

COUNCIL	DATE 24 February 2022	ITEM NO 15
TITLE Budget and Council Tax Setting 2022/23	WARD(S) All	
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Finance	CABINET MEMBER Finance and Resources	
DECISION CLASSIFICATION Key Non-exempt report Non-exempt appendices	IS THE FINAL DECISION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REPORT TO BE MADE AT THIS MEETING? Yes	

I. Decisions Required

Council is requested to:

- I.1 Agree that the Council budget for 2022/23 as set out in the report be approved
- I.2 Agree a 1.99% increase in the borough element of council tax in support of service delivery pressures
- I.3 Agree an Adult Social Care precept of 1%
- I.4 Note the overall additional cost of 73p per week at Band D (Section 4) of decisions I.2 and I.3.
- I.5 Note that the GLA precept for 2022/23 is due to increase by 8.8% (61p per week at Band D) (Section 4)
- I.6 Agree the addition to the council tax in 2022/23 on the taxpayers in premises surrounding the garden in Gloucester Circus SE10 (Section 4)
- I.7 Approve the overall council tax level and the relevant statutory calculations and resolutions (Section 4 and Appendix B)
- I.8 Agree the schools funding formula for use in 2022/23 as presented to Schools Forum on 12 January 2022 (Section 5)
- I.9 Approve the recommendation from the Audit and Risk Management Panel to Full Council for the submission of the form of acceptance notice to the Public

Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) to opt into the national auditor appointment arrangements for the audit years 2023/2024 to 2027/2028 (Section 6.7)

- 1.10 Note the level of Dedicated Schools Grant for Education purposes and that the budget proposals for 2022/23 were agreed by the Schools Forum on 12 January 2022 (Section 5)
- 1.11 Note the comments on financial standing, future risk and robustness of the budget process, including those specifically relating to the risk posed by the possible changes in Local Government Funding (Section 6 / Appendix C)
- 1.12 Note the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 February 2022 and the Cabinet’s response on 17 February 2022 (Appendix D – to follow).

2. Links to the Royal Greenwich Strategy

- 2.1 This report relates to the delivery of all of the high-level objectives contained within the Royal Greenwich Strategy.

Budget Principles

- 2.2 Building a Fairer Greenwich, set out in February 2020, has the budget principles outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 – Budget Principles

Principle	Description
A Fairer Greenwich	<i>an inclusive economy with financial inclusion reducing poverty, improving life quality and increasing opportunities for disadvantaged residents</i>
Maintaining the highest possible quality and efficient services commensurate with the cuts imposed by Central Government	<i>this underpins a commitment to continuing to provide value for money services and seeking to keep increases in council tax to a minimum</i>
Recognition of front line service pressures	<i>this recognises the prioritisation of key services, in particular, those provided to children and vulnerable adults, as well as those that underpin the quality of life in the</i>

	<i>public realm and support reductions in violent crime</i>
Maintenance of reserves at a prudent level	<i>this allows the Council to maintain and deliver service stability, longer term plans and respond to a range of financial risks and uncertainties, thus supporting the Council's approach to developing its financial standing whilst delivering major capital investment</i>
Investing in and delivering the Growth Strategy	<i>this means maximising, as far as possible, investment and delivery of the Growth Strategy and prioritising interventions which will have the greatest impact on growing the local economy with the consequent benefit for jobs, housing (including New Homes Bonus) and business rate growth</i>
Deepening Financial Resilience	<i>developing new sustainable strategies within a Continuous Improvement context, to manage resources and ensure continuity of service delivery</i>
Effective Governance in the context of diminishing resources	<i>using information about costs and performance to facilitate effective and informed decision making</i>

3. Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 3.1 The report enables members to determine the budget for the authority for 2022/23 and in doing so, consider spending requirements and how they are to be financed. The report should be read in conjunction with the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Treasury Management and Capital Strategy reports that are scheduled for consideration on the same agenda.
- 3.2 The report proposes a headline borough council tax rise of 2.99%.
- 3.3 The structure of this report is set out in Table 2.

