

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

## Full Council - 26 February 2013

### Alternative Budget Proposal – Independent Councillors

#### Introduction

This budget proposal is presented by the Taunton Deane Independent Councillors. As an alternative to the Executive's draft budget it has two immediate aims:-

1. Ensuring that the cross party emphasis on **service delivery** and **quality of place** in the emerging Corporate Business Plan is delivered promptly.
2. Ensuring that the Council is better prepared to meet its statutory duties, the needs and then the aspirations of residents in the face of Central Government policies detrimental to an urban/rural area like Taunton Deane.

Failure to achieve these aims will undermine Taunton Deane's status as the home of our County Town and irreversibly fix the Council on the path to an already well documented financial abyss in three to four years time (an abyss confirmed by our own Chief Executive Officer, S151 Officer and the LGA peer review).

Rather than following in the footsteps of West Somerset District Council this budget offers leadership towards resilience and resurgence.

The strategy underlying this budget rejects leaving Council Tax frozen for another year. This requires a demonstration of leadership and strength by this Council. Any freeze of Council Tax must be seen as a dangerous and disingenuous device to garner votes and grab headlines before the County Council elections while blatantly ignoring the real financial challenges that this Council faces.

Members of this Council are specifically asked to remember that their primary duty is to Taunton Deane. As such we must respond to challenges being forced on the Council by the Coalition strategy of reducing Local Government services by forcing District Councils to effectively go bust - by cutting funding, transferring greater burdens to the people of the Districts and incentivising (with increasingly smaller incentives) the freezing of Council Tax.

As West Somerset District Council glides powerlessly towards their financial abyss after two years of frozen Council Tax and is forced by Government to seek help from the Local Government family, our own Council must get a grip. Taunton Deane cannot afford another budget set by those hooked on the ecstasy of Coalition or those who are prepared to accept taking reducing Government freeze grants when they know it will harm those around them.

This budget says no to a quick fix and palliative measures. It provides a new foundation for Taunton Deane and prepares a stronger position for the unprecedented onslaught of a Central Government that remains committed to

localism to reduce cost while ignoring people who live and strive to work locally. This budget rejects appeasement in favour of immediate prioritisation towards sustainable local services; services that discharge the statutory duties of the Council, then meet the wider needs of the people of Taunton Deane and wherever possible the aspirations of our community.

## **Council Tax**

Someone assessed for Council Tax on a Band D property pays £135.19 per year for our services. Taunton Deane costs each Band D Council Tax payer £2.59 per week or £11 per month.

We propose to increase Council Tax by only 9p per week.

This amounts to a 3.5% change. It would change the Band D tax for Taunton Deane by £4.73 per annum (equivalent to 39p per month) and in doing so puts the Council on a much stronger footing for future years.

The Council would not receive the Government's Council Tax Freeze Grant. The freeze grant encourages false economy. It offers no real benefit to our community and postpones tackling the realities of future budget gaps. It harms Taunton Deane by doing so. The total value of freeze grant available to this council in 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 is at this stage likely to be £57,000 each year or £114,000 over the two years.

The proposed change to Council Tax in this Budget would bring net additional income of £119,340 to the Council in 2013/2014.

Importantly it increases the Council's base tax position so as to reduce future budget gaps by £119,000 on an ongoing and annual basis.

Even if Council Tax is frozen again in the following year, raising the base position now provides immediate funds to respond to the burdens imposed on our community by the Coalition and strengthens us in the face of increased burdens tomorrow.

A similar increase is to be applied to the Unparished Area of Taunton. This would raise £1,410 which would be earmarked to be spent to the benefit of residents of the Unparished Area in 2013/2014.

These measures would put the tax position on a stronger footing for the challenges ahead.

This proposal is within the referendum levels set by the Government.

## **New Homes Bonus**

The Executive has set this aside wholly for "growth and regeneration" purposes, something this administration and its predecessors have pursued for years, with little to show for their effort.

We propose to split the fund into two to achieve quality of place and service delivery. These real priorities have emerged from cross party discussions in the strategic planning work led by our officers. These are the foundations on which Taunton Deane will thrive and they will create the environment that will attract people to make their homes and build their businesses in Taunton Deane.

Firstly, we suggest that £2million should be allocated to a 'Sustainability Fund' for Taunton Deane. This would allow us to recognise what our community is and how we are viewed, to build on our local strengths and engage with stakeholders, including our own officers, for a year to get things right. We cannot just hope for magical 'growth'. We need to rebuild relationships with our community and businesses where they have been let down by the unintended consequences of ill-conceived penny pinching; for example where the new centre piece of Taunton is being used as a free car park and licensed events are impossible because of the Executive's failure to invest in CCTV to allow previous cuts.

