

FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE



RETROSPECTIVE

FOREWORD



Cllr David Watson

“I have been Chairman of the FPR Select Committee since May 2017. The Committee considers all areas of the Council’s strategic performance, financial management and corporate issues. The Committee comprises 8 Councillors and meets between 4-6 times a year.

In addition, the Committee undertakes a Budget Scrutiny Inquiry, spanning three full days of meetings in public. The Leader of the Council and each Cabinet Member are questioned on their draft budget proposals, resulting in a report with a number of recommendations being presented to Cabinet.

This annual inquiry remains the main focus of the Select Committee’s Work programme.”

KEY ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE COMMITTEE OVER THE LAST 2 YEARS

- Income Generation
- Digital Strategy
- Budget Savings monitoring
- The Growth Agenda
- Performance, Management and Quality Assurance Processes
- Project and Programme Management
- Recruitment and Retention of staff
- LASR Property Review and One Public Estate
- Capital and Investment Strategy
- Technology Strategy – Smarter Buckinghamshire
- Customer Service Standards Review
- Costs and Savings in Adult Social Care and Children’s Services

INCOME GENERATION

This issue was highlighted during Budget Scrutiny 2016. An inquiry was launched to consider whether enough was being done to identify external income opportunities and increase income across the Council. In December 2017, the Committee received a 12 month update on the implementation of the inquiry's recommendations, which included new governance arrangements to ensure oversight and delivery of income generation targets across the Council and a mechanism to share information and best practice. A number of income generation champions were established across the Council.

ICT & DIGITAL

Since May 2017, the Committee has received regular updates on progress of the Council's ICT and Digital projects. Significant budget savings were attached to a number of digital projects and Members were keen to track progress, to ensure that both financial savings and enhanced customer experience were delivered. Members were also interested to learn about the Smarter Buckinghamshire Technology Strategy and its ambitions to develop digital solutions for residents, which would go beyond the Council's services and encompass partners such as Health too.

PROPERTY

The Committee has taken a keen interest in how the Council manages its property and assets, including the development of a property investment portfolio. Members welcomed the opportunity to scrutinise the draft Capital and Investment Strategy with their feedback informing the final report that was agreed by Cabinet in December 2018.

RETENTION OF SENIOR STAFF

In 2018, a small task and finish group met with HR to better understand issues with recruitment and retention of staff, particularly at a senior level within the organisation. This short piece of work followed on from a Budget Scrutiny recommendation in January 2018 to ensure that exit interviews were undertaken to provide insight as to why staff may choose to leave.

ANNUAL BUDGET SCRUTINY INQUIRIES

The Finance, Performance and Resources Committee undertake a Budget Scrutiny Inquiry in January each year, which provides a valuable opportunity to test the assumptions in the draft budget and to question the rationale and deliverability of any proposed savings. Over a period of three consecutive days, the Committee meet to question the Leader and each Cabinet Member in turn on their budget proposals. In this way each Cabinet Member is held accountable, residents of Buckinghamshire can see how public money is being spent and through detailed scrutiny the Committee can make recommendations for change to Cabinet, to ensure that the final budget is as robust as possible.

The Committee's approach to Budget Scrutiny has prompted interest from other local authorities, who have attended the Cabinet Member meetings and spoken to members and officers to see at firsthand how they are conducted. The Council as a whole support this process and the Committee's Budget Scrutiny report is considered alongside the Budget papers at the February Council meeting.

“It is probably the most thorough scrutiny of the budget, anywhere in the country, certainly of any County Council.....It's really one of the key elements of our democracy within the Council.....” Cllr Martin Tett

Bucks County Council might be increasing Council Tax next year



Published by Charlotte Fisher at 3:26pm 10th December 2018. (Updated at 6:13pm 10th December 2018)



Our Council Tax will probably rise next year as Buckinghamshire County Council review the draft budget for 2019/20.

The County Council are looking at rising our bill by 2.99%.

The Cabinet are reviewing the draft budget today (10/12).

There will also be considerable investment in priority areas:

- £110.6 million will go on Primary and Secondary Schools over the next 4 years



NEWS

4th January

Residents urged to ask questions as Bucks County Council's budget goes under microscope

By Jasmine Rapson | [@Jasmine_BFP](#)
Local Democracy Reporter



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Buckinghamshire County Council

Appendix 1

Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Report for 2017-18

A report of the Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee

Contact Officer: Kelly Sutherland
Committee and Governance Adviser



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Budget Scrutiny is also an opportunity for the Committee to encourage public engagement in the scrutiny process. In advance of Budget Scrutiny, residents are asked for feedback on council services they consider most important via a public consultation. The results of this consultation are considered by Cabinet and FPR Select Committee members ahead of the January meetings.

The Chairman also invites residents to submit their own questions for the Leader and the Cabinet Members during the Budget Scrutiny meetings. Questions are invited via email and social media and this call is publicised in the press and through BCC's social media channels. All meetings are held in public and are also webcast, so residents can view their questions being asked and answered in real time.

Since becoming Chairman in 2017, I have worked with the S151 Officer and his finance team to encourage increased visibility and transparency in the budget paperwork, so that members and residents can understand it more easily. In September 2019, the Committee held a Mid-year Review of Budgets for Children's and Adults Social Care and the Finance Directors, provided a user-friendly variance table which provided valuable insight into the impact of supply and demand and unit costs of placements, on the overall budget.

“Budget Scrutiny remains the flagship piece of work for the FPR Select Committee and I have been fortunate in having an experienced team of members who have an in-depth understanding of the Council and are not afraid to ask difficult, searching questions.” David Watson, Chairman

ONE COUNCIL, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The launch of Buckinghamshire Council in April 2020 provides opportunities for the Select Committee to reflect on the achievements of the Committee over the last few years and to make suggestions for future areas of work for the new authority.