

Member comments considered by Cabinet on 28 January 2020

Comments from the Members' Budget up-date session 16/01/20

General comments on the revenue budget

Members raised a number of questions to clarify specific issues in the budget:

- Capital receipts flexibility.
- Financial resilience in relation to the amount of reserves.
- Loss of funding experienced over last five years.

Improvement Plans, Transformation and environmental targets:

- changes need to be made to the ethos of the Council in relation to becoming more efficient and using different working methods. The changes will need investment and the budget for this needs to be reflected in the Improvement Plans and Transformation Programme.
- also the impact of environmental and sustainability targets need to be reflected in a clear strategy and closer working with other authorities to achieve these.

Adults and Health

Points raised about the review of direct payments and self-funders and needing better control over assessments and over-payments.

Children's Services

Members expressed concern over the review of Early Help and the savings to be made. Requested that the review includes:

- consultation with users and an understanding of the impact this will have on families and the need to manage the process so that families understand any proposed changes.
- work with partner organisations to understand issues across the whole county,
- work with schools to ensure they have the necessary support available.
- transport links/issues to be considered.
- effect on rural communities.

Environment, Highways and Communities

Members requested any change in service standards to be communicated to the public.

Fire & Rescue Service

Members supported the need to continue to lobby the Government for a review of the funding formula and the development of the new training facilities at the Horsham site.

Capital Programme

Members raised the quality of the Council's own assets as an issue and requested whether budget could be found to improve facilities.

Also requested whether thought could be given to using some of the budget set aside for Income Generating Initiatives (IGIs) to improve our own assets – buildings and highways and to meet the environmental/sustainability targets.

Comments from Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee 22/01/20

National and Local Context and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

The Committee supported the budget process that had been used to develop the 2020/21 budget and recommend that this process of early and improved member engagement is repeated in future years.

The Committee strongly supported the continuing lobbying of the Government to undertake a funding review and provide fair funding to the County Council.

Recommended that the West Sussex Plan and priorities are reviewed by the Cabinet and that the proposed plan is brought to the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee (PFSC) for scrutiny as soon as possible.

Recognised the lack of transparency and complex nature over the future of Business Rates and supported the requirement to seek clarity over this.

The Committee request that the Cabinet Member for Environment consider introducing methane targets and support the promotion of the food waste reduction programme following the results of the pilot project currently being undertaken.

The Committee request that the Chief Executive provide a briefing on the requirements of the budget accountability for Executive Directors and Directors.

The Committee recommend that the corporate risk register is reviewed by the scrutiny committee's Business Planning Group meetings in order to identify future priorities for scrutiny.

Portfolio-specific comments

Adults and Health

The Committee supported the need to develop a long-term plan for the service and supported progressing the plans around independent living.

Children's and Young People Services and Education and Skills

The Committee noted that the Children First Strategic Approach is still to be scrutinised and that PFSC members would be invited to the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee meeting on 4 March to contribute to the debate.

Requested that officers provide further information on the split between permanent and temporary funding for 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 included within the Children First improvement programme.

Recognised the pressures on home to school transport and support a review and scrutiny in this area whilst ensuring the needs of children are maintained.

Economy and Corporate Relations

The Committee recognised that it will be receiving a report in March 2020 on the Whole Council Design Programme Review and future focus and requested that the report includes information on how much has been spent to date and the savings made as well as future spend and savings targets.

The Committee also expressed concerns over the One Public Estate programme and the progress being made.

Highways and Infrastructure

The Committee recommend that the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure carries out a review on the systems and processes around the repair of pot holes including the quality of repairs, timeliness and inclusion of all repairs required in an area into one job.

The Committee requested that when the Environment, Communities and Fire Scrutiny Committee (ECFSC) scrutinises highways maintenance standards at a future meeting that pot holes, white lines, signage and cats eyes are included within the review. Also requested that the Committee examine the outcomes achieved of the £30m investment in highways undertaken approximately five years ago.

Capital Strategy

The Committee requested that the Business Planning Group consider the effectiveness of using consultants to deliver the capital programme.

Recommended that the Cabinet Member for Finance reviews the resources needed to meet the Capital Programme.

Requested that the transparency and messaging around specific projects within the capital programme are improved.

The Committee requested further information on the progress of community hubs and One Public Estate Projects be shared with the Committee.

Requested that ECFSC reviews the funding of the backlog of highways works in the capital programme and review whether the capital budget is sufficient to meet need.

In relation to the knowledge and training of capital programme project managers, the Committee requested that appraisal monitoring figures are included within the future quarterly workforce reports to PFSC.