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16 January 2025

To: All Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Dear Member,

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Monday, 20th January, 2025

I attach a copy of the following reports for the above-mentioned meeting which were not available at the time of collation of the agenda:

**9. SCRUTINY OF THE 2025/26 DRAFT BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/2030 (PAGES 1 - 26)**

To ratify the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Panels in relation to the 2025/26 Draft Budget and MTFS 2025/30.

**Appendix 5 – List of Comments and Recommendations from Budget Scrutiny Process**

Yours sincerely

Philip Slawther, Principal Scrutiny Officer

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## Budget Scrutiny Recommendations – 2024-25

<b>Adults and Health Scrutiny Panel</b>			
<b>MTFS Proposal</b>	<b>Further info requested (if appropriate)</b>	<b>Comments/Recommendation</b>	<b>Cabinet Response Req'd (Yes/No)</b>
<b><u>General – Pressures and Savings</u></b>			
General		The Panel highlighted the risk from the high level of additional pressures to the Council budget, particularly in relation to the extra £15.1m of pressures in the Adult Social Services budget.	Yes
General		The Panel highlighted the forecast pressures in Adult Social Services for 2026/27 as this was only £930k (Table 1 of the Cabinet report) compared with much higher levels in the other years of the MTFS. The Panel considered that there was some risk of the pressures being revised upwards at the Budget setting process next year, thereby increasing the budget gap at that time.	Yes
General		The Panel expressed concerns about the higher level of proposed new savings in 2026/27 (Table 2 of the Cabinet report) compared to other years of the MTFS and the potential risk of this impacting on the services that residents received.	Yes

General		The Panel expressed concerns about the details received about some service providers attempting to raise the cost of services commissioned by the Council at rates that were considerably higher than inflation. The Panel recommended that the Council should be robust in its approach to the procurement from service providers and vigilant against the risk of being overcharged for services, particularly when compared to the cost of services provided in similar neighbouring boroughs.	Yes
<b><u>General – format of budget scrutiny papers</u></b>			
		The Panel expressed concerns that there was very limited information available in the budget scrutiny papers on what the specific savings proposals actually involved and that this led to the need for additional discussion at the meeting in order to understand them. The Panel recommended that there should be more detailed explanations in the budget scrutiny papers in future years.	Yes
<b><u>Savings – Cross-Council</u></b>			
Staffing Efficiencies		The Panel recommended that it should monitor progress on the numbers of agency staff that were moved over to permanent Adult Social Services	No

		contracts and an overall reduction in the proportion of agency staff used by Adult Social Services.	
<b><u>Savings – Adults, Health &amp; Communities</u></b>			
Connected Care Review	<p>The Panel requested that it should be provided with details of the implementation of this project at a later date as there was a risk that moving to a different model would not fully reverse the loss-making position.</p> <p><b>Jan 2025 update from AH&amp;C Dept:</b> “We are benchmarking our current business model to best practice from elsewhere and undertaking an options appraisal which will be completed by April 2025.”</p> <p><b>Action:</b> To be added to Panel’s work programme.</p>		No
Day Opportunities – Commissioning Review	<p>The Panel requested that it should be provided with details of the outcomes of the review when available.</p> <p><b>Jan 2025 update from AH&amp;C Dept:</b> “Adult Social Care are scoping the parameters of the review of day services and will</p>		No

	utilise the Co-production Board to ensure residents inform that work.”  <b>Action:</b> To be added to Panel’s work programme.		
Integrated Connected Communities		The Panel requested that local Councillors be consulted on the approach to integrated neighbourhood teams, in particular about local groups that could be linked into the teams.	Yes
Integrated Connected Communities		The Panel recommended that relevant organisations in local community and voluntary sector should be made aware of the reduction in scope of the Connected Communities work (in areas such as employment, education and housing advice) as this could add further pressure to organisations that provided advice and support to residents.	Yes
Integrated Connected Communities		The Panel recommended that the details of this proposal be broken down and made more accessible when presented as part of the forthcoming public consultation on the Budget.	Yes
<b><u>Capital Programme</u></b>			
Osborne Grove Nursing Home	The Panel sought reassurance that the Council would continue to engage and communicate with the co-production group for Osborne Grove including through a meeting with them which was anticipated to take place in the New Year.		Yes

