

## Response to Buckinghamshire Select Committee Inquiry

**Select Committee Inquiry Title:** Budget Scrutiny

**Committee Chairman:** Brian Roberts & David Shakespeare

**Date report submitted for response:**

**Lead BCC Cabinet Member (where response required from BCC Cabinet) and Lead Officer:**

**Select Committee Support Officer / Advisor (Extension):** Liz Wheaton (ext. 3856)

**Suggested frequency of future updates (e.g. 6 & 12 months):** 6 months & 12 months

Recommendation	Agreed Yes/No	BCC Cabinet / Partner Agency Response including proposed action	Responsible Cabinet Member (for BCC recs)	Responsible Officer	Action by date
1. That the delivery of all the savings required in the Medium Term Financial Plan be robustly monitored. The savings delivery programme should be overseen corporately and include quarterly reports to the Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee	Yes - In part	It is absolutely the intention of Cabinet that savings will be robustly monitored. Cabinet will continue to require quarterly reports on progress both on savings and on overall expenditure and achievement of KPIs. All reports to Cabinet are available to all members.	Martin Tett	Richard Ambrose	Quarterly reports to Cabinet
2. That any new proposals for unidentified savings should ensure due process is followed, including Equality Impact Assessments and public consultation on specific proposals prior to a decision	Yes - In part	As detailed proposals for changes in service provision are developed, then the Council will undertake consultations as appropriate and prepare EIAs to inform its decision making and fully meet its statutory requirements.	Martin Tett	Richard Ambrose	Ongoing
3. That a review of the Future Shape Business Case, agreed by Cabinet in December 2014, is undertaken to assess whether the benefits originally envisaged have been achieved and lessons learnt, as well as make recommendations on any changes to the approach needed	Yes – already underway	The Cabinet have already identified this as a first priority for the newly appointed Chief Executive in 2016. The One Council Board has started the background work to underpin this review, which will be reported to Cabinet following the appointment and agreement of the new Chief Executive.	Martin Tett	Sarah Ashmead	September 2016

<p>4. That business cases for any new Alternative Delivery Vehicles are developed with full consideration to all the possible delivery models and that these include clear and consistent proposals for future governance arrangements so that Members can be assured that adequate controls and contract management are in place. A review of existing ADVs should be undertaken to ensure they are delivering against their business plan</p>	<p>Yes – already underway</p>	<p>The Cabinet have already commissioned a review of the new Delivery Vehicles, with a focus on both delivery against the original business cases and lessons for the future including future governance arrangements.</p>	<p>Martin Tett</p>	<p>Sarah Ashmead</p>	<p>July 2016</p>
<p>5. We recommend that the Strategic Initiatives Fund is stopped and all funds earmarked for this are reallocated to supporting services for vulnerable children, including protecting those areas outlined in the rest of the report</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>This fund is critical in providing some modest flexibility to tackle unfunded priorities which emerge during the course of the year. In recent years, the SIF has been deployed to support a wide range of priorities including the debt advice service delivered by the Citizens Advice Bureau, Paralympics Flame Lighting ceremony, the improvement programme in children’s services and HS2 petitioning.</p>	<p>Martin Tett</p>	<p>Chris Williams</p>	
<p>6. To undertake a review of the current levels of agency and interim/consultancy staff across the organisation to consider how to reduce unnecessary costs</p>	<p>Yes - already underway</p>	<p>The use of agency and interim staff across the organisation is already subject to regular review. Bi-annual reports are presented to the One Council Board and to Cabinet Members to review agency usage across the organisation. As a consequence a number of actions have already been taken to reduce spend including a moratorium on the appointment of any new agency staff other than those required to cover critical posts, a review of all existing agency staff and termination of contracts where possible, a review of long-standing agency workers and development of strategies to replace with permanent staff where economically viable.</p>	<p>John Chilver</p>	<p>Gill Quinton</p>	<p>Six monthly reporting</p>

<p>7. To undertake a review of the Pertemps contract to ensure that this remains the most cost-efficient way of meeting the Council's needs</p>	<p>Yes – already underway</p>	<p>There are a number of misunderstandings in the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Report. In <b>para 25</b> the additional fees quoted are not representative of Pertemps charges. Pertemps do not operate charges of this nature. Outside the Pertemps contract, other agencies may charge between 20-30% of salary costs and may also have clauses to restrict us from being able to convert an agency worker to permanent without the payment of significant fees. However, we now require all new requests for agency workers to be commissioned via the Pertemps contract to avoid additional fees of this nature.</p> <p><b>In para 27</b> of the report, it suggests that the Pertemps contract limits our ability to be competitive. The Pertemps contract is a Master Vendor arrangement which means they act as the conduit to supply all BCC agency workers. We get the best rates if they can supply to us themselves, but where they cannot do this, they open up vacancies to other agencies that are signed up to their supply chain at centrally agreed rates, which are much more economical than those we would be able to obtain by approaching the agencies directly. We have clear SLAs to determine when they open up vacancies to the supply chain. We also benefit from rebates on the Pertemps contract. This year we are budgeting on income of around £140K.</p> <p>The Pertemps contract was renewed in April 2015 and has another 2 years to run plus an option to extend for another year if required. Operation of the contract is reviewed regularly via Operational Management meetings and via a Governance Board which includes the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources.</p>	<p>John Chilver</p>	<p>Gill Quinton</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
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<p>8. To undertake a specific project to identify skills gaps within the Business Units and to work across the organisation to upskill the existing staff and to recruit people with commercial skills to current vacancies</p>	<p>Yes – Already Underway</p>	<p>The Future Shape Programme contained a programme workstream entitled People and Organisational Change. The purpose of this workstream was in part to identify and understand any skills gaps in the organisation that may impact on our ability to become a commercially minded organisation. As part of this work, commercial skills were identified as a key development need. A series of activities have been put in place to develop commercial skills including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workforce development plans for each Business Unit which identify skills gaps.</li> <li>- Commercial awareness training available to all employees including courses such as Commercial Instinct, Effective Bid Writing etc</li> <li>- A robust training and development programme, which identified contract managers across the organisation on Contract Management skills. All contract managers of platinum and gold suppliers have been trained and included action learning sets</li> <li>- Supplier Management Group has been refreshed to focus on: Delivering collaborative work-streams identified in the Commercial Plan such as ‘low cost / no cost’ solutions, Platinum Plus supplier events and knowledge / skills sharing</li> </ul> <p>New job families and role profiles have been developed which include commercial acumen. Recruitment processes ensure that these competencies are identified and assessed in new recruits where appropriate.</p>	<p>John Chilver</p>	<p>Gill Quinton</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>9. To consider withdrawing the funding for local priorities and cease running Local Area Forums and instead ensure that there are more effective mechanisms in place for</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The operating cost of LAFs is some £110k p.a. although the immediate cashable savings if LAFs were discontinued would be less than £5k. The local priorities funding has been reduced to £500,000. Many members have already made commitments for local schemes with Parish or</p>	<p>Martin Phillips</p>	<p>Trevor Boyd</p>	

