

SCRUTINY BOARD RESOLUTIONS ON THE BUDGET FRAMEWORK 2021/22 – 2023/24

The Council's Scrutiny Boards convened in January 2021 to consider proposals for the Budget Framework 2021/22 – 2023/24. The resolutions arising from the Scrutiny Boards' consideration of the Budget Framework are detailed below:

CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY BOARD

13 January 2021

MINUTE EXTRACT: BUDGET FRAMEWORK 2021/22 – 2023/24

RESOLVED:

The Children's Services, Education and Skills Scrutiny Board:

- (i) Considered and noted the pressures and mitigating actions set out in Appendix A.
- (ii) Considered and noted the budget proposals outlined in the report.
- (iii) Considered and noted the schedule of fees and charges proposed for 2021/22.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD

18 January 2021

MINUTE EXTRACT: BUDGET FRAMEWORK 2021/22 – 2023/24

RESOLVED:

The Scrutiny Board:

- (i) Considered and noted the pressures and mitigating actions set out in Appendix A.
- (ii) Considered and noted the budget proposals outlined in the report.
- (iii) Considered and noted the schedule of fees and charges proposed for 2021/22.

HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY BOARD

7 January 2021

MINUTE EXTRACT: BUDGET FRAMEWORK 2021/22 – 2023/24

Members raised the following questions and comments:

- A Member asked whether additional funding would be provided to support the local COVID-19 campaign. The Director for Public Health confirmed that there had been additional funding provided as more requirements were introduced, and they would continue to discuss this with central government. The Head of Financial Operations confirmed that there had been around £80 million of COVID-19 related funding, which covered the additional pressures and loss of income. There was a schedule of all of the grants which would be used to update the forecasts. The COVID-19 pressures that were reported at Period 6 were covered within the COVID-19 emergency grant allocation. The MTFS dealt with future pressures when additional tranches of the emergency funds were made available.
- A Member commented on the Implications and Considerations section of the report. They suggested it would be helpful if there could be a stronger summary of how the plans in the Adult Social Care and Health Portfolio contributed to the 5 'building blocks' of the council plan, for example, how the portfolio would promote and deliver social value and help achieve the building blocks of inclusive growth.
- A Member queried about the domestic abuse legislation, what the £50,000 of funding would cover, how much money would be required for this new responsibility and would this cover increased overall amount of accommodation available. The Director for Public Health confirmed the £50,000 of funding was provided from central government to identify how the new duties may be delivered. They awaited further clarification on what they would be expected to deliver before they estimated how much this would cost. In terms of accommodation it was confirmed that there needed to be a flexible approach to individuals as required, but there was an expectation of additional accommodation.
- A Member asked whether there was suitable and safe accommodation for those people and their children who were escaping domestic violence. The Director for Public Health confirmed there was accommodation and during COVID-19, extra accommodation had been sought.
- A Member highlighted their concern about the future implications of COVID-19 and enquired about what extra pressures there were likely to be on the budget as they moved forward, as a result of COVID-19. The Director for Adult Care and Support referred back to the points in the report and also acknowledged that it was possible that further COVID-19 related grants and funding may become available, as had happened already, and if so that these would mitigate the financial impact. The MTFS had taken account of COVID-19 pressures across the whole of the MTFS period and would continue to reflect the changes when the MTFS would be presented to Cabinet in February 2021.
- A Member asked what the weaknesses in the non-accommodation provision for domestic abuse victims. The Director for Public Health explained more detail could be provided at a future meeting.
- Members acknowledged the work that had been undertaken by unpaid carers during the pandemic. A Member also asked whether the increased number of

carers had led to decreased reliance on Council support, and whether there was a large increase expected after COVID-19. The Director for Adult Care and Support confirmed that in the early stages of the pandemic there was reduced demand but it was now higher than pre-COVID-19. It was not certain if this was indicative of a long term trend. The MTFs had reserves to mitigate for the short term increases and decreases in requirements for services. The Member enquired if Healthwatch could be involved, with respect to impact on carers. The Director for Adult Care and Support confirmed that through the Carers Board they would update the Carers Strategy which would involve Healthwatch.

RESOLVED

The Scrutiny Board noted the report and agreed to have their comments fed back to the Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board and Full Cabinet in February 2021.

