

The budget settlement we have received for the next financial year provides some positive news in that it is better than might have been expected.

However, the fact remains that we still face an uncertain future as we still await announcements on how Councils will be funded in future. We, like everyone else, are faced with increasing costs that negate the better than anticipated settlement especially when viewed against our MTFS. It will no doubt be the case that the new council to be elected in May will be faced with similar difficult decisions during the next four-years. Our policy during my time as Leader of the Council has always been to ensure the Council has a firm financial basis and that decisions that protect this will always be taken irrespective of the possible political fallout. This budget, like others, will seek to protect our core services but still provide the ability to support the most vulnerable, as has been demonstrated by the Cost-of-Living support package that has been put in place. We will continue to look for ways to increase our revenue income where appropriate, as we have shown by the policies we have put in place over the last 12 months. As always, I will continue to use all channels available to me to ensure that Central Government are aware of our needs and expectations highlighting the potential impact of Central Government decisions on our financial viability.

Our residents and businesses must always be at the heart of what we do, and we will focus not just on those statutory services we must deliver, but also those other services, which truly add the greatest value. Coupled with this we owe a duty of care to our employees to provide a stable platform on which to carry out their duties and develop their careers.

Clearly the Council's trajectory has been set by the updated Blaby District Plan which articulates those areas of greatest focus with need to meet our net carbon zero target by 2030 being paramount. In this respect the Blaby District Plan provides the roadmap, and in this respect the recent peer review feedback has clearly supported our direction of travel.

Whilst we continue to face challenges on many fronts, I remain both optimistic and confident that we can meet these, especially supported by our excellent team of officers and our willingness, as articulated earlier, to make difficult decisions. I retain the belief that few Councils are as open, effective and harmonious as Blaby and I am committed to making sure this does not change.

Within my own portfolio responsibilities, the notes attached to the budget below are self- explanatory.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Terry Richardson

Senior Officers: Chief Executive, Executive Director (S151), Executive Director, Corporate Services Group Manager, Neighbourhood Services and Assets Group Manager.

Portfolio Total

	2022/23 Approved Budget	2022/23 Revised Estimate	2023/24 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
Leader - Total	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£1,159,407	£1,202,286	£1,212,565	£53,158 4.58%	£10,279 0.85%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£587,069	£816,824	£712,796	£125,727 21.42%	-£104,028 -12.74%
3. Direct Income	-£305,800	-£308,800	-£306,300	-£500 0.16%	£2,500 -0.81%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£1,440,676	£1,710,310	£1,619,061	£178,385 12.38%	-£91,249 -5.34%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	22.12	22.12	21.80	-0.32 -1.45%	-0.32 -1.45%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Leader's portfolio includes establishment and running costs in respect of the Chief Executive, Directors, Health and Safety, Elections, Democratic Services and Governance, and Emergency Planning/Business Continuity.

The establishment budget for 2022/23 has been adjusted to allow for the recently settled pay award and uplifted pension contribution rates. The base budget for 2023/24 allows for a 3% pay award effective from 1st April 2023. Contractual increments are incorporated where applicable as well as increases to national insurance and pension contributions. There is no increase in headcount built into the 2023/24 establishment budget.

The increase in other gross direct expenditure between approved and revised stage for 2022/23 is due to the following reasons:

- The carry forward of unspent budget provision from 2021/22.
- An increase in external legal fees in connection with various planning issues, including Lubbethorpe and the Hinckley National Rail Freight.

In 2023/24, provision of £100,000 has been made to cover the cost of the district election next May. This will be covered from the Elections Reserve. The reserve is maintained in order to smooth the impact of District elections so that the cost does not fall in one financial year.

