

**REPORT TO :** CABINET  
**DATE :** 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020  
**REPORT OF :** Councillor Joyce Plummer  
Portfolio Holder Resources  
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## **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

**2020/21 TO 2022/23**

### **February 2020 Update**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

The report informs the Cabinet of the 3-year projections of income and spending for the Council ahead of formulating its 2020/21 Revenue and Capital Budgets.

#### **2. Recommendations**

The Cabinet approves the report and the accompanying Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

#### **3. Summary**

The Medium Term Financial Strategy is attached to this report.

#### 4. Detail

See the attached report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

#### 5. Reasons for Recommendations

The Cabinet requires an update on its medium term financial outlook ahead of setting the Budget for 2020/21 and determining the level of Council Tax for the new financial year. This report also ensures those decisions are taken with a view to the overall position of the Council going forward and are not limited to a narrow one year perspective.

#### 6. Alternative Options considered & Reasons for Rejection

Not applicable

#### 7. Implications

Issue	Comments
Financial (inc mainstreaming)	As outlined in the report
Legal (including Human Rights Act requirements)	Not applicable
Assessment of Risk	<p>The Report contributes to the effective risk management of the Council by contributing to the overall financial context in which the Council takes budgetary and other operational decisions.</p> <p>The MTFS is revised on a regular basis to ensure it remains current and that changes in the financial outlook of the Council over the Medium Term are communicated to Members and appropriate action taken.</p>
Equality : Customer First Analysis	Not applicable as this report is for information only.
Key Decision	No

## 8. Consultations

Service Managers and their key staff are consulted during the early work on the compilation of the MTFS. CMT and Senior Councillors are regularly engaged in formulating forward views and policy objectives and these are taken into consideration when formulating the MTFS.

## 9. Links to Corporate Priorities

Priority	Comments
Corp Governance and Community Leadership	The Medium Term Financial Strategy covers all aspects of these objectives.
Community Safety	
Housing and the Environment	
Economy and Employment	
Culture and Leisure	
Other priorities with partners: Health and Social Care Education and Lifelong Learning	

## 10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985: List of Background Papers

[Cabinet 13th November 2019](#)

Agenda Items      Medium Term Financial Strategy

## 11. Freedom of Information

The report does not contain any exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972; Schedule 12a and all information can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

## 12. Equality Impact Assessment

There are no specific measures within the report that require an Equality Impact Assessment. Individual proposals stemming from the budgetary process will be Equality Impact Assessed as required over the coming months.

# **HYNDBURN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **MEDIUM TERM**

### **FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

**February 2020**

## Summary

1. The Medium Term Financial Forecast indicates that the Council needs to produce £116,000 of savings in 2020/21 to balance its budget, if it increases Council Tax by £5 for a Band D property, with little variance in 2020/21 expected within the different scenarios considered. However, the Council faces significantly larger savings challenges in 2021/22 of over £1m (9% of Budget) before returning to a neutral savings requirement for 2022/23.
2. Beyond 2020/21 the amount of uncertainty in the forecast position is high, because the Government is very likely to remove some or all of the £1.5m of Revenue Support Grant to the Council and reduce the amount it allows Hyndburn to retain from the Business Rates collected locally.
3. The extent of the reductions in funding is largely dependent on global and UK economic performance and due to the wide degree of potential outcomes that currently exist, it is not possible to make rigorous predictions. A range of possible occurrences has been considered from those in which the Council does well financially (Optimistic Scenario Appendix 3) and those in which the Council would experience deep reductions in its revenue and escalating costs in its expenditure placing the Council under severe financial strain (Pessimistic Scenario Appendix 2) have been considered.
4. In these circumstances it is prudent for the Council to look to increase its reserves and revenue streams such as Council Tax and Business Rates whenever it can and to avoid committing to any new revenue expenditure and continue its work to reduce internal costs.

## INTRODUCTION

5. This document sets out, for the next three years,

- the way in which the Council goes about its financial planning processes, especially in relation to the corporate budget planning cycle, which is subject to the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules,
- an updated action plan for the process and arrangements for reporting on progress to date in formulating and updating future years' budgets. Specifically, this report updates the Medium Term Financial Strategy presented to Cabinet in November 2019.

## OBJECTIVES

6. The objectives of the Medium Term Financial Strategy are:

- to be the financial expression of the Corporate Plan; it is a financial strategy's role to provide the resources to deliver this plan, and in turn, the Corporate Plan and service plans need to be consistent with the Financial Plan,
- to ensure that commitments do not exceed forecasted anticipated resources over the period and for each year,

- that expenditure is increasingly focused on those areas which the Council has determined are its priority areas,
- that the level of Council Tax is planned in line with what the Council and the community as a whole regard as being acceptable, albeit within the context of guidelines from Central Government,
- to review the effectiveness of delivery of additional resources into priority areas, to ensure that the objectives set for these target areas are actually being achieved,
- to ensure that the Council remains in a strong financial position as measured by the size of balances and reserves (consistent with the Chief Financial Officer's recommendations),
- to improve value for money assessments in all services by delivering increased efficiency savings,
- to provide an early signpost for the potential levels and timings required for savings

All of which must ensure compliance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.

## ELEMENTS OF THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

7. The key elements of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) are:-

Forecasting

Resources

The Medium Term Financial Strategy needs to be underpinned by sound forecasting mechanisms for the likely resources available to the Authority over a three year period. The Cabinet receives reports on the achievement of the financial plan with future projections for the following three years at regular intervals.

Budget Monitoring &

Forecasting

Commitments

Budget monitoring reports and forecast commitments are reported to Cabinet, and are developed as the year progresses, as indeed are ways of balancing resources with any new commitment if potentially outside the

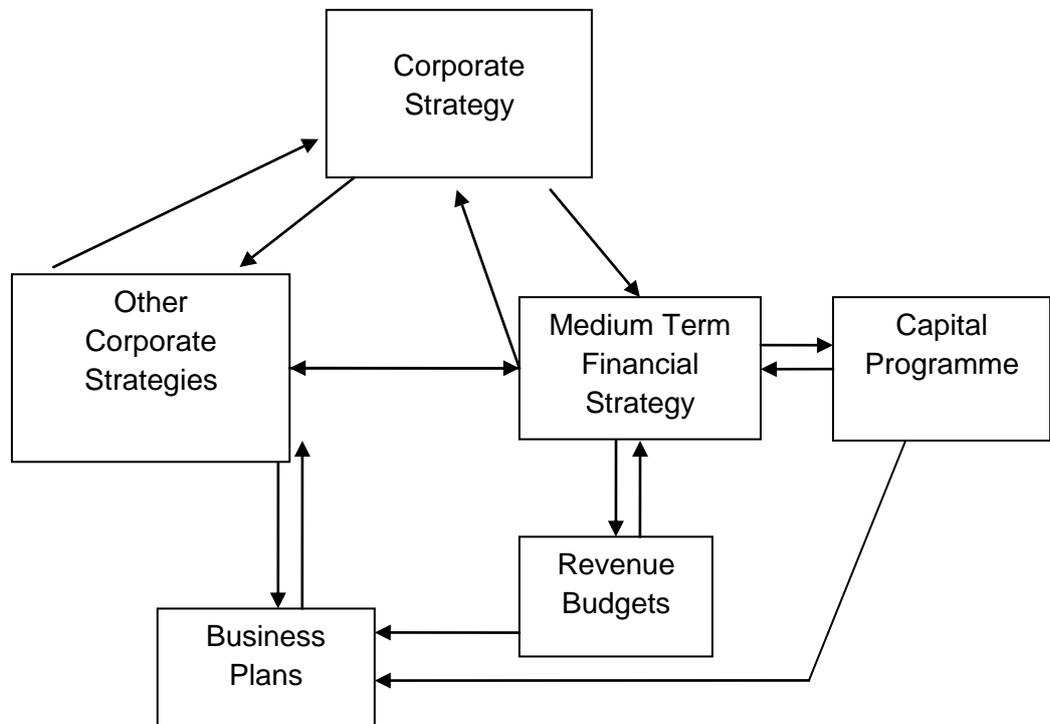
financial plan.

Corporate strategic  
direction & priorities  
of the Council

In the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) the Council has a clear hierarchy of strategy documents (see chart below) headed by the Corporate Strategy which sets out the vision and high level priorities for the Council. The Corporate Strategy drives the MTFS with details of committed events and their budget implications. These commitments are reflected in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules and consequently in Services' Business Plans. This hierarchy of plans gives clear direction on the Council's priorities and actions.

It is for the Cabinet, subject to overall decision by the Council, to recommend precisely which areas are their priorities to receive additional investment and which will receive less in the light of such priorities. This process reaches its natural conclusion in the Annual Budget Report.

## 8. Strategy Hierarchy:-



## Service planning to support overall strategy

9. The Corporate Strategy, together with Service Business Plans, provides a service planning structure that translates the priorities and aims of the overall strategy into measurable actions at the point of service delivery.
10. The Medium Term Financial Strategy, as it impacts on individual services' budgets, is reflected in service plans so that proper planning can take place in line with available resources. The preparation of service plans is also required in parallel with future years' budget plans since realistic levels of savings have to be determined for services in line with any overall shortfall in corporate funding.

11. The Government's agenda since 2010 of substantially reducing public expenditure has added further pressures on Hyndburn to reduce its costs. The impact of these changes can be seen at Appendix 1 and requires the Council to continue to make savings over the lifetime of the MTFS.

