investment Income** – The Executive will be aware that, as part of the strategy to lift the economy out of recession, the Bank of England pursued an aggressive policy of reducing interest rates. The Bank Rate has reduced to 0.25%. This has a direct impact on the Council's General Fund Revenue Budget insofar as interest rates on the Council's investments are generally reflective of the Bank Rate. As the number of external funding streams continues to reduce and the capital programme unwinds it is expected that surplus cash resources will start to diminish. This, combined with the continuing low interest rate environment, means that investment returns are likely to remain relatively depressed with the preservation of security and adequate liquidity taking priority. Investment returns of 0.5% (17/18) rising to 1.00% by 2019/20 have been assumed over the plan period;
 - **Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)** – This is the budget the Council must set aside annually for the repayment of debt. In recent years, MRP has been depressed both by the amount of slippage on the Council's Capital Programme and also the policy of applying all available capital cash resources to capital expenditure before incurring the need for debt. As the amount of slippage on the Capital Programme is diminishing and given the reduction in capital cash resources, debt will grow over the medium term resulting in higher MRP charges; the MRP charge is projected to increase from £435k in 2016/17 to £699k by 2019/20 – part of this links to the acquisition of parts of the ACE Centre. No account has been taken of the possible acquisition of No.1 Market Street at this time.
 - **Debt Interest** – Post the financial downturn and prior to 2014/15 the Council mainly used internal borrowing to finance capital expenditure as opposed to external borrowing. This was in recognition of the low investment returns on offer compared with the cost of borrowing externally. However, as the latter fell during 2014/15, significant external borrowing was taken from the PWLB. As a result of this and the further borrowing still required to fund the Council's capital programme, the plan reflects the associated increase in interest costs.
- d) **Pendle Leisure Trust** – the sustainability of the Leisure Trust remains an issue and the Trust's cost base is continually under pressure. Given the scale of savings required by the Council over the plan period there will be a need to look closely at the affordability of the Trust's activities in the context of the Council's own corporate priorities. Whilst the current payment to the Leisure Trust of £1.576m is assumed to remain unchanged over the life of the plan this is subject to a detailed review in 2017/18 as part of the wider review of saving options over the Plan period. The £60k growth in 2016/17 for the Blues Festival is assumed to fall-out of the budget in 2017/18.
- e) **Council Tax Benefit & Housing Benefit Administration Subsidy** – In 2016/17, the Council will receive £531k from the Government for the administration of benefits split £143k (C Tax) and £388k (HB). The planning assumption is for a year on year reduction of 10% in both funding streams. In due course it is expected that Housing Benefit Administration will not be required once Housing Benefit is fully incorporated within the Universal Credit.

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- f) **Universal Credit** – The ongoing development and roll-out of the Universal Credit will have implications for the Council. In particular, Housing Benefit will be subsumed within the Universal Credit which will be provided by the Department for Work and Pension. If this is the case, the Council will need to review its present arrangements with Liberata.
 - g) **County-wide review of waste collection arrangements** – the Council currently receives payments of £693k and £66k per annum under a cost sharing agreement with the County Council. This arrangement is due to end in March 2018. For financial planning purposes this income has been removed in full from 2018/19. This has a significant impact on the Council's net cost of services in that year.
 - h) **Other Budget Growth** – There is currently no provision for additional growth either as a result of any statutory matters or specific service improvements. It will be important as part of the review of the Council's Strategic Plan to ensure that any additional cost pressures are identified as early as possible and factored into the MTFP with compensating savings made where growth may be unavoidable due to statutory / regulatory requirements;
3. The Executive will appreciate that these assumptions are subject to change as the development of the budget progresses and more information becomes available. In view of this, the MTFP will be updated continuously and reported to Management Team and the Executive as and when it is appropriate to do so.