<p>engaging with communities. The money saved could be reallocated to support services for vulnerable people, including protecting those areas outlined in the rest of the report</p>		<p>Town councils and residents groups. Some schemes have been carried over from 2015/16 due to the freeze on non-essential expenditure with commitments given. There is a risk to the partnerships, built up over recent years with local communities, if commitments given are removed with little warning. A review of LAFs and their funding is due to be given to the Transport Select Committee in the near future where the policy for LAFs can be examined and debated by members.</p>			
<p>10. To undertake a detailed review of the gully cleaning programme with the objective of achieving greater efficiencies in the use of the plant and equipment</p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>A detailed review of the gully cleaning operation was conducted in 2015, to improve plant utilisation. The review focused specifically on adopting a split shift approach, extending the gully cleaning operation from 6.00am until 10.00pm (depending on the time of year). This would require two specific crews per machine per shift.</p> <p>A number of concerns about the split shift approach were raised by the workforce – including increased driver / operative fatigue, highway safety during early morning and night operations, traffic management on primary routes, customer dissatisfaction in residential areas for early morning and night/evening operation, and increased fleet maintenance and support (breakdown recovery). It was agreed these concerns would need to be addressed before this option can be implemented.</p> <p>The current focus of this service is based on an asset needs based approach (basically seeking to prioritise those gullies most likely to flood or have inherent problems). However the split shift approach will be revisited during 2016.</p>	<p>Mark Shaw</p>	<p>Mike Freestone</p>	<p>December 2016</p>
<p>11. To undertake an options appraisal to assess the cost/benefits of different delivery models for the Fostering and</p>	<p>Yes – Already underway</p>	<p>The Business Unit is currently undertaking an options appraisal to assess the most appropriate delivery model for the fostering service. In relation to the Adoption service, the Council has recently</p>	<p>Lin Hazell</p>	<p>David Johnston</p>	<p>July 2016</p>

Adoption service, including exploring outsourcing		joined forces with a number of other Councils to form a Regional Adoption Agency led by Coram, in accordance with the Government's ambition for adoption services.			
12. To ensure a full public consultation in relation to Children's Centres on all the options for delivering the service in a different way prior to a key decision on any service change. To work in conjunction with Public Health to understand the full impact on the proposed service reduction	In part	The Business Unit will examine all options with regard to Children's Centres which still enable the necessary savings to be achieved. All options will be consulted upon as appropriate and in accordance with statutory requirements.	Zahir Mohammed	David Johnston	September 2016
13. That an options appraisal be carried out on the Educational Psychology Service to assess the best delivery model for this service to maximise the income generation potential	Yes	The EPS is already successful at generating income to support the costs of the service. The Business Unit will explore a range of options in order to assess the opportunities for enhancing the income generation potential.	Zahir Mohammed	David Johnston	July 2016
14. To review the charging policies for all Home to School transport users to ensure maximum income generation opportunities are explored. To undertake a timely public consultation on any proposed changes to the service	In part	The Business Unit continues to keep the charging policies for home to school transport under review. Any changes will be consulted upon as appropriate and in accordance with statutory requirements.	Zahir Mohammed	David Johnston	Ongoing
15. To look at alternative ways of delivering the Youth Counselling Service without cutting the service completely (for example, reduce the number of paid staff and explore possibilities of joint funding the service with Oxford Health Trust)	Yes	The Cabinet recognises the importance of the Youth Counselling Service and is committed to continuing its support for the service as far as possible, within the resources available. The Business Unit will explore all possible options to achieve this.	Zahir Mohammed	David Johnston	May 2016
16. To explore other ways to keep the Duke of Edinburgh Award programme running (for example, explore the idea of a private company/companies	Yes	The Duke of Edinburgh Award programme is highly regarded across the County, providing valuable opportunities for young people to develop skills for life. The Business Unit will look at ways for private and voluntary sector organisations to	Zahir Mohammed	David Johnston	July 2016

sponsoring the programme and target those who currently employ a number of apprentices)		provide ongoing support for the programme in Buckinghamshire.			
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