

Budget Overview

20 October 2020

Budget 2021/22



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Statement from the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council

These budget proposals are presented in a period of extreme uncertainty resulting from the ongoing impact of Covid-19 – in particular how this is being felt in our local economy. There is uncertainty about how much income we will receive as a Council as well as about how much we will need to spend as we continue to respond to the pandemic. Equally, there is uncertainty over the national financial position including the level of funding that will be made available for local authorities in 2021/22.

We cannot pretend that the development of these budget proposals has been easy and, at this stage, there is still a “budget gap” which is greater than we would normally want at the start of the consultation period. We continue to have a statutory duty to balance the books by February 2021. We have a number of options to help us to meet the gap, many of which are dependent on decisions of central government.

Whilst the impact of Covid-19 on our community, and our economy in particular, has been significant (and has had a knock on effect on the Council’s financial position), the team Torbay response to Covid-19 has been fantastic – from the Torbay Helpline to the Food Alliance, the existing community and voluntary groups to the new Good Neighbours Network.

We want to ensure that this co-operative approach is at the heart of everything we do as we move forward. The opportunities that come about from partnership working need to be embraced as we look to redesign Council services. We are already seeing the benefits that groups like Friends of Oldway, Pride in Brixham and Babbacombe Bay Bloomers can bring to the whole community.

We also need to work in partnership to tackle the Climate Change Emergency. As a Council we are committed to becoming carbon neutral and we will work with others to create a carbon neutral community. We must increase our recycling rates which are currently lagging behind our neighbours and we must work to protect our coastal communities from the risk of flooding.

Our investment in Children’s Services is now reaping results – we have fewer children in residential placements and we are investing in our workforce. Our main aim is to improve the outcomes for our children and young people, but there are also financial benefits of this work with savings being realised. This means that we are more able to continue to deliver services which our community value.

Despite the financial impact of Covid-19, within our proposed budget for 2021/2022 we have not had to propose major cuts to services. We are still committed to delivering high quality social care for our children, young people, vulnerable adults and the elderly. We are able to maintain our Community Enablement Fund which will be fully launched in the coming weeks. In addition, we have been able to reinstate budgets to provide subsidies for local bus services which are so valued by our community and to provide additional support for vulnerable people requiring accommodation.

We look forward to hearing from you during this consultation period.



Councillor Steve Darling
Leader of Torbay Council



Councillor Darren Cowell
Deputy Leader and Cabinet
Member for Finance

Introduction

This document provides an overview of the Cabinet's proposals for the Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2021/2022. It highlights the consequences for the Council's budget as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and how we are proposing to meet our funding gap, primarily through our commitment to standardising and simplifying our processes to ensure we are a Council fit for the future.

Alongside this document a number of others will be published and will be available on the Council's website (www.torbay.gov.uk/budget-202122) and are listed below:

- **Proposals for Efficiencies, Income Generation and Service Change**
This sets out details of all of the draft proposals for service change, income generation and savings in order to produce a balanced budget for 2021/2022. We have included the high level environmental, economic and equality impacts of each proposal which we want to test with you during the consultation period. Where a draft proposal has been assessed as having a material impact on service users, a draft Equalities Impact Assessment has been prepared. These will be updated once the consultation process is completed and before any final decision on the proposal is made.
- **Draft Revenue Budget Digest**
This provides a description of what each Council service does and how much it is proposed that they will spend next year including how much income they will receive.
- **Fees and Charges**
The amount that the Council proposes to charge for its services over the next year.
- **Draft Capital Plan 2021/2022**
This explains which capital schemes the Council plans to fund over the coming year.

Other documents which will be updated and published on the Council's website will include the review of the Council's reserves, the Capital Strategy, the Treasury Management Plan, the Corporate Asset Management Plan and the latest version of Medium Term Resource Plan.

The Cabinet's Proposed Budget

Context

Torbay Council has been working hard over many years to find sustainable, innovative solutions to the financial challenges that we, and many other local authorities, have faced. We have explained before that our funding from central government has reduced dramatically whilst at the same time the demands on our high cost, statutory services have increased.

