



## Report to Finance & Resources Select Committee

<b>Date:</b>	22 February 2024
<b>Reference number:</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Twelve Month Budget Scrutiny Update</b>
<b>Cabinet Member(s):</b>	Martin Tett, Leader
<b>Contact officer:</b>	David Skinner, s151 officer
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	None specific
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>The Committee is asked to note and comment on the content of the report</b>

### **1. Executive summary**

1.1 In January 2023 the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group produced a report containing nine recommendations. The report was received and responded to by Cabinet on 14 February 2023. This report details the twelve-month update to each of the recommendations.

### **2. Content of the report**

2.1 Attached at Appendix 1 is a table which provides updates against each of the recommendations made by the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group in January 2023.

### **3. Other options considered**

3.1 Not applicable.

### **4. Legal and financial implications**

4.1 Set out in the responses below.

### **5. Corporate implications**

5.1 Not applicable.

### **6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views**

6.1 Not applicable.

**7. Communication, engagement & further consultation**

7.1 Not applicable.

**8. Next steps and review**

8.1 Not applicable.

**9. Background papers**

9.1 Not applicable.

**10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)**

10.1 Not applicable.

## Appendix 1

### Budget Scrutiny 2023 – Recommendations from the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group

Chairman – Cllr Ralph Bagge

Response from Cabinet – Cllr Martin Tett, Leader

Recommendation	Cabinet’s response – Y/N & comments	Six Month Update	Twelve Month Update	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 an ascertained source of funding or a finally approved business case in order to 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</p>	<p><b>Agreed in part.</b></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><b>In progress.</b> The pipeline of schemes is being considered as part of the MTFP Capital programme and will include schemes that have passed the gateway assessment.</p> <p>This will be included as part of the Draft Budget papers published in January 2024.</p>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>The Final Budget will be updated to provide further information showing those schemes where the budget has been ‘released’ (approved business case in place); and ‘unreleased’ (further report or final business case required).</p> <p>The pipeline of schemes was considered as part of the MTFP Capital programme but is not sufficiently developed at this stage.</p>	<p>Martin Tett</p> <p>David Skinner</p>

<p>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>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><b>Agreed. This is already the approach taken by Cabinet.</b></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 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><b>Complete.</b> This approach has been agreed by Cabinet. Examples of capital investment opportunities that have been supported include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children’s Homes</li> <li>• Temporary Accommodation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Complete</b> as per 6-month update.</p>	<p>Martin Tett David Skinner</p>
<p>3. The Council and individual portfolio Risks and Opportunities Schedule should quantify the potential financial impact and probability so that risks and opportunities can be fully assessed against the relevant Contingency</p>	<p><b>Agreed in Part.</b></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</p>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>Quantified risk &amp; opportunities schedules are already reported at Directorate Boards and Corporate Management Team; and the established process for release of contingencies</p>	<p><b>Complete.</b></p> <p>In addition to the 6-month update, a quantified risk schedule has also been included within the Draft Budget.</p>	<p>Martin Tett David Skinner</p>

<p>schedules. Year-to-year management of contingency, reserves and releases should also be taken into account for risk management. 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>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>and reserves already includes consideration of risk.</p> <p>A schedule of quantified risks has been shared with Risk Management Group and then Audit and Governance Committee at their next meetings.</p> <p>The strategy risk CMT-08 has been updated to include the overall risk to delivering a balanced Budget position for the Council and will be updated in line with the quarterly budget monitoring reports to Cabinet.</p>		
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<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 required for their operation and more proactive leveraging of external funding for local projects.</p>	<p><b>Agreed in Part</b></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 the business case for a unitary council and it remain 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</p>	<p><b>In progress</b></p> <p>In 2022/23 each £1 of Community Board funding secured an average of £1.03 in contributory funding.</p> <p>In 2023/24 the Boards have a target to achieve £1 in contributory funding for every £1 of funding allocated by a Board. As of 9 August, each £1 of Community Board funding has secured an average of £1.72 in contributory funding.</p> <p>The review of the community boards will commence during October 2023 with recommendations made by March 2024, ready for implementation in May 2025. This review will look at the financial arrangements of the boards, benefits delivered and whether the boundaries need to change to reflect the reduction in ward councillors and changes to councillor ward boundaries which come into</p>	<p><b>On track</b></p> <p>The review has commenced as planned and members have been engaged in considering the future boundaries for the boards etc. In view of the additional budget reductions proposed in the new MTFP, and the need to reflect this in the review, the timescale for reporting on the recommendations has been extended to Autumn 2024.</p>	<p>Arif Hussain</p> <p>Sarah Ashmead</p>
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	<p>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>effect from the next election in May 2025.</p> <p>The review will include engagement with key stakeholders such as town &amp; parish councils, VCS sector, police, health, Community Board Chairmen and board members and Community Board staff.</p>		
<p>5. A strategic business case should be put together in consultation with local partners and stakeholders to support the development of a</p>	<p><b>Agreed. This work is already in progress.</b></p> <p>A strategic Business case is currently being developed in conjunction with Thames Valley</p>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>Having consulted with Thames Valley Police, and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner a draft outline</p>	<p><b>In Progress</b></p> <p>The Strategic Business case is still in development. Initial consultation with members and Town and Parish</p>	<p>Arif Hussain</p> <p>Craig McArdle</p>