Table 2 – Structure of the Report

Ref	Section
4	Council Tax
5	Schools Related Funding
6	Financial Standing, Future Risk and Robustness of the Budget Process

7	Available Options
8	Preferred Option
9	Reasons for Recommendations
10	Consultation Results
11	Cross Cutting Issues and Implications
App A1	Council Tax levels 2021/22 (Band D – borough element)
App A2	Council Tax levels 2008/09 – 2021/22 (Band D – borough element)
App B	Statutory Calculations and Resolutions
App C	Financial Standing and Risk
App D	Comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16/02/22 (to follow)

4. Introduction and Background

Council Tax

Maximum Increases and Referendum Principles

- 4.1 The ability to raise council tax before a referendum is 1.99% in 2022/23, which is at the same level as 2021/22. In addition, authorities can levy an Adult social care precept of 1%, an decrease from 3% in 2021/22.

Funding Framework

- 4.2 The future resourcing of local authority services is once again uncertain. With a fundamental review of local authority financing signalled by the government in the Local Government Finance Settlement the local government funding that authorities will be depending on from 2023, is currently unknown. Any increase in council tax provides an opportunity to build upon the investments made and build some financial resilience into services.

Borough Element of Council Tax

- 4.3 The period since 2008/09 has seen long periods of freezes in the borough element of council tax, during times of low inflation.
- 4.4 In 2021/22 the majority of London boroughs raised the borough element of council tax by either the maximum amount or close to it (i.e. 4.99%).
- 4.5 In terms of the overall direction of travel for council tax across London, Greenwich (Table 3) remains in a relatively good position:

- 11th lowest borough element of council tax in 2021/22 (Appendix A1)
- 17th lowest rise for the period 2008/09 to 2021/22 (Appendix A2)

Table 3 – Royal Borough of Greenwich Element of Council Tax 2021/22

Valuation Band	Borough Element £
A	850.89
B	992.71
C	1,134.52
D	1,276.34
E	1,559.97
F	1,843.60
G	2,127.23
H	2,552.68

4.6 In respect of the period since 2008/09, it is worth setting this in context of the cumulative inflationary impact over that period.