Although we had a modest increase in funding in 2020/21, our finances have been fundamentally impacted by Covid-19 as we explain below.

The Chancellor's national budget, which was expected in November 2020, has been delayed and therefore we have had to prepare our draft budget based on a "roll over" position. We have assumed that Government funding will be at the same levels as 2020/21 and that Council Tax will increase by 1.99%.

The continuing uncertainty about the future funding of local authorities means that we are again focussing solely upon a budget for 2021/22. We have had to make a number of funding assumptions which are explained in our Medium Term Resource Plan – an updated version of which will be published shortly. In short, we need to plan to fill a funding gap of approximately £16 million for the period 2021/22 to 2023/2024.

Maximising our use of Capital Expenditure

As our operational (revenue) spend remains under pressure, it is vital that we maximise the opportunities within our Capital Plan. This will be from two funding routes: firstly by working with and bidding for funding from central Government; and secondly by the Council's own use of "prudential" borrowing at historically low rates.

We have set out a clear commitment for a thriving Torbay. Over the past 12 months there have been committed investments on projects including:

- Harbour View hotel scheme in Torquay (which is due to complete in 2021),
- the development of the Claylands site in Paignton to support growth of high value manufacturing jobs,
- the acquisition of the Fleet Walk shopping centre in Torquay, and
- a loan to TDA, the Council's wholly owned and controlled economic development company, for a light industrial scheme in Paignton which is now fully let.

The past year has also seen continued investment along the Ring Road and the completion of EPIC, the Electronics and Photonics Innovation Centre, located in Paignton and key to our aspiration that this sector becomes an ever more important part of the local economy.

We have submitted two significant bids on behalf of the community for Torquay (under the Town Deal programme) and Paignton (under the Future High Streets Fund) which, if successful, will see the Council's capital programme grow further.

These bids to deliver vital town centre improvements are supported by Council-funded schemes such as the redevelopment of Crossways in Paignton where we have committed to a compulsory

purchase order. Plans include 90 extra care and sheltered affordable housing units for local people with ground floor commercial use. This decisive move will transform Crossways so that it no longer blights the centre of Paignton.

There is a commitment to confirm with Brixham Town Council and the community a way forward for the town centre site in Brixham. We will explore opportunities for further investment at Brixham Harbour.

We will be investing to create new employment space at Torquay Gateway and in delivering these projects will be using our powers to generate the biggest local benefit by creating opportunities for local suppliers and local employment.

Building more new homes for the local community continues to be important and the capital programme includes a scheme at Preston Down Road while our housing company, TorVista Homes, will begin delivery of its programme once approval has been received from Homes England.

Subject to planning permission, there will be investment in solar farms at two locations in Torbay so that we can develop generation capacity in line with our commitment to tackle the Climate Change Emergency. Torbay's coastal nature means that there will continue to be investment to better protect the area from the impacts of flooding and coastal erosion with schemes planned at locations across Torbay.

Investment in IT for services is continuing to provide a better and more efficient service to our residents. We expect a new care management system for vulnerable children to go live in 2021 along with an improved system to enable our customers to better interact with us.

Financial Impact of Covid-19

The financial impact of Covid-19 has constantly evolved during the 2020/21 financial year and will continue to change. At this stage, the financial impact in the next year can only be estimated. However, a number of specific issues are emerging and have been reflected in this draft budget.

The estimated financial impact of the pandemic that will continue into 2021/22 is £7.7m – this is based on the current Covid-19 position in Torbay. How the pandemic progresses from here is likely to have a further impact. The key issues, which are known at this point, are set out in the following paragraphs.

Collection Fund (Council Tax and Business Rates)

We are forecasting a shortfall in our Collection Fund for the current year of £5m. Our accounting rules mean that any in-year deficit is “rolled” forward to the next financial year to be funded.

In July 2020 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced its intention to allow any Collection Fund deficit in 2020/21 to be spread over three financial years from 2021/22. The impact on 2021/22 and the following two years is therefore £1.7m each year. MHCLG have “hinted” that there may be some support for councils for irrecoverable losses in the 2020 Spending Review, however no assumptions of support have been included at this stage.