## **Integrated Resource Planning with Service**

### **Plans**

12. Growth items in future years (both revenue and capital schemes as applicable) and areas for savings, need to be identified in the Service Plans and Financial Plans should be developed consistently so that the impact of one on the other is fully appreciated, subject of course to Service Plans remaining within the limits allowed in the agreed Medium Term Financial Strategy. This precludes bids for extra resources arising during the course of the year for implementation in that year unless other funding can be identified. Developments are planned in accordance with a timetable well ahead of the year of implementation. They form part of an agreed strategy and need to be consistent with the priorities identified within the plan. Individual bids for resources, taken in isolation from the overall planning process, should therefore not occur.

## **Background Information**

13. The MTFS covers the period from 2020/21 to 2022/23. It is set against a background of continuing global financial volatility stemming from the worldwide Recession that began as a result of the banking crisis in 2007/8. There are some indications that parts of the globe have recovered and are achieving sustainable positive economic growth but

also contra indications of growing political and economic turbulence which could threaten another global financial crisis.

14. The financial recovery in both the US and the UK remains fragile and there remains a concern of a long period of stagnation before any meaningful real economic recovery is achieved and the potential for recession returning to the major Western economies is again growing. The uncertainty surrounding the UK economy has been further heightened by the Referendum vote to leave the EU and the subsequent political and economic consequences of abiding by the decision.
15. The new Government elected in December 2019 has moved quickly to announce the local government finance settlement for 2020/21. This announcement has removed the uncertainty that existed around funding for the financial year that commences in April 2020. The announcement was in line with indications given in Autumn 2019 by the previous Government that they would suspend their Fair Funding Review of local authority funding and roll forward grant levels awarded in 2019/20 into 2020/21. This has aided the Council's overall financial position for 2020/21 as £1.5m of Revenue Support Grant we expected to lose in 2020/21 will now be made available to the Council.
16. Beyond 2020/21 we still face a high degree of uncertainty over the level of our funding, as we await the outcome of the Government's Budget and Spending Review and their proposals around reshaping local government funding via their Fair Funding Review and the impact on RSG and Business Rates.
17. The Government's proposals in relation to funding for Hyndburn will be determined by its view of the overall global political and economic outlook and how this impacts the UK economy and public finances.
18. Global politics and the World Economy continue to look difficult to predict. Now 10 years on from the Worldwide Recession triggered by the Banking crisis in 2007 and 2008, economic recovery remains patchy

across the globe and there are many signs that we could again be entering a period of economic stagnation or recession.

19. Additionally, the world continues to face major political turmoil and uncertainties. Tensions in the Middle East continue with the ever present threat they could escalate into a major military conflict, with armed conflict in Syria, Iraq, Ukraine and Yemen all continuing. The USA and Iran seemingly drawing even further apart, escalating the risk of serious conflict between these two nations and their respective allies.
20. In the Far East, China and the USA appear to be locked into a trade dispute which will continue to impact on the world economy in unpredictable ways. While at the same time China is indicating a more aggressive expansionist policy towards the Pacific and its near neighbours and the potential for armed conflict here is also growing. Additionally the situation remains unresolved between North and South Korea and could deteriorate into military action quickly with the potential to escalate to include other countries. The recent outbreak of the Corona Virus could also impact across the Globe, either by forcing Chinese economic growth downwards as much of the country enters a period of quarantine or as the virus spreads into other countries, limiting economic activity due to the illness or simply the fear of people inter-mingling with each other and thereby not attending work.
21. In Europe, as well as the global situation impacting on its economies, the European Union is facing its own internal pressures around the sustainability of its own economies and finances with Germany and many other countries on the brink of a recession and the UK's departure from the European Union and uncertainty around the impact this will have on trading and political relationships. Greece in particular, but also Spain and Italy all have potential national economies that could fail if put under further economic pressure and Spain has the added complication of dealing with the separatist push from Catalonia, which could escalate into a problem with much wider European implications if the conflict escalates.

22. In Latin America, Argentina, Venezuela and Chile are all facing significant political and economic challenges and many other countries in the region are struggling with major challenges around maintaining a functioning government and economy. The whole region therefore has the potential to tip into economic decline which will impact the rest of the Globe including the UK.
23. In setting a national budget for the UK, the Government has to attempt to determine an economic outlook in the face of this uncertainty and risk as well as deal with its own pressures around Brexit, the economy, Health, Social Care and many other pressing matters.
24. Despite the various statements made during the recent 2019 General Election campaign it remains unclear at this time whether the new Government will continue to maintain tight fiscal control of public spending or loosen the purse strings to end the austerity it has imposed over the last 10 years.
25. It is also not certain that even if the Government did loosen the purse strings in relation to public finances whether local government and in particular districts councils such as Hyndburn would benefit. It is possible that any boost in spending in other parts of the economy or public services could be funded by further squeezing spend on local government or that any boost to local government, for instance to social care within local government is achieved by a redistribution within local government—away from district councils and directing money towards County and Unitary Councils. So, while there could be more spend in certain areas, Hyndburn may still actually see a reduction.
26. In line with previous Government announcements we expected that 2019/20 would be the last year that Hyndburn received Revenue Support Grant. The Government however announced a delay in its abolition in Autumn 2019 for at least 12 months. Therefore, the Medium Term Financial Strategy now shows no further funding of this type after 2020/21 rather than 2019/20 as previously shown. It is therefore anticipated the Council will lose the final part of the original £7.1m

funding from Government it was receiving in 2010/11 with the expected removal of the £1.5m in funding after 2020/21 compared to after 2019/20, which was our previous assumed date for this funding ending.

27. What will happen to our other funding however remains unclear. Some of the uncertainty will start to disappear when the Chancellor sets out his first Budget statement on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020. We will then obtain a degree of insight into whether spending constraints will be eased and in which areas of public spending or geographical locations.
28. Real clarity will however only emerge once the detail of the Fair Funding Review is known. Previous MTFS had imagined the final loss of Revenue Support Grant would be the end of the major upheavals in our finances stemming from the World-Wide Recession and we would at least enter into a period of stability once we reached the point in which the Government could no longer reduce our funding, as we had no direct grants left for them to remove. Fair Funding has however redefined the potential range of outcomes in terms of our future funding levels. This new major review of local government finance could lead to a new redistribution model which might transfer away more of our resources via the Tariff methodology or some new mechanism the Government introduces.
29. The timing of the implementation of the review could also be critical to the Council's finances over the next few years. Currently the system allows Council's the benefit of economic growth between periods of reset<sup>1</sup>. If the new system of funding is introduced ahead of any substantial growth in business rates the Council could benefit greatly from this uplift in subsequent years. However, if the growth takes place before the new funding methodology is adopted, the Council is likely to lose out on most of this growth going forward.

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<sup>1</sup> The reset is a tool used by Government to determine the baseline of business rates revenue for a given period. Once determined any growth in business rates over the forthcoming period substantially goes to the local council. The reset which occurs every number of years, effectively wipes out some or all of the previous growth figures and sets a new baseline.

30. Until the Government provides local councils with this information on how much it will receive and how the funds will be distributed, Hyndburn and all other local authorities are forced to rely on estimates of future revenue streams which may be wide of the mark. Currently there is a wide divergence amongst commenters on the potential outcomes. These range from the very optimistic, heralding a new wave of public expenditure directed at the North, to the more austere, pointing to the limits of public finances currently, the threat to the economy from exiting the European Union and the political and economic turbulence across the Globe.
31. Additionally, whatever course the Government might wish to pursue may be blown off course significantly if any one of the listed risks crystallises or other new shockwaves cause significant disturbance to the Global Economy or Britain's overall financial position.
32. The Medium Term Financial Strategy assumes that the Council is able to deliver its 2019/20 Budget as planned. The Cabinet has requested that the Corporate Management Team continue to look to improve the position during 2019/20 to ensure value for money is being delivered across all services and further savings are made. The Council currently predicts that it will achieve a surplus on its Budget for 2019/20. The General Fund Balance stands at £2.1m at the end of March 2019. This level of Reserve would normally be viewed as providing strong cover against the potential liabilities the Council faces. However, with:-
- large reductions in Central Government support for the next few years continuing and the prospect of a major review of local government finances,
  - Cost inflation continuing while overall revenues growth is downward,
  - the need to incur upfront costs to secure long term savings,

- the potential economic instability stemming from Brexit

the level of Reserves at £2.1m can be viewed as just above the minimum level of provision in the much more volatile financial climate which we now face.

33. The format of the Medium Term Financial Strategy considers the current estimated resources available for 2020/21 and builds upon anticipated changes to income and costs over the following 3 years. At this stage, the Medium Term Financial Strategy considers the broad strategic impact of known changes. As always, it is possible for new events to affect the budget position and these will be considered in future revisions to the Medium Term Financial Strategy. It is anticipated that the next update to the Medium Term Financial Strategy will occur in October 2020, immediately ahead of the Council commencing the process of setting its Budget for 2021/22.
34. Despite the difficulties over the last 8 financial years caused by further reductions in our funding from Government, the Council has continued to maintain its finances and provide value for money services. Balances stand in excess of £2.1m and we have generated significant savings in each of the last 13 financial years and expect to manage our finances during 2019/20 to once more achieve an underspend. It is likely that any savings this year will be used to fund the achievement of future savings, capital spend and further investment.

## **Financial Analysis 2020/21 to 2022/23**

35. This report at Appendices 1, 2 and 3 sets out the numerical values of the combined impact of the different financial assumptions for the next 3 years. Detailed commentary on the assumptions and their financial value is provided below. The report looks at the strategic shift in a number of the largest areas of the Council's Budget, before examining those

changes which are a more persistent element within our financial forecasts.

