

**Strategic Plan and Budget 2013: progress on recommendations (6 months – July 2013)**

**Task & Finish Group Chairman:** David Shakespeare

**Lead Scrutiny Officer:** Ben Cahill

**Date reported to Cabinet:** 14 February 2013

**Lead Officer for response:** Richard Ambrose

Recommendation	Agreed Y/N	Cabinet Response including proposed action	Responsible Officer	Action by date	Progress update – July 2013	Implemented Y/N
<p><b>1. That recent improvements made to the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process be continued, including earlier completion by service areas, use of plain English, fuller descriptions, and publication at the same time as Cabinet’s budget proposals for access by Members and other interested parties.</b></p>	Agreed in part	<p>The Cabinet intends to review its policy on the production of EIA assessments in the light of recent guidance from DCLG. The Council takes its obligations on equality seriously and will always comply with equality legislation. Due consideration of equality impacts is integral to discussion and decision making during the budgeting process. Care must however be taken that the production of EIA proformas does not become a disproportionately expensive and time consuming exercise for managers.</p>	Phil Dart	July 2013	<p>Improvements to EIA process are being integrated into the medium term plan (MTP) process so that assessments are explicitly linked to budget proposals as they develop and help inform decision making.</p>	N
<p><b>2. That the effective resident consultation process be further improved, including mechanisms to achieve better response rates from organisations and a more diverse range of age groups.</b></p>	Agreed	<p>As explained to the Task and Finish Group, the Cabinet already has plans to seek to improve response rates in surveys, through targeting different groups of residents and organisations, such as parish councils and businesses. It is encouraging that the rate is already significantly higher than in previous years.</p>	Marcus Grupp	Sept 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey of 1,000 businesses completed, covering priorities for BCC and support to encourage growth/survival. Report to LAG, COMT and BBF (July/August).</li> <li>• Evaluation of last year’s budget consultation with Cabinet Member (Martin Philips) showed specific target groups where views were required but insufficient responses were received to report results (Black</li> </ul>	N

					<p>Minority Ethnic Groups and Young People) (Complete).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft research plan being compiled with specific actions to reach these target groups – to be agreed with a budget consolation working group (August).</li> <li>• General increase of response rates through a larger postal survey (3,000 last year, increased to 5,000).</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. That Cabinet continue to develop a joined-up approach to working with and supporting the voluntary and community sector in Buckinghamshire (recognising the sector’s relatively low capacity compared to private and public sectors to absorb funding efficiencies), and in particular ensuring consistent and timely communication over funding proposals.</b></p>	Agreed	<p>The Cabinet is committed to supporting the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and has protected grants to voluntary organisations in difficult financial times. The County Council cannot however discriminate in its procurement between private companies and the voluntary and community sector. The Cabinet will therefore recommend to the County Council the funding of a programme to help develop the capability and resilience of the voluntary and community sector over the next two years so that they are better placed to respond to procurement opportunities in the future.</p>	Phil Dart	Sept 2013	<p>£500k available across 13/14 and 14/15 to support the VCS to improve their resilience. Methodology to support the VCS agreed at COMT 12/6/13, subject to working up the detail over the summer for final approval by COMT and Members in Sept for implementation from Oct 13.</p>	N
<p><b>4. That presentation of the budget papers continues to be improved, including fuller budget proposal definitions, removal of less clear accounting methods, and further detail on how estimated Year 3 and 4 savings will</b></p>	Agreed in part	<p>The Cabinet will look at ways to improve the presentation of financial data in future years. It is however unrealistic to expect detailed implementation plans at this stage for cost savings planned in 3 and 4 years time.</p>	Richard Ambrose	Sept 2013	<p>Initial discussion had with the new Cabinet Member for Finance &amp; Resources. Suggestion is that each Cabinet Member presents an overview paper setting out how the budget fits with the strategic priorities of the Council and what key policy / financial changes are being proposed. This should help focus the</p>	N

be delivered as soon as the information is available.					discussions on the key matters.d	
<p><b>5. That Cabinet make the following amendments to the draft Strategic Plan: 1. Clarify and provide further detail on Priority 4 (To give people more say in local services) to avoid any confusion over the aims of the priority, 2. Allocate Strategic Plan priorities to specific Cabinet portfolios (not named individuals), and that each Cabinet Member is clear on their strategic plan priority and how they link to other priorities, 3. That Priority 6 is more clearly defined as a general safeguarding priority, including greater reference to prevention and intervention, and that the Cabinet Members for Health and Wellbeing, and Children’s Services are clear how they share the priority.</b></p>	Agreed in part	<p>The Cabinet will recommend a clarification of Priority 4 of the Strategic Plan to the County Council. The detailed Implementation Plan will clearly show which Cabinet Member is responsible for each priority of the Strategic Plan. The Cabinet supports the existing definition of Priority 6. The Council is very supportive of clearly targeted prevention and intervention initiatives, such as the programmes we have developed around ‘Families First’ and also ‘Prevention Matters’. However, as a Conservative Council, we aim to balance this with considerable emphasis on personal responsibility and helping people to help themselves wherever possible.</p>	Sarah Ashmead	Sept 2013	Priority 4 was redrafted in the light of the recommendation and Council agreed the new wording in February 2013. The Implementation Plan identifies the lead Cabinet Member for each priority.	Y
<p><b>6. That, in light of the Council increasingly becoming a commissioning authority, Cabinet continue to develop contract</b></p>	Agreed	<p>As recognised in the report, the Council has established a programme for the development of commercial and contract management skills across the organisation and will continue to focus on delivering this.</p>	Richard Ambrose	On-going	The contract management framework initiative has focused on the identification and segmentation of our third party contracts. 34 platinum contracts have been identified (over £1m annual spend and deemed	N

