



## Budget Scrutiny 2020 – Recommendations from the Budget Scrutiny Task & Finish Group

### Response from Buckinghamshire Council – Cllr Martin Tett, Leader

Recommendation	Response – Y/N & comments	6- Month Update	Officer
<p><b>1. a) There should be a consistent approach to how inflation and salary increases are applied across the budget.</b></p> <p><b>b) Where budgets include monies released from a reserve, this should be clearly noted in a separate budget line.</b></p> <p><b>c) Further work should be undertaken on Years 2 &amp; 3 of the MTFP to ensure the robustness of the budgets in light of a number of external factors which are outside of the Council's control.</b></p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>In developing the budget for Buckinghamshire Council, we started with the existing budget plans of the 5 predecessor Councils. These budgets were set in different ways and in pulling them together some compromises were required. Buckinghamshire Council will continue to develop and improve the presentation of its budgets in future year to ensure transparency and robustness.</p> <p>December 2020</p>	<p>a) Given the increased complexity of pay budgets, with 20 different sets of Terms and Conditions in the Council, a review of the approach to budgeting for pay awards is currently underway and will be presented to SABC for consideration.</p> <p>b) The future presentation of the use of and contribution to reserves within budget papers will ensure transparency to ensure confidence that reserves are used sustainably.</p> <p>c) The 2021-25 MTFP process will ensure the robustness of the 2021-22 and 2022-23 budgets as well as those for 2023-25. This process will see proposals challenged through both 'Member Check &amp; Challenge' Groups and Scrutiny processes.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Martin Tett</p> <p>Richard Ambrose, Service Director for Corporate Finance</p>

<p><b>2. The Corporate Plan for Buckinghamshire Council should include a stronger commitment to Climate Change, with the aim of the Council being net Carbon Neutral by 2035(subject to consideration of the results of the Council's Carbon Audit) and the County generally by 2050. This commitment should be explicit and transparent and will require strong political leadership to ensure delivery.</b></p>	<p>In part. The Corporate Plan sets out a clear ambition to address climate change. The detailed objectives will need to be developed by the leadership of the new council, once it has the chance to review the results of the carbon audit which is currently underway.</p>	<p>A <a href="#">Notice of motion</a> regarding Climate Change was taken to full Council on the 15<sup>th</sup> July and agreed. This sets out the Council's position in terms of dates for achieving net zero with respect to our own Council's emissions as well Buckinghamshire wide emissions. The carbon audit for our own emissions has been completed and the results will feed into actions to be set out in a Climate Change Strategy of which, following the Full Council resolution, is intended to be presented to Cabinet later this year.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Bill Chapple</p> <p>Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth and Sustainability</p>
<p><b>3. The budget should include specific budget lines which demonstrate how it will deliver the Council being net Carbon Neutral by 2035.</b></p>	<p>Agreed. As the new council develops its detailed climate change plan, in response to the carbon audit, it will need to clearly identify the associated budget.</p>	<p>A sum of £5m has provisionally been allocated towards climate change within specific reserve as part of 20/21 budget setting process. Following Full Council resolution in July, the profile of spend is now being agreed with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment.</p> <p>As the Climate Change strategy and associated projects and actions become clear, this will then feed into the forthcoming MTFP cycle.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Bill Chapple</p> <p>Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth and Sustainability</p>
<p><b>4. A specific Portfolio and Portfolio Holder should be nominated to be responsible for driving the Climate Change &amp; Carbon Neutral agenda forward across Buckinghamshire Council and to take a leading role in championing this across the County and beyond.</b></p>	<p>Whilst the Shadow Executive has a Portfolio Holder leading on the Environment, the organisation of future portfolios will be the responsibility of the new Leader of Buckinghamshire</p>	<p>The Cabinet Member responsible for climate change is the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change (Bill Chapple).</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Bill Chapple</p> <p>Ian Thompson, Corporate Director,</p>