## Resources

36. From April 2011 the Council faced major changes in how it is funded as a result of Central Government decisions taken to reduce overall public sector spending in light of the worldwide recession and pressure to reduce the national deficit. These changes include:-

- The ending of the system of direct government funding to local government based on need;
- The introduction of a new system centred around how much revenue is collected locally as business rates, adjusted via a series of tariffs and top-ups;
- The transfer of the risk of non-collection of business rates and the cash flow impact away from HM Treasury to local government;
- The ending of the national universal system for Council Tax benefit and its replacement by locally determined schemes with an accompanying 10% reduction in funding at a national level in the first year and subject to further grant reductions in subsequent years.

37. These changes since their implementing have significantly reduced the core funding of the Council. The changes also create a much greater risk of volatility between years as business rate collection is much more prone to fluctuate than the previous system of government grants and

Council Tax Support levels may vary significantly depending on the state of the economy and the number of claimants.

38. These changes effectively signalled a period of decline in the overall resources available to the Council over the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. More detail on the nature of the changes and their impact is provided below.
39. The Government has said it will introduce a new system of local government finance and this will further add to the complexity of forecasting our overall financial position. As yet there are no indications of how the new system will work or how the amount of funding the Council receives will change. The proposals were due to be announced in Autumn 2019 and implemented for the start of 2020/21 financial year. However, in September 2019 the Government announced it was abandoning its planned Three Year Spending Review and as a consequence the proposed reforms to Local Government Finance were shelved for at least 12 months and the Government announced that existing funding would continue for the 2020/21 financial year.

### **Government Grant**

40. The Council has been one of the hardest hit by Government from reductions in financial support since 2010/11. The cuts in the early part of the decade were substantially accelerated in 2016/17 with a number of further adjustments the Government introduced to the funding model to distribute financial support to local councils. The impact of these changes in recent years is described below, before a summary of the overall impact since 2010/11 is given.
41. The Local Government Settlement for 2016/17 further altered the funding allocations for the Council compared to previous years. In 2015/16 Hyndburn Council was receiving Revenue Support Grant, Efficiency Support Grant and Council Tax Freeze Grant, as well as

Homelessness Prevention Grant, Housing Benefit Administration Grant and New Homes Bonus. From 2016/17, the Government has merged Efficiency Support Grant and Council Tax Freeze Grant into Revenue Support Grant so that the individual amounts can no longer be identified and reduced the overall funding by £722,000 or 16% in 2016/17 and this 16% level of reduction was rolled into the 2017/18 and 2018/19 settlement as a baseline, ahead of further reductions being made.

42. On the Revenue side of our Budget alone the total reduction in funding between 2015/16 and 2019/20 was £2.5m with a further £1.5m now expected to be removed at the commencement of the 2021/22 financial year. This is shown in Table 1 below.

Overall Change	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Variance	Percentage Change
<b>HBC Revenue</b>								
Revenue Support Grant	£ 2,312,430	£ 3,159,264	£ 2,446,543	£ 1,998,484	£ 1,498,991	£ 1,524,991	-£ 787,439	
Efficiency Support Grant	£ 1,272,186						-£ 1,272,186	
Council Tax Freeze Grant Part 1	£ 78,146						-£ 78,146	
Housing Benefit Admin Grant	£ 605,143	£ 386,958	£ 351,860	£ 312,201	£ 274,531	£ 250,000	-£ 355,143	
Homelessness Prevention	£ 35,339	£ 35,423	£ 35,483	£ 35,540	£ 35,750	£ 35,009	-£ 330	
HBC Government Support Revenue Total	£ 4,303,244	£ 3,581,645	£ 2,833,886	£ 2,346,225	£ 1,809,272	£ 1,810,000	-£ 2,493,244	57.94%
							£ -	
<b>HBC Capital</b>								
							£ -	
							£ -	
Efficiency Support Grant Part 2	£ 223,435						-£ 223,435	
Council Tax Freeze Grant Part 2	£ 106,814						-£ 106,814	
Council Tax Freeze Grant 2015/16	£ 53,171						-£ 53,171	
New Homes Bonus Main Grant	£ 451,787	£ 639,204	£ 546,634	£ 321,587	£ 220,495	£ 95,000	-£ 356,787	
New Homes Bonus Additional Grant	£ 10,564						-£ 10,564	
HBC Government Support Capital Total	£ 845,771	£ 639,204	£ 546,634	£ 321,587	£ 220,495	£ 95,000	-£ 750,771	88.77%
							£ -	
HBC Total Government Support Change	£ 5,149,015	£ 4,220,849	£ 3,380,520	£ 2,667,812	£ 2,029,767	£ 1,905,000	-£ 3,244,015	63.00%

43. The overall loss in Government funding over the period is however greater as our previous practice did not use all Government funding for Revenue purposes with some elements of Efficiency Support Grant, Council Tax Freeze Grant and all of New Homes Bonus being used to support the Capital Programme.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This was done to remove the dependency on Government Funds that were considered to be time limited and avoid building into the Revenue Budget additional spending which would subsequently be removed and thereby create further funding pressures once withdrawn by the Government. Using these “extra” funds from the Government for Capital purposes allowed us to finance key capital projects.

44. Funding of the money we used to finance Capital Spend is down £750,000 or 89%. The impact of Capital Funding within the MTFS is dealt with later in the report. When the impact of the funding on Revenue and Capital are combined the analysis shows the Council has lost almost £3.25m of resources from the Government between 2015/16 and 2020/21, which is almost 63% of the funds the Government had previously made available.
45. The latest local government financial settlement figures indicate Revenue Support Grant to the Council will be increased by inflation for 2020/21 to £1,560,000, before it is expected to be completely removed in 2021/22. Table 2 below shows the Council will have lost £3.16m of Government Grant between 2016/17 and 2021/22.

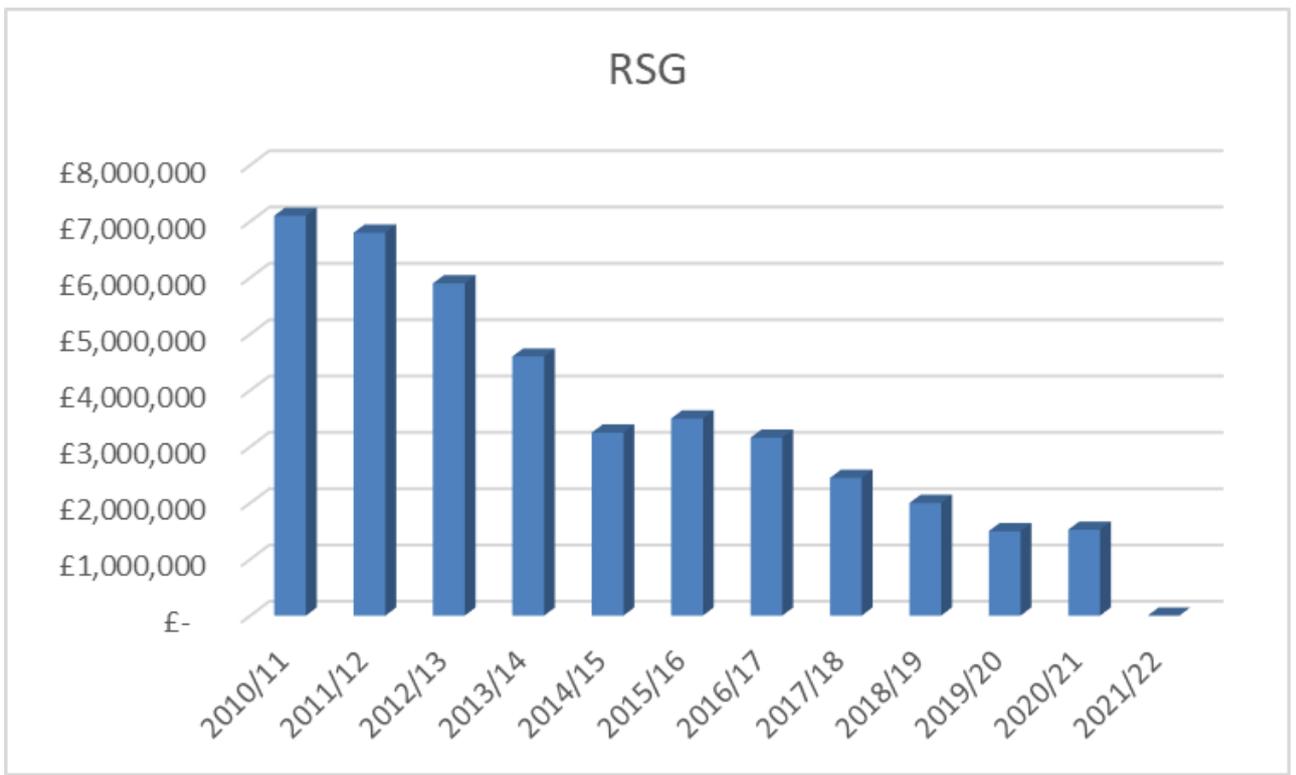
**Table 2 Change in Revenue Support Grant 2016/17 to 2021/22**

<b>Table 2 Change in Government Funding 2016/17 to 2020/21</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>Revenue Support Grant</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Percentage Change</b>	<b>Cumulative Change</b>	<b>Cululative Percentage Change</b>
<b>2016/17</b>	£ 3,159,264.00				
<b>2017/18</b>	£ 2,446,543.00	£ 712,721.00	23%	£ 712,721.00	22.56%
<b>2018/19</b>	£ 1,998,484.00	£ 448,059.00	18%	£ 1,160,780.00	36.74%
<b>2019/20</b>	£ 1,498,991.00	£ 499,493.00	25%	£ 1,660,273.00	52.55%
<b>2020/21</b>	£ 1,524,991.00	-£ 26,000.00	-2%	£ 1,634,273.00	51.73%
<b>2021/22</b>	£ -	£ 1,524,991.00	100%	£ 3,159,264.00	100.00%

46. These reductions from Government has been significant since 2016/17 at £713,000 in 2017/18 and £448,000 in 2018/19, with a drop of £500,000 in 2019/20, a respite in 2020/21, before a final drop in 2021/22. The final expected loss in 2021/22 is almost equal to the full value of all the 4 years prior reductions.

