

# COUNCIL AGENDA

**Monday, 19th February 2024 at 7.15pm**

**Council Chamber, Braintree District Council,  
Causeway House, Bocking End, Braintree, CM79HB**

**THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Members of the public will be able to view and listen to this meeting via YouTube.  
To access the meeting please use the link below:

<http://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

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**Members of the Council are requested to attend this meeting to transact the business set out in the Agenda.**

Councillor J Abbott	Councillor J Edwards	Councillor S Rajeev
Councillor D Abram	Councillor C Finch	Councillor R Ramage
Councillor M Ault	Councillor M Fincken	Councillor F Ricci
Councillor J Ayten	Councillor D Garrod	Councillor P Schwier
Councillor J Baugh	Councillor M Green	Councillor G Spray
Councillor J Beavis	Councillor J Hayes	Councillor M Staines
Councillor J Bond	Councillor P Heath	Councillor B Taylor
Councillor K Bowers	Councillor D Holland	Councillor W Taylor
Councillor L Bowers-Flint	Councillor A Hooks	Councillor M Thorogood
Councillor G Butland	Councillor L Jefferis	Councillor P Thorogood
Councillor J Coleridge	Councillor J Martin	Councillor R van Dulken
Councillor G Courtauld	Councillor S Mason	Councillor T Walsh
Councillor M Cunningham	Councillor A Munday	Councillor L Walters
Councillor T Cunningham	Councillor I Parker	Councillor E Williams
Councillor C Dervish	Councillor J Pell	Councillor T Williams
Councillor T Diamond	Councillor G Prime	Councillor J Wrench
		Councillor B Wright

Members unable to attend the meeting are requested to forward their apologies for absence to the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email [governance@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:governance@braintree.gov.uk) by 3pm on the day of the meeting.

D GASCOYNE  
Chief Executive

## **INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS – DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

### **Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), Other Pecuniary Interests (OPI), or Non-Pecuniary Interests (NPI).**

Any Member with a DPI, OPI or NPI must declare the nature of their interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Members must not participate in any discussion of the matter in which they have declared a DPI or OPI or participate in any vote, or further vote, taken on the matter at the meeting. In addition, the Member must withdraw from the Chamber where the meeting considering the business is being held unless the Member has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.

### **Public Question Time - Registration and Speaking**

The Agenda allows for a period of up to 30 minutes for Public Question Time. Members of the public may ask questions or make a statement to the Council on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties, or which affects the district, and matters listed on the Agenda.

All questions or statements should be concise and should be able to be heard within the 3 minutes allotted to each speaker.

Anyone wishing to ask a question or make a statement is requested to register their interest by completing the Public Question Time registration [online form](#) by midday on the **second working day** before the day of the meeting.

For example, if the meeting is on a Tuesday, the registration deadline is midday on Friday, (where there is a Bank Holiday Monday you will need to register by midday on the previous Thursday). The Council reserves the right to decline any requests to register to speak if they are received after this time.

When registering for Public Question Time please indicate whether you wish to attend the meeting 'in person', or to participate remotely. People who choose to join the meeting remotely will be provided with the relevant link and joining instructions for the meeting.

Please note that completion of the on-line form does not guarantee you a place to speak during Public Question Time. You will receive email notification from the Governance Service confirming whether your request is successful.

The Chairman of the Council has discretion to amend the order in which questions or statements are presented to Full Council.

In the event that a registered speaker is unable to connect to the meeting, or if there are any technical issues, their question/statement may be read by a Council Officer.

Further information on Public Question Time is available on the [Council's website](#).

### **Health and Safety:**

Anyone attending a meeting of the Council is asked to make themselves aware of the nearest available fire exit. In the event of an alarm sounding, you must evacuate the building immediately and follow all instructions provided by staff. You will be directed to the nearest designated assembly point where you should stay until it is safe to return to the building.

**Documents**

Agendas, Reports and Minutes may be accessed via [www.braintree.gov.uk](http://www.braintree.gov.uk)

**Data Processing**

For further information on how the Council processes data, please see the Council's Privacy Policy.

[https://braintree.gov.uk/info/200136/access\\_to\\_information/376/privacy\\_policy](https://braintree.gov.uk/info/200136/access_to_information/376/privacy_policy)

**Mobile Phones**

Please ensure that your mobile phone is switched to silent during the meeting in order to prevent disturbances.

**Webcast and Audio Recording**

Please note that this meeting will be webcast and audio recorded. You may view webcasts for up to 6 months after the meeting using this link: <http://braintree.public-tv/core/portal/home> The meeting will also be broadcast via the Council's YouTube Channel.