	Council, following the elections in May		Planning, Growth and Sustainability
<b>5. An overall recruitment and workforce strategy for Buckinghamshire Council as a whole should be developed as a priority.</b>	Agreed. A council wide strategy will be developed by October 2020	<p>The planned start of work to develop the recruitment and workforce strategy has been delayed as a result of Covid. The strategy will be developed in liaison with service areas and will now take into consideration our experiences of Covid and the way in which we are currently operating, together with the changes to the employment market.</p> <p>In recognition of the impact on timeframes and the critical need to engage with service areas in developing the strategy this is now likely to be completed in November 2020.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Katrina Wood</p> <p>Sarah Murphy Brookman, Corporate Director Resources</p>
<b>6. A strategy to reduce the number of agency staff should also be prioritised. The delivery &amp; performance of this strategy should be monitored regularly.</b>	Agreed. Whilst recognising that there are areas of the council's business where it is helpful to draw on agency staff and that agency staff provide organisational flexibility, there is a key priority to ensure that the use of Agency staff is appropriate and that an Agency worker's tenure is minimised through a clear exit plan. This will be one area of focus within the new recruitment and workforce strategy. In addition,	Reports on agency worker and High Cost Interims usage are reported to CMT on a monthly basis. An agency and high cost interim strategy has been developed and, working in liaison with services, tailored support is being put in place to manage down the reliance on agency assignments. Performance against this strategy will be reviewed on a quarterly basis.	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Katrina Wood</p> <p>Sarah Murphy Brookman, Corporate Director Resources</p>

	each service area will monitor its performance on the use of agency staff, and this will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Directorate Workforce Boards and CMT.		
<b>7. Buckinghamshire Council should ensure that there is sufficient capacity to deliver existing savings plans and an ambitious capital programme, as well as managing far-reaching service transformation.</b>	Agreed. As the new Council develops its transformation programme, and reviews individual service areas, a key focus will be on ensuring that the organisation has the right skills and capacity to deliver the Corporate Plan ambitions.	All recovery, improvement and priority business as usual activity for the new Council (including capital and savings plans) has been captured through Directorate Recovery & Improvement plans, which aim to ensure activity during 2020/21 is focused on the right priorities, and the appropriate capacity and skills are in place to deliver. A budget has been established to support the delivery of the transformation programme.	Lead Cabinet Member: Martin Tett  Sarah Ashmead, Deputy Chief Executive
<b>8. Buckinghamshire Council should invest in Key Worker Housing as a priority, to aid recruitment, reduce staff turnover and unlock additional skills capacity in the County.</b>	Agreed. Alternative options for developing Key Worker housing will be reviewed and business cases developed over the next year.	A preliminary set of sites has been identified and scoping, budgetary and preliminary business cases are being prepared. The ambition is to bring forward a report to Members in the Autumn.	Lead Cabinet Member: John Chilver  Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth and Sustainability
<b>9. A robust centralised management system is put in place to manage all Developer Contributions across the County, including CIL, S106 and S278 monies which are so</b>	Agreed. A harmonised approach to manage all developer contributions will be developed in the first year.	A report went to Planning, Growth & Sustainability Management team in July in terms of how S106 could be managed. Next step is to agree an approach with the Portfolio Holder. The outcome	Lead Cabinet Member: Warren Whyte