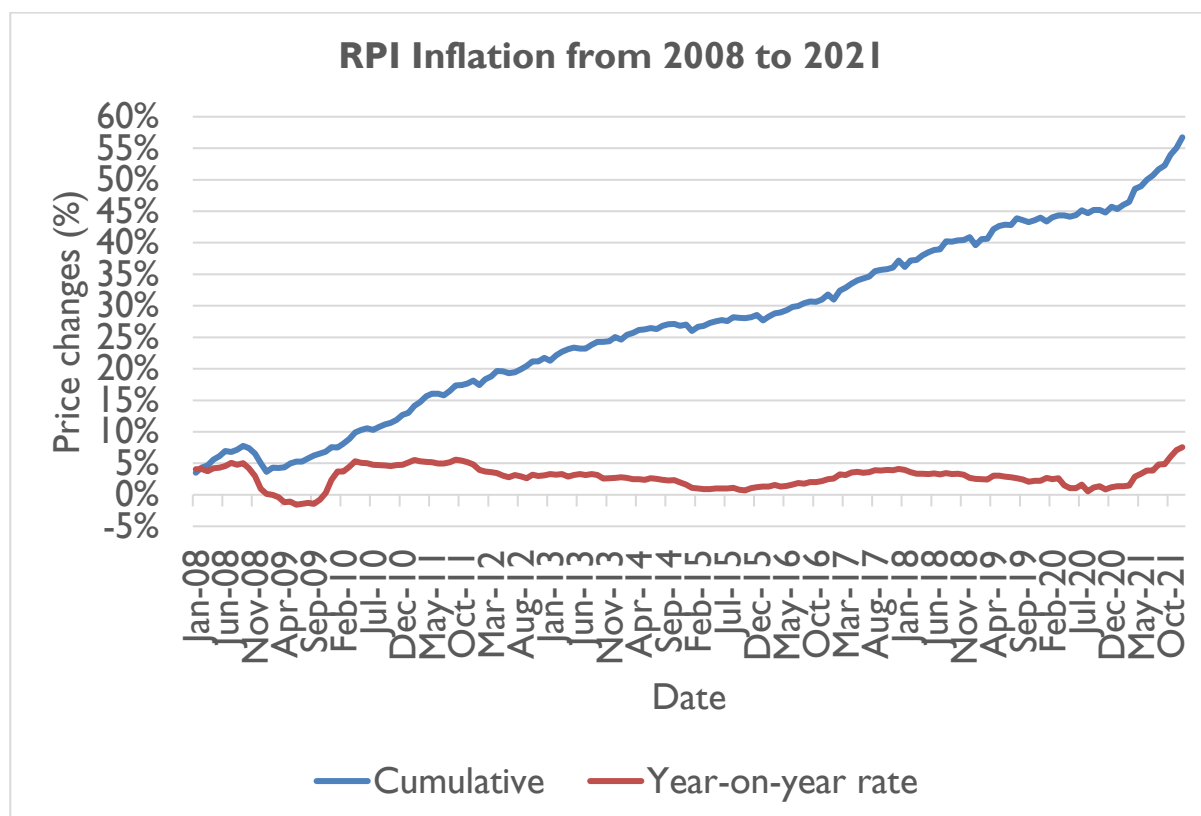


Chart 1: Inflation since 2008

4.7 The proposed council tax levels (borough element) for 2022/23 are set out in Table 4.

Table 4 – Change in Headline Council Tax

Valuation Band	Borough Element 2021/22	ASC +1.00%	Borough Element +1.99%	Total per Year	Council Tax +2.99%
	£	£	£	£	p/wk
A	851	+9	+16	+25	+49p
B	993	+10	+20	+30	+57p
C	1,135	+11	+23	+34	+65p
D	1,276	+13	+25	+38	+73p
E	1,560	+16	+31	+47	+90p
F	1,844	+18	+37	+55	+106p
G	2,127	+21	+43	+64	+122p
H	2,553	+26	+50	+76	+147p

Local Council Tax Support

- 4.8 Council Tax Support is a scheme to reduce Council Tax bills for residents on a low income. The maximum level of support for all working age claimants and pensioners is 100%. Additional support for LCTS working age claimants not in receipt of 100% support is being provided by the council in 2022/23 by way of a further bill reduction of up to £175 (subject to a decision within the council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy).

GLA Precept

- 4.9 Table 5 shows the GLA precept for 2022/23 - an increase of 8.8% (subject to agreement by the London Assembly meeting on 24th February 2022).

Table 5 – GLA Precept

Valuation Band	GLA Precept	+8.8% GLA	Pence Per Week
	£	£	
A	242	+21	41p
B	283	+25	48p
C	323	+28	55p
D	364	+32	61p
E	444	+39	75p
F	525	+46	89p
G	606	+53	102p
H	727	+64	123p

Council Tax Bands 2022/23

- 4.10 The overall impact of the council tax and the GLA precept is shown in Table 6 and equates to an increase of 135 pence per week at Band D.

Table 6 – Total Council Tax by Band

Valuation Band	Borough Element £	GLA Precept £	Total Liability £
A	876.33	263.73	1,140.06
B	1,022.39	307.68	1,330.07
C	1,168.44	351.64	1,520.08
D	1,314.50	395.59	1,710.09
E	1,606.61	483.50	2,090.11
F	1,898.72	571.41	2,470.13
G	2,190.83	659.32	2,850.15
H	2,629.00	791.18	3,420.18

Gloucester Circus

- 4.11 In relation to the Town Gardens Protection Act 1863, the borough is required to raise the sum calculated herein, to maintain the enclosed garden at Gloucester Circus by an addition to the council tax payable by the residents in the properties concerned. The amount of levy required for 2022/23 is £12,990. This can be raised by the additions shown in Table 7, to the council tax of the properties concerned.

