

SPECIAL ANGUS COUNCIL – 2 MARCH 2023

**2023/24 REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET SETTING
PROPOSED BUDGETS FOR THE LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DIRECTORATE**

**JOINT REPORT BY JACKIE BUCHANAN, DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
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ABSTRACT

This report sets out the proposed revenue budget for the Legal & Democratic Services Directorate covering the 2023/24 provisional revenue budget, budget savings from the Council's Finance & Change Plan and review of charges proposals. Legal & Democratic Services do not have any budget issues to be included in the budget. Equalities impact assessments for these proposals are also provided. Proposed budget savings for financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 are included in this report on an indicative basis only – final decisions on those savings will be made as part of the budget setting process for those financial years.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- a) note and approve the budget savings contained in Appendix A for inclusion in the Directorate's 2023/24 provisional revenue budget;
- b) note and approve the review of fees and charges contained in Appendix B for inclusion in the Directorate's 2023/24 provisional revenue budget;
- c) note and approve the 2023/24 Provisional Revenue Budget for the Directorate as set out in Appendix C;
- d) note there is no 2023/24 Provisional Capital Budget for the Directorate;
- e) note that the 2023/24 revenue budget set out in this report forms part of the Council's total budget for determining the 2023/24 Council Tax.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

2.1 This report contributes as a whole to the delivery of the Council Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Reference is made to Report 225/22 and Report 406/22 submitted to the Policy & Resources Committee in August and December 2022 respectively which set out the approach and timetable for the preparation of the 2023/24 revenue and capital budgets.

3.2 This report and its appendices sets out the proposed 2023/24 provisional revenue budget for the Legal & Democratic Services Directorate which along with the proposed budgets for all other Directorates and corporate budget items will make up the Council's total budget so that the 2023/24 Council Tax can be determined by elected members. It should be noted that the Legal & Democratic Services Directorate does not have any capital budget requirements for 2023/24.

4. 2023/24 PROVISIONAL REVENUE BUDGET

4.1 The proposed 2023/24 revenue budget for the Directorate comprises the following:-

4.2 Budget Issues

Through the budget setting process each Director identifies areas of their budget where specific issues are expected to arise which will mean that the current budget provision is inadequate and may need to be increased e.g. due to inflation or increased service demand. Some budget issues need to be taken at risk due to affordability constraints but those which are considered to be unavoidable are recommended for inclusion in the proposed revenue budget. The Legal & Democratic Services Directorate raised only one budget issue which is under-recovery in rechargeable income for the Digital Reprographics Unit (DRU). The under-recovery amount currently sits at £64,000. As delivery of the DRU is being reviewed currently in terms of considering whether an in-house service model is the most effective model, it is intended that the budget issue will be taken at risk for the 2023/24 revenue budget.

4.3 Budget Savings (see Appendix A for details)

The Council's financial challenges mean that savings in existing budgets must be made to achieve a balanced budget overall. Budget savings help to offset the additional costs arising from budget issues and other cost increases such as pay and general inflation.

The Council's Change Programme as set out in the Finance & Change Plan (Report 40/23 refers) covers all of the savings being proposed in the Council's budget over the financial years 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26. The budget savings proposed to be applied to the Directorate's 2023/24 budget and which elected members are being asked to approve are set out in Appendix A. Please note the exact detail of the Procurement budget saving will be the result of ongoing work involving the analysis of third party spend data across the Council which is not yet quantified. This will form the basis of the savings such as supplier rationalisation, streamlining of products and processes, smarter framework usage and improved contract management. All proposed budget savings for financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 included in Appendix A are indicative only at this point – final decisions on those savings will be made as part of the budget setting process for those financial years and equalities impact assessments, where appropriate, will be done at that time for any such savings before any decision on these is taken.

4.4 Review of Charges (see Appendix B for details)

The Council levies fees and charges for some services it provides. Some of these are set nationally but most are determined by the Council. Increases in fees and charges are usually necessary to reflect the impact of inflation on the cost of providing services.

The proposed fees and charges for the Directorate's services for financial year 2023/24 are set out in Appendix B. The percentage increase on current fees and charges is also shown as is the additional income the increase is expected to generate. Charges have been rounded up to the nearest 10 pence.

4.5 Directorate Net Expenditure Summary (see Appendix C for details)

An overall summary of the proposed 2023/24 revenue budget for the Directorate is included as Appendix C to this report. This includes the budget implications from the budget savings and review of charges proposals contained in Appendices A and B and represents the proposed 2023/24 Provisional Revenue Budget for the Directorate.

4.6 All of the 2023/24 revenue budget proposals set out in this report have been incorporated into the Council's overall budget for the year, a summary of which is included in Report 54/23 – Provisional Revenue and Capital Budget 2023/24 – Background Report & Setting of Council Tax 2023/24.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no additional financial implications for the Council beyond those set out in the body and appendices of this report. Members should however note that any changes to the budget proposals set out in this report which have financial implications will impact onto the Council's overall budget and the basis for achieving a balanced budget.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 A screening equality impact assessment has been prepared covering the proposals set out in the report and a full EIA is not required on any of the proposals, as there is no differential impact on any persons with protected characteristics.

NOTE: The following background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 were relied on in preparing the above report.

- Finance Circular 11/2022 issued by the Scottish Government

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Directorate Budget Savings

Appendix B – Directorate Review of Charges

Appendix C – Directorate Net Expenditure Summary - 2023/24 Provisional Revenue Budget