<p><b>integral to successful delivery of the Capital programme</b></p>		<p>is likely to be picked up as part of the current Planning and Environment service review as a quick win.</p>	<p>Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth and Sustainability</p>
<p><b>10. Risks around funding bids from Housing Infrastructure Fund and other government bodies are acknowledged and implications on cash flow/borrowing/interest and the timing of building projects should be clearly identified.</b></p>	<p>Agreed. The final budget report to Shadow Executive / Shadow Authority will include a section on key risks, including those relating to cash flow and the potential need for temporary borrowing.</p> <p>February 2020.</p>	<p>Complete.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Martin Tett</p> <p>Richard Ambrose, Service Director for Corporate Finance</p>
<p><b>11. Capital programme should be divided into those schemes which are fully funded, with deliverable business cases and those that are more aspirational, in order to give members and residents a clearer understanding of the programme. This detail should be included in the final budget.</b></p>	<p>Agreed. A further review of the capital programme will be undertaken post vesting day. This will include reviewing how the capital programme is presented with the aim to enhance both consistency in approach and transparency.</p> <p>September 2020.</p>	<p>A Capital Review is currently being undertaken of the Council's Capital Programme. There has been some slippage due to COVID-19, but this is being considered as part of the review. A review of the status of each project and the funding arrangements forms part of the review and will enable better classification of schemes and a much clearer understanding of the Capital Programme during the MTFP process. The review is now expected to be completed in Nov 2020.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Katrina Wood</p> <p>Richard Ambrose, Service Director for Corporate Finance</p>
<p><b>12. A detailed breakdown of the funding for each Community Board should be included in the final budget.</b></p>	<p>Agreed. A detailed breakdown of funding has been presented to the Shadow Executive. A review of the presentation of</p>	<p>Complete.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Martin Tett</p>

	the budget will be undertaken for future budget setting with the aim of enhancing transparency.		Richard Ambrose, Service Director for Corporate Finance
<b>13. Responsibility for Community Boards and the associated budgets should sit with the Communities Portfolio to drive Localism forward and have visibility of community grants and support in one place.</b>	The organisation of future portfolios will be the responsibility of the new Leader of Buckinghamshire Council, following the elections in May	Complete  The responsibility for community board funding and community grants sits within the Localities and Strategic Partnerships which falls under the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health.	Lead Cabinet Member: Gareth Williams  Sarah Ashmead, Deputy Chief Executive
<b>14. Increased funding for feasibility work in years 2 &amp; 3 should be investigated to reflect the quantum of Capital projects (£493m over 3 years)</b>	Agreed. This will be considered as part of the next budget round.  December 2020.	The current base budget for feasibility work is £1.2m p.a. Furthermore, some earmarked reserves exist. Future funding requirements will be reviewed as part of the MTFP.	Lead Cabinet Member: Martin Tett  Richard Ambrose, Service Director for Corporate Finance
<b>15. The balance of the Unitary Implementation transition fund should be added to the £14m transformation pot.</b>	Agreed. This will be amended as part of the final budget.  February 2020.	Complete.  £2.7m of unused transition funding has been moved to the transformation pot.	Lead Cabinet Member: Martin Tett  Richard Ambrose, Service Director for Corporate Finance

<p><b>16. Further assessment should be made during 2020-21 as to whether the £14m Transformation Pot will be sufficient to enable the required service transformation over the 3-year period of the MTFP.</b></p>	<p>Agreed. The process around how the transformation pot will be allocated out is to be agreed and any future investment requirements will be considered as part of the next budget round.</p> <p>December 2020.</p>	<p>The process for allocating service improvement funding (transformation pot) through a Service Improvement Board is currently being considered.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Martin Tett</p> <p>Sarah Ashmead, Deputy Chief Executive</p>
<p><b>17. As soon as plans are finalised for the priority order of service transformation, these should be shared with all staff to enable them to understand the implications for them as individuals over the next 3 years.</b></p>	<p>Agreed. The senior leadership team is currently developing a programme of service reviews, in order to be able to provide all employees with clarity about the implications for their own individual roles.</p> <p>March 2020</p>	<p>A schedule of service reviews across the next two years was shared with all staff in June, clarifying when services can expect to commence their reviews as part of the Better Buckinghamshire programme. A commitment has been made to engage staff throughout the review programme, ensuring that there is sufficient opportunity for individuals to discuss changes that might impact them, as well as contribute to the discovery and design process.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Martin Tett</p> <p>Sarah Ashmead, Deputy Chief Executive</p>
<p><b>18. A robust and clearly understood approach to risk management be adopted by Buckinghamshire Council as a priority.</b></p>	<p>Agreed. Risk Management is a key element of assessment of both individual proposals and the overall budget proposal, and this needs to be clearly evidenced in budget proposals.</p> <p>December 2020</p>	<p>The Council's Risk Management Strategy has been approved and is being embedded across all Directorates. Key financial risks are identified as part of the routine risk management process, and mitigating actions are monitored through Directorate Boards.</p> <p>The Risk Management Group will be established in September 2020 as a sub-group of the Audit and</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Katrina Wood</p> <p>Richard Ambrose, Service Director for Corporate Finance</p>