Land Charges fees represent the largest contributor to direct income, and this accounts for £247,000 of the total in the table above. Income has held up well and is expected to perform to a similar level in the next financial year. A further £31,000 is receivable from Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council and Oadby & Wigston Borough Council as their contribution towards the Land Charges service provided to them by Blaby. There is a future risk of loss of income because of the forthcoming migration of part of the local land charges function to HM Land Registry. This process has been delayed and is expected to be phased over more than one financial year. Implications for 2023/24 will be factored into the budget once dates are confirmed.

Chief Executive, Directors and Health & Safety

Chief Executive, Directors and Health & Safety	2022/23 Approved Budget	2022/23 Revised Estimate	2023/24 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£561,057	£569,584	£585,388	£24,331 4.34%	£15,804 2.77%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£15,817	£86,801	£43,302	£27,485 173.77%	-£43,499 -50.11%
3. Direct Income	£0	-£2,500	£0	£0 0.00%	£2,500 -100.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£576,874	£653,885	£628,690	£51,816 8.98%	-£25,195 -3.85%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	6.43	6.43	6.43	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The revised estimate allows for the pay award effective from 1st April 2022, which exceeds the provision made in the original budget. The 2023/24 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. Revised estimate includes one-off budget provision carried forward from 2021/22. Included in both financial years is the cost of commercial support from Charnwood Borough Council as approved as part of the management restructure in May 2022.
3. Non-recurring budget for shared cost of a study into the impact of the new prison at Glen Parva.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change to headcount.

Electoral Registration

Electoral Registration	2022/23 Approved Budget	2022/23 Revised Estimate	2023/24 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£87,207	£93,043	£96,686	£9,479 10.87%	£3,643 3.92%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£77,600	£108,690	£153,200	£75,600 97.42%	£44,510 40.95%
3. Direct Income	-£1,800	-£1,800	-£1,800	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£163,007	£199,933	£248,086	£85,079 52.19%	£48,153 24.08%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	2.67	2.67	2.67	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The revised estimate allows for the pay award effective from 1st April 2022, which exceeds the provision made in the original budget. The 2023/24 establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. The revised estimate includes budget a non-recurring carry forward from 2021/22 relating to IER Grant funding. Next financial year allows for the cost of the district election which will be funded from the Elections Reserve.
3. Income for sale of register of electors.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change in headcount.

Democratic Services, Governance, Information Management and Legal Services

Democratic Services, Governance, Information Management & Legal Services	2022/23 Approved Budget	2022/23 Revised Estimate	2023/24 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£511,143	£539,659	£530,491	£19,348 3.79%	-£9,168 -1.70%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£454,900	£582,581	£468,302	£13,402 2.95%	-£114,279 -19.62%
3. Direct Income	-£304,000	-£304,500	-£304,500	-£500 0.16%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£662,043	£817,740	£694,293	£32,250 4.87%	-£123,447 -15.10%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	13.02	13.02	12.70	-0.32 -2.46%	-0.32 -2.46%

Reasons for Variances

1. The revised estimate allows for the pay award effective from 1st April 2022, which exceeds the provision made in the original budget. The 2023/24 establishment budget takes account the pay award, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. The increase in the revised budget mainly relates to additional legal costs in relation to Lubbethorpe and the Hinckley National Rail Freight.
3. Mainly income from land charges.
4. Net impact of the variances listed above.
5. Minor change in FTE.

Emergency Planning & Business Continuity

Emergency Planning & Business Continuity	2022/23 Approved Budget	2022/23 Revised Estimate	2023/24 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1.Establishment Costs	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
2.Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£38,752	£38,752	£47,992	£9,240 23.84%	£9,240 23.84%
3.Direct Income	£0	£0	£0	£0 0.00%	£0 0.00%
4.Net Direct Expenditure	£38,752	£38,752	£47,992	£9,240 23.84%	£9,240 23.84%
5.Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. No establishment costs associated with this service.
2. Proposed budget includes increase in contribution for Business Continuity Resilience Partnership.
3. Not applicable.
4. Net impact.
5. Not applicable.

