



Budget Scrutiny 2023 – Recommendations from the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group

Chairman – Cllr Ralph Bagge

Response from Cabinet

Recommendation	Cabinet’s Response – Y/N & comments	Lead Member/Officer & Timelines
<p>1. The presentation of Capital Schemes should be divided into two sections: a programme which includes those schemes fully funded with an approved business case and a further section outlining projects which are realistic but do not yet have a finalized business case and funding agreed. This will give Members and residents a clearer understanding of the Council’s ambition for its capital investment programme in the longer term (Note that similar recommendations were made in 2020 and 2021). At present there is inconsistency across portfolios, and it is often not possible to achieve the tighter criteria over the whole of a four-year programme.</p>	<p>Agreed in part</p> <p>The capital programme includes those schemes that are fully funded within the 4-year period. In future budgets, we will identify the pipeline of schemes that have passed a gateway assessment in terms of viability and deliverability but remain dependant on a final business case and the identification of funding.</p>	<p>Martin Tett</p> <p>David Skinner</p>
<p>2. Cabinet should give serious consideration to more Capital investment projects which potentially reduce significant revenue pressures in the medium to long-term.</p>	<p>Agreed. This is already the approach taken by Cabinet.</p> <p>A number of business cases for future capital investment are currently under development in portfolios linked to reducing existing and future revenue pressures. We will continue to review</p>	<p>Martin Tett</p> <p>David Skinner</p>

	<p>these on a case-by-case basis and consider investing where we are confident about the delivery of realistic and achievable ongoing revenue savings.</p>	
<p>3. The Council and individual portfolio Risks and Opportunities Schedule should quantify the potential budgetary impact and likelihood of key risks and opportunities so that they can be fully assessed against the relevant Contingency schedules. Year-to-year management of contingency, reserves and releases should also be taken into account for risk management and financial risk registers for each portfolio should reflect the quantum of financial risk identified in the Budget. A new strategic risk on the overall finances of the Council should be added to the Risk Register to reflect the Budget position and updated to reflect any material deviations throughout the financial year.</p>	<p>Agreed in Part.</p> <p>Key financial risks are identified as part of the routine risk management processes, and mitigating actions are monitored through Directorate Boards and the Council’s Corporate Management Team which is attended on a regular basis by the Head of Audit.</p> <p>Cabinet already considers the adequacy of contingencies and reserves as part of considerations about the medium-term financial plan. There is an established process for the release of contingencies and reserves requiring member approval. It is difficult to be precise in quantifying financial risks but Cabinet will ensure that a schedule of quantified risks is shared with the Audit and Governance Committee in confidence (due to potential commercial sensitivities).</p> <p>Opportunities are dynamic and will be kept under review by portfolios on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>The strategic risk CMT-08 will be updated to include the overall risk to delivering a balanced Budget position for the Council and will reflect the quarterly reports to Cabinet on the forecast position.</p>	<p>Martin Tett</p> <p>David Skinner</p>
<p>4. The current delivery of Community Boards needs re-examination as the ratio of administration costs to the expenditure value delivered does not yet appear cost effective for Council Taxpayers. This may be addressed through a combination of a review of the cost base</p>	<p>Agreed in Part</p> <p>The administration overhead is not solely linked to the expenditure of the boards but is an important aspect of the engagement that the Council undertakes with different settlements across the county. This interface on a local level was an important aspect of</p>	<p>Steve Bowles</p> <p>Sarah Ashmead</p>