	<p><b>Jan 2025 update from AH&amp;C Dept:</b>          “The Council’s work around asset management is now being led by Placemaking and Housing, reporting into the Capital Board. Cllr das Neves is bringing together a group of officers to meet with the Osborne Grove Co-production Group to appraise them of the approach and of next steps.”</p>		
Locality Hubs		<p>Given the limitations on the capital budget which meant that the development of additional new locality hubs could not go ahead, the Panel recommended that further efforts be made to join up services across the Borough and to include the existing locality hub in this.</p>	Yes

<b>Children &amp; Young People's Scrutiny Panel</b>			
<b>MTFS Proposal</b>	<b>Further info requested if appropriate)</b>	<b>Comments/Recommendation</b>	<b>Cabinet Response Req'd (Yes/No)</b>
<b><u>General</u></b>			
	None	The Panel request that Cabinet provide a response on what their plans are for income generation, rather than savings, to close the residual budget gap. The Panel also seek assurances from Cabinet that they have explored every opportunity for income generation.	Yes
	None	In reference to the residual budget gap of around £32m, the Panel request assurances from Cabinet that they will seek to minimise the impact of further savings on children and young people in the borough.	Yes
<b><u>Budget Pressures</u></b>			
Budget Pressures relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education, Health &amp; Social Care Plans</li> <li>• Home to School Transport</li> </ul>	Further information requested about the extent to which additional funding from the government, announced in the Autumn Budget 2024, may actually help to reduce these three budget pressures.	<p>The Panel are concerned about forecast budget pressures on these service areas growing further and seek assurances from Cabinet around the modelling used to calculate the forecast pressures.</p> <p>The Panel would like assurances that the forecasts will continue to be reassessed going forward, including in reference to updated in-</p>	Yes.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High Cost Placements in Children's Social Care.</li> </ul>		year budget monitoring figures for Quarter 2 2024/25.	
<p><u>Response to Further Information Request</u></p> <p>The Local Government Finance Settlement has seen funding to the Council increase by around £16m for 25/26; this has helped to reduce the Council's budget gap. Although a portion of this will be allocated to Children's Services, this will not fully address the significant budget pressure of around £4.4M relating to social care and services for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities. There is also an expectation that some of the additional funding received will be required to support the implementation of the new duties and reforms being set out in the forthcoming legislation in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.</p>			
Children's Social Care (High Cost Placements).		<p>The Panel requested that Cabinet give assurances around the fact that they will monitor the costs of placements closely going forwards, and also give assurances around how the Council will ensure that none of our providers use unsuitable placements, such as caravans and Airbnb sublets.</p> <p>Further assurances were requested about how we will monitor providers charging excessive rates for placements.</p>	Yes
<p><b><u>New Savings Proposals</u></b></p>			
Pendarren	<p>Is there facility for Pendarren to be hired out by large private groups on a self-catering basis?</p> <p>Is there a separate kitchen in the main building that can be used to accommodate</p>		

	kosher/halal dietary requirements for these stays?		
<u>Response to Further Information Request.</u>			
<p>We are unable to offer the kitchen facilities in the main house at this time. This is due to the health and safety and food preparation restrictions which means that we would have to undertake a deep clean after every rental due to the main house kitchen being a commercial kitchen. At the moment we do not have the resources to do this; in addition, there is a fire prevention hatch which causes concern if the correct use is not monitored by trained staff. These issues are not limited to kosher/halal dietary requirements, but for any group wanting to use the main house as a self-catered option. We are committed to see if we can make it work in the future. The Firs Bungalow does have a separate kitchen and can be rented for sole use.</p>			
<b><u>Savings Tracker 2024/25</u></b>			
N/A	Digital Transformation Savings (£232k).	The Panel request clarification about what this saving relates to. The Panel also request clarification about why there is no RAG rating. It is presumed this should be red, as it is listed as a £232k shortfall. If this saving is undeliverable, how will the £232k saving be mitigated?	
<u>Response to Further Information Request</u>			
<p>This saving relates to a digital target allocated to Children’s Services and it is RAG rated as red and the service is working with Digital Services to identify how these savings can be delivered. The Service is on track to deliver its MTFs savings targets, and in some areas where we have successfully sustained stepping children down to family settings, we are avoiding more costs than expected. Where there are any surplus savings, these will offset the base budget pressures and these additional savings.</p>			