The aims of the 'Sustainability Fund' will be to ensure that Taunton Deane is a liveable and likeable place, a home and a destination and a place of enterprise, learning and leisure.

To achieve these aims our actions as a Council and a community must not degrade our natural and built environment, rather they must enhance it to sustain people, place and the products of our efforts, from business creation to cultural enterprise.

We would propose calling on the representatives of local business and our wider community to help us focus on a consensus on how that money should be spent efficiently and well.

But first we must put right what has gone wrong so secondly, we suggest that £375,000 should be immediately allocated to both "re-presenting" and 'representing' Taunton Deane.

Re-presenting Taunton Deane is our 'Spring Clean'. If we can get the first impression or shop window right quickly ourselves – by sorting out weeds and protecting nature reserves to achieve quality of place and sort out parking on Castle Green as an example of our service delivery then this would be a great start from which to go forward.

Representing Taunton Deane is setting out our stall afresh – holding our heads up high and celebrating our ambience, culture and history, the people and the place. This will include money to be allocated to rethinking Christmas in Taunton. Last year's debacle around the festive lights brought the town and the Council into disrepute and it should never happen again. Christmas is not an unexpected event and thousands turn out in mid-November each year. Irrespective of commercial or other positions the situation last year should never have been allowed to reach the position it did.

Real leadership from the Executive would have come from not letting the problem develop rather than suggesting they had saved the day. Taunton is the County

Town of Somerset and as the District Council with responsibility for it, this Council must offer leadership all year round.

In future years surpluses from DLO's transformational success must be channelled to sustaining our civic appearance and preparing our civil defences from keeping the weeds down to responding to severe weather for example by stockpiling sandbags or grit.

## **Savings Plans**

We accept the proposals being presented by officers in the Executive's budget that are simple budget adjustments but reject other savings plans that will impact on our communities. We challenge those ones that have been chosen arbitrarily over others that had previously been selected.

We therefore propose to reinstate the following budget savings:-

- Hanging Baskets £4,000;
- Christmas Lighting £10,000;
- Nature Reserves £2,000.

To fund this additional £16,000 we reject the flawed Executive plan to set up a new reserve for Extreme Weather. There are two clear reasons for this.

First, this Council has significant reserves in place already. There is no need to create yet another earmarked reserve.

Second, this Extreme Weather proposal should be thrown out by this Council as it is an insult to those in Taunton Deane who have already suffered from the impacts of the severe weather as it attempts to grab a headline founded on their recent suffering. Worse still, this is being done at the expense of our community presentation and cohesion.

Extreme weather is not unexpected and should always be planned for by this Council. How we respond to critical situations using our reserves is a measure of our qualities as a community. That said, things that people value, that reflect our community values and bring us all together in good times should never be undervalued. These things are the foundation of our ability to respond in crisis, forming the bonds that hold us together. We should take pride in our contribution to creating these bonds as a Council, whether it is recognised or not.

The proposed Christmas Lighting cut reflects this. The Executive considered that the Council gets limited recognition or credit for our contribution in Wellington and Wiveliscombe.

The Executive and leader should not be there for vain credit, asking the people of Taunton Deane's two other urban town centres to recognise 'whatever did the Executive do for us?'

It should demonstrate wisdom and recognise that lighting our towns for Christmas brings people together, out at night in early December and acts as a catalyst for the start of our Christmas season, from getting people into late night shopping or setting the tone for the behaviour we expect on our streets over Christmas. In the smaller towns the lighting ceremony is marshalled by Rotarians who arrange for Santa to attend and use the occasion to raise funds that are later distributed to our community. We should facilitate and support such occasions not cut them. And if we seek recognition for our contribution to these events, let the recognition be for our officers and employees, the strength behind everything we achieve.

The impact of previous cuts on Christmas lights in Taunton will be felt for years to come. They will be viewed negatively by young and old. We should not make the same mistake twice. We should support Christmas lighting in Wellington and Wiveliscombe, and aim to take responsibility for lighting Taunton at Christmas again in the future.

Our hanging baskets and nature reserves are equally well valued and to choose to cut contributions to these while maintaining other areas of civic pride that attract less consensus or serve small interest groups is wrong, especially when this civic pride that attract less consensus or serve small interest groups is wrong, especially when this cut is being made to simply increase reserves and pay for Extreme Weather.

