

BUDGET CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

This Appendix provides details of the budget consultation events which have taken place in December 2019 and January 2020. At the time that this appendix was prepared, details of the feedback received from Members during the December 2020 Councillor Budget Briefings and from the Scrutiny Committee meetings which have taken place before 24 January have been received and are included below.

Further Scrutiny Committee meetings are due to take place in the week commencing 27 January 2020, and the public consultation via the Council website is due to close on 25 January. A meeting with businesses, trade unions and other public bodies took place on 23 January 2020. An update on the budget consultation feedback from these meetings and the public consultation will be tabled at the meeting on 4 February.

Councillor Budget Briefings: 2 and 4 December 2019

Comments received at these briefings were reported in Appendix H of the report to Executive on 7 January 2020, and are repeated here for completeness:

On 2 December and 4 December 2019, presentations had been arranged for members of the County Council. Ten members of the Council attended each session, with senior officers and finance officers present to offer insight into specific budget areas.

The presentation pack, which comprised 33 slides, was circulated to those members of the Council who had attended. The pack provided detailed information on the background to the overall budget, including identified savings for each service area, as well as a programme of 'in depth' ('deep dive-') reviews.

No specific comments were agreed at either session by the members present for passing on into the budget process. However, a number of points of fact and clarifications were made, which included the following topics:

- Broadband Connectivity
- Winter Maintenance
- Highway Asset Management – Managing assets
- Street Works
- Home to School Transport
- Services for People with Dementia
- Suicide Prevention Strategy
- Sustainability of Rural Fire Stations

- Reclaiming Costs of Response to Flooding Incidents under the Bellwin Scheme and Contingency Reserves
- Raising Income from Property

Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The following statements have been received from Scrutiny Committee meetings which have taken place during January 2020:

Adults and Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee – 15 January 2020

On 15 January 2020, the Adults and Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee recorded its support for the budget proposals for Adult Care and Community Wellbeing for 2020/21 and concluded that the proposals for 2020/21 were cogent. In addition to senior officers, the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services was also in attendance at the Committee's meeting.

The Committee is pleased to record its congratulations to Adult Care and Community Wellbeing for consistently balancing its budget for the last seven completed financial years and there is an expectation that 2019/20 will represent an eighth year. Given the challenges and demands facing the service, and the overall reduction of funding from local government, this represents a significant achievement.

In relation to the 2020/21 details, the following points were clarified for the Committee:

- The grouping of the 2020/21 Adult Care and Community Wellbeing budget into three strategies (instead of the five used in 2019/20) does not materially affect the proposed levels of funding for each particular service.
- An additional Government allocation for adults and children's social care of £14.7 million had been confirmed (and this will for apply each year of the current Parliament).
- There is continued funding of £5.7 million for social care support grant and the winter pressures grant; the latter of which will be consolidated into the improved Better Care Fund and will continue at 2019/20 levels.
- Confirmation from the Government on the level of public health grant was awaited, but it was expected to contain a real terms increase of one per cent.
- Technological developments referred to will predominantly be funded via capital monies or existing funds used differently. Grant monies may also offer opportunities.
- Regulations and statutory guidance issued under the Care Act 2014 specified the charging structure for adult social care services. It was emphasised to

the Committee that the County Council had to follow this legislation in developing its charging policy.

- Some large contracts, which were due for renewal during 2021/21, have increased the scale of financial pressure and these are included in the proposed 2020/21 budgets.

The Committee also reflected on the longer term budgetary challenges for adult social care, from 2021/22 onwards, which will be considered as part of the Government's comprehensive spending review during 2020. When there is more detail on the Government's plans, this will be considered by the Committee.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 17 January 2020

On 17 January 2020, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee supported the budget proposals for Children's Services for 2020/21.

In relation to the 2020/21 details, the following points were clarified for the Committee:

- There would be no impact on service delivery from the changes to the Children's Services budget.
- The approach across the Council this year was to identify any savings by removing flexibilities from within the budgets, that could be given up to help with balancing the Council's budget to avoid making cuts to services and staffing.
- The Home to School/College Transport budget would be directly impacted by any major increases in fuel prices and assurance could not be provided that there would be no cost pressure arising from fuel price rises. The budget had been reviewed and cost increases were considered and built within the 2020/21 requirements. This budget was monitored on a monthly basis, due to it being a volatile and demand-led budget. If a cost pressure arose, it would be reported through the budget monitoring process, and considered corporately on how it could be managed.
- The budget for the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy consisted mainly of government grant funding. The government's Special Provision Fund allocations to transform SEND capital infrastructure was however small compared to what was actually required. The financial needs of this programme of works (£50.637m) were being regularly reviewed as surveys and requirements to the schemes progress, including the completion of capital appraisals for Executive approval and exploring alternative funding streams that come available.

- All schools would be receiving a gain in per pupil funding under the schools national funding formula for 2020/21. There was a government review commencing on how to make small schools more sustainable which may lead to greater certainty for small schools. It was suggested that the Committee considers the government review of school funding for small schools once it had been published.

Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee – 14 January 2020

On 14 January 2020, the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee supported the budget proposals for the Environment and Economy services for 2020/21.

The Committee highlighted the following points in relation to Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals for 2020/21:

- A member of the Committee highlighted the £5.500m addition to the capital programme in relation to the addition of a range of Infrastructure and Economic Development initiatives to support economic and housing growth in and around Boston. The Committee member queried the figure of £5.500m and sought clarification on the amount as this was understood to be a reduction on £11.000m previously allocated.
- Members expressed their concerns over the limited budgets for rural and countryside services, as a growing service offering a range of benefits.
- The Committee highlighted the work of the Council as Lead Local Flood Authority and the need to be proactive in relation to flood risk. The Committee recommended the need to ensure funding matched the increasing demand in this area.

Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee – 20 January 2020

On 20 January 2020, the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee supported the budget proposals for the Highways and Transport services for 2020/21.

The Committee highlighted the following points in relation to Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals for 2020/21:

- A member of the Committee highlighted the reduction in the volume of concessionary travel journeys which is expected to generate savings of £0.425m in 2020/21. Officers confirmed that decreasing volume of journeys was a national trend and that changes in the state pension age meant that the demand for concessionary bus passes had reduced.

The budget proposals will also be presented to:

- Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee on 28 January, and
- Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 30 January.

Meeting with businesses, trade unions and other public bodies

Budget proposals were presented to representatives from business, trade unions and other public bodies on 23 January 2020. Feedback from the meeting will be reported in due course.

Public Consultation via the Council website

Following consideration of the budget proposals 2020/21 by the Executive on 7 January 2020, a public consultation was published on the Council website, and is due to close on 25 January. Any comments received will be reported in due course.

This page is intentionally left blank