		Governance Committee. This group will play a key role in reviewing the key financial risks.	
<b>19. The option of the Home to School Transport team being integrated in the Education service and the Client Transport team being integrated in Adult Social Care, to realise savings and improve outcomes for residents should be explored.</b>	<p>In part. Further alignment with the teams will be considered as part of a wider review and improvement plan of the client transport service.</p> <p>September 2020</p>	<p>A staffing restructure was successfully completed in Transport Services in July 2020. This was the first transformation service review under the new Council and is designed to ensure that the right structures are in place to support improved transport outcomes for residents.</p> <p>The service provides integrated support for mainstream, social care (both children’s and adults), fleet services and public transport in order to ensure efficiencies in management and staffing and a coordinated offer for service users.</p> <p>Alternative options of splitting teams and then allocating them to other service areas would require additional managers and decrease service resilience as currently staff work flexibly in client transport to ensure transport needs are met across the different activity areas. It would also reduce the capacity to ensure a coordinated approach across the provider market (including commercial services, Council contracted services and public transport services) which has proved to be essential during the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>A client transformation improvement programme is underway which includes actions to reduce costs on home to school transport through</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: David Martin</p> <p>Richard Barker, Corporate Director, Communities</p>

		<p>managing demand and re-tendering contracts and will seek to provide a resilient and financially sustainable service.</p> <p>Given the transformation programme is underway, as the staff restructure has only very recently been completed and the continuing complexities of Covid with transport services, a further review is not recommended at this stage.</p>	
<p><b>20. A management reporting system should be established which enables a true comparison of costs and key performance indicators, in particular the quality of service, between in-house and contracted services on a like-for-like basis to support Buckinghamshire Council's future decision-making.</b></p>	<p>Agreed. The finance, procurement and business intelligence teams will develop a methodology which will support service areas in evaluating options for future models of service delivery as part of the transformation programme.</p>	<p>The Better Buckinghamshire service review methodology incorporates value for money (cost vs. outcomes) comparisons to enable services to challenge their current service models, including in relation to best practice delivery models. Zero based budgeting principles will be used to design new service models - costing the asset, people, process and technology elements and ensuring these costs are tied to the Council's strategic priorities.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Martin Tett</p> <p>Sarah Ashmead, Deputy Chief Executive</p>
<p><b>21. Priority should be given to the recruitment of experienced staff to support the Planning service in dealing with increased demand and Members would recommend that a 'Grow your Own' programme such as those in Social Care should be investigated.</b></p>	<p>Agreed. The recruitment of experienced planning staff is a priority, and this will need to be reflected in the wider recruitment and workforce strategy mentioned in item 5 above. As part of this work, consideration will be given to whether a grow your own</p>	<p>The service is about to go out for a recruitment campaign for planning staff from graduate to senior officers to fill vacant posts and reduce the reliance on consultants. We are working with the recruitment team to undertake a comprehensive campaign to support this process.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Warren Whyte</p> <p>Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth and Sustainability</p>

