

Report for:	<b>Shadow Executive</b>
Meeting Date:	<b>18th February 2020</b>

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Budget Scrutiny 2020 – Report of the Budget Scrutiny Task &amp; Finish Group</b>
Shadow Portfolio Holder	Cllr Martin Tett, Leader of the Shadow Executive
Responsible Members	Cllr Chris Whitehead and Cllr Alex Collingwood
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<b>Recommendations:</b>	<p><b>The Budget Scrutiny Task &amp; Finish Group recommend that:</b></p> <p class="list-item-l1">1a) There should be a consistent approach to how inflation and salary increases are applied across the budget.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">b) Where budgets include monies released from a reserve, this should be clearly noted in a separate budget line.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">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.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">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.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">3) The budget should include specific budget lines which demonstrate how it will deliver the Council being net Carbon Neutral by 2035.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">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.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">5) An overall recruitment and workforce strategy for Buckinghamshire Council as a whole should be developed as a priority.</p> <p class="list-item-l1">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.</p>

- 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.**
- 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.**
- 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 integral to successful delivery of the Capital programme.**
- 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.**
- 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.**
- 12) A detailed breakdown of the funding for each Community Board should be included in the final budget.**
- 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.**
- 14) Increased funding for feasibility work in years 2 & 3 should be investigated to reflect the quantum of Capital projects (£493m over 3 years)**
- 15) The balance of the Unitary Implementation transition fund should be added to the £14m transformation pot.**
- 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.**
- 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.**
- 18) A robust and clearly understood approach to risk management be adopted by Buckinghamshire Council as a priority.**

- 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.**
- 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.**
- 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.**
- 22) Additional funding should be set aside for the Local Plan reserve as £3m over the next three years is likely to be inadequate.**
- 23) When the Planning Service is reviewed, adequate resources should be allocated to enable an effective and timely response to planning enforcement issues.**
- 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.**
- 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.**
- 26) During 2020-21, as Community Access Points are reviewed, consideration should be given to their future funding.**
- 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.**
- 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.**

	<p><b>29) A specific line should be included in the budget for Special Expenses.</b></p> <p><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></p> <p><b>31) A strategy for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping should be developed as a priority for Buckinghamshire Council.</b></p> <p><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></p> <p><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></p>
Corporate Implications:	These will be considered as part of the Shadow Executive's response.

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 For the Shadow Executive to consider the recommendations of the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

## 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee delegated the responsibility for scrutinising the draft budget to a cross-party Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, which was chaired by Cllr John Gladwin.
- 2.2 The Shadow Executive agreed the draft budget at its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020 and Budget Scrutiny meetings were subsequently held on 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> January 2020, with each Shadow Portfolio Holder questioned in turn about their budget proposals.
- 2.3 The public were also able to submit questions via email or social media channels.
- 2.4 The Budget Scrutiny Group recognise that this is a unique budget to ensure a smooth transition from five Councils in Bucks to one new unitary council from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. Buckinghamshire Council will have a gross budget of £1.2bn and a net operating budget of £435m.
- 2.5 There has only been a short period of time for transition and we recognise the hard work of members and officers in preparing for this change. This budget is a consolidation of the 5 Council's existing financial plans and whilst the first year has

been robustly tested, it was acknowledged that more work will be needed on Years 2 & 3 following elections to Buckinghamshire Council in May 2020.

- 2.6 Whilst we acknowledge that the Leader and Portfolio Holders may be different after May 2020, the Shadow Authority should provide a clear direction to Buckinghamshire Council and must agree a balanced budget on its behalf.
- 2.7 We appreciate there is much uncertainty for staff but we welcome the enthusiasm of officers we met who are proactively seeking out new opportunities available as a Unitary, to work more effectively and improve outcomes for Bucks residents.
- 2.8 The Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group's key findings and recommendations are set out in the report attached - Appendix 1.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 These will be considered as part of the Shadow Executive's response.

### **4. Legal Implications**

- 4.1 These will be considered as part of the Shadow Executive's response.

### **5. Next Steps**

- 5.1 The Shadow Executive will respond to the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group's report and recommendations and outline any implications for the final Budget.
- 5.2 The final budget will be considered by the Shadow Authority at its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

<b>Background Papers</b>	<a href="https://shadow-buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=155">https://shadow-buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=155</a>
	Agenda papers for the four Budget Scrutiny meetings can be found at the above link.