

CABINET RESPONSE FOR O&S COMMITTEE

The Cabinet would like to thank the members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for their very thorough and insightful work related to the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Cabinet, having reflected on the recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee sets out its response in the accompanying appendix.

Portfolio Holders will be following through with their Heads of Service recommendations specific to their areas, and these will be highlighted in budget papers.

The Cabinet believes most of the points raised by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee are ones that need to be followed through in future years' budget work, and not just be limited to 2019/20. To enable this, officers will be requested to identify in the formal report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 2019/20 budget, how the recommendations have been addressed and what future work will be undertaken.

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation	Cabinet Response
<p>Cabinet need to consider the opportunity to maximise income from the New Homes Bonus / Business Rates Retention scheme, and in particular whether the Council should adopt a more enabling approach to encouraging housing and business growth in the district.</p>	<p>The Cabinet is fully cognisant of the need to maintain and maximise the council tax and business rate taxbases and income. In relation to the New Homes Bonus it recognises this as a risk area in the Government’s plans to revise the mechanism for funding local authorities. As the Government strategy is to increase the financing of local authorities from local taxation it is in the Council’s interest to encourage housing development in the context of the Local Plan, and business growth through work with partners and the work of the recently appointed economic development posts.</p>
<p>The Council need to put forward a case to Government regarding the Non Domestic Rate tariff payments as part of the Fair Funding consultation</p>	<p>The Cabinet has instructed officers to respond to Government consultations on the Fair Funding review. This will be directly and through supporting representations for bodies such as DCN, LGA, SDCT.</p>
<p>Cabinet to note the importance of maintaining the Council Tax base, including regularly reviewing the properties where Single Person Discounts are being.</p>	<p>As the O&S Cmm has correctly identified it is very important to do everything to maintain the council taxbase. To this end it has confirmed with officers that we will be undertaking work in the current year to review all properties classed as empty as this impacts on the NHB calculations. The authority is committed to doing a full review of Single Person Discounts every other year. With the bringing in-house of the council tax service from Northgate later this year it is expected that the shared service will have more capacity for property inspections to impact on the taxbase.</p>
<p>Cabinet should review opportunities to bring in revenue from advertising across all Council assets http://communitypartners.co.uk/</p>	<p>This is an area to explore and officers will be asked to do some assessment work, but it is unlikely to be a significant income opportunity given the options available to the Council. We would be mindful of issues such as planning requirements for as billboards etc. The assessment would enable the Council to understand what could reasonably be achieved and the</p>

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation	Cabinet Response
	resources required.
As part of the budget process O&S Members undertake challenge/scrutiny sessions with Portfolio Holders on their draft budget proposals	The Cabinet welcomes the suggestion of increased Overview & Scrutiny involvement in the budget process. They will ask officers to advise how this may most efficiently be achieved by enhancing the PAG budget meetings so they focus on the areas raised by the O&S Cmm and that the PAG reports are drawn to O&S members attention so that they can raise questions and issues..
Cabinet need to closely monitor the cost of homelessness	This recommendation is strongly supported. The Cabinet now receives monthly updates on temporary accommodation and the progress with plans to provide alternatives to nightly paid accommodation.
Cabinet need to ensure that appropriate resources are put into preventing homelessness, as this avoids SBDC having to house families that are homeless in nightly paid accommodation.	As part of drafting the housing budget for 2019/20 the resourcing of the housing service to 1) cope with the requirements of the Homelessness Prevention Act and 2) manage clients in temporary accommodation, will be explicitly addressed. This issue will be highlighted in the PAG budget report for members to discuss.
Cabinet need to address the volume of affordable housing stock by looking at opportunities through the Local Plan, and the housing numbers in the Plan	The Head of Healthy Communities will be requested to produce a paper for the PAG on the potential medium term impact of the draft Local Plan on affordable housing supply.
Cabinet need to actively progress with delivering alternative less expensive options for housing homeless families	The monthly monitoring of temporary accommodation by the Cabinet enables them to judge the effectiveness of current plans. As part of the budget process officers will be reporting on the position of the supply and cost of temporary accommodation and options to further expand the supply if forecast demand indicates this is necessary.