	programme would be the right solution		
<b>22. Additional funding should be set aside for the Local Plan reserve as £3m over the next three years is likely to be inadequate.</b>	As work commences on the Buckinghamshire Local Plan, we will develop a project plan including estimated costs for supporting evidence and the eventual Examination in Public. We will review the figure in the reserve on the basis of this work in the next 12 months.	The Planning Policy Managers are meeting to discuss and develop the project plan. The costs estimate for the evidence needed to support the Local Plan will be informed by an assessment of the actual costs incurred in the preparation of the three district local plans, and the possible impact of the new Planning white paper. This information is being collated prior to the meeting.	Lead Cabinet Member: Warren Whyte  Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth and Sustainability
<b>23. When the Planning Service is reviewed, adequate resources should be allocated to enable an effective and timely response to planning enforcement issues.</b>	Agreed. We are preparing a paper on the harmonised enforcement service looking at working practices and resources and will report back on the findings this year.	A new enforcement plan was adopted by Cabinet in July 2020. Structures will be considered as part of P&E service review which has just started.	Lead Cabinet Member: Warren Whyte  Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth and Sustainability
<b>24. Development of a parking strategy, including how to increase capacity, should be a matter of priority for Buckinghamshire Council after the elections in May 2020.</b>	Agreed. This work will be progressed during 2020/21.  March 2021	This has not progressed as a result of the Covid – 19 pandemic and its impact on travel patterns in the short and long term. A programme will be established once post-pandemic travel patterns emerge.	Lead Cabinet Member: David Martin  Richard Barker, Corporate Director, Communities

<p><b>25. A review should be undertaken ahead of the parking enforcement procurement, to investigate how the Council's on street and off street parking enforcement can be integrated to deliver an improved service and to review future requirements in light of the new parking strategy, to ensure quality service delivery and value for money.</b></p>	<p>Agreed - this work is already being progressed through the programme workstream and will be presented for decision by the new Council in 2020/21.</p> <p>October 2020</p>	<p>Work to establish an integrated parking team, for on and off-street parking management, including enforcement, is progressing. This will include opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness along with any wider enforcement benefits that may be achievable. A report will be brought forward in the autumn of 2020.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: David Martin</p> <p>Richard Barker, Corporate Director, Communities</p>
<p><b>26. During 2020-21, as Community Access Points are reviewed, consideration should be given to their future funding.</b></p>	<p>Agreed. As the plans for moving from Council Access to Community Access Points are developed, business cases will be developed which assess the financial implications of individual proposals. The Council will then be able to consider the need for any funding provision.</p> <p>December 2020</p>	<p>The initial focus has been on ensuring council access points are fully operational. The launch of the access points was affected by the Covid lockdown and, therefore, it is anticipated that the review will now take place in summer 2021.</p> <p>The Localities service will look to explore opportunities for community access points with partners and business cases will be developed around these.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Martin Tett</p> <p>Sarah Ashmead, Deputy Chief Executive</p>
<p><b>27. There should be continued investment in the Social Work Academy, which utilises the apprenticeship levy and will provide more stability in the Adult Social Care workforce and positive outcomes for clients.</b></p>	<p>Agreed. The first cohort of students are due to be recruited in April and then a further cohort in September. Their progress will be closely monitored to ensure that the programme delivers the right outcomes and that a case can</p>	<p>Any cohort requires a minimum of 10 people to ensure it is cost-effective for the training provider to run the programme. Despite receiving 15 applications for the first cohort in April, a number of those did not meet the requirement of having maths and English at the required level.</p> <p>We have worked with a number of staff to help them gain English and maths qualifications and are</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Angela MacPherson</p> <p>Gillian Quinton, Corporate Director Adults, Health</p>

	<p>be demonstrated for ongoing investment.</p>	<p>delighted to now have 11 applicants who have been successful in the first stage of recruitment for the Social Work Apprenticeship Degree programme. The panel interviews with Buckinghamshire Council and the Training Provider (Bucks Uni) will take place on the 3rd September 2020.</p> <p>The Apprenticeship Levy will be used to fund the Apprentices during the three-year programme which will commence on the 23rd October 2020. The value of each programme is £23,000 over the three years.</p> <p>We also have a pipeline of 17 applicants who are interested in applying for the next cohort in 2021. We are working with ten of these applicants to upskill their Maths and English with the support of our partner Bucks Adult Learning.</p>	
<p><b>28. There should be further investment in the ASYE Academy to enable Children’s Services to recruit and retain more qualified staff, which will stabilise the workforce and lead to improved outcomes for children and families. In turn, this should also support the pace of change required for Ofsted Improvement.</b></p>	<p>Agreed. We will increase the ASYE academy by another two cohorts of up to 20 each between now and 2021. Work is underway to achieve this subject to applications and successful appointments.</p>	<p>The initial plan was to have a new cohort of up to 20 ASYEs join our academy in April 2020; however, this was unable to happen due to Covid-19.</p> <p>Covid-19 has also affected social work students as all placements ceased, delaying the completion of their qualification and subsequent social work registration. As a result, the next cohort of up to 20 ASYEs will not be ready to join the academy until January 2021.</p>	<p>Lead Cabinet Member: Mark Shaw</p> <p>Tolis Vouyioukas, Corporate Director Children’s Services</p>