N/A	Reducing placement costs through effective management of the market (£200k).	The Panel requested further information about what mechanisms are being used to effectively manage the market? Are there lessons that could be rolled out more widely across the organisation?		
<p><u>Response to Further Information Request</u></p> <p>Regular meetings are now in place with the provider market to inform service requirements and negotiate competitive rates for placements. In addition, we have put in place a robust Fee Up-lift Request process, that challenges any requests which includes, looking at the company's profit margins, support package, impact against outcomes and value for money. Since implementation, this has resulted in cost avoidance of £254k in children's social care and £22k in SEND.</p> <p>Under the MTFS projects, we have successfully delivered the savings target for 2024/25 through using a simplified project management approach, tight governance arrangements for each of the programmes and associated projects and investing in up-skilling the team to ensure that they have the right knowledge and skills to successfully deliver the wider benefits to the organisation.</p>				

<b>Climate, Community Safety &amp; Environment Scrutiny Panel</b>			
<b>MTFS Proposal</b>	<b>Further info requested (if appropriate)</b>	<b>Comments/Recommendation</b>	<b>Cabinet Response Req'd (Yes/No)</b>
<b><u>General – pressures and format of report.</u></b>			
General		<p>There were no listed budget pressures from the three directorates under the Panel and after questioning the Panel were satisfied that this was the case.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> With regards to the Pressures Report, it was commented that it would be useful to show a comparison with the previous year (2023/24).</p>	No
General		<p><b>Recommendation:</b> The Committee commented that there were not sufficient details provided in the report for the proposed savings. It was requested that more detail be given next year.</p>	No
<b><u>Savings – Environment &amp; Resident Services</u></b>			
Management Actions: Parking Visitor Voucher Savings.	<p><b>Requests for further information:</b> More detail on the proposed savings for Parking Permits and storage were sent to the Committee for further scrutiny however there were no further recommendations from the Panel.</p>		No

Service specific charges: Parking Fees and charges.		<b>Recommendation:</b> After discussion about the gaps between public perception of the effect that parking restrictions have on businesses and the actual data that contradicts these - a recommendation was approved for the OSC to further scrutinise issues around consultations and whether they were an over representative process. Furthermore, how this could affect the co-production principles of the council.	
<b><u>Savings Tracker 2024/25</u></b>			
Savings Tracker General	<b>Requests for further information:</b> More information was requested and sent to the Committee as to the status of the RAG ratings. There were no further recommendations from the Panel.		No

<b>Housing, Planning &amp; Development Scrutiny Panel</b>			
<b>MTFS Proposal</b>	<b>Further info requested if appropriate)</b>	<b>Comments/Recommendation</b>	<b>Cabinet Response Req'd (Yes/No)</b>
<b><u>Budget Pressures</u></b>			
Strategic Asset Management	Further information requested about what impact a reduction/reconfiguration of the Strategic Asset Management team would have on the Council.		
<p><u>Response to Further Information Request.</u></p> <p>The Strategic Asset Management team is a small team (13 officers) which provides the following function: Strategic Asset Management, Accommodation Management, Children’s Capital Programme and the Programme Management Office for Capital Projects and Property. It is crucial to ensuring we take a long-term approach to planning investment in our property assets to realise the priorities of the council, and it also maintains key property data.</p> <p>A reduction of the team would have a significant impact on delivery of the capital programme and the realisation of savings across the council. We would be likely to make less robust investment decisions, either investing in the wrong assets, or failing to get the most efficiency in how we plan and scope the capital programme going forwards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Civic Centre Project could be impacted as the Accommodation team would not be able to provide support and deliver in the preplanning, consultation and moves of services into the completed building.</li> <li>• The delivery of the Children’s Capital Programme could be affected, delaying or halting essential improvements to Haringey schools, and affecting our relationship with the DFE, and the prioritisation of Haringey schools for capital investment.</li> <li>• The planning of the capital programme would be affected, weakening our ability to make improvements to public services in council buildings across the borough.</li> </ul>			
Housing Demand	Further information requested around a written breakdown of the		