Table 7 – Gloucester Circus addition to Council Tax

Valuation Band	2021/22 £	2022/23 £
A	80.52	88.14
B	93.94	102.83
C	107.36	117.52
D	120.78	132.21
E	147.62	161.59
F	174.46	190.97
G	201.30	220.35
H	241.56	264.42

Resolutions required by Legislation

4.12 The specific council tax resolutions required are set out in Appendix B.

5. Schools Related Funding

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

5.1 Education for young people is funded by a DfE grant known as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The DSG can only be used for the purposes defined in The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations. The grant comprises 4 elements known as “funding blocks”:

- Schools
- Centrally Retained
- High Needs
- Early Years.

5.2 The Schools Block supports state funded Schools for education of pupils aged 5 to 16. Funding is distributed to individual schools using a formula based on the characteristics of the school and the pupils in that school. The formula is approved by the Schools Forum. The distribution of funding to state funded schools within Greenwich for 2022/23 is based on the National Funding Formula (NFF) as agreed with the Schools Forum in 2018/19.

5.3 The Central Block includes funding supporting services such as Early Help, Place Planning & MIS, Learning & Achievement, Schools Forum and School Admissions. Funding is split into historic and ongoing commitment elements. The historic funding element is being reduced by 20% per year with no uplift for cost pressures. Other funding supports a contribution towards School Pension costs and Capital Funding. As these fluctuate, the financial risk falls on the Borough. The ongoing commitment element funds services that the Council statutorily obliged to provide. This element normally receives an annual uplift in line with inflation. The Centrally retained Block now includes the remnants of the Education Services Grant (ESG).

5.4 The High Needs Block enables the Local Authority to undertake its duties towards the education of some of our most vulnerable pupils. This covers special education needs provision for pupils aged 0 to 25 and a contribution to the Virtual School for Looked After Children.

- 5.5 The High Needs Block is under financial pressure as the profile of the cohorts of children changes. In January 2022, Schools Forum approved a transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of £1.2m (0.5% of the total Schools Block).
- 5.6 The Early Years Block funds education in maintained Nursery Schools and Private Voluntary and Independent settings (PVI) including the 2-year-old offer and the extended free childcare for 3 and 4-year-olds.
- 5.7 For 2022/23, funding blocks have been revised to reflect the current baseline adjustments.
- 5.8 The DSG will continue to be paid as a ring-fenced grant and will be subject to formal grant conditions.
- 5.9 On 12 January 2022, Schools Forum approved the 2022/23 DSG budget deployment as shown in Table 8.

Table 8 – DSG 2022/23

Block £m	2021/22* Including Pay Grants	2022/23* Including Pay Grants	Movement	Notes
Schools	246.7	253.3	6.6	An increase of 2.7% funding
Central	4.7	4.2	(0.5)	Reduction of 10.9% due to a reduction in funding for historic commitments
High Needs	56.9	61.9	5.0	An increase of 8.9% in funding
Early Years	28.1	26.8	(1.3)	A decrease of 4.6% due to a decrease in pupil numbers. Increase of £0.17 per hour for 3 and 4-year-olds and £0.21 for 2-year-olds
Total	336.4	346.2	9.8	

* prior to the transfer between schools and high needs blocks

- 5.10 The year-on-year increase in DSG is as a consequence of increasing pupil numbers and additional funding. The Schools Block element of the DSG increased by 2.7%. This increase masks the impact of the funding changes within Schools. Currently 64 Borough Schools are now in receipt of funding

protection through Minimum Funding Guarantee, meaning that their underlying funding would be further reduced if all other factors are unchanged. In addition, Schools will be facing increased costs through pay and general inflation, placing further pressure on their available resources.

