

Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2019-20 to 2022/23, Draft Revenue Budget 2019/20, Draft Capital Strategy 2019/20 and Draft Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2019/

Comments from the All Member session held on 9 January 2019

Comments for consideration by the Performance and Finance Select Committee

Questions were asked about the proposed increase in Council Tax and whether national government had a realistic view of the pressures being faced by local government to provide services. A question was also asked about whether the government could be lobbied to remove the Council Tax capping limit so that local decisions could be made without any pre-determination of a Council Tax increase.

Questions were asked about the capital programme, the borrowing requirements and revenue commitment to fund the debt. Members were assured that the detail of the figures are included in the budget report but that the programme remains within the financial envelope approved at County Council in February 2018.

Concerns were expressed that the savings decisions already taken could result in increased expenditure in other budget areas and that this needs to be fully explored. This was raised again by Members with specific reference to decisions pre-viewed by the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee in December 2018. Members were concerned that the unintended consequences, risks and costs have not been fully identified and reviewed. Other members also expressed concern regarding other savings decisions and the need for comprehensive financial and risk assessments being needed for all savings decisions. It was explained that risks and financial implications are identified by officers when pulling together a business case and that a summary of the findings should be included as part of a decision report.

Some concerns were expressed about decisions being taken forwards before scrutiny or a published decision, this was with particular reference to the Intervention and Prevention Team, and also recommendations from scrutiny not being taken into account. Members were assured that the correct governance processes are being followed.

Clarification was sought around the additional £19m received through the Business Rate Retention scheme and whether this had to be spent in 2019/20. Officers explained that this money was to be spent on the digitisation project and could be spent over a few years. The project is being developed and the profiling of expenditure would take place as part of the project planning, at the moment £1m is expected to be spent in 2019/20.

Members asked questions about the transformation programme and the implications this has for staffing numbers. Officers explained this is work in progress and would be reported through the 6mthly up-dates presented to PFSC as part of the Total Performance Monitor.