<p>required for their operation and more proactive leveraging of external funding for local projects.</p>	<p>the business case for a unitary council and it remains important to understand and respond to issues at a local level.</p> <p>In response to scrutiny last year, and the work of a member task and finish group, the structure of staffing support was remodelled to deliver £190k annual revenue saving and the new staffing model went live in June 2022. We also set a minimum requirement on contributory funding of 55p for every £1 of Council funding which has been delivered and is currently running at an average of 87p. Some boards have been able to achieve an average level of contributory funding over £2 and the learning from these Boards will be used to support other Boards as we seek to maximise the levels of funding available for local priorities.</p> <p>This year, we have committed to a review of the Boards including the geography of the existing arrangements. Cost effectiveness of the Boards should not solely be judged on the allocation of grant funding, and as part of the review, we will develop a clear framework for evaluating the success of the boards, including in relation to their critical place shaping role. We will also develop a 2–3-year roadmap for Community Boards to allow for their ongoing development, linked to the Council’s overall model for locality working.</p>	
<p>5. A strategic business case should be put together in consultation with local partners and stakeholders to support the development of a sustainable CCTV framework. It is recognised that its implementation would then require capital funding.</p>	<p>Agreed. This work is already in progress.</p> <p>A strategic Business case is currently being developed in conjunction with Thames Valley Police, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and other stakeholders which will set out options for the future development of the CCTV network in Buckinghamshire. A review of the public space cameras in the county, the transmission network and the control room based in</p>	<p>Steve Bowles</p> <p>Gillian Quinton</p>

	<p>Wycombe has been undertaken. Work is ongoing to identify a number of costed options for a staged upgrade of the current network which will need to incorporate an ongoing maintenance and replacement contract.</p> <p>A member’s task and finish group led by Councillor Bowles has been overseeing the review project, providing wider scrutiny from members. It is important to note however that given the financial pressures on the Council and that this is not a statutory responsibility of the Council, decisions about the future funding of CCTV will need to be taken in the context of the wider budget pressures on the capital and revenue programme.</p>	
<p>6. The Finance & Resources Select Committee should receive an in-depth report on agency staffing costs across the Council and the steps being taken to mitigate this spend, as well as a deep dive on the agency spend (Pertemps) of £22m.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The Council has robust mechanisms for monitoring agency staffing and detailed reporting already takes places. An explanatory report will be brought to the Select Committee meeting in June 2023 about the Council’s expenditure on Agency staff and the steps taken to mitigate this spend.</p>	<p>John Chilver</p> <p>Sarah Murphy-Brookman</p>
<p>7. Cabinet should seek to identify a permanent home for the Buckinghamshire Archives as part of the Accommodation Strategy or Town Centre regeneration plans.</p>	<p>Agreed. Work is already underway in relation to this recommendation.</p> <p>Securing a sustainable long-term home for the Archives is a requirement of Accreditation from the National Archives, to continue as a designated place of deposit for Public Records and the unique collections held. The Property team have already undertaken a review, with the Culture & Leisure Service Area (who have responsibility for Archives Provision) to identify possible sites,</p>	<p>John Chilver</p> <p>Ian Thompson</p>

	including as part of the wider accommodation strategy and town centre regen plans in Aylesbury.	
8. In light of rising demand and the increased costs associated with housing people in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation, the Council should develop alternative Temporary Accommodation solutions as a matter of urgency.	<p>Agreed. This work is already in progress.</p> <p>The Property and Housing team have already begun a major programme to acquire additional units for Temporary Accommodation. Sites have been identified and are in the process of being acquired and approved via the Key Decision process and included it in the Council's Capital Programme. A Project Board is in the process of being established to drive this work forward at pace.</p>	<p>Mark Winn</p> <p>Ian Thompson</p>
9. Cabinet should ensure that the emerging Visitor Economy Strategy will have clear Cabinet Member ownership and direction and an appropriate budget commitment to support its implementation.	<p>Agreed in part.</p> <p>Portfolio responsibility for the Visitor Economy Strategy sits with the Leader, due to its ties to Economic Development. The Strategy, which is under development, will set out the vision and aspiration for the visitor economy in Bucks. It is anticipated that the private sector will play a key role in its delivery. The Council will also contribute through its service delivery, including for example town centre development, transport infrastructure and country parks. There is no commitment to additional funding at this stage, and any potential budget requirement would need to be considered against other priority areas for the Council, and as part of the overall financial landscape of the MTFP.</p>	<p>Martin Tett</p> <p>Ian Thompson</p>