**Comments and Suggestions**

We welcome comments to make our services as efficient and effective as possible. If you have any suggestions regarding the meeting you have attended you may send these to [governance@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:governance@braintree.gov.uk)

**1 Apologies for Absence**

**2 Declarations of Interest**

To declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest relating to items on the agenda having regard to the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice where necessary before the meeting.

**3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 11th December 2023 (copy previously circulated).

**4 Public Question Time**

Only Registered Speakers will be invited by the Chairman to speak during public question time.  
Please see the agenda notes for guidance.

**5 To receive any announcements/statements from the Chairman and/or Leader of the Council.**

**6 Questions to the Leader and Cabinet**

The Chairman will invite Councillors to ask questions of the Leader and the Cabinet Members on matters which relates to the functions of the Leader and Cabinet Members, the powers and duties of the Council or matters pertaining to the District which are relevant to their respective portfolios which have taken place since the last meeting of the Council.

All Councillors are able to ask one question and questions will commence with the Leader of the Opposition. The order of all other questions will be at the discretion of the Chairman.

A period of up to 30 minutes is allowed for this item. Council Procedural Rule 12.13 applies.

**7 Council Budget and Council Tax 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28**

Please note: This has been circulated as a separate report and published on the [Council's website](#).

1. Council Budget and Council Tax 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28 - Addendum Report

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2. Council Tax Resolution 2024-25 - Report to follow.

<b>Report Title:</b> Council Budget and Council Tax 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28 – <b>Addendum Report</b>	
<b>Report to:</b> Council	
<b>Date:</b> 19 <sup>th</sup> February 2024	<b>For:</b> Decision
<b>Key Decision:</b> No	<b>Decision Planner Ref No:</b> DP2023/63
<b>Report Presented by:</b> Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of the Council and Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance	
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Phil Myers, Head of Finance <a href="mailto:phil.myers@braintree.gov.uk">phil.myers@braintree.gov.uk</a>	

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To update the Council Budget and Council Tax 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28 to take account of the final Local Government Finance Settlement.
- 1.2 To update the recommendations made to Full Council by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 5th February 2024. The updated recommendations within this report amend those contained within the report published on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (the Initial Budget Report). Where required, revised appendices to support changes in recommendations are appended to this report, otherwise any references to appendices are to those contained in the Initial Budget Report. Revised recommendations or appendices are **highlighted in bold** within this report.

**2. Recommendations (to amend those set out in the Initial Budget Report)**

- 2.1 The following recommendations amend those recommendations to Council as set out in the Initial Budget Report.

Cabinet **Recommend to Council** that the following be approved

- 2.1.1 The revenue budget for 2024-25 as set out in **Appendix A** to this **Addendum Report**, having considered the report of the S151 Officer on the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves as set out in Appendix F.
- 2.1.2 The Council's discretionary fees and charges for 2024-25 as detailed in Appendix B to the report.
- 2.1.3 Delegated authority is given to the appropriate Cabinet Members to determine the level of charges where these are subject to third party

information or agreed with external partners; or where in-year changes are required for commercial or concessionary reasons.

- 2.1.4 The Council's policy for discretionary business rate relief (under section 47 of the Local Government Act 1988), as detailed in Section 9 of the report.
- 2.1.5 The discretionary policy for council tax discounts and exemptions, and premiums as detailed in Section 12 of the report, including reducing the qualifying period from two years to one year for certain empty properties from which a 100% premium will become chargeable; and to provide notice that it is intended to introduce a 100% premium on second homes, subject to certain exemptions, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025.
- 2.1.6 To delegate to the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, to determine the exemption categories for Council Tax premiums on empty homes and second homes, taking into account government guidance.
- 2.1.7 The Council's Pay Policy as detailed in Appendix C to the main, report, subject to the amounts of pay included being updated in line with the final agreed pay settlement for the cost-of-living award due to be implemented with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.
- 2.1.8 The estimated movements on earmarked reserves as detailed in Appendix D to the main report.
- 2.1.9 **The additional grant of £172,834 receivable from the final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024-25 is combined with half of the allocation of New Homes Bonus receivable for 2024-25 and used to fund expenditure incurred on the Fit for the Future transformation programme, with the balance of New Home Bonus held as a risk management reserve.**

### **Capital**

- 2.1.10 The Capital bids for 2024-25 listed in Appendix E to the main report.
- 2.1.11 A Disabled Facilities Grants programme which matches the resources allocated to the Council from the Better Care Fund.