<p><b>management and monitoring skills across the authority, particularly those departments that contract services for the most vulnerable people where any shortcomings around a contract would have the greatest impact.</b></p>					<p>highly critical to the Council) and assessed against the framework to identify areas of good and poor practice. This has resulted in targeted improvement planning activities on a number of major contracts. The reviews identified the need for well-developed contract management skills and a soft-skills task &amp; finish group was established to assess the gap between current and required skills sets and competencies for platinum contract managers.</p>	
<p><b>7. That definitions between corporate transformation savings and individual medium term financial plan savings are clearly defined and that individual services commit to corporate transformation savings.</b></p>	<p>Agreed</p>		<p>Richard Ambrose</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>This will be ensured as part of the next phase of transformation.</p>	<p>N</p>
<p><b>8. That Cabinet monitor levels of reserves and ensure that they remain at around 5% of the Council's overall budget, and that unused contingencies are not automatically used to top-up reserves but instead be used to fund one-off projects guided by priorities of the Strategic Plan.</b></p>	<p>Not Agreed</p>	<p>In extremely uncertain financial times it is important that the Council maintains prudent reserves. The MTP already proposes a significant use of reserves over the plan period to fund one off initiatives and strategic programmes such as road resurfacing. Reserves will be kept under review but we will either add to reserves or fund one off priorities as circumstances require.</p>	<p>Richard Ambrose</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>No further comment beyond the Cabinet response.</p>	<p>Y</p>

<b>9. That the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources makes sure that all Cabinet Members ensure that their service areas enter financial data accurately and on time on the SAP system in order to eliminate all avoidable SAP variances.</b>	Agreed		Richard Ambrose	On-going	Actioned. Forecasts within SAP will be used for financial monitoring purposes.	Y
<b>10. That Cabinet develop a more strategic and corporate approach to the management and allocation of capital expenditure guided by the priorities of the Strategic Plan.</b>	Agreed	This already exists with the Business Investment Group, under the leadership of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources. The Cabinet will recommend to County Council an increase in the funding available for infrastructure projects, guided by the priorities of the Strategic Plan.	Richard Ambrose	Feb 2013	Actioned. The capital programme is informed by both the priorities and statutory responsibilities of the Council.	Y
<b>11. That, to provide a fuller picture of bus usage and future needs in the county, the Cabinet Member produce an outline document presenting current and projected bus usage in Buckinghamshire, bus connections with other transport networks, and wider linkages to strategic priorities, for example, to economic development.</b>	Agreed in part	The Cabinet would like to propose that this would be a very good topic for a Task and Finish Group of Overview and Scrutiny to explore in detail, with officer support from the service area and with involvement of the relevant Cabinet Member, as appropriate.	Andrew Clarke / Ben Cahill	Dec 2013	Following the change to a select committee model (replacing the OSCC and HOSC) this topic has been passed to the Environment, Transport and Locality Services Select Committee. The committee elected their chair on 26 June and are now finalising their work programme. The proposal is for the committee to undertake research on bus usage over Autumn 2013 following approval of the work from the committee.	N
<b>12. That the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills produce an</b>	Agreed	The Cabinet is currently consulting on a new policy for Special Educational Needs which will seek to address this	Chris Munday	Sept 2013	The County Council has consulted on a new SEND strategy. This went to COMT on 12th June and Cabinet	N

<p><b>initial plan for managing down statementing costs in Buckinghamshire as soon as is convenient and that it be developed in consultation with Overview and Scrutiny and Members more widely.</b></p>		<p>issue. The outcomes of the policy will be reported to Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate.</p>			<p>Members on the 1st July. It will then go through the member processes. It will be a key area for the new Education, Skills and Children's Services select committee.</p>	
<p><b>13. That the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills continues to focus on narrowing educational attainment gaps in the county and on improving the work readiness of young people, in particular increasing levels of volunteering. These priorities should be linked and developed with support from Overview and Scrutiny.</b></p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>The Cabinet has a significant programme of work in place targeted at narrowing educational attainment gaps and improving work readiness of young people. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills will continue to focus on these priorities going forward.</p>	<p>Chris Munday</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>The Cabinet member has continued to prioritise this area and School Forum has allocated additional funding for the next two years. A strategy is being developed looking at good practice in many Bucks schools.</p>	<p>N</p>
<p><b>14. That a campaign be developed to achieve better public understanding of the positive and varied work of Trading Standards, and that in future resident surveys Trading Standards be more closely aligned with crime prevention and community safety.</b></p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>The Cabinet Member for Community Engagement has already commissioned a programme of activity to promote the work of Trading Standards across the County, and intends to ensure that the work of the service is clearly presented in future residents surveys.</p>	<p>Phil Dart</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Increased publicity for the service being developed. Service Director has filmed four television programmes for the BBC and Trading Standards officers have filmed for Channel 4, and other opportunities both locally and nationally are being developed. Service repositioning itself with crime and the fear of crime and using strapline including 'fighting consumer fraud'.</p>	<p>N</p>

