

## Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board

### Wednesday, 29 January 2020, County Hall, Worcester - 3.00 pm

	<b>Minutes</b>
<b>Present:</b>	Mr R M Udall (Chairman), Mrs E A Eyre (Vice Chairman), Mr A A J Adams, Mrs J A Brunner, Mr A D Kent, Mrs F M Oborski, Mr P A Tuthill and Mrs R Vale
<b>Also attended:</b>	Mr S E Geraghty, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance  Michael Hudson (Chief Financial Officer), Sheena Jones (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) and Samantha Morris (Scrutiny Co-ordinator)
<b>Available Papers</b>	The members had before them:  A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated); B. Budget Scrutiny: 2020/21 (Agenda Item 5) Updated feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Panels' discussions of the draft 2020/21 Budget and draft comments from the Board (circulated at the Meeting) C. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 December 2019 (previously circulated).  (Copies of documents A and B will be attached to the signed Minutes).
<b>1134 Apologies and Welcome</b>	Apologies were received from Bryan Allbut.
<b>1135 Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip</b>	None.
<b>1136 Public Participation</b>	None.
<b>1137 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b>	The Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 December 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**1138    Budget  
Scrutiny:  
2020/21**

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Finance Officer were in attendance for the discussion.

The Board was asked to consider the feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Panels' discussions of the draft 2020/21 Budget, which had been circulated as part of the Agenda and an updated version tabled at the meeting. In addition, draft comments from the Board were tabled. Following its consideration of the comments, the Board was asked to agree final comments for consideration by Cabinet on 30 January 2020.

Throughout January, the Scrutiny Panels and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) had considered the Council's draft Budget approved by Cabinet for consultation on 20 December 2019. The Chairman of each scrutiny body was invited to summarise the key points from these meetings.

The final Budget would be agreed by County Council on 13 February 2020.

**Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Fran Oborski)**

- The Panel was content with the budget proposals for 2020/21.
- Concern was expressed about the budget for Home to School Transport. Given the budget overspend in 2019/20, Members urged careful monitoring of the 2020/21 budget and welcomed the setting up of a Corporate Working Group to look at levels of demand, transport routes and better ways of commissioning.
- In relation to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, the Panel recognised that the budget deficit reflected pressures being experienced by all Local Authorities and encouraged further lobbying of Central Government on the level of future funding.
- Members noted that the Social Care Directorate was forecast to be within 0.2% of budget overall for 2019/20 and wished to congratulate the Directorate on this.
- The Panel wished to express its thanks to Worcestershire Children First (WCF), and in particular the Director of Resources, on continuing to provide a good level of information to the Panel in relation to budget and performance. Members had been concerned that the move to WCF would

disrupt the flow of information to the Scrutiny Panel but were reassured that this had not proved to be the case.

- It was noted that Positive Activities was transferring to the People Directorate. The Chairman of the Panel would discuss with the Chief Executive of WCF, the services which could be provided if an additional £100k was allocated to this from the discretionary element of the Public Health Ring-Fenced Grant (PHRFG).

The Leader acknowledged and welcomed the comments. He explained that the final amount for the PHRFG was still awaited and that each request for funding from the discretionary element of the PHRFG would be considered on a case by case basis.

The Lead Member for Crime and Disorder reiterated the likely increased demand for diversionary and positive activities as work progressed in areas such as Get Safe and the impending Gateway Drugs and Young People Scrutiny.

#### Adult Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Juliet Brunner)

- In general terms, the Panel was very pleased with the settlement from Central Government for 2020/21, in particular the additional £0.9m social care grant. The Directorate, however should continue to find ways to reduce its overspend.
- It was noted that revenue savings and efficiencies of £3.295m had been identified, which included a carry forward of £800,000 of 2019/20 savings.
- A notional £1.5m of reserves had been identified as part of the General Fund Reserves Assessment for unforeseen demand in adult care, a prudent approach, which the Panel were supportive of.
- The Panel agreed with the Cabinet Member's concern about how the Service will be funded in 2021/22 and beyond and what the future would look like.
- Members highlighted that the Adults Current Capital Programme did not include a full forecast for 2020/21 nor any forecast for 2021/22 and 2022/23 and was advised that the Council was looking to re-prioritise its Capital Strategy for the next four years, which may result in further detail being available for future scrutiny of the People Directorate's finances.