5.11 The budget strategy presented to the Schools Forum:

- allocates funding to all maintained primary and secondary schools and academies via the National Funding Formula (NFF)
- sets the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) level at plus 2.00% (required to be from 0.5 to 2%)
- the protection for falling rolls
- no cap has been set on schools receiving funding in excess of MFG
- sets central budgets at the permitted levels
- allocates funding for early years provision
- allocates funding to Special Schools, Designated Special Provision and Pupil Referral Unit on a commissioned per place basis, with a top-up to reflect individual pupil need
- sets central budgets for SEN.

5.12 The total Schools Budget for 2022/23 has been contained within the total DSG allocated.

5.13 The DSG settlement includes estimates for 3 & 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds. The budget position will be revisited when final grant allocations are received.

Pupil Premium

5.14 In addition, schools will continue to receive the Pupil Premium which will be paid as a specific grant. Funding rates in the financial year 2022 to 2023 will increase in line with inflation forecasts. The table below contains the 2022/23 funding rates. The DfE will publish pupil premium allocations and conditions of grant for 2022 to 2023 in spring 2022.

Table 9 – Pupil Premium per Pupil 2022/23

Type of Pupil	Amount per Pupil
Free School Meals – Primary pupils	£1,385 pa
Free School Meals - Secondary pupils	£985 pa

Children Looked After	£2,410 pa
Children who have ceased to be looked after because of adoption, a special guardianship order, a child arrangements order, or a residence order	£2,410 pa
Service Children	£320 pa

5.15 The estimated allocation for Greenwich is £16m. Actual allocations will be based upon pupils on the roll in January 2022. The Pupil Premium Grant is fully devolved to schools.

Supplementary Grant and Additional High Needs Funding

5.16 The autumn 2021 spending review confirmed £9.5 million funding for schools and high needs in Greenwich, for the 2022 to 2023 financial year, above the previous settlement for that year:

- in the 2022 to 2023 financial year, Greenwich schools will be allocated £7.1 million of this additional funding, to provide support for the costs of the Health and Social Care Levy and wider costs. This funding will be allocated through the schools supplementary grant 2022 to 2023.
- included in the £9.5 million is additional High Needs funding of £2.4 million for the Health and Social Care Levy and wider cost pressures in special schools and alternative provision.

5.17 Both the Supplementary Grant and Additional High Needs funding allocations are provisional. The allocations will be confirmed and published in spring 2022.

6. Financial Standing, Future Risk and Robustness of the Budget Process

6.1 There is a legal obligation upon members to set a balanced budget. In turn, s25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires that the chief finance officer (s151 Officer) makes an assessment of the robustness of the budget preparation and the adequacy of reserves, in light of the pressures and risks faced by the authority, both of which are felt adequate for the reasons set out below.

6.2 The proposals within this report recognise the upturn in inflationary pressures and with this the continuation of the governments headroom afforded to council tax increases before the need for a referendum. In

applying the resources earned, the authority is allocating them to areas where demand and overspend pressure is already greatest and where expenditure will be required to meet increased pressures.

- 6.3 Financial challenges pose significant and increasing risks and present conflicting calls on reserves. Reserves are a finite resource – they can be used to protect services on a one-off basis (a short-term strategy) or they can be invested, to make the changes needed to reduce the cost of service provision (a long term strategy). Alternatively, reserves could be increased to further strengthen resilience against future uncertainties.
- 6.4 Balances smooth the effects of unforeseen calls on resources without disrupting service delivery. It is for the chief finance officer to advise on levels of reserves which can be considered as a prudent level, appropriate for the internal and external risks faced and based on local conditions and national factors. A degree of professional judgment is required.
- 6.5 Robust actions are required to ensure that the MTFs delivers a balanced position by the end of the period. A risk-based approach is used in judging the adequacy of the appropriate level of general reserves. It focuses on the following risks:
- changes to the Local Government Funding regime have resulted in recent years in significant turbulence and shifts in resources - the need for strong financial discipline remains
 - although the business rates retention mechanism is due to remain in place, the timing and extent of any reset remains a risk.
 - the exceptional pressures from the on-going Covid19 crisis presents a risk to the quantum of funding available to the local authority sector – a significant and sustained increase in overall resources is required as a starting point
 - the upcoming review of Local Government Funding will review the distribution of that resource. It is likely to produce new formulae to allocate local government funding between Councils comprising a main formula funding to cover most services delivered and specific formulas for Social Care and Children’s Services. As a result, this resource shift could propagate further and present a material risk to the future funding levels of this authority

