

**Strategic Plan and Budget 2013: progress on recommendations (12 months – Dec 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 to date	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>	<p>Agreed in part</p>	<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>	<p>Phil Dart</p>	<p>July 2013</p>	<p><b>6 months</b> 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> <p><b>12 months</b> All Cabinet Members have had due consideration of the equality impacts of their budget proposals. Process now part of the Integrated Performance Management Framework. Screening process used to identify whether any proposals need further analysis. All full equality and VCS impact assessments read through prior to publication to remove acronyms etc.</p>	<p>Y</p>
<p><b>2. That the effective resident consultation process be further improved, including mechanisms to achieve better response rates from organisations and a</b></p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<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</p>	<p>Marcus Grupp</p>	<p>Sept 2013</p>	<p><b>6 months</b></p> <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</li> </ul>	<p>Y</p>

<p>more diverse range of age groups.</p>		<p>rate is already significantly higher than in previous years.</p>		<p>Philips) showed specific target groups where views were required but insufficient responses were received to report results (Black 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>12 months</b></p> <p>The number of responses have increased and we are able to report on the views of groups which have been harder to obtain in previous years (young people, BME groups and differences between views in urban/rural areas), as well as businesses as a separate group this year. The activity included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Residents</b> through both a survey managed by BCC where participation is self-selecting (1,514 valid responses – up 31% from last year), and an independent statistically representative telephone survey of Bucks residents (1,000 responses).</li> <li>• <b>Businesses</b> - views on the priority of relevant council services were reported from a survey of 1,000 Businesses.</li> <li>• <b>Partners and community organisations</b> – were able to comment on what they see as key issues generating 40 responses as at</li> </ul>
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					21 November (closed 2 December 2013)	
<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>	Agreed	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.	Phil Dart	Sept 2013	<p><b>6 months</b> £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> <p><b>12 months</b> A new and innovative model of providing support services to VCS and not for profit organisations based on lean, demand led principles has been developed. Providers are being sourced currently and the programme will launch in December 2013.</p>	N
<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 be delivered as soon as the information is available.</b>	Agreed in part	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.	Richard Ambrose	Sept 2013	<p><b>6 months</b> 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 discussions on the key matters.</p> <p><b>12 months</b> Each Cabinet Member to present their Strategic overview paper highlighting how the budget fits with the strategic priorities of the Council and what the key policy / financial changes are.</p>	Y

<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>	<p>Agreed in part</p>	<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>	<p>Sarah Ashmead</p>	<p>Sept 2013</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Y</p>
<p><b>6. That, in light of the Council increasingly becoming a commissioning authority, Cabinet continues to develop</b></p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<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>	<p>Richard Ambrose</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p><b>6 months</b> 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</p>	<p>N</p>

**contract 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.**

and deemed 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 & finish group was established to assess the gap between current and required skills sets and competencies for platinum contract managers.

**12 months**

The number of Platinum contracts (over £1m annual spend and highly critical) has increased to 40, with Buckinghamshire Care and Bucks Learning Trust recently added. The focus of activity is moving to Gold contracts (under £1m annual spend and highly critical) with contract managers commencing the self-assessment of contracts against the best practice framework and engaging in the training that is available. A programme of technical contract management and soft skills has been commissioned for next year, based on the success of a pilot course. The training focusses on key technical and soft skills needed to manage complex contracts. Once complete 75 contract managers across the organisation will have received formal contract management training.

The Council ran its first Platinum Supplier Event in September which brought all 40

					suppliers together, with the purpose of introducing the Contract Management Framework. There was a group workshop exercise for the suppliers which generated many ideas and has resulted in the creation of Supplier Learning Groups, smaller groups of supplier and Council Officers meeting to discuss specific themes with the aim to identify feasible initiatives that offer value to both parties.	
<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>	Agreed		Richard Ambrose	On-going	<p><b>6 months</b> This will be ensured as part of the next phase of transformation.</p> <p><b>12 months</b> Built into Future Shape Programme.</p>	Y
<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>	Not Agreed	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.	Richard Ambrose	N/A	No further comment beyond the Cabinet response.	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></p>	<p>Agreed</p>		<p>Richard Ambrose</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Actioned. Forecasts within SAP will be used for financial monitoring purposes.</p>	<p>Y</p>
<p><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></p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Richard Ambrose</p>	<p>Feb 2013</p>	<p>Actioned. The capital programme is informed by both the priorities and statutory responsibilities of the Council.</p>	<p>Y</p>
<p><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></p>	<p>Agreed in part</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Andrew Clarke / Ben Cahill</p>	<p>Dec 2013</p>	<p><b>6 months</b> 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.</p> <p><b>12 months</b> A report on public transport (future risks and challenges) went to the 25th September 2013 Environment, Transport and Locality Services Select Committee.</p>	<p>N</p>

