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Appendix 1

Angus Council

Medium Term Budget Strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23 Update (General Fund Services)

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Angus Council Medium Term Budget Strategy
2020/21 to 2022/23 Update

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SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND & NEED FOR A MEDIUM TERM BUDGET STRATEGY

1.1 As a matter of good business practice all organisations should plan ahead in order to achieve their objectives. The Council first undertook medium term financial planning for the period 2010/11 to 2013/14 through a report approved at the Council meeting on 25 June 2009 (report 510/09 refers), setting out the financial challenges ahead and began to map out how the Council might meet these challenges through efficiency reviews and cost reduction strategies.

1.2 The medium term budget strategy (MTBS) is an update to the Strategy which was last agreed and approved in August 2018 (report 263/18 refers).

1.2 The need for a medium term budget strategy has been set out in previous strategy documents but it is considered important to emphasise that future service provision in Angus needs to be driven by clear policy objectives so that the limited resources available to the Council can be allocated on a priority based approach. In May 2015 the Council approved the adoption of priority based budgeting (PBB) as the approach to preparation of future revenue budgets. It is recognised that this is difficult to achieve in practice because so many of the Council's services are seen as valuable or essential, but it is essential that the Council continues to build on the work that has already commenced to continue to seek to better align resources to priorities. To this end, officers undertook a series of Zero Based Budgeting / Organisational Design reviews of service budgets during the 2018/19 financial year as part of the Council's change programme and aspects of this work is continuing into 2019/20.

1.4 Whilst the need for a policy driven approach to resource allocation is undoubtedly the best way forward, the Council must first have an appreciation of the resources and the constraints on those resources which are likely to exist so that policy decisions can be taken on an informed basis.

SECTION 2 - REVENUE BUDGET FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS- UPDATE (2020/21 TO 2022/23)

Purpose of the Projections

2.1 The focus of the projections is to identify the main areas of cost pressure over the period of the Budget Strategy and to identify the extent of influence the Council can have on such pressures. The projections also identify the likely gap between the cost of service provision and the resources estimated to be available to provide them in terms of government grant, local taxation, etc.

Background to the Projections

2.2 Making financial projections is a difficult exercise for an organisation such as the Council which is subject to unpredictable demands for service, regular changes in legislation and which is funded mostly by government grant. Notwithstanding the very serious challenges which arise from preparing meaningful financial projections over the medium term it is essential this exercise is undertaken to inform future service delivery / efficiency plans.

2.3 The projections are based on a review of all of the Council's main costs, incomes and grant funding and as a result of the lack of certainty over many of these it means that the projections have not sought to apply the level of precision and detailed calculation that would normally apply to the preparation of the Council's annual budget. The projections are, rather, based on broader assumptions over what may impact on costs and incomes over the 3 year period. The projections will therefore be subject to significant refinement as part of the annual budget setting processes but they do provide a broad indication of the Council's projected financial position based on the assumptions made.

Assumptions (Baseline Projection)

2.4 Medium term budget projections such as those set out in this strategy document are based heavily on assumptions. Changes in these assumptions can have a material effect on the end outcome. The projections make assumptions falling into 2 broad categories:-

A) Issues which are known about or can reasonably be foreseen which will create upward pressure on costs e.g. pay inflation, PPP commitments, energy costs, schools for the future unitary charges, etc.

B) Issues which can be anticipated as areas of budget risk but where the extent of the risk is uncertain e.g. the cost of an ageing population.

2.5 Clearly some assumptions are more material to the end results than others so listed below are the assumptions made on the most material items. <u>All assumptions and costs are based on the 3 year period 2020/21 to 2022/23.</u>

2.6 *Pay Inflation & Pressures*

Pay awards and other pay related cost pressures are assumed to cost around £12.0 million over the 3 years. This is based on the agreed pay award for 2020/21 (3% for LGE and Teachers) and a projected average increase of approximately 2% per annum for all categories of employees for 2021/22 and 2022/23. The above figure incorporates estimated increases to the Living Wage (including on payments made to Tayside Contracts) and the additional costs for pay increments.

