

### Emerging pressures and challenges for services in relation to the 2022/23 Budget

#### Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 9 November 2021

During the in-year budget monitoring discussion, the Panel was informed that this had proved to be a difficult period with transport and purchasing of services both being subject to price inflation since the budget was set. Income generation had been harder than anticipated and some jobs were proving difficult to recruit to. These were the main reasons for the variances to the budget and focused attention as to what could be worked on to mitigate the forecast. The Panel was also informed of the pressures regarding inflation and pay and that these were being closely monitored and managed. The Panel was informed that material supplies were impacting future capital works as well as some of the existing ones. The difficulty to recruit was a national problem and contractors and consultants were having to be used when necessary. The Panel was informed that the Directorate has a capitalisation target of £2m this year and service managers would be looking to capitalise staff costs wherever appropriate.

The forecast underspend of £250k in street lighting due to a reduction in energy costs following conversion to LED lighting was welcomed.

The Chairman of the Panel had written to the relevant Cabinet Members to identify a number of issues regarding next year's budget that the Panel wished to highlight, as follows:

#### Flooding

The Panel recognised and commended the positive progress made with the additional funding which had been allocated in this year's budget to deal with flooding issues, drainage, and gully clearance work. The Panel also highlighted that there was still much more to be done to alleviate road flooding caused by blocked or faulty pipes, or inadequate drainage and urged that the additional funding continue to be provided in the 2022-23 Budget.

A number of small flood alleviation schemes had been completed this year in partnership with landowners, the Environment Agency, District Councils, and residents. The Panel commended these smaller schemes and urged a concentration of effort from partners to try and find a solution to small scale flooding issues.

#### Footways

The Panel recognised the extra £7.5m which was being invested in the County's footways during 2021-22 and applauded this initiative. The Panel also noted from the coarse visual inspection survey of footways that 35.4% were currently in need of repair work. The Panel therefore highlighted this as an area for which they would urge continued budget support being maintained in 2022-23.

#### Public Rights of Way

The Panel welcomed the additional funding that was starting to make a positive impact in this area. Noting, however, that the number of outstanding PROW defect reports

remained at a high level, they asked that additional investment in PROW's continued to be supported in the 2022-23 Budget.

The Panel was pleased at the involvement of volunteers through the Countryside Access Group whose input was significantly contributing to the positive progress being made. The Panel were keen to see this initiative expanded and promoted going forward.