

Corporate Scrutiny Committee – Budget Consultation Submission 2024-25

Recommendations for Consideration by the Executive on 8th February 2024.

- a) That the Executive note and support the Budget Scrutiny process undertaken for 2024;
- b) That the Executive considers and responds to the issues raised within the Budget Scrutiny Submission at Appendix A (and the notes of the seven Budget Scrutiny Panel meetings held during December 2023 and January 2024 at Appendices 1-7);
- c) That Corporate Scrutiny Committee would draw to the attention of the Executive in particular:-
 - 1) That the Committee supports:-
 - (i) The efficacy of the 2024 Budget and Capital Programme, following detailed department by department scrutiny and questioning of officer and executive member assumptions and projections for the next and future years;
 - (ii) The raising of Council tax by 4.99% (inclusive of 2% adult social care precept). Whilst noting the impact of a rise in precepts on the cost of living, it is considered important to protect services and especially vulnerable people as much as possible in the face of continued challenges of balancing budgets across the local government sector in this and future years;
 - (iii) That officers of the Council, particularly those based in finance, be thanked for all their hard work in putting together the 2024 budget over recent months.
 - 2) That the Committee considers:-
 - (i) That Children's Services' remains one of the budget areas of greatest concern, especially as the deficit on the High Needs Block continues to grow each year, appreciating that the aftermath of COVID has generated a significant backlog in cases and development issues in younger children.
 - (ii) There is also significant concern in relation to Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing service pressures of £19.947m in 2024/25, particularly in Adult Services of £18.648m, against

savings of £4.217m. This will need to be monitored carefully in terms of maintaining a balanced budget for 2024/25.

- (iii) Whilst noting the excellent progress made by the Council following its formation in difficult circumstances and during a global pandemic, to achieve best value, savings and equality of service availability for taxpayers across North Northamptonshire, it would be helpful for the Council to set clear defined goals and milestones for the transformation and harmonisation of the remaining prior Borough and District based service areas.
- (iv) That, to ensure effective scrutiny of the NCT, Scrutiny should undertake a further review of the NCT's transformation work and its progress around the end of the second quarter of 2024.
- (v) That the budget scrutiny process around NCT commence earlier moving forward, so that recommendations may be put forward before contracts are agreed.
- (vi) That for future budget scrutiny sessions, Equality Impact Assessments be provided to enable effective consideration of the impact of proposals on our vulnerable residents.