## Financial Summary

This financial summary demonstrates the removal of the two aspects of the Executives Budget that harm Taunton Deane by their futility, *the Council Tax Freeze Grant* and the *New Extreme Weather Contingency*. It is on one hand positive that the Executive wish to maintain an election promise they knew they would never be able to keep. It is not realistic, reasonable or safe to maintain this stance. To do so at a time where that promise has been undermined by the mantra of imposed austerity from Central Government's equivalent to fiddling while Taunton burns.

The financial summary of our Alternative Budget is as follows:-

	£	£
Increase Council Tax by 3.5%	(176,340)	
Remove Council Tax Freeze Grant	57,000	
Reinstate Saving – Hanging Baskets	4,000	
Reinstate Savings – Christmas Lights	10,000	
Reinstate Savings – Nature Reserves	2,000	
Remove New Fund For Extreme Weather	(16,000)	
<b>NET ADDITIONAL FUNDS GENERATED</b>		<b><u>(119,340)</u></b>

## Additional Spending

We would like the additional money generated by our budget proposal to be used both innovatively and prudently.

## Maximising community asset use while reducing management cost – 100 community fruit and vegetable gardens

Much of our asset base is open spaces, maintained by Deane DLO. Additionally there are our grass verges. As part of our climate change agenda towards carbon reduction, our attractiveness of place and aim of securing the well-being of our population we propose a seed fund being made available to community groups who wish to plant and grow fruit and vegetables in areas of public open space, for members of our community to work together and share the fruits of their labour.

To achieve immediate growth this budget proposes allocating £10,000 for the one off cost of seed materials to be purchased and planted by groups, so as to kick start a system of community gardening as has proved successful in other areas. DLO nurseries will help with procurement by being the provider of the seed packs. Each group would be eligible for £100 from the 'seed fund' to spend with DLO in an attempt to establish 100 community fruit and vegetable gardens in our open spaces before this year's Taunton Flower Show.

Combining the spirit of Taunton Deane's horticultural societies, the ethos of Dig for Victory with environmental learning and the need for food security/ resilience of Transition and other movements, global and local (for example the Mayor of London's programmes) this green works programme intends to:-

- increase the amount of public open space maintained and used by the community;
- improve health and well-being;
- reduce areas requiring maintenance by Deane DLO, thus reducing our future cost and environmental impact;
- allow retention of public assets;
- helps us catch up from being 10 years behind places like London, Totnes and Todmorden; and
- then positions Taunton Deane as a leader in showing how going green works for communities across the United Kingdom.

Additionally the grants will be available to community organisations with their own land who agree to turn that land over to community gardening.

Council owned open spaces are a discretionary service provided by the Council and the opportunity to encourage different shared community uses should be tested.

In doing so we are actually investing Council Tax Payers money back into the community and Deane DLO for future years use.

Greening the Deane - Quality of place depends on the quality of our environment and our service quality directly contributes to the quality of our environment.

The first proposal will demonstrate that Green Works but we need to do more. Promoting our services and good practice is vital first step in this and we miss opportunities to combine this with education and behaviour changing activity locally.

Greening the Deane initially aims to use Deane DLO vehicles as public information and advertising source celebrating our best practice or success in our efforts to improve our environment as well as offering simple tips as to how people might get involved.

Using the prominent and well known white Deane DLO vehicles we aim to brand vehicles with information about what 'WE DO' from the 13 hybrid commercial vehicles purchased in 2012 to the solar panels on the swimming pool roof and other information.

We would allocate £5,000 for temporary vehicle livery. To ensure that the vehicles showcase Taunton Deane talent, vehicles would display original art work promoting the work of young designers from Schools and sixth form colleges in Taunton Deane.

A 'Greening the Deane Conference' will be held to get anyone who will work with us on this and who is prepared to bring their expertise and enthusiasm for free in one place at one time. £4,320 is allocated for this. The purpose of that conference will be to plan a one off 'catch up' programme to allocate £50,000 of the New Homes Bonus Re-presentation fund and to seed the green shoots of growth for Taunton using £100,000 of the 'Sustainability Fund'.

Supporting an Innovative Culture - the officers of Taunton Deane represent the best traditions of public service. We suggest their innovation and ideas is often stifled by the climate that is created by elected officials or the austerity messages of Central Government.