Council Tax Support Scheme

This Scheme is to support residents with their Council Tax bills. For working age claimants the level of support is linked to their household income. Since March 2020 with the start of “lockdown” and its economic impact, the number of claimants for this scheme has increased. As household incomes could be impacted once the Furlough Scheme ends in October 2020, there could be a further increase in the number of claims. **These costs have been estimated at £0.750m (a 1% impact on total Council Tax income).**

Collectability of Council Tax

The Council’s share of Council Tax is over £72m a year. In the current year up until September, we have seen a cash reduction of 4% in year-on-year collection of Council Tax which has been attributed to the impact of Covid-19. **The ongoing impact on the collectability of Council Tax in 2021/22 due to the economic conditions has been estimated at 2% or £1.5m.**

Collectability of Business Rates

The Council’s share of National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) (otherwise known as Business Rates) is over £19m a year. Again, in the current year to September, we have seen a cash reduction of 10% in year-on-year collection of NNDR. Two thirds of Torbay businesses are in retail, leisure or hospitality and given the current economic conditions, **the ongoing impact on the collectability of NNDR in 2021/22 has been estimated at 5% or £1.0m.**

Leisure and Conference Centres

The Council has outsourced contracts for the leisure centre at Clennon Valley and the Riviera International Conference Centre (albeit the Council now controls the Board of the Riviera Centre). Both centres have seen a complete cessation of their income during “lockdown” and are unlikely to achieve historic income levels for up to two years. As a result both centres are in financial difficulty and **£0.5m has been estimated as the deficit funding required in 2021/22 for the Riviera International Conference Centre and Clennon Valley.**

Supporting Homelessness

In March 2020, under the “Everyone In” initiative, we accommodated an extra 140 clients, ensuring that all those homeless and sleeping rough in Torbay have been housed throughout the pandemic. Consequently, there is a forecast net increase in costs (after Housing Benefit) of £1m. We are in the process of seeking to accommodate these clients in permanent rented accommodation. However, the economic impact of Covid-19, is likely to lead to a further increase in the number of homeless people requiring support in 2021/22. **This impact has been forecast at level similar to 2020/21 at £0.750m.**

Home to School Transport

We are responsible for providing home to school transport for pupils that are eligible for support. A currently unresolved issue is the social distancing requirements that will have to

be applied to pupil transport. These requirements could reduce the number of pupils per vehicle which could increase costs. It is possible any increased costs could be funded by a new Government grant. However, at this stage, **an additional cost of £0.5m has been estimated for 2021/22.**

Service Income

There has been a reduction in income for a number of our services due to the impact of “lockdown”. Some income reductions are likely to be temporary, however the “new normal” for some of these income streams, particularly those linked to people’s behaviour and household income, could be a lower level than historic levels. In particular car park income could continue to be impacted. **This impact has been estimated at £0.5m.**

Rental Income

We receive an income from properties that we own for regeneration or investment purposes (such as Fleet Walk, Wren Park and the shop units in Tor Hill House). While any rental shortfall on our investment properties and Fleet Walk would initially be met from the relevant earmarked reserves there is likely to be an overall impact on rental income. **Therefore a contingency of £0.5m for rent income losses has been included.**

Council Redesign and Investment in Services

We have been able to reinstate budgets to provide subsidies for **local bus services** (£150,000) which are so valued by our community and also to provide additional **support for vulnerable people requiring accommodation** (£250,000).

Our Transformation Programme remains in place delivering savings across a range of our services.

The continued delivery of our **Improvement Plan within Children’s Services** has seen a significant and maintained reduction in the number of our Children Looked After in residential placements. This means that their outcomes are improved and there is a reduction in the associated spend.

The launch of our Learning Academy will help all social care staff build their professional skills and futures with us. A three year academy programme will give newly qualified social workers the time to learn while they practice, and give them the opportunity to progress to experienced social worker status two years into their career, and to advanced practitioner status at three years.

In all, we are proposing that we are able to remove around £2 million from the base budget of Children’s Services.