- Members noted the impact of outside pressures on the adult social care budget, in particular the Interim Director of People suggested that there was around a £6m cost pressure to the Council relating to hospital acquired functional decline, which the Panel were keen to see further detail on.

The Leader was very supportive of the Adult Panel carrying out some detailed Scrutiny on the £6m cost pressure to the Council relating to hospital acquired functional decline. He suggested that looking at how the health and social care system was working together to ensure the best outcomes for the residents of Worcestershire could also be an area of focus for the Panel.

#### Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Adam Kent)

- Scrutiny of the draft budget was complicated by a lack of reference between the notes and the budget appendices. It would be highly beneficial moving forward for areas where savings were projected, reserves were used or where there were areas of significant change, to reference these directly in the budget pages.
- The budget preparation was hindered by the fact that Members' work had been based on the 20 December Cabinet Budget Report, and some figures had changed in the recently published Budget Report for 30 January Cabinet. Whilst acknowledging that changes were largely due to Directorate restructuring and changes to grants from Central Government, members asked that in future, the reporting be made clearer and easier to understand.
- The Panel felt that in order for the redesign of the provision, collation and use of data across the organisation (CoaCh 4) to be achieved, it was essential that the new Assistant Director for IT and Digital and appropriate Information Technology were in place as a matter of urgency, to enable this and other efficiencies and productivity improvements to be implemented.
- It was clear that the focus on all services being delivered in the most efficient and effective way and best value for Worcestershire residents was being achieved. The Panel fully supported the continuing work to review all contracts to ensure this continued.

- The Panel acknowledged the ongoing performance was meeting expectations and complimented the officers on the financial performance.

The Leader concurred with the Panel's observation about the importance of the new Assistant Director for IT and Digital being appointed as soon as possible and advised that he was very keen to have the right people in place. There had been a good range of applicants and initial appointments should be made by the end of February.

The Leader acknowledged the difficulties that Panels had experienced in trying to reconcile the budget figures during the organisational re-design process and undertook to take this into account in future, should the situation re-occur. The Board was reassured that despite the changes, nothing had changed in terms of policy.

Cllr Kent re-iterated that even when there wasn't an organisation re-design, it would be highly beneficial moving forward for areas where savings were projected, reserves were used or where there were areas of significant change, to reference these directly in the budget pages.

#### Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Alastair Adams)

- The Panel was satisfied that the budget for Economy and Environment (E&E) Directorate was good and well managed and the extra capital expenditure on highways, footways, street lighting, flood mitigation and especially the £5m to reduce congestion were all welcome.
- Scrutiny of the draft budget had been hindered by the fact that members' preparation had been based on the 20 December budget report, and some figures had changed in the recently published budget report for 30 January Cabinet. Whilst acknowledging that changes were largely due to directorate restructuring and changes to grants from Central Government, members did not feel equipped with the latest information.
- Rationalisation of cost codes, and changes in recharges also made it very difficult to compare year on year trends. Also, the proposed saving in 2020/21 of £830,000 for the Directorate Organisational Re-design and a further £500,000 for the Directorate Organisation Lean could not be scrutinised as the various savings had been

arbitrarily allocated across the departments as nothing was known at this time how this will affect E&E.

- For future Budget Scrutiny, the Panel would like more transparency, and more information on budget trends for services, and comparison with other local authorities, which would be scrutinised by an informal E&E mini Scrutiny Task Group comprising at least three members of the Panel.

The Chief Finance Officer reiterated that if a similar situation occurred in future, where Panels experienced difficulties in trying to understand the budget information available to them, they would be provided with a reconciliation. The Panels were also signposted to the Budget Book, which it was envisaged in future years would be available earlier in the budgetary cycle.

#### Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) (Cllr Paul Tuthill)

- The HOSC supported the budget proposed for public health for 2020-21, noting the change in allocation (but not total) of capital budget from a standalone Public Health Directorate into the People Directorate.
- It also noted that the final amount for the Public Health Ring-Fenced Grant (PHRFG) had not been confirmed at the time of its meeting.
- The Committee sought clarification about the allocation of the discretionary part of the PHRFG (£0.801m) to various services and recommended that there must be clarity of outcomes expected for the investment made.
- The Committee looked forward to receiving details about performance in those areas during the coming year.

