

## Appendix K

**Subject:** **Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments on the draft Budget 2015/16 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2015-2019 and Capital Programme**

**Summary:** This briefing provides Members with the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) during their consideration of the above reports during January 2015. These Minutes are presently draft until they are approved by the Committees at future meetings.

### **Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

1. The Committee received a report that outlined the Council's draft Budget for 2015/16, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme and also set out the efficiencies and pressures faced by the directorate. In light of the report and the further clarification provided by the Executive Member the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:-
  - Whether a £253k pressure relating to the new market rate supplement scheme (CSP 1501) for 2015/16 should be a continued pressure in future years. In response the Executive Member advised that with the success of the Social Worker Academy and the good progress made to retain social workers within the directorate, he was confident this was a realistic forecast. In addition the Committee were informed that careful monitoring of vacancies rates would continue in this volatile market. A Member raised concerns regarding the high number of agency social workers employed by the Council and the need to support social workers who continue to be hounded by the media as a group. The Assistant Director, Children's Services advised that the Directorate had been successful in reducing the number of temporary social worker staff, some of whom had been with the Council for a number of years. The Council had also featured in an LGA best practice article for its work in this area and would continue to profile and raise awareness of the excellent results achieved by the Council's social workers.
  - Whether the new responsibility for the commissioning of 0-5 year old children's public health services could be funded by the increase to the public health grant. The Executive Member commented that negotiation meetings on funding continued to be held to ensure this service would be fully met by the transferred fund.
  - Whether the pressures predicted in the Executive report were expected to change significantly during the year. The Executive Member commented that close monitoring of the pressures would be maintained throughout the year.
  - That all ward members engage in negotiations for Section 106 monies in their area to be directed towards Education and specifically new school places to fund the deficit of £2m. The Executive Member for Children's Services advised he would continue to lobby the Secretary of State about this particular gap in funding.

## Appendix K

**RECOMMENDED that the Council's draft Budget for 2015/16, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme 2015/16 – 2018/19 be endorsed.**

### **Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

2. The Committee received the report, which outlined the Council's Draft Budget for 2015/16, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme and also set out the efficiencies and pressures that faced the Directorate.

**RECOMMENDED that the proposals be endorsed and supported by the Committee**

### **Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

3. The Committee received a presentation that outlined the Council's draft Budget for 2015/16, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme and also set out the efficiencies and pressures faced by the directorate, in particular the implications of the Care Act and introduction of the Better Care Fund. The Committee also received an presentation that outlined the Public Health Revenue Budget, which had £11.4m of ring fenced grant for 2015/2016 and 2016/2017. Of note was the re-commissioning of the Drugs and Alcohol contract.
4. In light of the report and the further clarification provided by the Executive Member the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:-
  - Concern that the rationalisation of contracts to draw efficiencies would result in job cuts. The Assistant Director Resources advised that the Care Act would create a greater demand for services and it was not presently envisioned there would be any impact on jobs.
  - Whether costs in association with the transition of Children to Adults were realistic. The Assistant Director Resources advised that 98 customers with learning disabilities were looked after outside of Central Bedfordshire and had expensive care packages. An effort to find suitable care within Central Bedfordshire was a priority.
  - Whether the forecast for the demand in Social Care service and assumptions made were accurate. The Assistant Director explained the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and Swift system data had been used to inform the assumptions and anticipate demand.
  - Whether provision had been made to support carers. The Committee was advised that carers' plans would be prepared in case of a crisis and efforts to maximise support and information at the right time was also planned. However it was difficult to accurately predict demand.

## Appendix K

- Whether the ring fenced Public Health grant could be used to support efficiencies identified elsewhere in the Council's budget. The Head of Public Health Finance advised that subject to assurances that use of the Public Health Grant benefited the population's health, it could be used for this purpose.
- Whether Health Checks and early intervention advice was making a difference to services. The Head of Public Health Finance advised that investment in IT software would enable monitoring of data and early intervention advice delivered at GP surgeries. Public Health would consider other providers to deliver this important service.

**RECOMMENDED that the Council's draft Budget for 2015/16, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme 2015/16 – 2018/19 in relation to Social Care Health and Housing be endorsed.**

### **Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

5. In light of the presentation and the Executive report received at the meeting, Members discussed concerns regarding reduced funding for education and how the shortfall would be addressed along with perceived cuts to customer services and front line services. The Executive Member responded to these queries by explaining that although there was a highlighted shortfall in one aspect of educational funding, the budget presented had to be balanced and so this had been mitigated by ensuring all areas were funded. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the part of the educational grant reflecting a shortfall related to the school support grant, the overall grant paid directly to schools, per capita had increased.
6. The Director for Improvement and Corporate Services responded that there was not a cut in Customer Services but there had been a previous plan to work alongside the Job Centre Plus and combine certain services. This had not been possible due to certain constraints and so there was a delay in Customer Service staff delivering on this, therefore detailed within the report was a delay in efficiency savings.
7. The Executive Member also responded to a query regarding timescales for Parking Bays to be granted by explaining that due to required changes on the Highway, there could be lengthy timescales involved when dealing with this issue.

**RECOMMENDED that the Revenue Budget be endorsed by the Committee.**

*(Cllr Egan asked for her dissent to be noted and Cllr Murray abstained from voting).*

## Appendix K

8. The Chief Finance Officer introduced the Capital Programme and explained that the Annuity method used effectively matched depreciation against asset lives. In response to a query the Executive Member for Corporate Resources explained the difference between the gross and net expenditure listed.
9. Concerns were raised by a Member of the Committee that regeneration schemes in Houghton Regis and Dunstable, whilst welcome, meant that housing could still be unaffordable for those who currently lived there and asked that the Executive consider this as a potential issue.

**RECOMMENDED that the Capital Programme be endorsed by the Committee.**

*(Cllrs Egan and Murray abstained from voting).*