<p>sustainable CCTV framework. It is recognised that its implementation would then require capital funding.</p>	<p>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 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 Cabinet Member 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</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire CCTV strategy has been developed. There is now a need for further consultation with Members and Town and Parish Councils to seek their view on how the policy should be developed to meet their needs in relation to CCTV.</p> <p>A central pillar of the strategy is to form a CCTV Advisory Group which will be Chaired by the Cabinet Member for Communities with members from across the county, police and other stakeholders. The group will oversee all CCTV development work and performance monitoring. This will provide complete transparency on the installation and use of overt which had CCTV cameras in Buckinghamshire and ensures that camera deployments are proportionate, legal,</p>	<p>Councillors has taken place in January, with further consultation planned.</p> <p>Due to the financial position of the Council and the need to ensure Best Value further work is being completed to stabilise the current network as an interim position and then investigate what level of upgrade to the existing system would be possible if the £868,000 of capital budget is approved.</p> <p>Following the MTFP scrutiny Board which took place on Monday 8th January we are now in a position to undertake further consultation with members based on the available funding.</p> <p>An interim solution utilising second hand equipment is being progressed in order to ensure that the CCTV system remains functional for the next 12 months.</p>	
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	<p>wider budget pressures on the capital and revenue programme.</p>	<p>accountable and necessary.</p> <p>The costed options for this project were considered at Informal Cabinet, who have agreed in principle to fund the upgrade of the CCTV control room and network.</p> <p>£600,000 of capital has been set aside for the first phase of this upgrade and I am exploring procurement options to deliver this first phase of work.</p>		
<p>6. The Finance &amp; Resources Select Committee should receive a deep dive 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 (Per temps) of £22m.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The Council has robust mechanisms in place for monitoring agency staffing and detailed reporting is in place. 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><b>Complete</b></p> <p>A comprehensive report was taken to Finance and Resources Select Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023. This set out how Agency workers are a key part of the council's resourcing and attraction plans: Agency workers provide a flexible workforce with the capacity and capability to deliver services, sometimes at short notice. It was noted that the</p>	<p><b>Complete</b> as per 6-month update.</p>	<p>John Chilver</p> <p>Sarah Murphy-Brookman</p>

		<p>use of agency staff is a strategic approach to recruitment for a number of entry level roles in the Council including the Depot and Corporate Business Support. Agency staff also provide project and temporary support for project-based roles such as HS2. Agency usage and premium costs are scrutinised monthly by CMT Budget Board and Directorate Budget Boards, and appropriate actions taken where required including exit plans to cease use. The cost of Agency workers is funded from the relevant Service Pay and Agency budget to ensure visibility and cost control.</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><b>Agreed. Work is already underway in relation to this recommendation.</b></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</p>	<p><b>In progress</b> - on track. A suitable site has been identified and detailed feasibility work is underway to bring back to Cabinet for decision.</p>	<p><b>In progress</b> – A Cabinet paper is proposed for February 2024 seeking authority to progress a scheme on a net neutral capital cost to the Council using Future High Street Funding.</p>	<p>John Chilver Steve Bambrick</p>

	<p>of deposit for Public Records and the unique collections held. The Property team have already undertaken a review, with the Culture &amp; Leisure Service Area (who have responsibility for Archives Provision) to identify possible sites, including as part of the wider accommodation strategy and town centre regen plans in Aylesbury.</p>			
<p>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>	<p><b>Agreed. This work is already in progress.</b></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 include 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><b>In progress</b></p> <p>A savings action plan is in place for Temporary Accommodation, focussing on providing additional council-owned temporary accommodation as well as targeting better prevention. This is overseen by the newly established Housing Improvement Board. A dedicated, experienced Housing Asset and Development manager is in post, with 1 site already acquired and further sites in the pipeline to deliver Council</p>	<p><b>Complete.</b></p> <p>Several actions to tackle temporary accommodation demand and provision have been developed and implemented as part of the TA Recovery Plan. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase of Holmers House and Jasmine Court (new TA properties)</li> <li>• Opening and full occupation of Bridge Court, a new council run TA facility with 58 units</li> <li>• Weekly assessment and actions taken to resolve</li> </ul>	<p>Mark Winn Ian Thompson</p>

		owned Temporary Accommodation.	<p>the highest cost TA placements into other more cost effective ones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New arrangements for 'block-booking' with hotels/B&amp;Bs for lower cost volume placements</li> </ul> <p>These actions have been successful to reduce the number of places at the more expensive 'nightly-paid' rate. The average cost per night for 'nightly paid' has reduced from a high at £120 per night in Q4 of 2022/23 down to a recent average cost of £93 in Q3 2023/24.</p>	
<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>	<p><b>Agreed in part.</b></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</p>	<p><b>In progress.</b></p> <p>The Visitor Economy Strategy is in the final stages of development. This will include discussions at the Growth, Infrastructure &amp; Housing Select Committee with input from some members of the Communities &amp; Localism Select Committee on 7 September, at which point the portfolio holder will share the</p>	<p><b>Complete</b> – a decision has been made to pause the development of the Visitor Economy Strategy in light of the current economic climate. Portfolio responsibility lies with the Leader of the Council due to its ties with Economic Development.</p>	<p>Martin Tett</p> <p>Steve Bambrick</p>

	<p>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>data and research gathered during the development process as well as an outline of some of the priorities set out in the Strategy. Ahead of Member sign off and publication, further engagement work is required with partners and key stakeholders. This is due to take place in the Autumn.</p>		
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