It was agreed that in addition to the Panels and HOSCs comments the Board would wish to highlight to Cabinet that:

- The proposed budget was economically and legally sound. The proposals for Council Tax were supported and endorsed.
- Financially, the situation in which the Council found itself was largely not one of its own making, it was therefore necessary to continue to lobby for change to allow a fairer funding regime which would enable an improvement rather than a reduction in services.

- As services changed and were reformed, the need for Scrutiny and oversight was more not less important. Scrutiny would play an active part in helping the Executive to look at alternative ways to make efficiency savings and to make the changes to meet the challenges, but there was much more it could do in the area of pre-policy determination as advocated by the Chief Executive and Leader. For example, it had requested strategic leadership in the area of Scrutiny from all Senior Directors, it carried out in-year budget and performance monitoring but had much more to offer to help the Council improve decision making and the outcomes for residents.
- The Budget Book was very welcome to help with this work and Scrutiny needed to work smartly to cover more areas for example mini task groups to drill down in areas of finance where value could be added
- Whilst its focus was on better support for the Directorates, more energy from Directors and their staff to ensure that there was adequate information to do pre-policy determination and find savings for the Council was important. There was a view that Scrutiny was part of investing to save and an additional 30 hour per week Scrutiny Officer to replace the temporary cover that was being lost in April was important. Cabinet should be asked to take this request seriously.
- Income generation needed to be more actively pursued; Scrutiny was up to the task of helping in such activities and to think outside the normal boundaries of funding.

The Board wanted to support the Leader and Chief Executive in their drive for cultural change.

The Leader thanked the Board for its comments advising that the re-design process was about ensuring a local authority which was fit for the future and offered best value for its residents.

The Chairman of HOSC raised the issue of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHs) Task Group which was due to start imminently. He suggested that as CAMHs had been rated as outstanding in a CQC Report published 21 January 2020, following a CQC Inspection which took place during September and October 2019 the CAMHS Scrutiny was no longer necessary. The consensus of the Board was that the Scrutiny was necessary and should continue would include referral

**1139 Update Report:  
Care Work as a  
Career Scrutiny  
Task Group**

and access to the Service, as well as the priority given to looked after children.

The Board approved the HOSC, Panels and Boards comments subject to the paragraph referring to the need for a Lead Member being appointed to feedback on Children's Health issues to the Board, which would be discussed in detail at the next meeting of the Board.

The Board was asked to consider and approve the update report of the Care Work as a Career Scrutiny Task Group and the proposed recommendations.

Cllr Tucker, Lead Member of the Task Group attended the meeting and explained that the work of the Task Group was nearing completion and that it had met with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care and the Interim Strategic Director for People to share its emerging themes. Owing to the timings of the Council's budgetary process, the Task Group wished to make two recommendations for consideration in advance of its final report. The recommendations were:

Recommendation 1: Promotion of Care Worker role

The Task Group urges the Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) for Adult Social Care to identify additional financial resources to facilitate a publicity campaign aimed at promoting the work of Care Workers and increasing public understanding of the crucial and valuable role that they carry out.

Recommendation 2: Apprenticeship Programme

The Task Group is aware that a Council-wide Apprenticeship Strategy is currently being developed and, as part of that process, the Task Group urges the CMR to support the development of a structured route for care worker apprentices to flow into adult social care. This would be of considerable benefit to social care teams by providing a regular source of newly qualified apprentices and would also help to make effective use of the Apprenticeship Levy.

The Leader thanked Cllr Tucker for flagging up the recommendations and confirmed that he was supportive of the sentiment of the recommendations and if accepted

**1140 Member Update,  
Work  
Programme and  
Cabinet  
Forward Plan**

by the CMR, given that the financial amounts involved weren't significant enough to affect the budget policy, they could be dealt with in-year.

It was agreed that the Member Update and Work Programme would be deferred for discussion at the next meeting.

No items from the Cabinet Forward Plan were agreed for consideration.

It was agreed that the membership of the Gateway Drugs and Young People Scrutiny Task Group would be established, whilst the priority of scrutiny task groups was being determined by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Board in consultation with the Scrutiny Officers.

The meeting ended at 4.15 pm

Chairman .....