School & Public Transport Costs

2.7 It has been assumed that inflationary and tender price increases will add around £0.5 million to the Council's costs over the 3 years. The projections assume a continuation of current service levels as a starting point.

Third Party Inflation (Excluding IJB)

2.8 The Council commissions services from other providers as an alternative to direct provision by its own staff. Payments to these third parties make up a significant part of the Council's costs, particularly in social care type services. Pay and general inflation will affect third party providers in much the same way as it affects the Council and the cost impact of this will usually be passed on to the Council in the charges made by third party service providers. Although the Council will require its third party providers to look at their own efficiency so as to minimise the cost impact on the Council it has been assumed that the cost increase will amount to around £0.6 million over the 3 year period.

Waste Management Costs

2.9 Net growth of £0.7 million (over the 3 year period has been assumed for recycling waste management costs required as part of meeting national targets. The majority of this cost is in relation to the new contract arrangements that have been put in place for dry mixed recyclates (plastics/glass) £0.450 million. The costs for the new contract on the waste disposal facility are identified as broadly breakeven for 2020/21 and 2021/22 with the inflationary increases being assumed to be offset by income through the contract gain share mechanisms.

Energy Costs

2.10 The Council has been faced with significant rises in energy costs in the past due to market conditions. An overall net increase in the Council's energy budget provision, including street lighting, of £0.7 million over the 3 years has therefore been assumed given volatility in energy markets and geo-political risks.

Core Government Grant

2.11 This is the single most critical assumption to the projections and in many ways is the most difficult to estimate.

2.12 The Scottish Government published a medium term financial strategy in May 2019 which provided limited information from which to determine what the Local Government settlement will be so we have relied on this and other information from economists and researchers and reflected this in the Council's grant projections which are extremely variable under the 3 planning scenarios. As in previous years definitive grant figures for 2020/21 will not be known until November/December 2019.

2.13 The projections currently assume a 1.0% cash reduction in core government grant for 2020/21, a 1.5% cash reduction has been assumed for 2021/22 and a 0.5% cash reduction has been assumed for 2022/23. There are also anticipated reductions in loan charges support grant in addition to the reductions in core grant applied from 2020/21 to 2022/23.

2.14 Based on these projections the Council's revenue grant support is projected to reduce by circa £5.8 million over the 3 year period 2020/21 – 2022/23. It remains a significant risk that government grants will be even more curtailed than those projected if the UK and Scottish economies are impacted by local or world events or if the Scottish Government's financial forecasts are overly optimistic. The fact that more than 80% of the Council's funding comes from Government merely serves to emphasise the extent of the financial difficulties which the Council will face in the period ahead.

It is anticipated that the local government finance settlement will be issued in December and will cover the period 2020/21 to 2022/23. If so, the MTBS will be reviewed and updated at that point in light of new information.

Council Tax

2.15 The projections assume that there will be no Council Tax increase over the 3 years of the strategy on the basis that this will be one of the options (in addition to budget savings) for how part of the funding gap could be bridged. It would not however be appropriate within the budget strategy to speculate about future Council Tax levels as these will be decisions taken on an annual basis based on all relevant factors at that time.

2.16 The Council Tax base has continued to grow despite the economic climate and the ongoing impact on the housing market. Having regard to this the projections assume the tax base will grow by 0.5% in each of the 3 years.

IJB (Demographic Change & Third Party Payments)

2.17 This is an area of major concern especially in Older People's Services. Despite our enablement approach and Help to Live at Home project and efficiencies which may be achieved through ongoing service reviews it is recognised that changing demographics will bring additional pressure to adult care services; consequently an allowance of £7.2 million has been assumed over the 3 years towards costs associated with demographic changes and third party inflation. These costs will affect the Angus Health & Social Partnership's budget but the Council is a funding partner and accordingly must plan for potential budget pressures affecting the Partnership.