47. The total reduction in core Government funding for our Revenue Budget since 2010/11 is shown in the diagram below. This shows a drop from just over £7m in 2010/11 to zero by 2021/22.

**Table 3 Reduction In Government Funding to Hyndburn Council 2010/11 to 2020/21**



48. For the purposes of the MTFs the ending of Government Funding at the end of 2020/21 remains the most significant financial change over the next 3 years, but the potential losses from changes under the Fair Funding Review also have the potential to impact at least as dramatically.

### **Business Rates**

49. In addition to the substantial alterations to local government funding created by the withdrawal of Revenue Support Grant, the Government introduced major changes to Council funding from April 2013, which

ended the previous system of business rates collected locally but pooled nationally and redistributed by the Government via an assessment of “need”.

50. The new system from April 2013 attempts to allow Councils to retain the business rates raised locally. However, the implementation of the new system was significantly altered from the original aspiration of local business rates retained locally and the current system sees the vast majority of business rates transferred away from Hyndburn. This is due to Government rules which firstly top-sliced 50% of locally collected business rates into a Central Government pot to support a variety of Government policies across Local Government. A further 10% of the monies collected are transferred to Lancashire County Council and the Fire and Rescue Authority, leaving Hyndburn with only 40% of the locally raised business rates. The 40% remaining is then further reduced under the rules introduced by the Government to further redistribute funds between local Councils. In a system called “Top-Ups and Tariffs” the Government determined amounts to be deducted from “Tariff” Councils to help fund Councils which did not have sufficient funding in their view to meet their expenditure needs.
51. As a consequence, Hyndburn which raises around £20m in Business Rates each year is only allowed to retain about £4.2m (21%) from this source of funding.<sup>3</sup>
52. The Government has indicated that it wished to move to a system of 100% of Business Rates going directly to Local Government, expanding upon an earlier decision to earmark 50% of Business Rate income to be retained by local government. However, after that announcement, the Government made almost no progress towards its implementation as

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<sup>3</sup> This figure is on a like for like basis with previous years and ignores the impact of the adjustment to Business Rates for Revenue Support Grant as a consequence of Pooling.

various difficulties in devising and introducing such a scheme emerged. Hyndburn participated in a Pilot Scheme in 2019/20 to increase the amount distributed locally from 50% to 75%. However, the Government announced in late 2019 that the Pilot's would not be renewed for 2020/21 and Pools would revert back to a 50% share of growth and progress on moving forward on local government retaining more of the money raised locally would be delayed at least 12 months.

53. The forecast level of business rates in the future will depend on two major factors. How much the Government determines a Council should receive as a baseline from business rates and how much additional income is achieved and retained.
54. After the June 2017 General Election, Theresa May's Government concentrated more of its announcements around a Fair Funding Review of Local Government Finance that it intended to have implemented for the 2020/21 financial year. The new Government of Boris Johnson however announced in Autumn 2019 that this review would be delayed by at least 12 months. These changes are expected to redistribute funds away from District Councils.
55. Any such review is likely to be fraught with difficulties and there have been many unsuccessful attempts over the last few decades to reform local government finance all of which have failed and this latest attempt must be considered as likely to be delayed further or abandoned altogether as it is to be implemented by the revised date of 2021/22.
56. This therefore creates significant uncertainty for the Council around its Medium Term Financial Strategy in its second year of 2021/22. From statements already made by the Government the Council already faced the strong prospect that it would lose all of its remaining Revenue Support Grant in 2020/21, which has now been delayed until 2021/22 at the earliest and it now faces the additional risk that another of its sources

of income could be threatened if the Fair Funding Review redistributes existing resources in a different manner to that done currently.

57. There is no clear basis on which to currently estimate the level of change the Council will face from the Fair Funding Review. There were mixed signals from the Government during 2018 and 2019 over the purpose, extent and degree of radicalism of the potential changes under the Fair Funding Review. The only consistent message was that no additional funds would be made available to local government and the Review would be a redistribution of existing resources between councils and not an injection of new funding. In the latter part of 2018 and the early half of 2019, the Government was clearly under further mounting pressure to address the underfunding of adult and children's social care amongst County Councils. Given the scale of the gaps forecast by County Councils in this area, this would require a major reduction in funding to District Councils to make a partial dent in the situation faced by County Councils, with the magnitude of any such change highlighted as potentially pushing many District Councils into severe financial difficulties. Since Boris Johnson became Prime Minister and the December 2019 General Election, the ability to predict what will occur has further been complicated, with widespread election promises around additional public spending and a change in emphasis away from austerity towards investment and growth.
58. For forecasting purposes, we have therefore assumed that the Fair Funding Review will reduce the Baseline amount (£3.6m) of Business Rates Hyndburn can retain automatically by 4% in its Standard Model, which is £150,000 a year. The Pessimistic Model assumes the reduction is doubled to 8% and costs the Council £300,000 in lost Business Rates income, while the Optimistic Model assumes the reduction is only 2% and the Council therefore only loses £75,000 of Business Rates Revenue. The model also assumes that the other key aspects around sharing growth above Baseline remain in their current format. However, at this

stage, there is no way of assessing what the actual change will be and it is likely we will only see the actual figures late in the year before setting the 2021/22 Budget. The assumptions used are therefore more illustrative than scientific at this stage and while we will need to plan on the basis of the Standard Model until we receive real information, we will also need to develop financial flexibility to be able to respond to the potential major swings in funding that could occur either way.

59. Offsetting the potential reduction in business rates from the changes caused by the redistribution in funding between councils as a result of the Fair Funding Review, the Council should benefit from growth in the local tax base which is likely in most scenarios to compensate for any loss through the new redistribution of funds.
60. The growth is split 50:50 with the Government, unless the Council enters into a Pooling arrangement for business rates with other Councils in which case it can retain up to 100% of the growth locally, though at this stage very few councils have been granted the opportunity to retain 100% of business rate growth.<sup>4</sup> If this practice of allowing councils to benefit from business rate growth continues after the Fair Funding Review, the Council could benefit substantially from increased business rate income in 2020/21 and particularly in 2021/22 and beyond due to the expansion of investment in the local area.
61. The current system while providing a vehicle for local Councils to potentially benefit from growth in the local economy also has transferred the financial risk of declining business rates to local Councils. A local Council that was experiencing local business premises closing or moving away from their local area would suffer declines in revenues. As well as closures, local councils are also facing the financial consequences of

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<sup>4</sup> The downside to Pooling arrangements are that outside of a Pool, the Government guarantees every local council a minimum of 92.5% of their baseline funding, once a Pool is formed this guarantee is ended and Councils run the risk of being financially worse off if their business rates income plunges.

large-scale business rating appeals, where businesses claim their properties have been valued too highly for business rating taxation purposes and they require a re-assessment leading to a lowering of the amount of tax they have to pay. Successful appeals lead to both a lowering of the amount of business rates we can collect locally going forward and therefore to a lower amount of resources for the Council to spend but also the need to compensate businesses for previous “over charged” years reducing further the sums that can be deployed to finance local public services.

62. The current estimate for 2020/21 of Business Rates income for the Council is £4,283,000. This is up from £4,083,000 in 2019/20 with approximately 40% of the increase attributable to inflation and the remaining 60% due to business expansion.
63. This would seem to indicate that despite a number of companies expanding in the local area the value of successful appeals and business closures is offsetting this growth, leaving the Council with only a small amount of practical benefit from the additional investment that is currently taking place.
64. The assumption over the following two years within the MTFS is that Hyndburn does start to benefit from economic growth and there is an assumption that the local economy will expand and this will produce growth of around £650,000 in Business Rates income to the Council in 2021/22 offset by the expected reduction of 4% from the Fair Funding Review giving a net position of £500,000 of growth for that year, plus an extra £85,000 for 2% inflation. This is followed in the next year by a further £250,000 of growth in 2022/23 along with a general inflation increase of 2% for a total increase of almost £350,000. The speed of developments will be crucial in achieving this level of increase and this will need to be carefully monitored over the next 3 years to ensure the income is arriving as forecast.

65. While for financial forecasting purposes it is assumed that Business Rate income to the Council will increase over the period between 2020/21 and 2022/23, it is possible that it could move in either direction, positively for the Council if local businesses continue to grow and appeals on business rates are largely unsuccessful, or negatively, if the local or national economy weakens or appeals on business rate values are largely successful. This is covered in detail later in the report on the section on the various financial scenarios the Council faces.
66. The negative impact from a declining economy is currently viewed as less likely to occur given the signs of local business expansion and investment, as well as the United Kingdom's recovery from the Recession. However, world markets remain volatile and there are a small but significant number of warnings in the financial press of the dangers of another major contraction in the global economy.
67. As indicated earlier in the report the Standard Model assumption is net growth of £585,000 in 2021/22 and £350,000 in 2022/23. In the Pessimistic Model we have assumed a greater reduction as a consequence of the Fair Funding Review of 8% reducing the Baseline position by £300,000 and that growth is limited to £500,000 producing a net gain of only £200,000 above the £85,000 coming from the inflation uplift on all properties and that no real growth occurs in 2022/23 with an uplift only for inflation once again of 2%. The Optimistic Scenario assumes strong growth in the tax base in 2021/22 with the 2% inflation increase supplemented by £825,000 of real growth and the negative impact of the Fair Funding Review being limited to just £75,000, with a further £125,000 of growth in 2022/23, plus the annual inflation increase.