	component parts that made up the £10.797m pressure in Housing Demand.												
<p><u>Response to Further Information Request</u></p> <p>We've done a comprehensive review of base costs and a comparison against other neighbouring boroughs. We are forecasting a 15% increase in bookings in 25/26 compared to 23/24. The 25/26 net budget after MTFs adjustments is £12.9m. The net cost of temporary accommodation is £17.3m (£3.3m for B&amp;Bs, £13.4m for NPAs and £0.6m for PSLs). Other Housing demand cost total £6.3m which includes a contribution from the homelessness prevention grant of around of £4m. The staffing budget is £6.5m. Also included in other costs are the debt provision and other service running costs. We are also waiting for the allocation of the £233m announced by Government to support homelessness and rough sleeping that we hope will offer some mitigations. These will be announced next week and our pressures position will be updated thereafter.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="208 639 705 847"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>£m</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Net budget</td> <td>12.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Net cost of TA</td> <td>17.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other cost</td> <td>6.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Net pressure for 25/26</b></td> <td><b>-10.7</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					£m	Net budget	12.9	Net cost of TA	17.3	Other cost	6.3	<b>Net pressure for 25/26</b>	<b>-10.7</b>
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Housing Demand	Further information requested on what the revenue cost implication was of a void, both in terms of TA voids and a void in general needs housing.												
<p><u>Response to Further Information Request.</u></p> <p>As this amount fluctuates based on the number of voids, we have calculated that the average annual costs of a PSL void is £9,379 which represents the amount we pay to landlords for vacant properties. The average annual council tax charge per property is £224. We are appointing a new voids contractor to reduce the level of voids.</p>													

General need social housing voids result in a loss of income to GF to the extent of properties offered to temporary accommodation. Approximately 50% of general need social housing voids are offered to homeless households resulting in the reduction of TA use.

**New Savings Proposals**

Asset Management	Further information requested on what the current level of bad debt provision was. Members requested that it be broken down into general debts, those debts on a payment plan, and those debts which were written off as non-reclaimable.		
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**Response to Further Information Request.**

The total debt owed to LBH Commercial Property is £4,975,692.90 as at the 31 December 2024. £1,182,681.23 of this debt is less than 30 days old. The 25 December was a quarter day (the days – four a year - on which commercial rents are usually paid) which would suggest a true bad debt position of £3,793,011.68.

There are limitations with the debt data LBH holds and the finance system that make it difficult to analyse the debt in the way requested. While we can use manual processes to work on individual rent cases, and identify its stage, but we do not have a database that would support the level of reporting requested.

We have c.149 cases in active debt recovery, out of a total of 255 debtors. This includes payment plans, legal agreements, and court orders as well as live litigation. The team individually contracts each of these. The team are actively working on write-offs for 2024/25, which we would do if we have legal opinion that the debt cannot be recovered, or the cost to recover would be in excess of the amount owing.

Housing Related Support Contracts	Further information requested about the types of contracts being re-negotiated. What support do these contracts provide to residents and what services were potentially being lost.		
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Response to Further Information Request

Contracts in scope are for community based floating support, information, advice and guidance.

Savings in the following contracts will be achieved by freezing recruitment, benefiting from natural wastage, re-direction towards targeted prevention and streamlining and reconfiguring service to prevent statutory need. This will minimise the risk of service reductions and ensure resources are focused on those who are most in need.

