

Response to Select Committee Budget Scrutiny Inquiry 2019

Select Committee Inquiry Report Completion Date: February 2019

Date of this update: September 2019

Lead Officer responsible for this response: Richard Ambrose, Director of Finance & Procurement

Cabinet Member that has signed-off this update: Martin Tett, Leader

Accepted Recommendation	Agreed Yes/No	Original Response and Actions	Progress Update	Committee Assessment of Progress (RAG status)
1. That additional monies should be added to the 2019-20 contingency budget, to supplement the current Unitary reserve of £7.7m. The Committee suggests that this additional sum could be taken from the County Council's share of additional income anticipated from the Business Rates Retention pilot, which all five Local Authorities in Buckinghamshire will be participating in.	YES	Cabinet agree that additional monies should be added to the current Unitary reserve by allocating funding from the successful Business Rates Retention pilot bid. This will bring levels up to £11m, which is expected to cover 50% of the overall anticipated transition costs.	Closed.	
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	<p>Significant levels of information were provided to the Select Committee in a high level Budget Book. This included setting out the major costs of running the Council, gross costs and income, FTE's and key drivers and unit costs in Social Care.</p> <p>The new authority will need to decide what information they would like to see for future Budget Scrutiny Inquiries. However, the S151 Officer and the Leader of the Council will meet with the Chair of the Select Committee to discuss this further.</p>	6-month update: Now that the Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee chair has been appointed the information requirements for Budget Scrutiny can be discussed and agreed.	

<p>3. That a balance sheet and cash flow budgets should be prepared to support the capital, treasury investments and revenue costs over the four year period.</p>	<p>IN PART</p>	<p>This is already prepared for the year ahead. The new authority will need to consider how best to extend this to cover a four year period.</p>	<p>6-month update: This is being considered by the Finance & Procurement Workstream and will be discussed with Members, as appropriate.</p>	
<p>4. The Committee has concerns that the root cause societal issues driving the increase of Looked After Children may continue to grow over the coming years and therefore there is the possibility that the budgeted growth in demand may not be sufficient. It is recognised that assistance from Government may be required; in the meantime a significant contingency is recommended.</p>	<p>IN PART</p>	<p>Significant funding has been added to the Children's Social Care Portfolio in 2019/20 (c£11m). The assumptions around Looked After Children numbers and type of placements have been reviewed to ensure that they are as robust as possible.</p> <p>Furthermore, contingencies have been included in the 2019/20 budget for demography (£370k) and high cost placements (£500k) together with a general contingency relating to social care pressures (children's and adults) of £2.7m.</p>	<p>6-month update: The Q1 revenue forecast position for Children's Social Care is roughly breakeven. Furthermore, there are contingencies included as previously stated.</p>	
<p>5. That a realistic figure is included in the final Children's Services budget for legal fees.</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>The assumptions around the budget required in relation to Children's Services legal costs has been reviewed and a further £750k added as compared to the draft budget proposals for 2019/20.</p>	<p>Closed.</p>	
<p>6. That the Health and Wellbeing contingency should be reviewed to ensure that it offsets the risk areas outlined above. A significant contingency is recommended.</p>	<p>IN PART</p>	<p>Contingencies have been included in 2019/20 for demography (£1.35m) together with a general contingency relating to social care pressures (children's and adults) of £2.7m.</p>	<p>6-month update: Closed.</p>	
<p>7. That a minimum 5% per annum uplift should be applied to this budget line to take into account inflation, growth of the asset and impact of increased traffic on the</p>	<p>NO</p>	<p>Cabinet have already recognised capital highways maintenance as being a priority by allocating £15m p.a. which should ensure that the</p>	<p>N/A</p>	

<p>highways.</p>		<p>overall condition of roads improves year on year. Furthermore, £4m has been allocated to plane and patch works over the remaining part of 2018/19 and 2019/20.</p>		
<p>8. That the additional funding for gully cleansing and weed management which had been added into the budget as a result of Budget Scrutiny recommendations over the past two years, should be maintained. This will prevent further decline of the asset and should be viewed as an ‘invest to save’.</p>	<p>IN PART</p>	<p>Cabinet’s agreement to add £500k to the weeds programme as a one-off in 2019/20 will result in TfB being able to carry out three weed spraying treatments across all of the urban areas in the County. Furthermore, two two-man crews will be deployed during the growing season to deal with hot spots and remove heavier type growth, self-seeded buddleia and the like as well as clearing slabbed areas of dead weed growth. This work will have significant visual impact across the network and will help our District colleagues with their sweeping programme.</p> <p>For gully maintenance the previous funding from Scrutiny will be retained in 2019/20. Information gathered will then be used to feed our new gully maintenance management system.</p>	<p>6–month update: Routine weed spraying commenced across the county in May, the first spray is complete and die-back is evident in most areas. Follow up work through mechanical sweeping is ongoing to remove dead weeds/detritus.</p> <p>Growth in the Spring and early Summer has been vigorous.</p> <p>Spray 2 will progress through August. Mechanical sweeping will continue. Spray 3 is programmed for late September/October.</p> <p>Two man crews have been active across the network removing detritus, self-seeded growth and sign cleaning. This work will continue through summer and autumn.</p> <p>The new GullySMART system was introduced for 01 April and is now integrated into maintenance activities, providing enhanced and robust information relating to activities carried out and building asset history to assist future planning.</p>	

<p>9. That a Street Lighting Survey should be undertaken to establish the location, ownership and condition of all columns in the County, including an assessment of the current status of all lights. In addition, if a further £2m could be funded from within the Capital envelope, this should be added to fund an acceleration of Column Replacement works. The use of smart technology should also be investigated.</p>	<p>IN PART</p>	<p>We are working with Parish and Town Councils to determine the extent of assets that are in their ownership and will be looking to display this information on the 'Fix-My-Street' reporting site. The County asset will be collected and reconciled as a part of a technology trial that is underway; the primary purpose of which is intended to collect data relating to outages and the like. There is no further funding available to increase the Council's budget from £1.5m p.a. However, the County has recently been awarded £4.2M of innovation type funding that will permit the limited roll-out of a Central Management System and intelligent control gear (dimming etc.). In addition we will be investigating the development of alternative material lamp columns.</p>	<p>6-month update: A questionnaire was sent in early 2019 to all Parish and Town Councils asking for confirmation if they are responsible for the maintenance and ownership of any footway lighting within their local areas and if so, to confirm their understanding of the stock for which they are responsible. They were also asked to confirm if they have a strategy in place for management of their asset.</p> <p>Responses have been prompt, all have responded. However, very few have full spatial data on assets under their control, the majority are now undertaking that collection. Once provided, TfB will populate into the county's asset management system.</p> <p>A number of the Parish Councils have followed up to seek details of the equipment that is being used on County Council projects so that they can install similar but distinguishable equipment.</p> <p>The trial of smart equipment has now been incorporated into the larger £4.2m innovation project being delivered by BCC directly, as it was seen that the two work streams were duplicating efforts and that a joined up approach would be preferable and provide a more coherent solution. This project is progressing well.</p>	
--	----------------	--	--	--

10. That preparations for the new authority should include both the Unitary Opportunities and Future Budget Scrutiny recommendations detailed on slides 45 to 47. The opportunity that the creation of a new Council presents should not be missed.	IN PART	It will be for the new authority to decide how best to take these suggestions forward.	6-month update: No further update.	
--	------------	--	---------------------------------------	--