## Council Tax

68. With the significant decline of Government Grant from 2010/11, Council Tax became the largest single contribution to the Council's Revenue by

the middle of the decade. The Council is rightly proud of its record as a Council that thinks very carefully over increasing the burden on local people's spending power through tax increases and has over the last 20 years kept its average Council Tax increases below the rate of inflation. Hyndburn is only one of 7 councils to have this distinction and the only one north of Watford to do so. This is a remarkable achievement given that in Hyndburn's case it will have not been able to replace the lost income from below inflation rises from significant growth in housing numbers and Hyndburn will have effectively had to deliver more efficiencies instead, to maintain its Balanced Budget position.

69. Now faced with the loss of all of its funding from Government after 2020/21, the Council needs to look to increases in Council Tax to partly fill the gap. The Medium Term Forecast therefore assumes the Council will take advantage of the Government's major shift in policy on Council Tax increases. Previously the Government attempted to ensure Council Tax was not raised at all and provided additional funds to Councils who set 0% increases. Now the Government has signalled it expects Councils to raise Council Tax roughly in line with inflation each year and those Council who do not raise their Council Tax are effectively penalised as the Government in their calculations assume the rise has occurred whether or not it actually does happen. Not increasing Council Tax in line with the Government guidance therefore leaves the Council not only with less resources but further away from the target figure the Government expects them to spend.
70. The MTFs therefore assumes an overall growth of around £107,000 in 2020/21 compared to the previous year mainly coming from a £5 increase (2%) in the Band D charge. In each of the following years Council Tax Revenue is forecast to grow by 4.5% from a combination of an increase in the standard charge of £5.00, which is approximately 2% and expansion of the numbers of properties subject to the tax from housing developments.

71. It is not expected that Council Tax income will decline over the coming period, but the Pessimistic Scenario reflects no increase in the overall value of taxation raised from this source in any of the three years of the MTFs, with no net growth in housing numbers and the annual charge for a Band D property remaining at £245.52 which was set in 2019/20. Compared to the Standard Model, the Council loses over £100,000 of income in 2020/21 and is over £580,000 worse off by 2022/23 under these assumptions. The cumulative impact over the 3 years is in excess of £1m lost to the Council to support local services.
72. The Optimistic Scenario shows a more buoyant second and third year in terms of Council Tax income with £80,000 of extra income stemming from developments etc. in 2021/22 and a further increase from Council Tax of £136,000 in 2022/23. This would reflect above average growth in the local housing market and potentially the early dividends from the proposed development at Huncoat starting to impact on the Council's finances.
73. The Collection Fund Surplus is anticipated to be around £137,000 per year and the same figure is used for the Pessimistic Scenario. The Optimistic Scenario envisages a slightly stronger surplus in 2021/22 and 2022/23 at £170,000 per year.

### **Expected Loss of Income**

74. The Government is continuing with its proposed reforms to the national Welfare Benefits System and plans to consolidate most benefit payments into a single system called Universal Credit. As part of this process Housing Benefit which is administered by local authorities will end, at least for those of working age and as such the Government is substantially reducing the amount it pays local councils to undertake this work and the subsidy paid to reimburse council's for benefit paid out is

also declining. The Government announced an original timetable in which it envisaged that all working age Housing Benefit Claims will cease by the start of the financial year 2018/19. This deadline has now been moved back again and therefore the MFTS adjusts the loss of this income over the next two years to £120,000 per year, with a final year figure of £150,000. The Pessimistic Scenario recognises the potential for both the administration and benefit elements to decline to the Council by £30,000 per year in 2021/22 and 2022/23. While the Optimistic Scenario shows the reduction in funding declining to £60,000 in 2021/22 with no further reduction in 2022/23.

## Changes in Costs

### Salaries Costs

75. As an individual line across all budget areas the cost of employing staff at over £10m is the largest expense faced by the Council. Upward pressures on this budget stemming from pay awards should remain low compared to historic norms. Since 2010 wage increases have been limited to 1% or below, but the 2018/19 wage settlement for local government employees encompassed a 2 year deal at 2% for most employees with additional increases above 2% for those staff on the lowest wage bands. Upward pressure beyond the 2% level over the next few years is not expected as the economy still remains in recovery mode and the Government continues to exert significant pressure to contain public sector wage settlements at or below the 2% mark. With inflation remaining around 2% annually and continuing fears over job security and redundancies and an excess of supply of labour despite record numbers in employment it is unlikely industrial action will force higher increases than those we have seen over the last few years. The MTFS therefore

uses a 2% increase in Salary and Pension costs for each of the three years and it is assumed that this level of rise will cost around £270,000 per year with an additional £40,000 of costs falling in 2021/22.

76. It is possible that wage settlements will be higher if the economy shows stronger signs of recovery and this scenario is covered in the Pessimistic model. This assumes that increases after 2020/21 are 4%. Given that resource levels are likely to remain under pressure over the period, wage increases add to the overall pressures to make savings and may lead to the need to make more redundancies than the Council would have done if wages had remained at the predicted level.

77. There is no uplift in payroll costs expected to occur due to the introduction of the Living Wage. Currently the Council is paying above the levels proposed and estimates indicate that it will only have a small impact on our overall wage bill in 2020/21 and it is assumed the impact can be accommodated within existing budget projections at this time.

## Pension Costs

78. A triennial review of the Pension Fund is underway and this will result in new employer contribution rates being determined for 2020/21 onwards.

79. Historically the Council has faced increased employer's contributions when the new rates are announced by the Actuary. However, the Council has taken a number of steps to stem the tide of increased costs over recent years including, stopping expensive redundancies and retirements and always ensuring a strong business case exists around any exit, paying contributions at a higher level than required by the Actuary

and making one-off additional contributions into the Pension Fund whenever it could do so. This has ensured the Council has not incurred additional costs from the most recent Triennial Revaluations.

80. Due to the positive actions outlined above and a long run of good investment returns, it is expected that Hyndburn, for the first time in a considerable period, will have pension assets that exceed its pension liabilities and this will allow the Council to reduce its payments to the Pension Fund by £528,000 in 2020/21 and an estimated £500,000 in 2021/22 while continuing our existing commitment to overpay when possible thereby reducing further pension pressures in future years. The reduction in pension costs in 2020/21 has helped limit the need for savings in the next financial year and will help to partially offset the expected loss of £1.5m of Revenue Support Grant in 2021/22.
81. The savings resulting from the actions taken in earlier years in this area provide a significant boost to the Council's overall financial position and the dividend from these decisions are a strategic shift in our cost base similar to that achieved by taking hard decisions around repaying debts and not borrowing to finance expenditure.

## Supplies and Service Costs

82. General inflation over the past 3 years has been as low as 1.2%, it then increased to over 3% before starting a steady decline downwards to 1.4% (ONS December 2019), with concern currently that it might fall still further and may require the Bank of England to cut the Base Rate to stimulate the economy. Beyond the immediate last 3 years we have had negative inflation and the accurate forecast of future rates remains difficult to predict. There are a variety of upward pressures across the globe driving inflation in one direction, while other pressures continue to contain and push it downward. The fragility of the economic recovery in

the major Western Economies, the Brexit Vote and the sharp drop in sterling and the growing power of the dollar all indicate a continuing period of instability.

83. While inflation appears not to have settled on any particular direction over the last 10 years, there still appears to be significant capacity in the market place to resist price increases and therefore the probability of large rises in inflation remains weak.
84. Predicting the level of general inflation in the economy remains therefore a major challenge and one fraught with uncertainty. The MTFS therefore assumes inflationary pressures of around £130,000 per year over the next 3 years, with around £50,000 of general additional costs in 2020/21 and £50,000 budget adjustment in 2021/22 for Government changes to Land Search fees. The Pessimistic Scenario assumes inflation running at 4% in 2021/22 and 2022/23. The Optimistic Scenario assumes the Government's changes in relation to Land Search charges are not introduced in 2021/22 or that if they are introduced, they can be implemented in a manner that is cost neutral to the Council.

## Capital Costs

85. The Council has over the last 12 years maintained a strong commitment not to borrow to finance Capital Expenditure. In doing so, it has ensured that it has not added to the burden of its revenue budget by having to pay increased loan costs. The intention within the MTFS is to maintain that commitment. The Capital Programme will be funded from a mixture of carry forward receipts from the Housing Market Renewal Programme,

the use of one-off grants from the Government, surpluses, external funding and existing Capital resources.

86. The ending of direct Housing Market Renewal Programme (HMR) has led to a substantial reduction in the overall size of the Capital Programme. Residual HMR funds will be used over the next 36 months to complete work in this area and help finance other capital investment projects.
87. External Funds continue to be less in abundance and this will further restrict the amount of capital works we will be able to undertake. It should however remain possible to secure some external funds to deliver specific projects.
88. The MTFS in February 2012 showed a need for the Council to begin to set aside a substantial amount (£750,000) from within its Revenue Budget in both 2013/14 and 2014/15 to fund a modest Capital Programme in these years. However due to careful financial management of the Capital Programme and effective husbandry of other resources, it should be possible in this MTFS to delay the need to fund future Capital Programmes from revenue spend until after 2022/23 if expected capital receipts arrive over this period.
89. The Strategy assumes a continuing commitment to limiting financial spend to a modest programme with only the highest priority capital projects receiving approval to proceed. It also assumes we will continue to earmark time limited and one-off grants such as New Homes Bonus for Capital and we will also support the Capital Programme from any additional revenue, from surpluses on the Collection Fund or the Pooling of Business Rates etc. when these are available and don't need to be used to underpin the Revenue Budget as well as any in-year savings that are generated and capital receipts.