Other Assumptions

2.18 In addition to the above listed main assumptions, further allowance for cost pressures and risks in areas such as PPP commitments, Schools for the Future unitary charges and roads and winter maintenance etc. have also been made.

2.19 Except where indicated otherwise, the projections also assume that service provision levels and methods will remain as at present (2019/20 levels). This means that reductions in service provision levels or new more efficient methods of delivery will help narrow the financial gap identified in Table 1 below.

Projections Summary

2.20 The purpose of the projections is to inform future service and budget planning and in particular to try to get an appreciation of the level of future budget savings that will need to be made. Table 1 below provides a high level summary of the projection results based on the assumptions made. The funding gap shown is the amount which would need to be met from a combination of the Change Programme, other measures such as possible Council Tax increases and by taking budget risks.

2.21 It is emphasised that the figures in Table 1 are a baseline projection and that variant projections on an optimistic and pessimistic basis have also been undertaken.

Table 1 – Revenue Budget Financial Projections (2020/21 to 2022/23)

	2020/21 £m	**2021/22 £m**	**2022/23 £m**
Total Angus Council Service Expenditure	250.7	250.9	251.1
Capital Financing Costs	13.2	13.2	13.1
Surplus Local Tax	(0.5)	(0.5)	(0.5)
Pay Award Provision*	4.6	8.2	12.0
Joint Boards	0.3	0.3	0.3
Use of Balances / Special Funds per existing drawdown strategies	0.0	0.0	0.0
Add Back Specific Grants	9.1	9.1	9.1
Net Expenditure Before Government Grant	**277.4**	**281.2**	**285.1**
Allowance for budget pressures (A)*	5.0	8.7	12.7
Allowance for budget risks (B)*	0.9	1.6	2.3
Revised Net Expenditure (before Govt. grant)	**283.3**	**291.5**	**300.1**
Less Government Grant	(214.3)	(211.0)	(209.8)
Less Council Tax (assuming no increase in charge)	(54.7)	(55.0)	(55.3)
Total Funding Shortfall (cumulative)*	14.3	25.5	35.0
Total Funding Shortfall (annual)	**14.3**	**11.2**	**9.5**

*- figures shown for these items are cumulative

2.22 The projections show a total funding gap of £35m over the 3 year period which is equivalent to 15.1% on the 2019/20 budgets, or 5% per annum on average. It is worth highlighting that the percentage saving is based on the Council's core net expenditure on services i.e. after removal of the Loan Charges budget, Capital Funded from Current Revenue, Joint Boards, PPP unitary charge payments, Other Services etc. as these budgets are subject to specific arrangements which restricts the ability to apply budget savings. In practice many areas of the Council's budget are not easily changed or cannot be significantly influenced due to national policies. This means the burden of savings falls on a much smaller part of the budget and in those areas the level of reduction in budget will need to be much higher than the percentages shown below.

Sensitivity Testing

2.23 A number of sensitivity tests have been applied to the more material estimates and assumptions to provide an optimistic and pessimistic view. The baseline, optimistic view and pessimistic view are presented in Table 2a, 2b and 2c below.

Table 2a – Estimated Funding Gap (Base Projection)

	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	**3 Year Total £m**
Funding shortfall	**14.3**	**11.2**	**9.5**	**35.0**
% age Level of Savings Needed	***6.2%***	***4.8%***	***4.1%***	***15.1%***

Table 2b – Estimated Funding Gap (Optimistic View)

	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	**3 Year Total £m**
Funding shortfall	**12.7**	**7.7**	**6.3**	**26.7**
% age Level of Savings Needed	***5.5%***	***3.4%***	**2.7%**	***11.6%***

Table 2c – Estimated Funding Gap (Pessimistic View)

	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	**3 Year Total £m**
Funding shortfall	**15.7**	**15.6**	**13.0**	**44.3**
% age Level of Savings Needed	***6.8%***	***6.8%***	***5.6%***	***19.2%***

2.24 It will be noted from Tables 2a, 2b and 2c that the estimated funding gap for the 3 year period ranges from £26.7 million to £44.3 million.