On 1 July 2020, we brought services including refuse collection and recycling from Tor2 and established a new wholly owned company – **SWISCo**. Our aim is to provide a new, improved waste, recycling, highways, street scene and grounds maintenance services for the Bay. SWISCo’s vision is to improve and sustain where we live and work by transforming service delivery.

Our revised Resources and Waste Strategy (which is currently subject to consultation) sets out how we aim to help everyone in Torbay recycle more. We want to develop a program of activities to promote recycling across Torbay. We want to increase food waste collection rates which are relatively low compared with other areas and provide an opportunity for residents to opt-into a scheme to collect garden waste from the kerbside. Overall our aim is to reduce the amount of waste that needs to be put in your wheelie bin (your “residual waste”) meaning that less money is spent on disposing of this type of waste.

As we explained during last year’s budget consultation, we are also planning to introduce charges at the Household Waste Recycling Centre for disposing of materials used in building projects (such as plasterboard, rubble and asbestos). This would bring Torbay in line with Devon County Council which already charges for these items.

We are implementing our **Council Redesign Programme** with the objective of modernising, simplifying and standardising how we work so we can support the communities of Torbay and build a resilient council fit for the future. Part of this will involve investing in the Council’s IT systems to ensure that our customers can access our services as effectively as possible.

We recognise that we need to change the way we approach our work so as to create a culture of co-operative partnership with our communities. We need to ensure that our whole organisation is more flexible, adaptive and focused on the needs of our customers and our communities.

Ultimately, we want to enable people and communities to more easily access support, information and influence and to act for themselves.

Over the coming weeks, we will be accelerating a number of initiatives which have developed as a result of our two Community Conferences and our collective response to Covid-19. This will include launching our Community Enablement Fund which will complement the existing Crowdfund Torbay project.

Proposals for service change, income generation and efficiencies

In the main, the proposals that we are putting forward in order to achieve a balanced budget for 2021/2022 will have a minimal impact on our residents, businesses and communities.

We are continuing our drive to be an efficient Council.

- We will be standardising and simplifying the back-office processes associated with Housing Benefit Administration, Customer Services and Financial Services, as well as continuing to work to reduce fraud and error. We will change how our Corporate Security and Environmental Enforcement services are operated. In total, this will bring savings of £255,000.
- We will also be standardising and simplifying the processes within Parking Services whilst also looking at delivering incentive schemes to increase footfall within our town centres. In addition, we will work to increase the take-up of cashless payments across our car parking estate.
- Within Children’s Services, our move to a new Case Management System will bring efficiencies which will result in £100,000 worth of savings.

- As we rationalise the number of IT licences across the Authority, savings of £50,000 will be achieved without any impact on services.
- We will ensure that our home to school transport provision is as efficient as possible through route mapping and moving towards our school escorts being employed as contractors.

We will look to maximise our income through ensuring that Tor Hill House is fully occupied by Council staff as well as by external tenants. This will also increase the footfall for the businesses within Torquay town centre.

Similarly, we have developed proposals for the in-house management of the café at Torre Abbey. An improved offer at the Abbey would have a positive impact on the Torbay economy as well as generating income for the Council. This will be trialled from Autumn 2020 with the aim of a full offer being in place from April 2021.

We will put in place a full cost recovery model for our allotments. The Council is currently covering the cost of water at the allotments. We will work with allotment holders to maximise the benefits of rain water harvesting and if water is still required, as with our other facilities, we will be asking for our allotment holders to cover these costs saving a total of £6000.

We are putting forward a range of proposals to reduce our carbon footprint and these include:

- Customers will be able to opt-into paperless billing for both Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates. If fewer than 20% of customers opted for paperless, there would be a significant reduction in paper and postage costs as well as a financial saving of £25,000.
- Through the change in our working practices as a result of Covid-19, we have reduced the amount of paper we are using and the amount of confidential waste we dispose of. We will ensure that this behaviour change continues so that we can achieve £84,000 of savings.
- Again as part of our changed working practices as a result of Covid-19, our social workers have had to be flexible in how they meet children, young people and their families and carers. This has led to reduced travel costs and freed up resources as a result of less travelling time. We will ensure that this behaviour change continues and we are aiming to make a saving of £100,000.
- We are currently asking for views on our draft Resources and Waste Management Strategy. Our Strategy seeks to support Torbay's path towards carbon neutrality by 2050 as part of the collaborative Devon-wide response to the climate emergency. We are already a Zero to Landfill authority and, by increasing the amount that we all recycle, we both meet our environmental obligations and generate a financial saving of £600,000.
- We will expand, where possible, the use of LED street lights whilst also ensuring that we have efficient and effective management of the street light network. This will save £50,000.