90. This will enable us to escape the need to borrow over the period of the MTFS and we will therefore not increase our debt burden over the next 3 years.
91. The Capital Programme is always oversubscribed and the Council will continue to have to make tough choices over which projects to support in line with its key objectives. It should however be able to fund its highest priority projects over the coming 3 years, without burdening future tax payers with an increased legacy of debt and interest payments.
92. Current predictions indicate the Council has sufficient funds to finance its capital expenditure plans over the next 3 years. This is however reliant on the achievement of significant capital receipts over the period and continuing to only fund the Council's highest priority projects. If the sale income from anticipated disposals is delayed or sales in the pipeline do not mature, decisions around curtailing capital expenditure or using some stop gap funding including short term borrowing may be necessary. Recent indications from the Government that New Homes Bonus might be reduced or abolished may add to our difficulties in this area as it would remove a source of funding, we have previously used to assist in financing our capital expenditure.
93. The Pessimistic Scenario deals with the impact of having to fund Capital Expenditure from Revenue by £250,000 in 2022/23. This could occur if the Council is unable to limit its capital expenditure commitments to less than £1m in 2021/22 and 2022/3 or there is a drop in sales receipts or other funding we use for Capital Expenditure. This scenario increases the saving pressures within the Pessimistic Scenario substantially.

## Growth

94. With the current intense pressure around generating savings, no allowance has been made for additional finance within the MTFS for growth. Any such bids for new items of expenditure would need to be considered very carefully as they would add pressure to the savings target in any year that they are proposed and would lead to further reductions in expenditure in other areas of Council funding as this would be the only means to fund them. An amount of £105,000 in 2020/21 and 2021/22 is shown under this heading in the appendices to allow a step change in budgets connected with the Market Hall to be reduced to reflect concessions granted to market traders on rent levels in response to pressures they face from the national decline in town centre retail activity since 2010.

## Reserves

95. Over the last 13 years, the Council has been able to rebuild its Revenue Reserves. This has seen the negative position of 2003/04 replaced by Balances at the 31st March 2019 of just over £2.1m. This level of Reserve would normally be viewed as healthy given an overall spend of around £11m in 2019/20, coupled with a prediction this level of spend will remain steady over the next few years. However, the level of challenges faced by the Council would indicate that this level of Reserve may only be a minimum level of what is needed given the significant increase in costs and the reduction to its revenue funding that it faces. It is therefore recommended that Reserves are maintained at a minimum of £2.0m or strengthened at this time to meet any major challenges which might occur over the next 3 years, which could not be dealt with via the normal budgetary process.

96. The threats to the Council outside its normal budgetary pressures include,

- ❖ the proposal by the Government to conduct a Fair Funding Review and implement its findings in 2021/22, which might further substantially reduce the monies the Council currently expects to have at its disposal
- ❖ the continuing economic uncertainty which may lead to the Government having to reduce public sector expenditure further or requiring the Local Government sector to shoulder more of the burden
- ❖ the impact of Brexit and any potential downturn in the economy that would impact on commercial, housing and land development and therefore suppress fees the Council earns from providing services to the business community such as planning fees, land search fees etc.
- ❖ the Government's transfer of responsibility to local Councils for determining Council Tax Benefit and capping the amount it will reimburse in the future regardless of whether there is a surge in the numbers claiming

- ❖ the continuing risk of challenges to planning decisions and the costs of defending these through the legal process
- ❖ the threat of substantial claims under employment law
- ❖ the increased threat of industrial action during a period of public sector pay restraint and job losses
- ❖ emergency spend pressures in-year, due to one-off items of capital or revenue spend
- ❖ risks around the conclusion of the Housing Market Renewal Programme
- ❖ the continuing trading difficulties experienced by Hyndburn Leisure and the financial pressures on partner organisations and the third sector in general
- ❖ insurance claims for which cover is not in place, in particular claims relating to items formerly covered by Municipal Mutual Insurance which has gone into liquidation and historic employee health claims dating back to the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

- ❖ supplier failure during an elongated period of uncertainty
- ❖ environmental warranties on our land and guarantees provided to Hyndburn Homes over land transferred to them
- ❖ the threat that Central Government will pass fines from Europe directly to Councils if the UK fails to meet its targets on climate change and environmental improvements.
- ❖ continuing reductions in our income from fees and charges as the economy continues to struggle
- ❖ the need to meet the cost of land acquisitions under the Community Right to Purchase legislation.
- ❖ Fines stemming from breaches around data protection under the new General Data Protection Regulations.

## Other Assumptions

97. The MTFS assumes that the Council is able to present a balanced budget each year and operate within that budget and that it does not need to draw upon reserves or overspend within any financial year.
98. It assumes that any draw down of reserves is either immediately replenished within the financial year or a top slice of funding from the next year's budget is made to ensure they remain at the stated level.
99. It assumes that service provision remains largely within the current confines and that no major initiatives are imposed upon the Council without suitable funding provision. For instance, the MTFS does not allow for the return to weekly refuse collection without the Government providing the necessary funds not only to manage the change process, but also to meet the additional on-going revenue costs.

## Equality Impact Assessment

100. There are no specific proposals within the MTFS that would require the completion of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). This document remains a high level strategic overview. Individual EIAs will be completed for relevant policy developments, service alterations and saving plans as they occur, as a response to the overall financial plans of the Council.

## Scenarios

101. As with the previous MTFS we have attempted to outline the potential range of scenarios around the Council's Finances over the next few years, by varying some of the key assumptions. In order to avoid a myriad of possible scenarios, we have presented in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3, two scenarios towards either extreme side of the MTFS forecast. This allows the potential maximum and minimum range of savings required over the next 3 years to be broadly established. Due to delay and the

potential unknown impact at this time of the Fair Funding Review, the range and accuracy of these forecasts is more limited than in previous years. It is hoped that once the Fair Funding Review discloses the new financial settlement these forecasts can return to their previous degree of rigor.

102. The MTFS has therefore been developed around key assumptions of what is most likely to occur and then two scenarios produced showing what might occur should these assumptions be confounded by other events, all moving in one particular direction or the other. Appendix 1 to this report sets out the scenario which it is believed most likely to occur and is labelled the Standard Model. Appendix 2 shows what might occur if many of the negative things that could happen did actually occur and this is labelled Pessimistic Model. Appendix 3 shows the opposite situation in which the Council benefits from a series of good outcomes with resources growing and downward pressure on spending occurs. This is the Optimistic Model.

103. This approach produces a spectrum of the possible ranges in which the Council's finances will have to operate over the next 3 years. It does not cover every eventuality and there are possible outcomes outside of the ranges shown, though these are deemed to have only a small chance of occurrence.

104. It is possible the Council could emerge with a stronger financial position as a result of a combination of these volatile factors going in its favour. A strong financial position for the Council could emerge for instance if

- The Government decides to boost the economy by an injection of cash into the country and expanding expenditure on public services particularly in the North with Hyndburn receiving extra revenue as a result.
- The exit from Brexit going much better than most commentators have predicted and the country thriving outside of the European Union.

- Political tensions in the Middle East and Far East reduce.
- The global economy avoids recession and begins a steady period of growth

105. The Optimistic Model shows a scenario in which the Council's revenues grow throughout the period and spending pressures can largely be easily dealt with over the next 3 years.

106. The Standard Model which shows the most likely position in terms of our finances, it predicts the Council will need to deal with significant budgetary pressures in 2021/22. This will require the Council to save over 9% of its Budget, before hopefully reaching what could be a sustainable break even position going forward beyond 2022/23.

107. The potential for the Council to face severe financial pressure over the 3 years is shown in the Pessimistic Model. This model assumes a backdrop of fragmented global economic growth and potential recession, heightened political turbulence across the world accentuating a decline in economic growth and a UK Government limiting public sector spending and switching money away from District Councils, particularly in the North of England. The level of savings required to be generated each year by Hyndburn in these circumstances are significantly higher in each year than the other models and are likely to be very challenging for the Council to deliver.

108. The Pessimistic Scenario presented at Appendix 2 looks at the baseline assumptions for the MTFs and adjusts them for the following reasons.

109. In terms of income the Pessimistic Scenario indicates that revenue could be lower in all three years compared to the Standard Scenario due to the loss of RSG and declines in the level of Council Tax and Business Rates.

110. The Pessimistic Scenario when compared to the Standard Model shows income down from £11.2m to £11.1m in 2020/21 and down from £10.5m in 2021/22 to £9.8m and down from £11.0m to £9.9m in 2022/23. This is due to the Council not increasing council tax in any of the three years and there being no growth in numbers of properties besides the small

numbers in 2020/21. The assumption is also for lower business rates as the Fair Funding Review has a more dramatic impact on the Council's finances and there is less growth over the three years from local businesses.

