

Overview & Scrutiny – Budget Scrutiny Recommendations 2024/25

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Adults and Health					
Ref	MTFS Proposal	Further info requested by the Panel (if appropriate)	Comments/Recommendation	Cabinet Response Req'd (Yes/No)	Cabinet to agree not agree/partially agree recommendation
Recommendation 1	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 response to be added	To be added
Recommendation 2	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 response to be added	To be added

Recommendation 3	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 – response to be added	To be added
Recommendation 4	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 Response to be added	To be added
Recommendation 5	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 Response to be added	To be added
Recommendation 6	Integrated Connected Communities		The Panel recommends 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 be added.

			to organisations that provided advice and support to residents.		
Recommendation 7	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 Response to be added	To be added.
Capital Programme					
Recommendation 8	Osbourne Grove Nursing Home		<p>The OSC welcomed the commitment by officers to meet with the Osborne Grove Co-production Group.</p> <p>The OSC also recommended that the Osborne Grove Co-production Group should be provided with the opportunity to provide input to any future business case for the site.</p> <p>The Panel will continue to monitor this issue.</p>	Yes Response to be added	To be added.
Recommendation 9	Locality Hubs		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.	Yes Response to be added	To be added.

Children & Young People					
Ref	MTFS Proposal	Further info requested by the Panel (if appropriate)	Comments/Recommendation	Cabinet Response Req'd (Yes/No)	Agreed/ Not Agreed/ Partially agreed
Recommendation 10	General		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 – response to be added	To be added.
Recommendation 11	General		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 – response to be added	To be added.
Recommendation 12	Budget Pressures relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education, Health & Social Care Plans • Home to School Transport • High Cost Placements in 		<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-year budget monitoring figures for Quarter 2 and beyond.</p>	Yes – response to be added	To be added.

	Children's Social Care				
Recommendation 13	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 – response to be added	To be added.
Recommendation 14	Pendarren		The Committee urged that all options for income generation from Pendarren are considered, with due regard given to the health & safety requirements that were specified.	Yes – response to be added	To be added.
Recommendation 15	Reducing placement costs through effective management of the market (£200k)		The OSC requested clarification on whether this reduction in costs would impact on the ability of young people approaching the age of 25 to complete education courses that they were undertaking.	Yes – response to be added	To be added.

Housing, Placemaking & Development					
Ref	MTFS Proposal	Further info requested by the Panel (if appropriate)	Comments/Recommendation	Cabinet Response Req'd (Yes/No)	Agreed/ Not Agreed/Partially agreed
Recommendation 16	Housing Related Support Contracts		<p>The OSC noted that discussions were still ongoing with providers regarding service impacts and requested that details of the outcomes be provided to the Housing Panel when available.</p> <p>Clarification was also requested on the anticipated timescales for these details to be available.</p>	Yes - response to be added	To be added.
Recommendation 17	Capital Investment of £13.247m in Asset Management of Council buildings.		The OSC expressed concern about the ongoing disuse of some Council-owned buildings and urged that all possible opportunities for interim uses be considered to maximise income generation.	Yes - response to be added	To be added.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Culture, Strategy & Engagement).					
Ref	MTFS Proposal	Further info requested if appropriate	Comments/Recommendation	Cabinet Response Req'd (Yes/No)	Agreed/ Not Agreed/ Partially Agreed
Recommendation 18	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 - response to be added	To be added.
Recommendation 19	General - Format of Budget Papers		The Committee noted the feedback from the Scrutiny Panels that the descriptions for many of the specific budget items (pressures, savings and capital items) in their 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 reports, particularly for items that involved significant sums of money.	Yes - response to be added	To be added.

Recommendation 20	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 - response to be added	To be added.
Recommendation 21	Review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.		The Committee noted the commitment for any proposals to go through the full democratic decision-making process before implementation in 2026/27 and requested further details on when this information was expected to be available to Scrutiny.	Yes - response to be added	To be added.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Recommendations arising from 30 th January OSC meeting).					
Ref	MTFS Proposal	Further info requested if appropriate	Comments/Recommendation	Cabinet Response Req'd (Yes/No)	Agreed/ Not Agreed/ Partially Agreed
Recommendation 22	HRA Business Plan		The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the mitigations and actions that had been put in place to manage the increasing number of housing disrepair cases, and the high number of housing voids. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee felt that these areas were ongoing risks to the HRA budget. They agreed that there be ongoing detailed reporting to the Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel during the financial year, to provide assurance that the costs were being managed and reduced. The Committee further recognised that there was currently a high churn of residents moving to new Council properties, as a result of new Council housing coming available and through the Neighbourhood Moves scheme but felt that the movement between Council properties needed to be quicker to ensure that Voids numbers were reduced.	Yes - response to be added	To be added.

Recommendation 23	HRA Business Plan		The Committee agreed that there was a continuing risk to the HRA account as the forecasted revenue contribution to capital outlay (RCCO) was currently substantively below the set minimum of £8m and that this should be continue to be carefully monitored by the Cabinet.	Yes - response to be added	To be added.
Recommendation 24	General – Exceptional Financial Support		The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that the Council is not in a position to set a robust balanced budget for 2025/26 without an assumed £37m Exceptional Financial Support.	No.	N/A.
Recommendation 25	General – Exceptional Financial Support		The Committee discussed the other options available to the Council when reaching the decision to seek Exceptional Financial Support from the government. This included Council Tax increases above the 5% threshold and significant cuts to service. The Committee commented that they were broadly supportive of the approach taken to seek Exceptional Financial Support, in light of the alternatives. There had been some incorrect external press reporting about the type of support that EFSA was, and it was clearly understood by the Committee, in the discussion, that this was not a government grant but the ability to draw down a loan which had interest payments together with the ability to use capital receipts to support the revenue spend on key services.	Yes - response to be added	To be added.

			<p>In light of the continual increases seen in the budget gap in recent months and the fact that ongoing use of EFSA beyond 2025/26 was unsustainable, the Committee recommended to Cabinet that there be robust and careful monitoring of the use of the EFSA funds through in-year budget monitoring. Future budget monitoring reports should clearly set out the areas of Council revenue spend that have been drawn down from the EFSA. The financial monitoring report will also need to highlight any unexpected increases in the use of this particular funding above the assumptions that have been used to seek the particular sum of £37m EFSA support.</p>		
Recommendation 26	Budget Monitoring		<p>The Committee noted that work was currently being undertaken to develop the format and content of the budget quarterly monitoring reports and recommended that Overview and Scrutiny be consulted on the final format to ensure that it allowed them to access the necessary detailed financial information on the revenue and capital budget, including risk, so they are able to confidently carry out their financial scrutiny responsibilities. The Committee agreed to meet with Director of Finance to agree how the Committee would</p>	Yes - response to be added	To be added.

			scrutinise in-year budget monitoring for 2025/26.		
Recommendation 27	New Savings Proposals in Adults – Format of Reports		<p>The Committee considered the new savings proposals on the community support model, reablement services and supported living contract. Although, there was further information provided at the meeting, on how the savings figures had been arrived at and the financial modelling behind these savings, the Committee felt that there was much more detail required by them, which needed to be included in the papers, in order to properly consider, challenge and scrutinise these savings in a meaningful way, and be able to make recommendations. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data/evidence for the Developing Community Support Model item - Data/evidence for the Review of the Council's Reablement model item including expansion of the model and any financial projections on invest to save (i.e. by reducing the need for long-term social care packages) - Data/evidence for the Supported Living Contract item, including details on the involvement of the co-production group. 	Yes - response to be added	To be added.