We wish to support the natural innovation of our officers by inviting them to identify new ideas, better ways of doing things or different ways of looking at what we do and how we do it to improve service quality in pursuit of our Corporate Objectives.

In a six monthly competition we will ask work force teams to do more than give us their ideas for Improving Taunton Deane. We will ask for their worked solutions to problems they identify or for developing new ideas. As an incentive every six months the team with the idea voted for by other participating teams as the 'stand out idea' will be able to allocate funding of £2,000 to a voluntary organisation (or organisations) of its choice that operates from Taunton Deane.

We propose allocating £5,000 to develop this idea, split into £4,000 for prizes in 2013/2014 and £1,000 to produce electronic resources to guide and support their work based on the internationally successful practice of Honda and their New Ideas Circles and the savings achieved and value created by them.

The potential for future benefit and value from this exercise is considerable as are the opportunities to benefit and directly create positive relationships between Council employees and local charitable organisations.

Celebrating Taunton Deane - public facing – pictures of councillors – not our work or our people – are the first things visitors to The Deane House see. There is no clear presentation of exactly what our 'must do' or 'discretionary' roles or of 'who' is

doing this work for us. We would allocate £5,000 to a campaign clearly celebrating how much we do in our area in our premises around Taunton Deane, modelled on best practice already achieved in leading NHS Trusts.

Distinguishing Taunton Deane – As a collector of Council Tax, Taunton Deane is associated with the full extent of the Council Tax bill each year despite being a proportionately small net receiver. This distorts people's view of us and the debate on Council Tax each year. The £140 annual average payment for the services of Taunton Deane and value for money people receives needs to be emphasised. The extent to which Taunton Deane maximise the benefit and add extra value to each Council Tax payer's contribution is not made clear.

An important first step in this is to change our Council Tax bill presentation to reflect this as currently as the collector and messenger, Taunton Deane is perceived to be the full recipient of the tax not simply the distributor of it, despite our bills setting out the apportionment. We would allocate £2,000 to changing the template to clearly distinguish where Council Tax is going and who is spending what. This money would also be used to investigate the extent to which we are receiving proper compensation from our partner organisations for our collection of Council Tax on their behalf.

### The Deane Helpline

This is a vital service to vulnerable members of our community and with demographic changes is likely to be called upon by increasing numbers of vulnerable members of our community. As people wish to remain in their homes and communities longer we need to review how this service operates now and plan for its future. It currently operates at a loss, though we stress we do not envisage it as a profit making operation, rather see it for what it is, an essential public service.

We would expect the Deane Helpline to operate as a model for Councils across the country and as part of a wider contribution to sustaining quality of life in Somerset generally. While we have no clear answers as to what this service will look like in the future we wish to allocate funds to investigating this now and considering whether:-

- We are able or would we benefit from establishing the Deane Helpline as a charitable body in order to extend the service area;
- The options to work with other lifeline centres to provide Somerset Lifeline, using a similar model to the Waste Board, operated, funded and controlled by the Districts on the basis of pooling current expertise and resources to offer an even more comprehensive service; and
- Recognising on principle that we need to preserve all of the current expertise and professionalism that the Deane Helpline offers. This is not about 'savings' or 'efficiency', instead this means working with the staff to maintain and develop service delivery and ensure that every person who strives to live independently in Somerset has our full support.

To support any plans that emerge from the staff of the Deane Helpline and their colleagues in Somerset we would ring fence £20,000 to facilitate the discussions



necessary and set up costs of any other method of working or organisation the staff would consider workable, and will invite other authorities to consider similar allocation in the financial year 2014/2015 in response to our lead.

It is a disgrace that the Executive of Taunton Deane have only budgeted to recognise the losses of this essential and excellent service and allocated reserves to it, without immediate efforts to do something about those losses. More is required in the budget to plan and invest in this service, knowing its value to some of the most vulnerable in our community. Failure by the Executive to plan for this should alert Councillors to a possible future strategy of 'the Executive cannot support the Deane Helpline any longer'.

### Protecting Our Community

Extreme weather and weeds are not a new experience for our community and we should be able to deal with these. What is unprecedented however is the extent to which it is being threatened directly by the Coalition Government's agenda, be that welfare reform or reducing public services to make government smaller.

We recognise that public services and those who provide them are a something to be proud of and that our community is being directly threatened by the Government.

We must protect our service and community from these threats.

We note that the Executive proposes to provide a budget of £91,000 to fund a range of measures to support citizens through welfare reform. This will be funded from £66,000 New Burdens Grant plus £25,000 of the Council's own revenue resources.