- Riverside Engage Floating Support contract
- Reach and Connect Older People’s Floating Support Service
- Citizens Advice Information Advice and Guidance service

Detailed discussions are taking place with providers regarding any service impacts, and we will report back on this once these discussions have finalised. There will also be a phased reduction in the contribution from this budget to Council delivered activities in sheltered schemes, but this will be mitigated by the service who are seeking other/external funding to cover any shortfall.

**Capital Budget**

Capital investment of £13.247m in Asset Management of Council Buildings.	Further information requested around the business case and some of the modelling around River Park House and what it would cost to bring it up to a reasonable standard in order to generate revenue from renting it out. Member also requested to see some of the financial modelling for Station Road and the wider Wood Green scheme.		
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Response to Further Information Request.

- The Capital Investment in Asset Management of Council Buildings is an overall scheme comprising many projects. Each project is subject to its own business case approval.

- High level costings for a full refurbishment of RPH were commissioned from GL Hearn in 2019. This estimated the cost at £52,590,000.
- The cost to bring it up to a reasonable standard for revenue generation depends on the proposed use (i.e. the needs and requirements of a potential lessee). A key consideration for the council is that the building has an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of F, which means any new lease would currently be non-compliant with Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards.
- River Park House would need its mechanical and electrical installations replaced, including a new Heating and Ventilation System and new lifts. The GL Hearn costing for these elements was £10M. This should only be considered as a reference point for cost of any works, depending on actual designed scope and updated costings. Updated costings would follow if a viable proposition was identified for meanwhile use of the site. We continue to explore possibilities, include undertaking soft market testing to ensure we identify any opportunities.
- Financial modelling for Station Road and the wider Wood Green scheme is being developed with a consultant team appointed to ensure this is done to a high standard, and to ensure the Wood Green scheme supports the investment into the Civic Centre. Further information on this will be come forwards in the form of reports to Cabinet at the appropriate time.

**HRA**

General - Voids	The Panel requested further information about what was the average time taken to turnaround a void property in the current year, along with a figure for the shortest time and the longest time taken to turn a void around.		
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**Response to Further Information Request.**

- The average time taken to turnaround general needs void properties during the current financial year was 140 days year to date as at end of December 2024 (95 days to repair & 45 days to let)
- The shortest time taken to turnaround general needs properties void properties during the same period was 14 days (3 days repair & 17 days to let)

<p>The general needs property with the longest void turnaround time during the current financial year took 1141 days to relet. This property became vacant during the pandemic when there was a slowdown in voids repair work being carried out and required major works to be carried out. On completion of the works in March 2024 it then became squatted prior to reletting.</p>			
<p>General – Legal Disrepair</p>	<p>The Panel requested further information about the number of active legal disrepair claims that were currently in place against the Council.</p>		
<p><u>Response to Further Information Request.</u></p> <p>The formula rent increase is based on Central Government guidance which is September CPI + 1%. The service charges are not required to be based on this as they are based on the principle of cost recovery.</p> <p>September 2024 CPI is 1.7%. CPI +1% totals 2.7%.</p> <p>The tenants’ services charges excluding heating is increasing by an overall 2.5%. The tenants’ service charges for heating are reducing by 31%</p> <p>Overall, the tenants service charges including heating is increasing by 0.6% (i.e. less than 1%).</p>			
<p>Service Charges</p>	<p>Further information was requested about the total increase in services charge costs across the board, and whether that was more than CPI inflation plus 1%.</p>		
<p><u>Response to Further Information Request.</u></p> <p>Landlord communal inspection (previously called Converted properties cleaning service) provides a landlord safety inspection of the communal/shared areas including cleaning across street properties.</p>			