Portfolio Priorities

- To Lead the Council through a period of Recovery
- To oversee the delivery the Blaby District Plan
- To ensure the Council has robust arrangements in place for responding to emergencies and can fulfil its statutory obligations
- To ensure the Council has robust Health and Safety advisory capacity and arrangements in place for fulfilling its statutory obligations.
- To continue to work on the recommendations from the LGA Peer Review.

Services

Chief Executive & Directors

Includes costs for the Chief Executive and Directors' budgets and in addition the costs for the PA team and Health and Safety Officer budgets.

Electoral Services

Includes costs for electoral registration and elections, note that the 2023 District Elections are paid for by the district (national election/referenda, County and parish election expenses are recoverable).

Democratic Services, Governance, Information Management & Legal

Includes costs for the Legal, Democratic Services and Information Management budgets.

Emergency Planning

Includes the costs associated with the provision for Emergency Planning within the Authority, which is delivered across the Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland area.

Key Points

<p>Doing things differently – plans for the coming year</p>	<p><u>Leader, Directors & SLT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Senior Leadership Team will work with Members to develop the New Blaby District Plan following the election in May.• All members of the Senior Leadership Team will be supporting the Transformation agenda and to work towards to the Council becoming financially sustainable. <p><u>Electoral Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elections 2023• Parliamentary Boundary Review• Neighbourhood plans <p><u>Land Charges and Legal Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Electronic signature/sealing• Migration to HM Land Registry <p><u>Emergency Planning/Business Continuity arrangements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to develop tactical and strategic awareness across the Senior Leadership Team to continue to develop expertise in our collective emergency response to immediate and enduring events.• Complete review of Blaby DC incident management plan to incorporate incident specific action cards.• Focus on development of robust power outage plan and participation in national exercise to ensure LLR and Blaby are prepared for power outages.• Participation in exercises to develop resilience and business continuity arising from risks to cyber security.• Continue to manage the safety of the Huncote Leisure centre campus. <p><u>Corporate Health & Safety</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The safety of our staff will continue to be a key focus and our organisational Blueprint, and all Health & Safety policies will continue to be reviewed with particular reference to staff working in a more agile manner and consideration of mental health and the support available to staff.
<p>Income generation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Legal Service Team and Information Governance continue to offer services for other authorities. Land Charges income may be impacted in future by the transfer to HM Land Charges, however it is felt that the budget included is realistic and achievable Land Charges undertake work for OWBC and HBBC.

Capital plans for the portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No capital plans specific to this portfolio
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Key Performance Indicators

Land Charges

Turnaround time (smaller is better)

	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
2021/22	9.67	8	9.33	11	11.67	7.67	4.67	4	3.67	4.33	3	3.33
2022/23	5	5	4.67	5.67	4.67	4	4	4				

Customers

The Council will continue with its focus on delivering services that our customers need. This is going to be a particular focus as we transform and ensure that our customers remain at the heart of what we do.

Risks

A full risk register is maintained in relation to the teams within this portfolio and is regularly reviewed to ensure its accuracy. However, significant potential risks include the following issues:

- **Impact of Cost of Living on Residents** – It is vital that our Council is prepared to support our residents and local economy as they continue to cope with the Cost-of-Living Crisis. There is reputational risk to the Council if we are not in a position to assist our locality and along with partners, we will develop strategies to support both residents and business.
- **Emergency Planning** – reputational risk with partners and customers if appropriate response not available or given. Lessons learnt from both flooding incidents and the pandemic situation has helped us to review our plans and add to them to support our residents specifically in relation to recovery following an incident.
- **Health and Safety** - financial, legal, moral, reputational risk - negligence. Control measures managed through advisory service and internal policies, procedures and departmental audits.
- **Carbon Zero Target** – the Council is committed to meeting its net zero ambition by 2030 but the potential future financial gap represents a risk to that aim.
- **Delivery of the 2023 Elections** – all risks associated with staffing of the Election are being considered and mitigated.