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation	Cabinet Response
<p>All non-statutory fees and charges should be reviewed annually, to ensure that they fully cover the Council's costs, and are in line with the average charge or higher from neighbouring authorities.</p>	<p>This will be explicitly built in to the budget process for all non-statutory charges where the income exceeds a minimum amount. PAG reports will set out the outcome of these reviews.</p>
<p>Cabinet should review the garden waste fee.</p>	<p>This will be done as part of the budget work and the results and proposals included in the budget report to the Environment PAG.</p>
<p>Cabinet should consider having a single long term joint waste contract with all three District councils to obtain economies of scale</p>	<p>This has been agreed by the Joint Waste Collection Committee and the Council has agreed funding towards the joint procurement process.</p>
<p>Actively explore scope to increase cemetery charges and burial capacity, including facilities for the non-Christian communities and marketing these outside of the area and the use of Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens</p>	<p>As part of the budget process a report(s) will be produced for the Environment PAG identifying the income potential for the three aspects, i.e.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Charges for out of area customers 2. Provision of spaces for non-Christian funerals, and related charges 3. SPMG income
<p>Cabinet should review the car park charging strategy, particular focusing on whether evening and Sunday charges would be appropriate.</p>	<p>Review of car parking charges will be undertaken and a report brought to the Environment PAG as part of the budget process.</p>
<p>Cabinet should support the progression of car parking expansion, where there is a clear service need and a business case for doing so, including additional car parking such as the one proposed for Gerrards Cross</p>	<p>The Cabinet welcomes the support for expanding car park provision to meet service demand. Any proposed changes need to be carefully planned and supported by a sound business case addressing parking need and benefits to residents.</p>

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation	Cabinet Response
<p>Cabinet should review underutilised car parks e.g Burnham as these assets could be more effectively used for the Council's objectives.</p>	<p>The O&S Committee is right in advising that the effectiveness of Council assets need to be kept under review and it will be appropriate to review those in the Burnham area and officers will undertake work on this subject in the Autumn. This is likely to have implications for the Council's medium term position rather than the 2019/20 budget.</p>
<p>Cabinet should review the use of recycling facilities in car parks as this space could generate extra income.</p>	<p>This will be done as part of the budget work and the results and proposals included in the budget report to the Environment PAG. This will also include any implication for the Waste service, as there needs to be consideration around potential consequences for fly tipping.</p>
<p>Cabinet should closely monitor the progress with the Customer Experience / R&B service / ICT strategy as these are key projects to help improve and deliver savings including:-</p>	<p>The Cabinet fully agrees with this point, and this is something that needs to be included in the forward work programmes for the Joint Committee and the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</p>
<p>Cabinet should support the LGA with its efforts to lobby the Government to allow local authorities to set their own planning fees.</p>	<p>The Cabinet will support all efforts made by the LGA and other bodies on this subject.</p>
<p>That further planning income should be identified through the Proceeds of Crime Act and administration of Section 106 agreements and CIL if introduced.</p>	<p>This piece of work will be undertaken by the new Enforcement Manager. There is believed to be potential for additional income via this route as part of the improvements planned for the Enforcement service and an initial view will be brought to members as part of the 2019/20 budget process.</p>
<p>Once the Local Plan has been finally submitted, the Head of Planning should critically review the size of the planning policy team to ensure it is appropriately resourced to meet the (hopefully reduced) requirements going forward.</p>	<p>The Joint Local Plan is currently anticipated to be submitted in 2019. Following submission officers will be asked to review resourcing requirements and report to the Joint Committee.</p>

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation	Cabinet Response
<p>The T&F group supports the development of Consilio, subject to appropriate safeguards being put in place to oversee its operation such as supporting the employment of a part time investment professional, the need to take considered risks to increase returns and the need to take advantage of market opportunities.</p>	<p>An investment adviser is now in place to give more focus to Consilio's development plan, and this will include how to establish the Council's risk appetite for funding different investment opportunities. This will be done in collaboration with a member sounding board and made transparent in formal reports to members on the investment activity with Consilio.</p>