Risk and Issues

2.25 The extent of variation in the results per Tables 2b and 2c may in some ways be surprising but this is a product of the extent to which the financial projections outlined in the financial strategy are so heavily reliant on assumptions, particularly government grant levels and pay awards. The sensitivities are therefore essential to understanding the range of possible outcomes for the Council.

2.26 In considering the funding gap and developing a budget strategy, it is essential that the risks inherent in these projections are fully understood. There are number of risks to the projections but three of these are considered to be fundamental risks which members are asked to bear in mind as follows:-

Government Grant

2.27 The Scottish Government will decide how the Scottish Block and tax revenues raised in Scotland is allocated and if, for example, the Government decides, as part of the next Scottish Spending Review, to offer a greater degree of protection to non-local government services such as health this could result in further grant reductions for local authorities, including Angus Council. It is also possible that the position could improve if there is a change in fiscal policy and spending priorities at a UK or Scottish Government level.

Pay Settlement Risk

2.28 The level of pay settlements for 2021/22 & 2022/23 is a risk in that it could exceed the levels assumed in the projections. The Council is part of national pay bargaining so doesn't decided these alone.

Severance Costs

2.29 The projections make no allowance for severance costs on the assumption that where these arise they can be met from either existing service budgets, the Change Fund or other the earmarked monies in the General Fund Balance There is a risk that additional severance costs may arise and how they will be funded will be subject to further work by the Policy and Budget Strategy Group.

Revenue Budget Financial Projections - Conclusions

2.30 The financial projections work included in this budget strategy update builds on the work done in previous years. This exercise continues to be fraught with difficulty because of the reliance on assumptions and the many variables which can affect the figures. Notwithstanding the need to use the projections with caution they do provide a broad indication of the serious financial challenges which Angus Council faces over the next few years. The availability of this information provides a solid and transparent base from which to continue to plan future service provision and set future budgets.

2.31 The further savings projected to be required over the next 3 years are in addition to the £55 million (22%) million saved in the last 7 years alone and the reduction in the Council's workforce by more than 500 staff (12%) in the same period. The scale of the savings required is unprecedented and the cumulative effect of such savings over such a protracted period calls into question the sustainability of existing levels and methods of service, the funding models used to pay for local government services as well as the multitude of statutory duties placed on Councils. There is simply no prospect of this level of funding gap being met without current service provision being affected on a very significant scale.

SECTION 3 – BRIDGING THE PROJECTED FUNDING GAP

Background

3.1 The Council is required by statute to set a balanced budget each year and this means that projected gaps in funding in future years present a real and unavoidable problem for the Council which will force members and officers to make difficult and highly challenging decisions out of necessity.

Historically the Council identified the savings needed to balance its budget by setting percentage targets for each service to achieve. In the last 3 years savings have been identified from a mix of the Change Programme and other savings services were able to deliver. One-off measures such as curtailing capital spending and using uncommitted reserves have had to be used in recent years to fill a remaining gap on a one off basis.

Plans for Addressing the Funding Gap

3.2 Addressing the projected funding gap is the biggest challenge the Council faces in the next 3 years. The projected gap will be addressed primarily through the Change Programme which is made up of numerous projects and options as outlined in Report 278/19.

This is work in progress with many of the ideas and options being worked on to identify the savings which could potentially be delivered over the next 3 years. However, it should be highlighted that the options for further (new) savings are inevitably limited by what has already been done. Savings already removed from the budget can't be taken again and new options need to be identified and implemented. The scale of savings already made along with constraints over where the Council is limited in its ability to save the money "untouchable" areas provide a context for the next phase of the Change Programme which is truly daunting and there should be in no doubt as to the challenges we face.

