

Service and Resource Planning 2018/19 – 2021/22

Comments from the Performance Scrutiny Committee

At the December and January meetings of the Performance Scrutiny Committee members scrutinised the financial investments, pressures and savings for 2018/19 and the medium term, and the proposed approach to capital expenditure for the next 10 years.

This report details the key comments raised by the committee in relation to 2018/19 – 2021/22 Service and Resource Planning for consideration by Cabinet in agreeing its proposed budget.

In relation to pressures and savings members made the following overarching points:

- The committee is keen to scrutinise further the impact of work to meet and exceed the council's transformation savings target.
- The proposed budget does not take account of the potential impact of a move to a unitary authority.
- The committee is concerned about the effect of a limited increase in the tax base on the budget and the accuracy of forward projections.
- That income generation figures should be clearly identifiable within the budget.

The committee also made a number of specific comments in relation to directorate proposals, as follows:

Children's services

- The outcomes from the Local Area inspection of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities should inform future High Needs funding decisions.
- The committee considers there to be a high risk that the scale of proposed savings from reducing the number of children entering care will not be delivered, particularly in light of rising need and demand and the current overspend in children's services.
- The committee is supportive of the directorate's work with partners to drive down the cost of placements and further develop Oxfordshire's own provision.

Adult Social Care

- The impact of changes to the Adult Social Care Contributions Policy on vulnerable individuals is of concern and is an area the committee will want to review.
- The committee is keen to keep a watching brief on progress with plans to use council owned land to develop Extra Care Housing and the levels of cooperation with Local Housing Authorities that will enable this.

Resources

- The committee is pleased that the council is investing in staff and 'growing its own'.
- The use of new technologies to support a reduction in staff mileage should be actively encouraged.

- Members are keen to encourage directorates to become more 'business-like' in their negotiation of contracts.

Communities

- The committee supports the council taking a more proactive role in delivering growth to increase income for the Authority.
- The committee is keen to monitor progress with agreeing a new street lighting contract that enables integration with new technologies.
- Members are keen to see improvements in the Fire and Rescue Service High Risk Inspection Programme and are interested to see the cost savings expected from the new duty for the Fire Service to collaborate with other emergency services.
- Councillor input could be particularly useful in regard to asset management planning.

In relation to proposals for the capital programme members raised the following points:

- The committee supports a longer-term plan for capital investment that enables a more strategic approach to the use of community assets.
- The committee is keen to keep a watching brief on the impact of the Growth Deal on the capital programme, particularly its effect on infrastructure development plans and delivery of highway maintenance.
- Members are keen to see the development of Maltfield Children's Home expedited.
- The committee supports a move towards building more in-house facilities.
- Members are keen to understand how capital will be spent to meet council priorities and review proposals

Councillor Liz Brighthouse
Chairman of the Performance Scrutiny Committee

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