

Comments on the budget from the Policy Overview Committees

Policy Overview Committees are an integral part of the consultation on the Cabinet's budget proposals each year. This opportunity enables Councillors, who are not in the Cabinet, to provide input or comment on aspects of the budget for the ensuing year. The Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee met on 2 February 2016 to consider and coordinate all Policy Overview Committee comments and recommended them to Cabinet as set out below:

	Budget remit	Comments
Corporate Services & Partnerships - 7 January 2016	<i>Administration and Finance Directorates and Residents Services (Asset Management).</i> <i>Consideration of Voluntary Sector Grants.</i>	<p>The Committee noted the budget projections contained in the report and praised officers for the work which had been carried out in preparing a draft budget which was providing better value for money for the Council, and for residents of the Borough, whilst not impacting on front line services to residents.</p> <p>In addition, the Committee was impressed at the work carried out by officers in making savings in re-tendered contracts, such as the Revenues and Benefits Administration contract, and generally more effective procurement. Particular mention was made of Teams within the Council who had vacant posts removed from the establishment with the workload absorbed amongst existing team members. The Committee praised officers in teams for taking on extra work to enable savings to be made.</p> <p>Members welcomed the increase in revenue from fees and charges, particularly in relation to Registrars where revenue from weddings had increased.</p>
Children, Young People and Learning – 13 January 2016	<i>Residents Services (Education Policy & Standards) & Social Care</i>	<p>The Committee noted the budget proposals submitted and acknowledges the work that has been undertaken in providing a working budget, noting constraints placed via external funding streams. Concerns were expressed by some Members about the level of saving that needed to be achieved and the effect on services. There was no consensus amongst the Committee Members as to whether reductions in funding would have an impact on the service delivered.</p>
Residents' & Environmental Services – 19 January 2016	<i>Residents Services (various service areas)</i>	<p>The Committee expressed admiration for the continued savings found within the budget without compromising front line services. The Committee commented that charges for non-resident users of services had remained static for several years, and this was a potential area to review for future savings. It was noted that charges have been benchmarked against those of neighbouring authorities and shown to remain competitive</p>

<p>Social Services, Housing & Public Health –</p> <p>20 January 2016</p>	<p><i>Social Care and Residents Services (Housing / Public Health)</i></p>	<p>The Committee noted the budget proposals and welcomed the work of the Council in this challenging area. In particular, the Committee noted that demand management and associated early intervention measures formed a key part of delivering future savings.</p> <p>The Committee acknowledged the Government had announced that authorities providing Social Care would be able to levy a precept on Council Tax of up to 2% in support of Adult Social Care but this had not been reflected in the Council's draft budget.</p> <p>The Committee was concerned about the high level of demand for Housing Needs services and the costs associated with Bed and Breakfast accommodation. However, it also welcomed the steps being taken across Council Departments and in conjunction with partners to monitor the numbers of empty properties and secure further accommodation at lower unit cost where possible.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed new initiatives such as reablement in Adult Social Care and Supported Living through the Council's HRA programme to deliver savings whilst improving the quality of life for service users. The Committee expressed concern at the reduction in contingency provision for SEN transport but welcomed the steps being taken to increase the uptake in travel training and the use of travel budgets where appropriate.</p> <p>The costs associated with transitional children were noted with the increased costs stemming from the complexity of the case load rather than increased volume.</p> <p>The Committee also noted the role the preventative agenda plays across Adult Social Care, Housing and Public Health remits in delivering savings and efficiencies.</p>
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