					The committee resolved to consider the topic of public transport as potential committee topic over 2014, dependent on committee capacity.	
<b>12. That the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills produce an 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>	Agreed	The Cabinet is currently consulting on a new policy for Special Educational Needs which will seek to address this issue. The outcomes of the policy will be reported to Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate.	Chris Munday	Sept 2013	<p><b>6 months</b> The County Council has consulted on a new SEND strategy. This went to COMT on 12th June and Cabinet 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>12 months</b> No further update.</p>	N
<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>	Agreed	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.	Chris Munday	On-going	<p><b>6 months</b> 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><b>12 months</b> No further update.</p>	N
<b>14. That a campaign be developed to achieve better public understanding of the</b>	Agreed	The Cabinet Member for Community Engagement has already commissioned a programme of activity to promote the work of Trading	Phil Dart	On-going	<p><b>6 months</b> Increased publicity for the service being developed. Service Director has filmed four television programmes for the BBC</p>	Y

<p><b>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>Standards across the County, and intends to ensure that the work of the service is clearly presented in future residents surveys.</p>			<p>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><b>12 months</b> The Service has been working closely with the Communications team to raise local awareness of what the Trading Standards does. There has been strong media coverage especially around the developing volunteering arm of Trading Standards and of National Consumer Week. Officers have been filmed by two TV companies, and will appear in the next series of The Food Inspectors in 2014. In the recent budget consultation Trading Standards was closely aligned with Community Safety as it was in a group specified as "Crime and anti-social behaviour reduction and consumer protection through Trading Standards". This was chosen as the 5<sup>th</sup> top service that people do not want to see cut, and the 18<sup>th</sup> service where people would be willing to see cuts.</p>	
<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</b></p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Trevor Boyd</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p><b>6 months</b> 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</p>	<p>N</p>

services place on the authority's budget.

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.

**12 months**

An initial analysis of the Care Bill requirements has been carried out to identify the potential financial impact upon the Council. The costs of care in Buckinghamshire are above the national average. In addition, the County has a high level of self-funders who will become eligible for financial support under the new Bill. These factors significantly increase the degree of financial risk to the Council inherent in these proposals, both from increased responsibility for care costs and from the additional resources required to complete the increased number of assessments. By using BCC current spending levels and increasing this to include the anticipated number of self-funders (50% based on local modelling of self-funders currently in care homes), it is likely that by 2019/20 the costs to the Council could be in the region of £31m per year.

The scope of the Care Bill and the extent of the fundamental changes involved require a number of different workstreams to be put in place to ensure the overall delivery of all the Care Bill requirements. The financial workstream covers the financial impact of the Bill, and the development of mechanisms for charging

					and paying for care. This will be built into the MTP going forwards.	
<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	<p><b>6 months</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><b>12 months</b></p> <p>Objectives continue to be implemented and monitored as above.</p> <p>The Healthy Communities Partnership has undertaken a review and now has 4 projects that are supporting key areas in the strategy including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a physical activity strategy</li> <li>• Continuing to develop the 5 Ways to Wellbeing Programme</li> <li>• Developing a Healthy Eating Strategy</li> <li>• Developing action for addressing people with multiple risk factors</li> </ul>	N

<p><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 encourage hard to reach groups to take up NHS health checks.</b></p>	<p>Agreed in part</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Jane O'Grady</p>	<p>April 2013</p>	<p><b>6 months</b>  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.  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.</p> <p><b>12 months</b>  The public health allocation has been considered as part of the MTP planning process  A revised specification has been developed for the School Nursing Service and additional investment built into the MTP for 2014/15 to make progress on full implementation of the Healthy Child Programme  An action plan is being developed to support the physical activity strategy  Additional outreach has been commissioned to deliver NHS Health Checks in community settings in order to target hard to reach groups</p>	<p>N</p>
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<p><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></p>	<p>Agreed in part</p>	<p>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).</p>	<p>Richard Ambrose</p>	<p>Feb 2013</p>	<p>Actioned - see Cabinet response.</p>	<p>Y</p>
<p><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 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</b></p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>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 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 pro-active in working with all schools, including Academies and Free Schools, to establish mechanisms to carry out its</p>	<p>Chris Williams / Sue Imbriano / Trevor Boyd</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p><b>6 months</b> See last sentence to the left - 'In addition, the local authority is refreshing the School Improvement Strategy with schools.'</p> <p><b>12 months</b> The Leader has continued to lobby for a better funding settlement for Buckinghamshire through a variety of national and regional bodies. The government has announced another one-off Council Tax Freeze Grant, which would not be added to the base funding level. Consequently the Council consulted the public on increases in Council Tax of 2%, 4% and 5%, which would be added to the base level of</p>	<p>N</p>

<p><b>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>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 on- going work to develop the local authority role further. In addition, the local authority is refreshing the School Improvement Strategy with schools.</p>			<p>funding.</p> <p>It has recently been announced that the proposed top-slicing of New Homes Bonus will be reversed following strong lobbying from local government.</p> <p>For adult social care see S 15 above.</p>
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