### **Capital and Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy**

- 2.1.12 The Capital and Investment Strategy as detailed in Appendix G to the main report including the Authorised Borrowing Limit of £50million for the 2024-25 financial year, the related Prudential Indicators, and the policy for Minimum Revenue Policy.
- 2.1.13 The Treasury Management Strategy as detailed in Appendix H to the main report including related Prudential Indicators.

## **Council Tax**

- 2.1.14 A council tax requirement of £11,386,784, resulting in the Council's element of council tax being £200.07 for a Band D property in 2024-25.

Note for the sake of clarity unless it states **Addendum Report**, the reference to report (or appendices) relate to the original Council Budget and Council Tax 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28 report published on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

### **3. Summary of Issues**

#### **Local Government Finance Settlement 2024-25 and Other Budget Changes**

- 3.1 Detail of the final Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) were received on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024. The Council has been allocated additional funding of £172,834, comprising:
- Services Grant (+£2155 giving a total of £24,345)
  - Rural Services Delivery Grant (+£4,097 giving a total of £30,046)
  - Funding Guarantee (+£166,582 giving a total of £982,723)
- 3.2 The additional funding follows the announcement made by Government on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024, of an additional £600 million for local authorities. This included an additional £15 million to be distributed as Rural Services Delivery Grant, and an increase in the funding guarantee so that all local authorities would see a minimum 4% in their Core Spending Power, before taking any local decisions on raising council tax.
- 3.3 The additional Services Grant reflects funding held back nationally in the provisional settlement pending confirmation by Government of allocations of New Homes Bonus.
- 3.4 No other changes have been made to the Council's provisional allocations or the Council Tax referendum principles that were originally published on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023.
- 3.5 As part of the announcement on the final LGFS, the Government confirmed that all councils will be required to prepare and publish a productivity plan by July 2024, which must be agreed by Leaders and members, published on websites, and updated for progress.
- 3.6 The Government stated that productivity plans are expected to cover the following areas:
- transformation of services to make better use of resources;
  - opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design;

- ways to reduce wasteful spend within systems, including specific consideration of expenditure on consultants and staff Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programmes. This does not include programmes designed to promote integration and civic pride, and counter extremism; and
- barriers preventing activity that Government can help to reduce or remove.

3.7 It is proposed that the additional funding is used in conjunction with the current reserve and proposed allocation of New Home Bonus to meet expenditure incurred on the Fit for Future transformation programme.

3.8 By allocating the extra funding to the Fit for the Future transformation programme this will further support the Council to deliver its corporate objectives of being a high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services; and delivers better outcomes for residents and businesses whilst reducing costs to taxpayers.

#### **4. Options**

4.1 The Government expects councils to use the additional funding made available through the final Local Government Finance Settlement and not use to increase reserves. By using the extra funding for the Fit for the Future transformation programme this will allow the Council to proceed at much greater pace bringing forward the necessary resources and investment required to achieve the longer-term goals and benefits. Whilst the funds are unringfenced and could be used for other purposes, this is the preferred option.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

5.1 This report sets out the financial implications of the updated budget proposals taking into account the extra funding receivable from the final Local Government Finance Settlement.

#### **6. Legal Implications**

6.1 There are no new legal implications from those set out in the Initial Budget Report as result of this Addendum Report.

#### **7. Equality and Diversity Implications**

7.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not



(c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.3 The proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

## **8. List of Appendices**

### **Addendum Report Revised Appendix A:**

- (i) Revised General Fund MTFS Financial Profile 2024-25 to 2027-28
- (iv) General Fund Business Plan Summary 2024-25
- (v) General Fund by Type of Expenditure and Income Summary 2024-25.

## **9. Background Papers**

[\*Council Budget and Council Tax 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28\*](#)