At present and based on the projects and options in the current Change Programme it is estimated that it will achieve savings of £20.2 million over the next 3 years. The savings plans across all years are being reviewed and updated and for 2022/23 are at a relatively early stage in their development. This is well short of the projected funding gap identified in this MTBS as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Comparison of Estimated Funding Gap and Estimated Savings from Current Change Programme

	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	**3 Year Total £m**
Funding shortfall (Base Projection)	14.3	11.2	9.5	35.0
Estimated Savings From Current Change Programme	(9.7)	(6.6)	(3.9)	(20.2)
Remaining Funding Gap	**4.6**	**4.6**	**5.6**	**14.8**
Further Savings and Options Required from next iteration of the Change Programme*	(4.6)	(4.6)	(5.6)	(14.8)
Net Position	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

* - the further options to achieve these figures are being worked upon and will be reported on separately

3.3 Part of the further savings and options to bridge the remaining funding gap shown in table 3 could be met from Council Tax increases. A 3% rise per annum would yield circa £4.8 million. Such a rise has not been assumed in this MTBS but is clearly an option the Council will have to consider. Other options may also include use of the Council's reserves, increases in fees and charges or more significant reductions to spending in some areas than is currently assumed.

3.4 The shortfall between current plans in the Change Programme and the latest funding gap projections reflects the need to identify further options for change and savings. Given the scale of the challenge and the savings already achieved in past years it is not unreasonable for the Council to be unsure at this point about the detailed means by which the full funding gap over a 3 year period may be bridged. There is however some urgency in identifying the means through which the 2020/21 remaining funding gap will be met given the budget setting for that year is only 6 months away.

3.5 The shortfall between the change programme estimated savings as at August 2019 and the projected funding gap will be addressed from a combination of the following measures:-

(1) Additional Change Programme Projects

3.6 The Programme will continue over the next 3 years and will grow over time as existing projects are completed and new projects are introduced. The primary route through which the remaining funding gap identified in Table 3 above will be addressed will therefore be from existing and new change programme projects which will be identified on a rolling basis.

(2) Increases in Council Tax and Other Fees & Charges

3.7 The funding gap projected assumes no increases in Council Tax or other existing fees and charges levied by the Council but these are clearly options which will need to be considered in order to lessen somewhat the effects of savings in service provision. The scale of the funding gap suggests increases in council tax and fees and charges will be unavoidable but this will be a matter for the Council to decide upon in each year's budget setting process.

3.8 In addition to (1) and (2) above the following options may need to be considered as a means of balancing each year's budget.

(3) Savings from Corporate (council-wide) Budgets

3.9 The Council's budget is dominated by expenditure incurred by its various services in providing those services. There are therefore very few "corporate" budgets from which savings can be made with the main source of potential corporate budget savings in the years ahead being Loan Charges.

3.10 The Council has a long term capital affordability strategy which provides a good base from which to consider future reductions in loan charges costs or reductions in capital spending. In the past there has been scope to review the levels of special repayments within the capital affordability strategy in the short term but this will create long term problems for the Council and requires careful consideration. It should be noted that a Review of the Loans Fund has been included in the Change Programme for 2020/21 and this involves the Council engaging with Link Asset Services. Link Asset Services will undertake a review of Angus Council's Loans Fund to assess opportunities to optimise benefits available to the General Fund in terms of the profile of the provision of Loans Fund repayments, whilst ensuring the authority maintains a prudent provision for the repayment of its debt liability. It is anticipated that the review could offer potential savings, which could be of a "permanent" nature. £1.0 million has been identified in the Change Programme for this review.

3.11 Further reductions in loan charges costs beyond those made in recent budgets and the loans fund review may therefore mean that the Council has to curtail its capital spending in future and this would result in less money being available for investment in essential infrastructure such as schools, roads and care establishments.

3.12 The Council has traditionally fared well in generating good levels of interest income from its surplus cash and reserves but the current interest rate environment has severely restricted this as a source of income. This is not therefore likely to be a source of significant corporate savings in the immediate future.