Estimates for income and expenditure

Our proposals include estimates of our income and expenditure for 2021/22, however we do not yet have certainty on a number of items which may increase or decrease any budget shortfall:

- The Council's tax base will not be set until December 2020.
- The level of the Council's Collection Fund surplus and National Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates) income will not be set until January 2021.

- The value of the New Homes Bonus Grant, Social Care Grant and other service grants will not be confirmed until the Local Government Finance Settlement is announced at the end of December 2020.
- Our Revenue Support Grant will be confirmed as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement.
- We are expecting to receive some funding for the irrecoverable Collection Fund losses we incurred this year as a result of Covid-19.
- There are possible changes to our 2021/2022 baseline Council Tax and Business Rate income baselines to reflect the current economic impact on this income.
- There is likely to be an impact on our funding as a result of the Government's 2020 Spending Review and the Local Government Finance Settlement.
- There could still be significant changes to the demands and costs of services and our income levels as a result of the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and its continued impact on the local economy.

Further to this, we are obviously also aware that we may wish to make changes to the draft proposals as a result of feedback that we receive during the consultation period.

Balancing the Budget 2021/22

The budget proposals as currently presented result in a budget gap of £2.6m. This is an unusual position – highly influenced by the uncertainties associated with Covid-19 but also linked to the uncertainties over central Government funding, income and expenditure for 2021/22.

The Chief Finance Officer considers this position to be reasonable at this stage of both the Council's and the Government's budget process for 2021/22; although clearly a robust balanced budget will need to be set by Council in February 2021.

On 12 October 2020, an additional £1 billion of funding was announced by the Government for local government Covid-19 pressures. At the time of writing, the allocation of this has not yet been announced but we are recommending Torbay's allocation of this is included in an earmarked reserve to be used to support future Covid-19-related financial pressures.

Ahead of the additional funding being announced (and indeed the details being confirmed), we have a number of options in mind for how the "gap" could be mitigated:

1. We are hopeful that additional funding will be received from central government, either as part of the Local Government Settlement (expected in December 2020) or through other means (such as that announced on 12 October). In particular, we expect that there will be additional funding to compensate us (in part) for the irrecoverable losses in Council Tax and Business Rate income in the current year and in recognition of a lower income "baseline" in 2021/22 for both Council Tax and Business Rates. We also hope to receive additional funding to recognise Covid-19-related ongoing service demand and income pressures on services (such as increased demand for housing support).
2. The draft budget includes a number of allocations to reflect reduced income and higher demand for services all directly linked to the ongoing impact of Covid-19. Officers will continue to work on mitigating these cost pressures.

3. If there is still a gap after the above two options have been taken into account, the Council could aim to identify the balance from earmarked reserves. A number of the Covid-19 pressures would hopefully only impact on 2021/22 as the impact of the pandemic (including that on the economy) reverses over time. Therefore, the use of reserves, on a one-off basis, could be a reasonable option to part fund the gap. We recognise that, if the impact continues into 2022/23, savings would need to be identified as soon as possible.
4. An alternative option to generate one-off revenue income would be to use a Capitalisation Direction to apply capital receipts to the revenue budget, combined with an option to convert planned revenue contributions to capital projects to prudential borrowing. This option would give a one-off return of the revenue funding with the consequence of an ongoing borrowing cost.
5. The final option would be to seek service reductions. Inevitably, savings can only be generated in a short time period from a limited number of expenditure types – usually by staffing reductions or by pausing spend where possible such as on asset and highways repair and maintenance. This would be a last resort.

Proposed Budget

The budget that is being proposed is set out in the table below. The detail behind this is included within the draft Revenue Budget Digest.