**ADDENDUM APPENDIX A (i)**

**General Fund MTFS Financial Profile**

	MTFS Period			
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Base Budget b/f</b>	<b>18195</b>	<b>18885</b>	<b>18697</b>	<b>19273</b>
<b>Base Budget Changes</b>				
Pay award, increments, & other staff related <sup>1</sup>	1370	582	581	566
Energy, fuel, and other inflation	287	110	108	195
Vehicle Replacement Programme financing	25	25	195	215
Fee & Charges provision	-20	-100	-50	-50
Treasury Management income	-870	580	90	-
Budget demand & growth previously agreed (adj.)	-2			
Unavoidable pressures (net)	351	98		63
Growth	381	354	132	
Savings/Additional Income previously profiled	-142	-5		
New Savings/Additional Income	-296	9		
Changes on previous savings	106			
Green Waste Charging	-500	-400		
Future year ongoing savings required		-1441	-480	-425
<b>Cumulative savings required</b>		<b>-1441</b>	<b>-1921</b>	<b>-2346</b>
<b>Base Budget c/f</b>	<b>18885</b>	<b>18697</b>	<b>19273</b>	<b>19837</b>
<b>Non-Base Budget Items</b>				
Councillor Community Grant Scheme	61			
One-off Investment	393			
<b>General Fund unallocated balances</b>				
Addition/(-withdrawal) <sup>2</sup>	262			
<b>Budget Requirement before Govt. &amp; Local Tax</b>	<b>19601</b>	<b>18697</b>	<b>19273</b>	<b>19837</b>
Revenue Support Grant	-185	-189	-193	-197
Retained Business Rates	-6431	-6697	-6864	-7011
Rural Services Grant	-30	-26	-26	-26
Services Grant	-24	-	-	-
Funding Guarantee	-983	?	?	?
Collection Fund Balance - Business Rates	-279	-	-	-
Collection Fund Balance - Council Tax	-282	-	-	-
<b>Council Tax Income</b>	<b>11387</b>	<b>11785</b>	<b>12190</b>	<b>12603</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes £568k for extra cost of the final 2023 pay award

<sup>2</sup> 2024-25 is 'balanced budget' after using one-off Collection Fund & Service Reserves offset by addition to balances

	2024/25
Council Tax Requirement	£11,386,784
Council Taxbase (Band D Equiv)	56914
<b>Band D Council Tax Rate</b>	<b>£200.07</b>
Y-on-Y increase	£5.76
Per week (rounded)	11p

GENERAL FUND BUDGETS 2024/25 - BUSINESS PLAN SUMMARY

ADDENDUM APPENDIX A (iv)

	Controllable Budgets							Reversal Use of Earmarked Reserves 2024/25 £	Planned Net Spend 2024/25 £
	Net Budget 2023/24 (Updated)	Ongoing Demands	One-off or Short-Term Demands	Reductions and Savings	Pay, Pension Fund, Inflation & Recharges	Other Budget Changes <sup>1</sup>	Proposed Controllable Net Budget 2024/25 £		
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£		
<b>Business Plan</b>									
Asset Management	-2,699,430	54,250	20,000	-134,100	10,280	-121,350	-2,870,350	0	-2,870,350
Community & Leisure	799,790	109,640	61,250	-15,660	27,900	-61,250	921,670	521,110	1,442,780
Corporate Management Plan	1,634,990	0	0	0	58,450	0	1,693,440	19,810	1,713,250
Economic Development	237,430	40,000	0	0	23,310	0	300,740	210,750	511,490
Environment	940,220	1,380	0	-19,500	17,520	0	939,620	51,760	991,380
Finance	1,359,030	201,770	0	-842,150	145,560	11,820	876,030	2,100	878,130
Governance	1,324,530	22,170	0	0	52,850	8,110	1,407,660	50,000	1,457,660
Housing Services	957,550	1,090	0	0	44,830	0	1,003,470	237,810	1,241,280
ICT & Facilities	2,044,970	8,380	0	-25,500	57,030	0	2,084,880	0	2,084,880
Marketing & Communications	653,320	8,900	0	-4,000	39,060	0	697,280	0	697,280
Operations	7,755,640	-30,040	0	-514,290	285,510	-29,000	7,467,820	201,130	7,668,950
People & Performance	1,027,450	80,000	0	0	34,220	0	1,141,670	13,000	1,154,670
Strategic Investment	35,610	100	0	0	0	0	35,710	160,000	195,710
Sustainable Development	1,500,630	106,600	0	-72,000	72,120	0	1,607,350	130,850	1,738,200
<b>COST OF SERVICES</b>	<b>17,571,730</b>	<b>604,240</b>	<b>81,250</b>	<b>-1,627,200</b>	<b>868,640</b>	<b>-191,670</b>	<b>17,306,990</b>	<b>1,598,320</b>	<b>18,905,310</b>
Corporate Financing	1,330,410	150,000	172,834	-75,000	767,370	540,182	2,885,796		2,885,796
Transfer to/(-from) Earmarked Reserves	-495,091	0	200,000	0	0	-558,872	-853,963	-1,598,320	-2,452,283
Contribution to/(-from) Balances	-765,486	0	0	0	0	1,027,154	261,668		261,668
<b>BUDGET REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>17,641,563</b>	<b>754,240</b>	<b>454,084</b>	<b>-1,702,200</b>	<b>1,636,010</b>	<b>816,794</b>	<b>19,600,491</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19,600,491</b>
Government Grants (General)	-809,657	0	0	0	0	-412,050	-1,221,707	0	-1,221,707
Retained Business Rates	-5,667,380	0	0	0	0	-763,620	-6,431,000	0	-6,431,000
Collection Fund Balance - Business Rates	-100,075	0	0	0	0	-178,925	-279,000	0	-279,000
Collection Fund Balance - Council Tax	-221,760	0	0	0	0	-60,240	-282,000	0	-282,000
<b>COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>10,842,691</b>	<b>754,240</b>	<b>454,084</b>	<b>-1,702,200</b>	<b>1,636,010</b>	<b>-598,041</b>	<b>11,386,784</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11,386,784</b>