(4) Management of Budget Risks

3.13 Budget setting is not an exact science and invariably budgets will be based on assumptions and will include an element of risk. A key part of each year's budget setting exercise is about determining the extent of budget risk which it may be possible to take. In an environment where resources are scarce and savings are having to be applied it doesn't make sense to try to budget for all possible risks on the basis that this will usually mean extra savings being required in some areas to provide budget provision in other areas which may ultimately not be fully used if the anticipated risk does not fully materialise.

3.14 Essentially each budget the Council sets includes an element of risk whereby Directors have agreed to try to manage costs and services within the resources provided knowing that circumstances may mean that the budget won't be sufficient. Perhaps the best example of budget risk is in relation to the winter maintenance budget where the Council budgets for a level of costs based on an "average" winter. Winter maintenance spend is very difficult to predict so the budget is set on a balance of probabilities which includes a risk of overspend against that particular budget.

3.15 The management of budget risks will therefore continue to be a feature of the Council's budget setting in the future. Given the financial pressures the Council will continue to be under in future years it is reasonable to assume that there will continue to be a need for budget risks to be managed and this therefore will continue to be an option for the Council in setting a balanced budget. This is however a very delicate balancing act because seeking to manage too much budget risk might ultimately create significant financial problems for the Council. The management of budget risks must never be allowed to undermine the need to make proper provision for unavoidable costs – the Council must therefore strike a sensible balance in the level of budget risk it takes in future budget setting exercises.

(5) Use of Reserves

3.16 As a last resort the Council can, assuming it has reserves available, use these to fund any remaining shortfall in order to balance its budget. This could only be on a one-off basis but can be used as a legitimate means of bridging a gap if plans are in place to achieve ongoing savings at a later date. In relation to financial year 2020/21 and based on current information it may again be necessary to use Reserves to provide breathing space for the Change Programme to deliver additional ongoing savings.

Conclusions – Addressing the Funding Gap

3.17 At the time of preparing this Medium Term Budget Strategy the Council does not have the full answer as to how it will balance its budget in any of the next 3 years. Work is well underway to identify the further options required to address the shortfall and this will be the subject of further reports in the coming months. Addressing this shortfall over the full 3 year period will be the focus for the Policy and Budget Strategy Group between now and February 2020.

SECTION 4 - CAPITAL BUDGET FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS (2020/21 TO 2023/24)

Background

4.1 Report 62/19 approved by the Council in February 2019 outlined the results of a long term affordability review on the General Fund Financial Plan. That report effectively set out the Council's capital budget strategy and financial projections for the period up to 2022/23 and included the Council's General Fund Financial Plan for 2018/19 to 2022/23. The information in this section of the medium term budget strategy is drawn from Report 62/19 but members should refer to report 62/19 for detail.

4.2 Reference may also be made to report 277/19 which presents the updated 2018/2023 Financial Plan and 2019/20 capital monitoring budget. This updated plan will be used as the basis for the 2020/21 budget process and the subsequent long term affordability review associated with this.

4.3 The Council's General Fund Financial Plan for the period 2018/19 to 2022/23 was set under the self-regulating Prudential Code which requires the Council to consider the affordability and sustainability of its capital spending plans. Reference may also be made to report 60/19 which presents Angus Council's annual capital strategy. This purpose of this new requirement of the Prudential Code (2019/20 is the first year) is to demonstrate that the Council takes capital expenditure and investment decisions in line with service objectives and properly takes account of stewardship, value for money and prudence, as well as the aforementioned affordability and sustainability.

2019/20 Local Government Finance Settlement - Capital Funding

4.4 The Background Report to the Special Budget Meeting of Angus Council on 21 February 2019 (report 57/19 refers) noted that Angus Council had been awarded total capital funding of £20.131 million for 2019/20, comprising general capital grant of £16.740 million and specific capital grants of £0.191 million for Cycling, Walking & Safer Streets and £3.200 million for Early Years Expansion.