<p>This charge only applies to street properties that have been converted into flats and have a shared internal space.</p> <p>The title of the service charge to be made clearer in the Cabinet report - Landlord communal inspection (previously called Converted properties cleaning service).</p>			
<p>Service Charges</p>	<p>The Panel requested further information about the service charge for Converted Properties Cleaning, and what type of converted properties this affected. Presumably some of the converted properties we acquire would be individual dwellings and the Panel were sceptical that anyone would be sent to clean hallways in this type of property.</p>		
<p><u>Response to Further Information Request.</u></p> <p>Most of the new build properties are charged London Affordable Rent (LAR). Some of the earlier ones are on formula rent. Not many of the formula rent new builds would go to formula + 5% for a long time as there is likely to be less turnover of tenants in new builds. New builds on formula rent from 2024/25 would be charged at formula+5% at the outset.</p> <p>For the non-new builds, the number of tenancies affected each year would depend on the instances properties become void and re-let in the year i.e. the churn in the year, and this can fluctuate each year. Possibly 300 -400 properties may be affected in a year.</p>			
<p>Rental Charges</p>	<p>Further information was requested in relation to the number of tenancies that would be affected by the +5% rent increases levied on new-builds and re-let properties.</p>		
<p><u>Response to Further Information Request.</u></p>			

Most of the new build properties are charged London Affordable Rent (LAR). Some of the earlier ones are on formula rent. Not many of the formula rent new builds would go to formula + 5% for a long time as there is likely to be less turnover of tenants in new builds. New builds on formula rent from 2024/25 would be charged at formula+5% at the outset.

For the non-new builds, the number of tenancies affected each year would depend on the instances properties become void and re-let in the year i.e. the churn in the year, and this can fluctuate each year. Possibly 300-400 properties may be affected in a year.

Rental Charges	The Panel requested further information about average rental charges across the bedroom categories for new-lets in 2025/26 on formula rent properties.	
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Response to Further Information Request.

The 2025/26 average rental charges by bedroom for existing stock re-lets on formula rent is summarised in the table below:

<b>Number of Bedrooms</b>	<b>2025/26 Average Formula +5% rent capped £pw</b>
Bedsit	119.31
1	124.35
2	147.09
3	168.58
4	194.91
5	224.12
6	235.24
7	229.56
<b>All dwellings</b>	<b>146.77</b>

<b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee (Culture, Strategy &amp; Engagement)</b>			
<b>MTFS Proposal</b>	<b>Further info requested (if appropriate)</b>	<b>Comments/Recommendation</b>	<b>Cabinet Response Req'd (Yes/No)</b>
<b><u>General – Pressures and Savings</u></b>			
Digital Services		That this item be referred to the Cabinet as an area of concern due to the risk of further future pressures that could be caused by the need for unforeseen technological updates or cyber-security measures. The Committee also noted that this was an area where future savings were also proposed, leading to further potential pressures.	Yes
<b><u>General – format of budget scrutiny papers</u></b>			
General		The Committee noted that the descriptions for many of the specific budget items in the agenda papers had been very limited and that detailed conversation had been required in the meeting in order to understand them. The Committee recommended that significantly more detail should be included in future budget report, particularly for items that involve significant sums of money. This comment followed a discussion on the Housing Benefit pressure item, but the same	Yes

		point applied to various pressures, savings and capital items.	
General		It was requested that, in the future, any specific funding allocated to organisations be itemised in the budget scrutiny report. This would help clarify which funds would be applied earlier or later, allowing for a better understanding of the proposals. This comment emerged from the discussion on the Culture Review savings item which involved discretionary budgets used to fund local organisations. However, this recommendation applied as a general point for any relevant future item.	Yes
<b><u>Savings – Cross-Council</u></b>			
<b>1 - Enabling services review</b> <b>2 - Procurement &amp; contract management</b> <b>3 - Staffing efficiencies</b> <b>4 - Income generation</b>	The Committee noted that the four items discussed under cross-Council savings totalled over £13m for 2025/26 which was a large proportion of overall savings proposed. However, the descriptions for these items in the agenda papers had been very limited. The Committee requested that a more detailed report on these items be provided at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting in 2025/26. In particular, it	<p>The Committee noted that consideration would need to be given on how these savings were monitored by Scrutiny during 2025/26, including whether or not this should be carried out by individual Panels via a breakdown of savings on a service-by-service basis.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> To be added to Committee’s work programme ahead of the 2025/26 budget scrutiny process.</p>	No

