

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board – Budget Scrutiny comments for Cabinet – 30 January 2020

The proposed budget is economically and legally sound. The proposals for Council Tax are supported and endorsed.

Financially, the situation in which we find ourselves is largely not one of our own making, we need 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 change and are reformed the need for Scrutiny and oversight becomes more not less important. We will 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 is much more we can do in the area of pre-policy determination as advocated by the Chief Executive and Leader. For example, we have requested strategic leadership in the area of Scrutiny from all Senior Directors.

We carry out in-year budget and performance monitoring but have much more to offer to help the Council improve decision making and the outcomes for our residents. The Budget Book is very welcome to help us do this work and we need to work smartly to cover more areas for example mini task groups to drill down in areas of finance where we can add value.

In the area of the Health Overview and Scrutiny (HOSC) we require a Lead Member for children's health issues e.g. drugs and CAMHS in particular to ensure that children's health issues are properly prioritised.

Whilst our focus is on better support from the Directorates, more energy from Directors and their staff to ensure that we have adequate information to do our pre-policy determination and find savings for the Council, there is a view that Scrutiny is part of investing to save and an additional 30 hour per week Scrutiny Officer to replace the temporary cover we are due to lose in April is important. I would ask Cabinet to take this request seriously.

Income generation needs to be more actively pursued; scrutiny is up to the task of helping in such activities and to think outside the normal boundaries of funding.

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