111. The Council received £1.5m in RSG funding in 2019/20 and this was expected to be the last year in which we received such funding as the Government had telegraphed over a number of years, it intended to abolish this source of funding for local government at the end of 2019/20. However, in September 2019, the Government announced that the Spending Review due to take place in Autumn 2019 would be postponed and replaced by a one year spending exercise and that the Fair Funding Review of local government finance would also be delayed for at least 12 months. As a consequence, funding for 2020/21 would be based on 2019/20 levels, indicating that Hyndburn would continue to receive RSG in 2020/21 of £1.5m. The Pessimistic Scenario assumes that while the Council will still receive RSG in 2020/21 the Government will press forward with its previously stated intention and remove it as a source of funding for the Council in 2021/22.

112. There are no indications as yet of the likely revisions to local council funding from the Government's Fair Funding Review and these are not likely to emerge until late Summer or Autumn 2020 at the earliest. However, the Government previously made it clear that extra money is not on offer and that the Funding Review will be about addressing the division of existing resources in a different manner between Councils. There is therefore a general expectation that the Government's Fair Funding Review will look to substantially transfer funds towards Adult and Children's Social Care and that will see major reductions in funding for other parts of local government which do not provide these services. As the figures needed by Social Care Councils to balance their current Budget demands are so great and District expenditure relatively small compared to these demands there is a possibility that non Social Care Councils will face major reductions in their funding.

113. To provide some figures in order to allow the magnitude of the possible changes that could impact on the Council, it has been assumed the Government reduces the amount the Council can retain from Business Rates by an 8% reduction in 2021/22. This decrease of approximately £300,000 is offset by assumed growth in business rates from the local economy of £500,000, giving a net change of £285,000, once the annual inflationary increase is included.
114. The Pessimistic Scenario also assumes that the Council is unable to grow its Council Tax Revenue over this period. This would involve not increasing the amounts paid by households each year and no growth in the overall number of properties.
115. Overall this would see the Council with £105,000 less resources in 2020/21 than expected and a further reduction in revenues of £645,000 compared to the Standard Model in 2021/22, with 2022/23 revenue figures down a further £1.1m. This level of reduction would put the Council under severe financial pressure.
116. The impact of funding from the Department of Work & Pensions in relation to Housing Benefit Grant is shown to be £30,000 more expensive in year 2, as the programme to implement Universal Credit accelerates and the Council loses higher amounts of both administration grant and repayment of benefits.
117. In our Standard Model we have assumed a 2% pay award over each year of the three years of the forecast. The Pessimistic Scenario allows for a 4% wage settlement in the second and third years within the forecast, recognising that upward pressure may build for an enhanced pay settlement after a large number of years of enforced pay restraint. This potentially adds £270,000 per year to our costs over these years. The potential for these types of pay awards has increased with the Government announcing larger pay rises for key public sector workers over the last 12 months and this now being used by both trade unions and employees as a new yardstick for all public sector pay.

118. The threat however still remains that in an area which is seeing its income substantially decline and with no indications from the Government that it is willing to fund local government for public sector pay rises, wage settlements close to or exceeding the rate of inflation are likely to lead to redundancies.
119. General inflation continues to be difficult to predict. For the Pessimistic Scenario an assumption has been made that the costs of supplies and services rise to £260,000 in 2021/22 and 2022/23. Additional costs of £50,000 are also added here in 2021/22 to allow for a budget adjustment to Land Search Fees, as the Government proposes to end the current arrangements in this area, which will lead to a net cost rise in the provision of this service.
120. The final factor considered in the Pessimistic Scenario is the need to finance part of the Capital Programme in 2022/23 from Revenue. This assumes that the Council is unable to generate sufficient sales of its land and property over the next 3 years or that it spends significantly above the current forecast and therefore needs to set aside some of its Revenue in 2022/23 to fund its capital spend in that year. Current estimates are that sufficient resources are available to fund capital expenditure through 2021/22. A figure of £250,000 has been added to the Pessimistic Scenario in 2022/23.
121. The combined impact of all these potential changes are illustrated at Appendix 2 and show that the savings target for 2020/21 would rise to £220,000 up £104,000, while the following year it would be £2.0m (18%), up £969,000 on the Standard Scenario and that in 2022/23, the savings target would be £1.1m up £1.1m from the break-even position in the Standard Scenario.
122. While it is viewed as unlikely, though possible, that all these factors would combine against the Council, the Pessimistic Scenario at Appendix 2 indicates the Council does face a number of potential challenges, which would require the Council to take a series of much tougher decisions

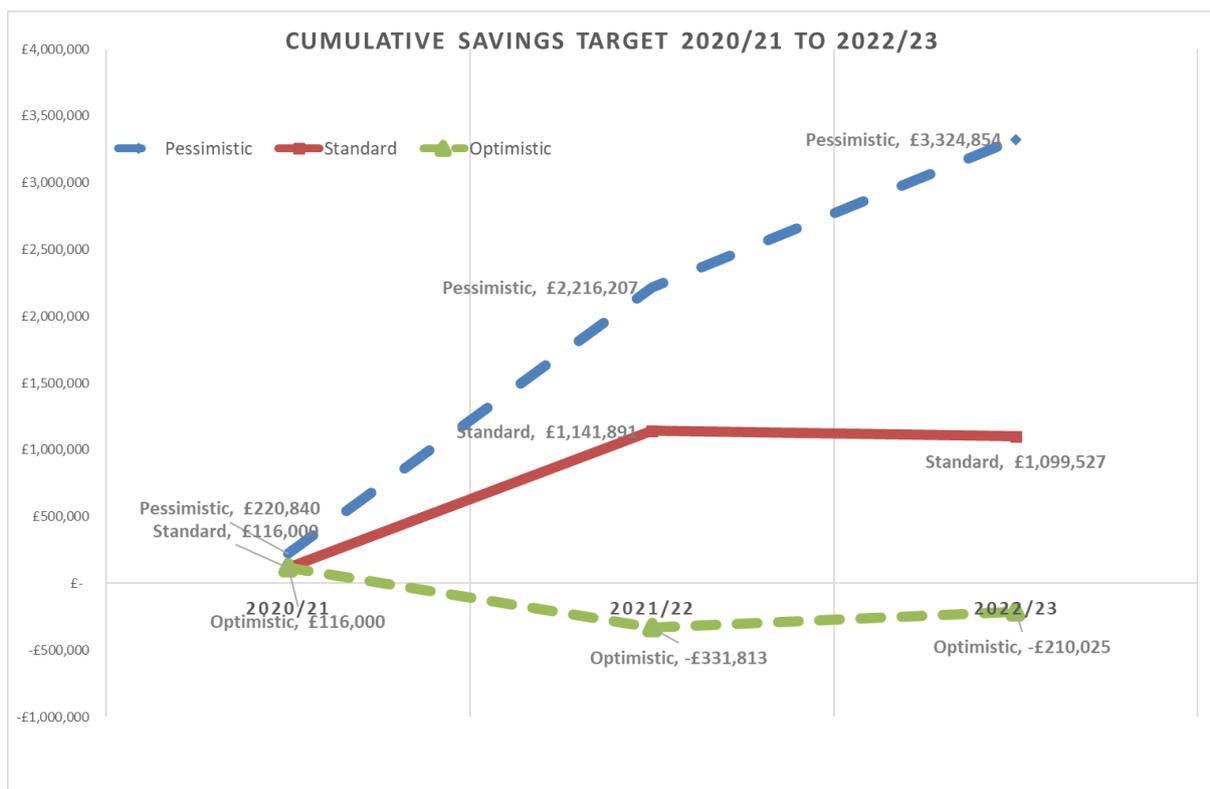
around its spending plans and priorities if these assumptions materialised.

123. The level of savings required under the Pessimistic Scenario would put the Council's finances under severe strain and it is likely it would need to use a considerable amount of its reserves while it attempted to reconfigure its operations so that it could achieve the cost reductions necessary to continue to set a long-term balanced budget, particularly as it is unlikely to know its Business Rate figure for 2021/22, at the time it is making its key budget decisions and therefore will not be able to develop meaningful savings proposals of the magnitude required to balance the Budget in 2021/22 with any degree of accuracy.
124. The Optimistic Scenario is presented at Appendix 3. The major assumptions here are that the Government continues to provide some form of RSG in 2021/22 and 2022/23, though at reducing levels and that the reductions in business rates due to the Fair Funding Review is only 2% and not the 4% modelled in the Standard Scenario and additional growth in the local economy takes place. This adds £250,000 of business rate revenue in 2021/22 compared to the Standard Model in 2021/22 and a further £380,000 in 2022/23.
125. The Optimistic Model also assumes the Council will be able to boost its Council Tax income from growth above the level already predicted in the Standard Model via further increases in the number of houses, reducing the number of people claiming Council Tax Support, increasing the yield from reducing empty properties, improving collection rates and raising council tax levels. There is some indication that Developers are now returning to Hyndburn and planning applications are being discussed for new housing in a variety of locations. Again, assuming a high level of performance in all these areas it would be possible to boost council tax income by around £80,000 by 2021/22 compared to the Standard Model and by £136,000 in 2022/23 and for the Collection Fund Surplus to rise by £33,000 in each of these two years.