	was requested that this should include details on how future contracts could be improved and the governance structures to support this on a longer-term basis.		
<b><u>Savings – Culture, Strategy &amp; Engagement</u></b>			
Digital Transformation		The Committee requested that further information be provided in future on the tracking of these savings, noting that an approach would need to be in place in order to quantify how digital transformation was resulting in specific reductions in spending across the Council.	
Leisure Services	Further information to be provided to the Committee when available on the discounts that would be provided and the groups that would be eligible for these.		
<b><u>Response to Further Information Request (Leisure Services)</u></b>			
<p>“The discounts that will be provided and the groups eligible will be partly determined by further consultation work with the community - as well as reviewing the evidence based around tackling health inequalities.</p> <p>As such, we are not yet in a position to be able to share further information but we are committed to developing our proposals early in 2025.”</p> <p><b>Action:</b> To be added to Committee’s work programme.</p>			

**Management actions (OSC & Climate/Community Panel)**

Review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

That a written explanation of the Review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme be provided to the Committee. As part of the information to be provided, reassurance was sought by the Committee regarding individuals affected by the changes, ensuring they wouldn't fall into further debt or arrears during the process.

Response to Further Information Request

The Council has commissioned Policy in Practice, a social policy software and analytics company used by many Local Authorities, to model options for reducing the cost of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2026-27. The modelling is expected to be completed by March 2025.

The council already uses Policy in Practice's Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) to combine multiple data sources including Council Tax Reduction, Housing Benefit, Discretionary Housing Payments, and Universal Credit, to better understand the position of low-income Haringey residents, and to target allocation of benefits such as the Household Support Fund to the residents in greatest need.

The aspiration is to revise the scheme for 2026-27 ensuring it:

- Is fair and equitable
- Considers the affordability of Council Tax payments, including an analysis of the financial resilience of different groups of residents using LIFT
- Minimises the frequency of changes of entitlement
- Is simple to understand, access, and administer re-using data from Universal Credit
- Delivers the £2m MTFS savings target.

Any proposals will go through the full legal and democratic decision-making process including public consultation and EQIA before they can be implemented from April 2026.

**Capital Programme**

Alexandra Palace	For further information to be provided to the Committee on the proposed reduction to the capital budget on Alexandra Palace, including the view on this of the Alexandra Park and Palace Charitable Trust.		
Capital support for delivering digital solutions	For further information to be provided to the Committee on the proposed reduction to the capital support for digital solutions.		

Response to Further Information Requests

**Alexandra Palace** – response from Chief Executive of Alexandra Park & Palace Charitable Trust:

The Council and AP are continuously reviewing the significant repair and maintenance requirements for the Park and Palace, as a large and well-used public venue, as well as a listed heritage building. A series of technical investigations and reports have identified the ten year capital investment requirements. In the context of the Council's financial challenges, the AP team have agreed to prioritise as follows for the first three years:

- Risk to Life
- Risk to Injury
- Failure to comply with Building Regulations, Health and Safety Legislation, Insurance Requirements

Based on these criteria the following CAPEX applications were submitted to Haringey Council.

**Alexandra Park & Palace Charitable Trust Emergency CAPEX request Yrs 1 to 3**

**24/25 Capex 25/26 Capex 26/27 Capex Total Yrs 1 to 3**

**Total** £2,189m    £1,662m    £3,940m    £7,791m

The allocation in 2024/25 has been instrumental in safeguarding the Palace and enabling the Trust to continue vital revenue-generating activities, which are critical to achieving a sustainable future. The CAPEX allowance for 2025/26 will build on the progress made in 2024/25. However, the AP team are concerned that the proposed reduction of £1,679,650 in CAPEX for 2026/27 poses a challenge to maintaining this momentum and addressing critical projects essential for preserving the building's integrity. Therefore, as part of the Council's budget round in 2025, the Trust will submit further evidence for the capital proposals to be reviewed and reconsidered for 2026/27 onwards.

**Capital support for delivering digital solutions:** “Following a review of activities, it was considered more appropriate to charge for IT support directly to capital schemes so any IT costs are contained within individual scheme budgets.”

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