- each of these points present a significant risk to the funding levels receivable by Royal Greenwich
- the continuing development of risk management has created a focus on the level of risk presented by on-going service delivery. Demand, inflation and volume pressures arise across many services. Because of difficulties of scale and limited options for control over volumes and inflationary / market pressures some elements raise particular concerns, in particular waste, homelessness and social care price increases
- Royal Greenwich has an ambitious and diverse capital programme, details of which can be found within the Corporate Capital Strategy. Delivery of the capital programme generates a significant resourcing requirement, including the realisation of capital receipts from asset disposals. The timing of these, and other, receipts may have substantial working capital and treasury management implications; therefore risks within this area can only be managed through a strong balance sheet position and use of resources. With increasing focus and complexity in this area the management of these risks has been strengthened through greater alignment of Treasury Management and Capital Investment functions
- the authority must put itself in a position to respond to key areas of service risk and community priorities and it needs to set a budget that is sufficiently financially robust to take account of these identified pressures.

6.6 A summary risk register relating to financial standing is attached at Appendix C.

Arrangements for the Appointment of External Auditors

6.7 On the 16th December 2021, the Government published information on a new package of measures to support the improved timeliness of local audit. This set out the background to the deterioration in performance in hitting audit deadlines by local bodies and a series of actions which are designed to abate the decline.

6.8 On 22 September 2021 PSAA invited all eligible bodies to become opted-in authorities for the five consecutive financial years commencing 1 April 2023 (the compulsory appointing period).

- 6.9 A decision to become an opted-in authority must be taken in accordance with the Regulations by the members of an authority meeting as a whole (Full Council).
- 6.10 All local government and police bodies will need to make a decision on the procurement method of their external audit arrangements for the period commencing from the financial year 2023/24 by Friday the 11th March 2022.
- 6.11 The Audit and Risk Management Panel met on the 23 February 2022 to consider the options available in relation to the appointment of external auditors. The recommendation from the Audit and Risk Management Panel to Full Council is for the submission of the form of acceptance notice to the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) to opt into the national auditor appointment arrangements for the audit years 2023/2024 to 2027/2028

7. Available Options

7.1 Options available are:

- do nothing and don't set a Council Tax for 2022/23.
- set the Council Tax for 2022/23.

8. Preferred Option

8.1 Set the Council Tax for 2022/23.

8.2 Setting the Council Tax which is a legal requirement - The requirements to calculate and set a Council Tax are set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992

8.3 To approve the recommendation from the Audit and Risk Management Panel to Full Council for the submission of the form of acceptance notice to the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) to opt into the national auditor appointment arrangements for the audit years 2023/2024 to 2027/2028

8.4 To not approve the recommendation from the Audit and Risk Management Panel to Full Council for the submission of the form of acceptance notice to the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) to opt into the national auditor appointment arrangements for the audit years 2023/2024 to 2027/2028

9. Reasons for Recommendations

- 9.1 In considering the relevant factors, the authority has generated a number of proposals to address the matters presented within the MTFS. Risks are outlined in section 6.
- 9.2 Although other alternative proposals could be made, this report has been scrutinised by the Chief Finance Officer and considered in the light of the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 9.3 The compelling financial and non-financial benefits of the collective purchasing arrangement together with the contract management benefits of utilising the PSAA.