<b>15. That Cabinet develop and communicate a long-term and sustainable approach to the significantly rising costs of adult social care and the pressures these services place on the authority's budget.</b>	Agreed in part	The Cabinet is very concerned about the demographic pressures and rising costs associated with adult social care. We will continue to look for increased efficiencies as an authority and also continue to lobby central government on this issue.	Trevor Boyd	On-going	Demographic Growth has been built in to the MTP to recognise the pressures. Our Prevention Matters Programme is designed to help manage the future demands by preventing or delaying demand through earlier intervention. We may still need to lobby government if the costs associated with the implementation of the Dilnot Proposals are not met by Central Government. Due July 2013.	N
<b>16. That the outline measures in the Public Health Strategy be developed and that progress of the strategy be robustly monitored and reported.</b>	Agreed		Jane O'Grady	September 2013	The priorities within the Public Health Strategy have been incorporated into the Public Health Work Programme and will be monitored monthly at internal team meetings. All objectives in the strategy have been specifically incorporated into individual objectives as part of the DSP process. There has been active engagement with members through the member induction process as part of embedding public health responsibility across the organisation. Relevant priorities have been adopted by the Healthy Communities Partnership.	N
<b>17. That the additional Public Health settlement be allocated to greater integration with clinical commissioning groups, support for School Nursing, developing physical activity in country parks, and to</b>	Agreed in part	The Cabinet will allocate the public health budget in accordance with the priorities of the Public Health Strategy, which was agreed by Cabinet on 7 January 2013.	Jane O'Grady	April 2013	The 2013/14 public health work programme is built around the priorities in the vision and strategy document. A review of the school nursing service is being undertaken to ensure the most efficient and effective use of the current resources and to identify and quantify any additional investment required.	N

encourage hard to reach groups to take up NHS health checks.					A multi-agency physical activity strategy is under development and will inform the allocation of resources to physical activity for 13/14. An evaluation of the uptake of the NHS Health Check is underway and a programme to increase uptake in hard to reach groups with low uptake will be finalised when the evaluation is completed.	
<b>18. That Cabinet allocate any unallocated council tax surplus towards the following budget proposals: 1. Reductions in Short Breaks for Disabled Children (£300k in Children's Services portfolio), 2. Efficiencies from recommissioning of Connexions and Counselling provision for young people (a combined total of £150k in Education and Skills portfolio), 3. Reductions in Supporting People contracts (£750k in Health and Wellbeing portfolio).</b>	Agreed in part	The Cabinet agrees to reinstate the funding for short breaks for disabled children and for the Connexions and counselling provision for young people. The Cabinet also agreed to reinstate the sum of £500k for the Supporting People contracts (£250k of the total savings figure being contractual efficiency savings which will not affect service users).	Richard Ambrose	Feb 2013	Actioned - see Cabinet response.	Y
<b>19. That the Leader continues to lobby the government on key issues facing the local authority, including: 1. Council tax proposals and grant funding – particularly any</b>	Agreed	The Leader has already taken an active role in lobbying on these issues for Buckinghamshire at a local, regional and national level, including through his involvement in the County Councils Network and the Local Government Association. The Leader and relevant Cabinet	Chris Williams / Sue Imbriano / Trevor Boyd	On-going	See last sentence to the left - 'In addition, the local authority is refreshing the School Improvement Strategy with schools.'	N

<p><b>government ambitions for continued council tax ‘freezes’ to be funded by on-going base funding rather than a series of one-off grants, 2. Educational standards – how local authorities are to be responsible for local education standards given that, with the rise of academies, there are insufficient mechanisms or powers for influencing standards, 3. Social care – to shape implementation of the Dilnot review and wider national solutions to funding social care</b></p>	<p>Members will continue to lobby on these issues to promote the interests of Buckinghamshire residents, as reflected in the Strategic Plan priority. In relation to educational standards, the local authority has been proactive in working with all schools, including Academies and Free Schools, to establish mechanisms to carry out its responsibilities as champion of children and families. In addition to securing agreements on fair access to educational provision for all pupils, the authority has been continuing to support and challenge schools on raising educational standards. An analysis of comments on the authority’s contribution to raising standards by OFSTED in their school inspection reports indicates success in this area. There is ongoing work to develop the local authority role further. In addition, the local authority is refreshing the School Improvement Strategy with schools.</p>				
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