Directorate/Service	Expenditure £m	Income £m	Net £m
Adult Services	53.1	(14.1)	39.0
Children's Services	100.5	(55.1)	45.4
<i>Dedicated Schools Grant included in Children's Services. 2021/22 (estimated)</i>	42.0	(42.0)	0
Public Health	11.7	(1.3)	10.4
Sub Total – Joint Commissioning Team	165.3	(70.5)	94.8
Corporate Services			
Community Services	5.5	(3.9)	1.6
Corporate Services	8.7	(3.2)	5.5
Customer Services	46.4	(43.0)	3.4
<i>Housing benefit included in Customer Services</i>	40.3	(40.3)	0
Sub Total – Corporate Services	60.6	(50.1)	10.5
Finance	29.3	(31.8)	(2.5)
Place			
Business Services and Regeneration and Assets	29.4	(18.8)	10.6
Investment Properties	9.5	(14.1)	(4.6)
Planning and Transport	9.4	(2.4)	7.0
Sub-total – Place	48.3	(35.3)	13.0
TOTAL	303.5	(187.7)	115.8
Sources of Funding			
Council Tax – 1.99% increase			72.1
Collection Fund Surplus/Deficit			0
Revenue Support Grant			6.5
Business Rates (NNDR)			33.9
New Homes Bonus and Other Grants			0.7
TOTAL			113.2
Shortfall – October 2020			2.6

Timetable

Consultation on the budget proposals, both for the public and partner organisations, will be undertaken until 4 December 2020 so as much feedback as possible can be gathered. The consultation questionnaire can be found at [**www.torbay.gov.uk/consultation**](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/consultation).

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board will be holding its Priorities and Resources Review Panels during the consultation period when the budget proposals will be discussed in detail. The Board's formal response to the consultation will be agreed at its meeting on 11 November 2020.

Having considered the feedback from the consultation (including from the Overview and Scrutiny Board), the Cabinet will agree its final budget proposals at its meeting on Tuesday 19 January 2021.

The Council will meet on 11 February 2021 to discuss the revenue and capital budgets and if the proposed budgets are approved by a majority of members then they will be adopted on the night. If an objection to the budget is proposed and approved by a majority of councillors, the Council will adjourn. Any objections will be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 18 February 2021. Cabinet's response to any objection will be considered by the Council on 25 February 2021 when a final decision on the budget will be made by the whole Council. Council Tax levels will be set at the meeting of the Council on 25 February 2021 as the Council has to wait for notifications from the Fire and Rescue Authority, the Police Authority and Brixham Town Council before setting the overall Council Tax for Torbay.

Details of the meetings when the budget proposals will be discussed are available on the Council's website: [**www.torbay.gov.uk/meetings-and-decisions**](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/meetings-and-decisions)

Appendix 1: Summary Budget Proposals 2021/2022

Proposal	Amount £000	Proposal	Amount £000
Council Fit for the Future		Tackling Climate Change	
Revised operating model for Corporate Security, CCTV and Environmental Enforcement	45	Implementation of Resource and Waste Management Strategy	600
Improved use of Churston Library	14	Street Lighting contract management	50
Improved use of Paignton Library and Information Centre	20	Thriving economy	
Paperless billing for Council Tax and NNDR	25	Increased income from leased properties	50
Redesign of Housing Benefit Administration	10	Thriving People	
Full cost recovery in allotments	6	Efficiencies within Home to School Transport	50
Efficiencies resulting from the new Children's Social Care case management system	100	In-house delivery of Torre Abbey Café	50
Rationalisation of IT licences	50		
Redesign of parking services	100		
Redesign of Exchequer and Benefits	50		
Redesign of Financial Services	75		
Reduced fraud and error in Business Rates and Council Tax	75		
Reduced spend on print, post and confidential shredding	84		
Reduced travel costs	100		

Further details of the proposals and the following document are available online at
www.torbay.gov.uk/budget-202122

Complete the consultation questionnaire at
www.torbay.gov.uk/consultation

This document can be made available in other languages and formats.
For more information please contact consultation@torbay.gov.uk