10. Consultation Results

- 10.1 This year, the authority has engaged in an on line consultation regarding proposals for 2022/23. The consultation was for the period 17 January 2022 until 6 February 2022.
- 10.2 A total of 135 respondents engaged with the consultation. It provided an opportunity for stakeholders to input their feelings on key themes. To summarise, marginally less than half of respondents were in favour of a rise in the Borough element of Council Tax.
- 10.3 Other headlines were as follows:
- 81% want front line services to be protected
 - 20% want the council to make cuts to services
 - 66% want to increase income by way of fees and charges
- 10.4 In terms of the priorities around building a fairer, greener Greenwich, respondents provided replies to a number of further questions as follows:
- 69% want the council to prioritise spending on the increased demand for social care services.
 - 60% want the council to prioritise spending on reducing poverty and trying to support residents struggling with the cost-of-living crisis
 - 59% want the council to prioritise spending on supporting families in dealing with the cost-of-living crisis
 - 54% want the council to prioritise spending on building more affordable council housing

- 53% want the council to prioritise spending on supporting the Community and Voluntary Sector
- 64% want the council to reduce poverty by helping working age residents on the lowest incomes
- 21% want the School Uniform Grant scheme improved. Whilst support for this scheme appears to be low from the responses provided, it should be balanced against the positive responses for supporting prioritising spending on reducing poverty and trying to support residents and families in dealing with the cost-of-living crisis. Therefore, financial provision has been made to improve this scheme, but it will be subject to a further decision and consultation process.
- 36% want council tax exemptions for defined categories of households

10.5 A number of respondents suggested:

- increasing income from developers.
- increased enforcement activity.
- staffing reductions including use of agency workers and consultants.
- improve & develop housing in the Borough.
- maintain/improve infrastructure.
- continued investment in waste and street services.
- Increased opportunities in activity services for Children and Young People including those with disabilities and special needs.

10.6 The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires billing authorities to undertake consultation with “persons or bodies appearing to it to be representative of persons subject to non domestic rates under s43 and s45 of the 1988 Act as regards hereditaments in the authority’s area” as part of the budget setting process. This has been undertaken as part of the public consultation process.

11. Cross Cutting Issues and Implications

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Legal including Human Rights Act	This report reflects the Council's statutory obligations in setting a balanced budget. The report also meets the duty to report to the Council on the robustness of the estimates provided and the adequacy of the financial reserves in place in line with section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003.	Ingrid Brown Assistant Head of Legal Services, 27 th January 2022

	<p>The requirements to calculate and set a Council Tax are set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and are detailed in the report.</p> <p>The requirement to consult provided for in section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 has been complied and the results of that consultation are set out in paragraph 10 of the report.</p>	
Finance and other resources	This report is authored by the Director of Finance and there are no other financial implications arising.	Damon Cook, Director of Finance, 26 January 2022
Equalities	<p>Decision-makers are reminded of the requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty (s149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups.</p> <p>The decisions recommended through this paper have a low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. Proper regard has been given to equalities considerations and after careful analysis on the impact of the proposals it is clear that there are no equalities issues arising because there are no specific service adjustments proposed as part of this report and the proposed percentage increase to Council Tax is the same across all bands.</p> <p>This report makes no direct contribution to the Council's Equality and Equity</p>	Richard Pulfer, Accountancy Business Change Manager, 26 January 2022

	Charter and the Council's Equality Objectives 2020-2024.	
Climate change	This report does not make any direct contribution to the Greenwich Carbon Neutral Plan agreed by Cabinet 18 November 2020	Richard Pulfer, Accountancy Business Change Manager, 26 January 2022

12. Report Appendices

12.1 The following documents are published with and form part of the report:

App A1	Council Tax levels 2021/22 (Band D – borough element)
App A2	Council Tax levels 2008/09 – 2021/22 (Band D – borough element)
App B	Statutory Calculations and Resolutions
App C	Financial Standing and Risk
App D	Comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 February 2022 (to follow)

Background Papers: Local Government Finance Settlement – DHULC

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