

## **Introduction**

At the Budget Council meeting held on 20 February 2024, Council referred one General Fund alternative budget proposals, representing an 'amended budget' to the Mayor for consideration. The Mayor has the following options:

- accept the budget as now amended
- submit alternative proposals to the Council
- resubmit the original budget proposals

The Mayor has considered the above and his response is outlined in the subsequent sections.

## **Mayor's Proposed Budget**

The budget proposed by the Mayor is formed on the basis of the budget as outlined in the Budget report with Appendices 1-15, with proposed amendments as set out in the Appendix to this supplementary report.

## **Mayor's Rationale for Alternative Budget Proposals**

Following the full council meeting and debate, as well as discussions in the days allowed by the process, a budget is presented which takes on suggestions and solutions from those discussions.

Amendment 3, referred by Council (Conservative Capital 3) has been accepted and included, and amendment 2, with the exclusion of 2.1; 2.2; 2.5; 2.6. and minor variations to 2.3 and 2.9, has been proposed.

There was clear consensus around the positive homes led Housing Revenue budget, and as the vast majority of the budget was unamended, there is an assumption that the Dedicated Schools Budget is also supported.

The wider General Fund proposals do not impact key services, and where there is a service impact they have been modified to minimise the staffing impact.

- There will be no annual inflationary uplift to allotment charges.
- Local transport schemes will be subject to prioritisation agreed by Area Committees.
- On a one off basis an earmarked £1m provision will be created to explore further supported bus services in Bristol (subject to a future agreement with the Combined Authority on the transport levy), allocate additional spend on sustainable transport routes, repairs and maintenance to infrastructure, to mitigate reduced commercial services.
- For the 2024/25 financial year, the introduction of proposed district car park charges (subject to it meeting the overall objectives of the Charging Order) will be deferred to mitigate the impact on local communities.
- The reduction in the Bristol Design budget will continue, albeit at a lower level, to minimise the impact on staff Previously proposed planned funding from the Clean Air Zone reserve earmarked for supported buses and local transport schemes will continue to create the additional funding source.

This budget prioritises front line services, continues to protect all our children's centres and libraries, delivers the council's key transformation programmes, including the SEND transformation and invests £78m in council services and corporate priorities.

The proposed capital programme remains ambitious, with £2.7 billion with a key focus on programmes and projects that deliver homes and infrastructure for a rapidly growing city.

Despite resource constraints and the ongoing impact of the national cost-of-living crisis, this budget supports Bristol's most vulnerable citizens. It retains the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, as Bristol remains one of the only cities to offer up to 100% off council tax bills, something which supports 32,200 families in Bristol at a cost of £43.4 million. In line with this we retain a Local Crisis Prevention Fund to support economically vulnerable households and families in the most need with upfront support for crisis situations around fuel bills and groceries.

This altered budget is recommended as an eighth balanced budget. Responsibility for delivery will fall to the committee system and new administration. Therefore the chamber is invited to make its decisions.