		The plan at this stage is to have a further intake of up to 20 ASYEs in July 2021; however, this is reliant on (a) successfully recruiting the first cohort in January, and (b) no further delays to the completion of social work qualifications.	
<b>29. A specific line should be included in the budget for Special Expenses.</b>	Agreed. Special Expenses income will be specifically identified on the face of the budget and an appendix presented with the final budget papers showing the budgets for Special Expense areas.  February 2020.	Complete.	Lead Cabinet Member: Martin Tett  Richard Ambrose, Service Director for Corporate Finance
<b>30. Voluntary sector organisations which provide vital community services at minimal cost should be nurtured and a full review carried out to establish how they have been funded to date and how grants and other funding from Buckinghamshire Council should be offered going forward to deliver improved outcomes for residents.</b>	Agreed. A review of the council's relationship with the voluntary, community and charity sector will be undertaken during 2020/21, with a view to developing new funding arrangements for 2021/22.  October 2020	VCS organisations remain a critical partner for the council, which was demonstrated throughout the coronavirus response where there was intense collaboration.  The Localities service is working with the sector to develop a VCS Strategy, which will build on the positive partnership work highlighting the importance and value of the sector as well as what a good relationship looks like. The Localities service is also undertaking a grants and public spend review to understand the range of financial assistance and support the council provides to the voluntary and community sector and develop	Lead Cabinet Member: Gareth Williams  Sarah Ashmead, Deputy Chief Executive

		options for the future. The timing of the review has been delayed due to the Covid situation and a detailed review timetable is currently under development.	
<b>31. A strategy for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping should be developed as a priority for Buckinghamshire Council.</b>	Agreed – the strategy will be developed in the first year of operation of the new Council, using a collaborative approach with key partners.	The existing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies have been carried forward from the former District Councils. To date in 2020/21 the Council’s Housing Service has had to focus its homelessness resources on the Covid-19 response by initially bringing Rough Sleepers off the street and now planning for the next phase of supporting and moving on clients (including submitting a bid for funding to the Government Next Steps Accommodation programme). Consequently, work has not yet commenced on developing the new Buckinghamshire Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. During Quarter 3 of 2020/21 (following the outcome of the Next Steps Accommodation bid) a timetable and plan will be agreed for the development of the new Buckinghamshire Council strategy.	Lead Cabinet Member: Isobel Darby  Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth and Sustainability
<b>32. A consistent approach to licensing for HMOs and Taxis should be applied across the County as soon as practicable after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.</b>	Agreed - a country wide taxi licencing policy will be progressed during 2020/21.  February 2021	A new Taxi Licensing Policy is now in development and is likely to go to the Licensing Committee meeting for approval to proceed to consultation in Autumn 2020. It is envisaged that a new harmonised policy for Taxis will be adopted in the Spring of 2021.	Lead Cabinet Member: Fred Wilson  Richard Barker, Corporate

		All other Licensing policies will be harmonised by the end of 2021.	Director, Communities
<b>33. The evaluation of the Wycombe Street Warden scheme, should be reported to the new Cabinet as part of a wider review of Community Safety/Anti-Social Behaviour.</b>	Agreed. The evaluation will be included as part of a wider review of enforcement activity across the new Council  December 2020	A review of the community safety service is currently taking place as part of the Better Buckinghamshire Programme. The evaluation of the street warden scheme is being progressed as part of this review and it is on track on meet the timetable of December 2020.	Lead Cabinet Member: Gareth Williams  Sarah Ashmead, Corporate Director, Deputy Chief Executive