It is proposed to use this one-off funding to provide a temporary additional Revenues and Benefits Officer post for one year to enable working with "first time" Council Tax payers to educate and inform them on prompt payment and provide additional support to vulnerable people through home visits. We recognise that this money is being targeted correctly. We question whether the proposed post is an effective use of this resource but would be advised by expert officers on this.

We see significant strength and value in the focus on the funding to the CAB towards the cost of a debt supervisor and debt caseworker, to help citizens with money advice and debt management. The welfare reforms will channel more people into debt and enforcement and the consequence and cost of this must be recognised. We recognise the need for funding used by the Council to support a further range of initiatives and costs in response to welfare reform.

We will allocate a further £18,000 to be ring fenced to meet the challenges our local organisations will face once the welfare reforms bite. If for example we find that we have increased the number of people we must direct to Citizens Advice we will allocate these funds to extending the face to face services offered. Alternatively the money will be used to provide grants for charitable service organisations whose work load is increased by the Government's agenda.

However this Council should not be prepared to accept carrying the cost of the hardship created by Central Government, be it to West Somerset District Council or local people, while our funding is being cut. This only serves to move the cost to the same tax payer in a different way, while not actually reducing public spending.

Consequently, this Council must clearly articulate the adverse impacts of the change agenda while demonstrating leadership in finding true efficiency and sustainable public benefit. To do this we must be able to explain the hidden cost of cuts to us and our community and officer funding will be allowed to identify the knock on and hidden costs to our community. The planning for sharing services with West Somerset District Council must be recognised as an opportunity we would explore anyway, and at the same time, as an immediate cost being forced on this Council by Central Government.

For the Executive to plan for this but not budget for it, though they have created in principle the situation where money will need to be spent is unacceptable (reports have gone to scrutiny and will go to Full Council in March 2013 asking for over £50,000 of additional one off funding from reserves). Shared services are something that should have been considered before and should be planned for proactively as part of our strategy, not as a knee jerk response to Central Government ultimatums.

Working with West Somerset is a direct cost to us. This cost must be paid for. While it is hoped that benefits will be derived from the exercise we cannot be expected to reduce emergency reserves or front line services to solve an avoidable problem that has been caused by Government and not avoided by the current administration at West Somerset District Council.

Therefore, while we would wish to invest money to investigate how to deliver better quality services in the future in our own time we must set out clearly to our community now that the consequence of public funding cuts is a significant knock on cost to them at their District level. The cost should not be hidden by being drawn from reserves. No longer can the Executive present to the people of Taunton Deane that the West Somerset situation will not cost the tax payer of Taunton Deane a single penny. Nor can their partners in Coalition pretend that it is acceptable to continue to leave the Government's Plan A unchallenged.

We would prefer to allocate the remainder of the sums raised to protecting the community in Taunton Deane but are prevented from doing so.

In the interests of prudent budgeting and offering clarity to the people of Taunton Deane we are forced into allocating £50,000 of Taunton Deane Council Taxpayer's money to solve a problem caused by Central Government as we investigate sharing services with West Somerset.

We must have extra money to do this, if we are not to do it within our own timescales. Our reserves are for emergencies not avoidable problems, forced on us by others.

## Financial Summary of New Spending

	£	£
Community Fruit & Vegetable Gardens	10,000	
Greening the Deane – Vehicle Livery	5,000	
Greening the Deane - Conference	4,340	
Supporting An Innovative Culture	5,000	
Celebrating the Deane	5,000	
Distinguishing the Deane	2,000	
Deane Helpline	20,000	
Protecting our Community	18,000	
Shared Services	50,000	
		<hr/>
		119,340

## CONCLUSION

We ask Councillors to adopt the budget proposals set out below to discharge their responsibility to the people of Taunton Deane.

This budget is a real alternative and is the budget that:-

- a. should have been put before the Council by those who have the privilege of holding the future of Taunton Deane in their hands; and
- b. would have been put before them had the Executive been acting in a fiscally responsible way and in the interests of the residents of Taunton Deane now and in the future.

Councillors cannot ignore the Section 151 Officer's comments that:-

- we have a serious financial challenge ahead;
- that the difficult economic conditions are forcing more of our community into circumstances where they require more support;
- that we simply do not have the resources to do provide support anymore; and
- that the Medium Term Financial Plan shows we have a fiscal gap of around £1million for 2014/2015 if we do nothing and this continues to grow thereafter.

