

Response to Select Committee Scrutiny Inquiry

Inquiry Title	Budget Scrutiny Inquiry 2018
Select Committee Owner	Mr David Watson, Chairman – Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee
Date agreed by Select Committee	
Lead Cabinet Member	Mr Martin Tett, Leader
Lead Senior Officer (Director)	Mr Richard Ambrose, Director of Finance

Recommendation	Agreed Yes/No	BCC Cabinet / Partner Agency Response including proposed action	Responsible Cabinet Member (for BCC recs)	Senior Responsible Officer Owner	Action by date
1. That all Business Units across the Council should switch to timely monthly management accounting on an accruals basis including meaningful variance analysis/reporting.	In part	The Cabinet agrees that we need to ensure a disciplined approach to budget forecasting. Monthly accounts are currently produced on a timely basis, including variance analysis. The Director of Finance is leading a review of financial management across the organisation and will consider our forecasting methodology and reporting arrangements as part of that review.	Leader	Director of Finance	July 2018
2. That there should be improved level of visibility in individual budget lines across all portfolios for future Budget Scrutiny Inquiries. The financial data submitted should clearly identify the major costs of running the Council e.g. Home to School Transport, the EfW plant income and costs, on street parking revenue, Skills budget, number of Full Time Equivalent(FTEs) staff, costs of agency staff/interims, key drivers of demand in Social Care and associated unit costs. A high level Budget Book to enable more transparency for Members and the Public is proposed.	In part	As part of the review of financial management identified above, we are reviewing reporting arrangements to ensure that financial information is clearly aligned to individual services which will help improve accessibility of the data. We will also carry out research into best practice in other councils, including in relation to the use of budget books, and consider opportunities for improving visibility of the major costs of running the council.	Leader	Director of Finance	July 2018

<p>3. That where there are figures in the County Council budget which will also be reflected in a District Council's budget, there should be liaison between financial colleagues to ensure that the relevant figures agree e.g. recycling credits, S106 funding.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>We fully agree that there should be liaison with partner agencies, including District Councils, where there are key dependencies. There is already good liaison on many of the areas identified by the Select Committee – however, we recognise that there may be occasions where relevant figures do not match as organisations have taken different views.</p>	<p>Leader</p>	<p>Director of Finance</p>	<p>November 2018</p>
<p>4. That mandatory face to face exit interviews should be undertaken for all staff on Range 10 or above, and where deemed appropriate, staff below that range and that the online exit interview process should be promoted more effectively to capture feedback from staff at other levels.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The opportunity for face to face exit interviews is already available for all staff. Further steps will be taken to promote this, as well as the online exit interview process, although clearly we cannot make it mandatory for leavers to participate in these interviews.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Resources</p>	<p>Director of HR</p>	<p>April 2018</p>
<p>5. That Cabinet ensures that there is clear and effective leadership and programme management in the area of ICT and Digital to ensure that the Council's systems are robust, fit for purpose and can share data, where appropriate. This should include a centralised approval system for ICT procurement to ensure value for money and an improved customer experience.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Cabinet agrees that effective leadership and governance arrangements are critical for the delivery of our technology strategy. We agree that it would be useful to ensure a centralised approval system, although will need to take care to ensure that such governance arrangements are designed in a way to be agile and responsive to service requirements.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Resources</p>	<p>Director of Technology</p>	<p>April 2018</p>
<p>6. That a realistic figure is included in the final Children's Services budget for legal fees.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>There is more work to do to fully understand our expenditure on legal fees in children's services. The Cabinet Member will consider realigning budgets within the overall portfolio budget envelope in order to make the appropriate provision for legal costs. The Cabinet has also proposed setting aside a contingency of £250k to manage the risks associated with this area of expenditure.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p>	<p>Executive Director of Children's Services</p>	<p>May 2018</p>

7. That the Fostering Service undertakes a benchmarking exercise on foster carers allowances and a best practice review of independent fostering agencies to better inform the Council's approach to recruiting additional in-house foster carers.	In part	As part of our Change for Children Programme, we have a specific focus on increasing our numbers of in-house foster carers. We know from previous research that, in making a choice, foster carers tends to focus on the wrap around support offered rather than the level of allowances. We will continue to review best practice from the public and private sectors and develop our approaches accordingly	Cabinet Member for Children's Services	Executive Director of Children's Services	Ongoing
8. That there should be a detailed independent review of the assumptions and cost drivers used to develop the Children's Services and Health and Wellbeing budgets, as well as a comprehensive review of processes and financial modelling to ensure more accurate forecasting of spend.	In part	Key drivers of expenditure in these areas are volume of demand and the cost of provision, both of which can be volatile. As a result, it is important to recognise that these budgets can be challenging to predict with accuracy. We have started a detailed review of the processes and methodologies underpinning our forecasting in these budget areas, in order to provide Members with greater confidence about the budget forecasts during the course of the year. The proposed budget also includes additional contingencies to reflect the high risks within Social Care.	Leader	Director of Finance	July 2018
9. That the provision of Home to School Transport, both mainstream and children with EHC Plans, by the Council meets national statutory guidelines only, that discretionary transport should be phased out and that parents/guardians are provided with reasonable notice for any policy changes.	In part	Whilst the Council does currently offer some home to school transport provision that goes beyond our statutory obligations, we are committed to achieving full cost recovery. We will also ensure clear consultation with parents and carers when considering any further changes in this area. Further work is needed to fully understand the financial model of the discretionary provision and to establish alternative options for parents and carers.	Cabinet Member for Education & Skills	Executive Director of Children's Services	September 2018
10. That as part of the Strategic Options Appraisal for redelivering Library Services, an e-book pilot study should be undertaken.	Yes	E-books are currently provided by our libraries; we will explore the further development of such options as part of the future direction of the library	Cabinet Member for Community Engagement & Public Health	Executive Director of Communities, Health & Adult	Ongoing

		service.		Social Care	
11. That, within existing resources, a comprehensive gully survey is undertaken throughout the County to identify accurately the number of gullies and locations and use this to inform the creation of an effective maintenance programme.	Yes	TfB have confirmed that they have accurate records of known gully locations but Cabinet understands the importance of a well maintained highway drainage system and so is allocating a further £125k to this service area in the proposed budget.	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Transportation	Director of Growth, Strategy & Highways	September 2018
12. That sufficient budget is set aside to enable the introduction of a programme of weed management on footways across the County.	Yes	We recognise that we do not have the resources to undertake a full weed spraying programme. As an alternative, Cabinet is keen to explore options for pilot projects with District or Town/Parish Councils which could deliver other potential solutions. A sum of £125k has been set aside in the proposed budget to support such initiatives.	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Transportation	Director of Growth, Strategy & Highways	May 2018