<sup>1</sup>"Other Budget Changes" reflects changes arising from use of balances/ reserves; Collection Fund items; reversal of prior year one-off investment; treasury management; and Local Government Finance Settlement

GENERAL FUND BUDGETS 2024/25 - BY TYPE OF EXPENDITURE & INCOME

ADDENDUM APPENDIX A (v)

	Controllable Budgets						
	Budget 2023/24 (Updated)	Ongoing Demands	One-off or Short-Term Demands	Reductions and Savings	Pay, Pension Fund, Inflation & Recharges	Other Budget Changes	Proposed Controllable Budget 2024/25
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>							
Employee Related Expenses	23,085,930	442,750	0	31,500	1,447,490	-108,110	24,899,560
Premises Related Expenses	2,530,630	35,000	0	-6,000	-940	-1,650	2,557,040
Supplies & Services	4,986,560	83,100	81,250	-45,160	119,770	-282,820	4,942,700
Members Allowances	509,470	0	0	0	14,320	0	523,790
Transport Related Expenses	2,961,020	-24,600	0	0	43,660	-83,210	2,896,870
Housing Benefit Payments	24,481,070	100,000	0	0	0	0	24,581,070
Third Party Contracts	2,368,840	29,100	0	29,000	47,200	-29,000	2,445,140
New Homes & Growth Dividend	1,650,000	0	0	0	0	-1,650,000	0
Capital Financing Costs (incl. MRP)	1,229,440	0	0	0	0	177,450	1,406,890
Capital Expenditure from Revenue Reserves	0	0	0	0	0	2,770,840	2,770,840
Other Expenditure	604,389	0	172,834	-61,790	790	-301,800	414,423
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>64,407,349</b>	<b>665,350</b>	<b>254,084</b>	<b>-52,450</b>	<b>1,672,290</b>	<b>491,700</b>	<b>67,438,323</b>
<b>INCOME</b>							
Housing Benefit Subsidy	-23,891,130	0	0	0	0	-57,870	-23,949,000
Specific Govt. Grants and New Homes Bonus	-1,996,699	37,720	0	0	0	-282,148	-2,241,127
Joint Financing Income	-1,798,890	-65,000	0	-75,000	-42,120	0	-1,981,010
Costs Recovered & Allowances	-2,991,560	188,120	0	-80,000	-10,000	0	-2,893,440
Sales	-806,950	1,550	0	0	0	0	-805,400
Fees & Charges	-5,945,430	-32,000	0	-553,650	29,500	0	-6,501,580
Rents	-4,375,160	20,000	0	-81,600	-2,730	0	-4,439,490
Interest & Dividends	-1,293,920	0	0	-840,000	0	0	-2,133,920
Other Income	-187,430	0	0	-19,500	-2,000	0	-208,930
Recharges to Capital and Other Funds	-426,710	-61,500	0	0	-5,110	0	-493,320
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-43,713,879</b>	<b>88,890</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-1,649,750</b>	<b>-32,460</b>	<b>-340,018</b>	<b>-45,647,217</b>
Transfer to/(-from) Earmarked Reserves	-2,286,421	0	200,000	0	-3,820	-362,042	-2,452,283
Contribution to/(-from) Balances	-765,486	0	0	0	0	1,027,154	261,668
<b>BUDGET REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>17,641,563</b>	<b>754,240</b>	<b>454,084</b>	<b>-1,702,200</b>	<b>1,636,010</b>	<b>816,794</b>	<b>19,600,491</b>
Government Grants (General)	-809,657	0	0	0	0	-412,050	-1,221,707
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