Nor should we ignore her conclusion in considering the Executive's proposed Budget that **'the Council must now focus on dealing with the longer term challenges of dealing with the underlying financial position'**. If we accept there is still a very long way to go and that Members must now focus on the big challenge of tackling the budget deficit over the medium term we cannot wait to achieve the clarity of what the Council can and cannot afford to do in future years.

Given the priority of dealing with our problems we cannot afford another year of putting off until tomorrow what **must** be done today. In supporting a Coalition agenda this Council risks misfeasance. Coalition supporting Councillors avoiding reality will CONDEMN Taunton Deane to a future of choices between services that could be avoided by taking action now and commits the area to inevitable social,

economic, cultural and environmental decline with diminishing options and harsher choices each year.

As Taunton was famously the site of the Taunton Stop Line during the Second World War we trust facing this reality will be the start of our community and this Council's leadership demanding Central Government to STOP now.

This budget clearly faces the reality that the financial pressures on our community at difficult economic times are manufactured by Central Government, notes the position of the financial abyss faced by the Council (made worse by two years of frozen Council Tax) and offers a new direction to avoid the abyss. This budget challenges the unnecessary burdens being imposed by Central Government.

The analogy of financial abyss or financial cliff has been used a lot this year. Our question to fellow Councillors is if there is a financial cliff why are we being steered towards it by those on the bridge with the majority of the passengers cheering them on?

Quite simply it is like being on the Titanic knowing the Captain knows the iceberg is ahead and refusing to change course and burning the lifeboats.

A different course is necessary now and is suggested in this alternative budget. By protecting our community now, reducing future budget gaps now and standing up for our community now this budget sets the foundations for a resilient and resurgent Taunton Deane, for today and tomorrow.

The statutory statement from the Council's Section 151 Officer on the robustness of this proposal is set out in **Appendix 1**. The amended recommendations that support this alternative budget (for budget setting and determination calculations) are set out in **Appendix 2**.

**Councillor Steve Ross**  
**Independent Councillor**

**Councillor Eddie Gaines**  
**Independent Councillors**

**February 2013**

# Appendix 1

## Alternative Budget Proposal – Statement by Section 151 Officer

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This appendix reviews the amendments set out in the Independent Councillors Alternative Budget proposal and reports on the robustness of that proposal and the adequacy of reserves.

### 2. ROBUSTNESS OF BUDGET ESTIMATES

- 2.1 The proposed alternative budget makes some policy amendments to spending priorities for 2013/14, and increases the council tax by 3.5%. This increases the Councils base tax position and will reduce future years budget gaps by £119k per annum.
- 2.2 The additional spending plans are based on estimates and will need to be firmed up as plans progress. The spending plans are largely on one-off issues and do not therefore commit the Council to ongoing financial liabilities. There are no new financial risks associated with the new investment.

### 3. General Comments

- 3.1 All other general comments as set out in my report on the Executive's budget proposal stand.

### 4. Adequacy of Reserves

The Alternative Budget proposal does not make any changes to the level of General Fund Reserves.

### 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Based on the above review, and the comments in my report on the Executive's proposal, I am pleased to report that I believe the Council's reserves to be adequate and the 2013/14 Alternative Budget proposal is robust.

**Shirlene Adam**  
**Strategic Director**

**February 2013**

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Recommendations – General Fund Budget Setting**

Full Council is requested to consider this alternative budget proposal and, if supported, to approve the detailed recommendations on the General Fund Budget as set out in the Executives proposal with the following amendments:-

- a/ Note the s151 Officer Statement of Robustness in Appendix A of the Executives proposal and the further information in Appendix 1 of the Alternative Budget proposal.
- b/ Note the Draft General Fund Revenue Budget 2013/14 as summarised in the Executive report Appendix B with the above amendments, including a Basic Council Tax Requirement budget of £5,216,300 and Special Expenses of £42,630 (noting formal resolution of Council Tax Requirement is included in a separate report).
- c/ No changes needed
- d/ Approve the Service Options in Appendix D of the Executive proposal, with the deletion of the proposals to save £4k on hanging baskets, £10k on Christmas Lights, and £2k on Nature Reserves.
- e/ No changes needed
- f/ Note the General Reserves position and MTFP position in the Executive report (which will now show reduced gap of £119k per annum for future years).

### **Recommendations - Council Tax Setting**

The Alternative Budget will make significant changes to the determination and tax setting position. A full set of updated recommendations supporting the above Alternative Budget will be available at Full Council.