RESOURCES AND DELIVERING VALUE SCRUTINY BOARD

11 January 2021

MINUTE EXTRACT: BUDGET FRAMEWORK 2021/22 – 2023/24

RESOLVED:

The Scrutiny Board:

- (iv) Considered and noted the pressures and mitigating actions set out in Appendix A.
- (v) Considered and noted the budget proposals outlined in the report.
- (vi) Considered and noted the schedule of fees and charges proposed for 2021/22.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY BOARD

20 January 2021

MINUTE EXTRACT: BUDGET FRAMEWORK 2021/22 – 2023/24

As a result of the report, the following questions and observations were noted:

- 2021/22 Fees and Charges for Leisure Centres and Libraries - the Chairman and a number of Members stated that, having regard to the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and future economic recovery, they were pleased to see the proposed 2021/22 fees and charges for the Council's leisure centres and libraries, particularly, with little or no increase.
- 2021/22 Fees and Charges for Car Parks – the Board welcomed the proposal not to increase car parking charges and appreciated that this would help with Solihull's economic recovery.
- Leisure Centre Fees and Charges (Swimming) – the Board sought further comment as to why the Borough's two leisure centres had different fees for this individual activity. Officers advised that fees and charges were benchmarked against similar service provision available locally.

- Bulky Household Waste Collections – the Chairman considered that greater promotion of this service should be undertaken to (i) increase potential income and (ii) reduce the potential for fly tipping.
- Reduction in Car Parking Income – the Board sought additional clarification for the ongoing pressure highlighted in the report between 2020/21 and 2023/24. Officers advised that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic it had already been recognised that car park usage had reduced, thus reducing income. This year, car park usage had reduced considerably owing to Covid-19 and it was envisaged that there would be a long-term shift in people's behaviour that would have an effect on future car park usage and reduced future income (i.e. continued working from home and greater shopping online). This had been taken into account in future forecasts. The Board was also advised of the method of accounting for income loss recovery claims.
- Business Rates Windfall – the Board asked for a view on the level of confidence in the business rates windfall for the current financial year and if this had been affected by the pandemic. Officers advised that the 2020/21 forecast had not been adversely affected as businesses were able to claim business rate reliefs and Officers were confident that this would enable the topping-up of reserves. For future years, Officers advised that there was an element of risk although they had continued to account for those windfalls on a one-off basis. However, those windfalls would not be allocated into the budget until there was certainty that they would be received.
- Business Rates Retention – the Board sought clarification that Solihull was included in the regional pilots of 100% business rates retention. Officers advised that Solihull was part of the pilot.
- £2.250M Forecast Windfall – the Board noted that the Budget Strategy Group had agreed to endorse the use of £2.250M of the forecast windfall funding to top-up the reserves in the Children's Services and Skills; and Economy and Infrastructure Portfolios. Members asked for further information as to the individual breakdown for each and were advised that Appendix A of the report provided a detailed breakdown of Covid and non-Covid related pressures. Further detailed information, not available at the meeting, could be circulated separately outside of the meeting for Members information.
- Defective Brown Bins – the Board sought further information as to how this had been accounted for in the budget setting process. Officers advised that as part of the MTFs, an assumption had been made that the Council would manage to conclude the ongoing legal case successfully, accepting that there was still current high risk associated with that assumption.
- Tell Us Once – the Board sought confirmation that Solihull used this national service. Officers confirmed that Tell Us Once was used within Solihull Council (Registrars) to notify a number of service areas (at a single point of contact) of a residents/family change of circumstances when registering a death.
- Strategic Environment Contract – the Board sought further information as to the potential costs to the authority due to uplifts to the contract arising from service growth due to the increase in properties from new residential developments. Officers advised that during the life of the current contract, a further £231k had been added for waste and recycling collections and a further £75k for street care.
- The Core Theatre – the Board asked if there were any plans to move to some form of online theatre/film provision in the future, particularly to maximise income opportunities given the evident behaviour changes owing to the pandemic. Cllr Tildesley, Cabinet Member (Leisure, Tourism & Sport) advised that there were no current plans to provide an online broadcast from the theatre at the present time. Cllr Tildesley reaffirmed his commitment to providing excellent cultural services to the Borough as soon as council services could return to any form of normality. Cllr Tildesley also highlighted the publication, this week, of a cultural report for Solihull that had been undertaken by Sampad Arts to support the delivery of cultural services in Solihull. Once available, the report would be shared with Members.
- Operation of Leisure Centres (Deed of Variation) – the Board sought further comment on the financial implications of the current contractual arrangements triggered by Covid-19. Officers advised that the outcome of the ongoing pandemic would determine any future clarity

regarding the contract financial model. Financial losses were being mitigated by the receipt of government relief and the future use of reserves.

The above observations and recommendations of this Scrutiny Board would go forward to the Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board and Full Cabinet during February 2021.

The Board extended their appreciation to Officers in compiling the proposed budget and acknowledged what must have been an extremely challenging year for them.

RESOLVED

The Board **UNANIMOUSLY** made the following **RECOMMENDATIONS** to the **Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board** and **Full Cabinet**:

That, subject to the preamble above, the Board:

- (i) Acknowledges the pressures and mitigating actions set out in Appendix A to the report;
- (ii) Supports the schedule of fees and charges proposed for 2021/22, as attached at Appendix B to the report; and
- (iii) Supports the indicative budget proposals outlined in the report at Appendix C.

End