126. These changes in Business Rates and Council Tax allows the Council to fully replenish the loss of £500,000 in Government Grant in 2021/22 and 2022/23 from these sources and its Revenue Resources increase compared to the Standard Scenario by £1.3m in 2021/22 and £1.0m in 2022/23.
127. Wage inflation and inflation in general supplies and services to the Council are expected to mirror the performance in the Standard Model over the 3 years with inflation only pushing up costs by 2% per year. The Optimistic Model however does assume that the changes to Land Search Service and Fees is either delayed until after 2022/23 or that the Council finds a way to adapt to the changes in a cost neutral manner, by either reducing costs or finding other sources of income in this area. This would remove £50,000 of financial pressure in 2021/22.
128. The Optimistic Scenario considerably eases the overall financial position of the Council such that it is able to generate a small surplus over the 3 years of the forecast.
129. As with the Pessimistic Scenario, the Optimistic Scenario painted here would be at the extreme end of the potential range of upside events that could occur to the Council's financial position and is therefore viewed as unlikely to occur in its entirety.
130. In these circumstances, given the existing uncertainties it is not possible to predict which scenario is more or less likely to occur. It is clear however, that the downside risk is far more damaging to the Council's wellbeing. Therefore, a course of action which values financial prudence at this time, seeking to continue to maintain Reserves at high levels, boosting income streams whenever possible particularly from growth in council tax, business rates and fees and charges and avoiding committing to any additional on-going revenue spending will provide the Council with the best chances of overcoming the challenges currently presented. Otherwise the Council will face significant challenges in maintaining its ability to present and operate a balanced budget and deliver its key services.

131. Clarity and certainty may come within a 12 month period if a new local government settlement for three years is announced, the economic consequences of Brexit are resolved and the worldwide economic and political turbulence returns to calmer times. This then should provide an environment in which effective robust financial planning can take place. If, however the Government is unable to map out a long term funding position for local government finance, Brexit remains unresolved and political and economic turmoil continues or escalates, financial forecasting will remain more difficult.

132. There is significant divergence in the financial predictions for the 3 years between the Pessimistic and Optimistic Models. The diagram below shows the potential range from the most pessimistic to the most optimistic put forward in this document.



133. The divergence between the Pessimistic and Optimistic Models in terms of annual savings that need to be identified is £104,000 in 2020/21, £2.433m in 2021/22 before reducing to £986,000 in 2022/23. The cumulative difference is almost £3.54m over the three years. The wide range in the cumulative impact between the difference scenarios underlines the degree of uncertainty in making accurate forecasts around the impact of local government funding, the growth in local revenues, the future rate of inflation and pay settlements and pressures on Revenue and Capital spending. Given the level of uncertainty it will be necessary for the Council to hold strong reserves over this period and hold off making any major commitments on expenditure until after the Fair Funding Review announces its decision on the future amounts the Council can expect to receive from 2021/22 onwards.
134. The Pessimistic and Optimistic Scenarios are meant to show the outer limits of what might occur and what the Council would face in these circumstances. The reality is that the Council is very unlikely to suffer from all bad news or all good news over the next 3 years and its fortunes will therefore lie somewhere between the two scenarios.
135. The figures in Appendix 1 therefore remain our current best estimate of the likely financial position over the next 3 years, with the risk of other overall positions diminishing as you move away from the prediction shown in the Standard Model.
136. This indicates a balanced budget can be achieved in 2020/21, with a relatively small savings target for the year of £116,000. The savings requirement for the following year is just over £1.0m, mainly stemming from the loss of RSG, with a break-even position expected the following year. The Pessimistic and Optimistic Scenarios at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 provide the most likely boundaries within which the savings target will fluctuate over the coming three years. There remains a potential for the savings target to fall outside these boundaries, though this is viewed as remote.

## Robustness of Forecast

137. The robustness of the forecasts beyond 2020/21 is severely diminished due to the uncertainties around the funding decisions made by the new Government in relation to local government. The Council could lose or gain significant funds from these changes and there is little current evidence on which to make appropriate forecasts and therefore the MTFS has made assumptions at hopefully either end of the spectrum of possibilities.
138. The uncertainty stemming from these decisions will necessitate the Council taking a defensive position in managing its finances and having to lock more funds into Reserves to cope with any negative dramatic swings from the Government's financial review.
139. It is expected that the uncertainty around these forecasts will disappear in late 2020 when the new Government announces the details of the Fair Funding Review and at that point it should be possible to update the robustness of the forecast to good or very good depending on the level of detail released and other factors remaining consistent with the current analysis.

## Overall Net Position

140. The Council faces continuing pressure on its finances over the next 3 years. The potential reductions in the level of government grant are significant and the Council will need to take tough decisions over service provision to maintain a balanced budget in these circumstances.
141. The likely reductions in business rates retained locally should be offset by growth from Frontier Park and elsewhere across Hyndburn, but if that growth fails to materialise the Council will face further financial pressure.

142. The key to the future financial wealth of the Council remains tied to the performance of the national economy and Central Government finances but a significant additional risk has been transferred to local government around the level of business rates generated and retained locally.
143. The Council therefore needs to continue to manage its revenue costs aggressively over the next 3 years. The single largest area of influence the Council can directly exert action over to improve its future financial position is around its Capital Programme. If the Capital Programme can continue to be self-financing over the period this will substantially ease the cumulative financial pressures on the Council over the 3 years of the MTFS and into the future.
144. The Council also needs to protect its Reserves and the flexibility it has in its current financial position until it is clear that it fully understands the outcome of any changes to local government financing that the new Government proposes and brings forward the detail of what they intend to implement.

## Appendix 1

### Three Year Standard Model Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Revenue Support Grant	£ 1,560,000		
Business Rates Funding	£ 4,283,000	£ 4,868,660	£ 5,216,033
Council Tax Collection	£ 5,247,000	£ 5,486,449	£ 5,731,440
Collection Fund Surplus	£ 137,000	£ 137,000	£ 137,000
	£ -		
<b>Total Resources</b>	<b>£ 11,227,000</b>	<b>£ 10,492,109</b>	<b>£ 11,084,473</b>
Prior Year Spend	£ 10,995,000	£ 11,227,000	£ 10,492,109
Adjustments to Prior Year			
HB Admin & Subsidy	£ 120,000	£ 120,000	£ 150,000
Salaries & Pension Costs	£ 310,000	£ 270,000	£ 270,000
General Supplies & Services	£ 176,000	£ 180,000	£ 130,000
Revenue Contributions to Capital Spend	£ -		
Reversal of Corporate Savings Target	£ 165,000	£ 116,000	
Pension Deficit Cost Reduction	-£ 528,000	-£ 500,000	
Growth Items	£ 105,000	£ 105,000	
<b>Estimated New Operating Costs</b>	<b>£ 11,343,000</b>	<b>£ 11,518,000</b>	<b>£ 11,042,109</b>
<b>Costs Exceed Resources by</b>	<b>£ 116,000</b>	<b>£ 1,025,891</b>	<b>-£ 42,364</b>
<b>Percentage Savings to Balance Budget</b>	<b>1.06%</b>	<b>9.14%</b>	<b>-0.40%</b>

## Appendix 2

### Three Year Pessimistic Model Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Revenue Support Grant	£ 1,560,000		
Business Rates Funding	£ 4,283,000	£ 4,568,660	£ 4,660,033
Council Tax Collection	£ 5,143,160	£ 5,143,153	£ 5,143,153
Collection Fund Surplus	£ 137,000	£ 137,000	£ 137,000
	£ -		
<b>Total Resources</b>	<b>£ 11,123,160</b>	<b>£ 9,848,813</b>	<b>£ 9,940,186</b>
Prior Year Spend	£ 10,995,000	£ 11,123,160	£ 9,848,813
Adjustments to Prior Year			
HB Admin & Subsidy	£ 120,000	£ 150,000	£ 150,000
Salaries & Pension Costs	£ 310,000	£ 540,000	£ 540,000
General Supplies & Services	£ 176,000	£ 310,000	£ 260,000
Revenue Contributions to Capital Spend	£ -		£ 250,000
Reversal of Corporate Savings Target	£ 165,000	£ 116,000	
Pension Deficit Cost Reduction	-£ 528,000	-£ 500,000	£ -
Growth Items	£ 105,000	£ 105,000	
<b>Estimated New Operating Costs</b>	<b>£ 11,343,000</b>	<b>£ 11,844,160</b>	<b>£ 11,048,813</b>
<b>Costs Exceed Resources by</b>	<b>£ 219,840</b>	<b>£ 1,995,347</b>	<b>£ 1,108,627</b>
<b>Percentage Savings to Balance Budget</b>	<b>2.00%</b>	<b>17.94%</b>	<b>11.26%</b>

**Three Year Optimistic Model  
Medium Term Financial Strategy  
2020/21 to 2022/23**

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Revenue Support Grant	£ 1,560,000	£ 1,000,000	£ 500,000
Business Rates Funding	£ 4,283,000	£ 5,118,660	£ 5,596,033
Council Tax Collection	£ 5,247,000	£ 5,567,153	£ 5,867,992
Collection Fund Surplus	£ 137,000	£ 170,000	£ 170,000
	£ -		
<b>Total Resources</b>	<b>£ 11,227,000</b>	<b>£ 11,855,813</b>	<b>£ 12,134,025</b>
Prior Year Spend	£ 10,995,000	£ 11,227,000	£ 11,855,813
Adjustments to Prior Year			
HB Admin & Subsidy	£ 120,000	£ 60,000	£ -
Salaries & Pension Costs	£ 310,000	£ 270,000	£ 270,000
General Supplies & Services	£ 176,000	£ 130,000	£ 130,000
Revenue Contributions to Capital Spend	£ -		
Reversal of Corporate Savings Target	£ 165,000	£ 116,000	
Pension Deficit Cost Reduction	-£ 528,000	-£ 500,000	£ -
Growth Items	£ 105,000	£ 105,000	
Estimated New Operating Costs	£ 11,343,000	£ 11,408,000	£ 12,255,813
Costs Exceed Resources by	£ 116,000	-£ 447,813	£ 121,788
Percentage Savings to Balance Budget	1.06%	-3.99%	1.03%