4.5 A further £3.132 million general capital grant was subsequently awarded following the Special Budget Meeting, taking total capital funding to £23.263 million in 2019/20. This related to monies held back by the Scottish Government in 2016/17 which were ultimately distributed as part of the 2019/20 finance settlement. As these previously undistributed funds related to the flooding element of general capital grant, they were allocated to councils largely on the basis of approved priority flood schemes (in Angus Council's case, Arbroath Flood Strategy). It should be noted however that the level of grant due to be received in respect of Arbroath Flood Strategy in 2020/21 will be reduced by an equivalent amount - the Council has essentially just received it a year earlier than anticipated.

Summary of Capital Spending Plans to 2023/24

4.6 The 2018/2023 Financial Plan agreed by members in February 2019 sets out the Council's specific capital spending intentions up to and including financial year 2022/23. The long term affordability analysis then made assumptions about spending levels thereafter to give the levels of expected spend in the period to 2023/24 set out in Table 4 below.

Table 4 – Summary of Net Capital Expenditure 2018/19 to 2022/23

	Year 1 2019/20 £m	Year 2 2020/21 £m	Year 3 2021/22 £m	Year 4 2022/23 £m	Year 5 2023/24 £m
Projected Net Capital Expenditure	31.551	14.623	9.510	9.557	15.000

Priority Projects

4.7 The priority of the projects in the capital programme (both existing and new) was agreed by the Policy & Budget Strategy Group (PBSG) and Council as part of the 2019/20 budget setting process.

4.8 The list of priority projects approved at February's special budget meeting is attached as **Annex 1** for information.

4.9 In respect of the 2023/24 financial year, capital project priorities will be considered as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process and this will include re-consideration of those projects currently presented on Annex 1 as lesser priority or "below the line" as well as potential new projects.

Key Risks and Issues

4.10 The main risks to the capital budget projections relate to government funding for capital generally although the potential impact on public spending levels has been allowed for as far as possible within the capital budget projections.

4.11 In terms of policy implications the affordability analysis confirms that there is likely to be a significant limitation on the scope to introduce new projects into the Financial Plan over the next few years. Should new projects come forward for consideration over the current period of the Financial Plan, they will only be affordable if existing projects are deferred, removed or amended, or a conscious decision taken to divert additional revenue budget resources towards supporting loan charges costs (**i.e. the Council cannot simply keep adding to its intended capital spending**).

SECTION 5 – CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Angus Council faces enormous service and financial challenges over the next few years and the Council needs to be ready and able to meet those challenges. This Medium Term Budget Strategy provides a firm basis upon which to take forward future service and budget planning and begin to meet the challenges ahead.

5.2 This update maps out a clear view of what is likely to be required in order to balance future budgets. The update has projected ahead on both revenue and capital budgets to identify the actions in relation to corporate/efficiency reviews, budget savings and policy prioritisation which the Council needs to take.

5.3 Angus Council cannot directly influence much of the financial pressures and grant restrictions which are expected to affect the Council's finances over the next few years. The Council can however be proactive in anticipating the problems ahead and begin planning for how these problems may be addressed.

5.4 The further savings projected to be required over the next 3 years are in addition to the £55 million (22%) saved in the last 7 years alone and the reduction in the Council's workforce of more than 500 staff (12%) in the same period. The scale of the savings required is unprecedented and the cumulative effect of such savings over such a protracted period calls into question the sustainability of existing levels and methods of service, the funding models used to pay for local government services as well as the multitude of statutory duties placed on Councils.

5.5 The MTBS should leave Councillors and members of the public in no doubt about the severity of the challenges the Council faces to remain financially sustainable. Angus Council has never faced a more serious challenge to its financial viability than that which lies ahead in the next few years. Significant improvements to the funding settlements received by Local Government compared to recent years would be necessary to lessen the severity of the challenge and that scenario seems unlikely.

5.6 The change programme and the multiple service re-designs and efficiency activity which is part of the programme is intended to limit the negative effects on service provision from having to make such significant savings in budgets and officers will be doing their utmost to protect service provision as much as possible. Nevertheless savings on the scale estimated to be required simply cannot be achieved without real and far reaching changes and reductions to services. Work to ensure citizens and businesses across Angus are aware of this reality will be undertaken.