

Labour Group Budget Proposals for Corporate Performance and Resources O&S Panel

The Labour Group recognises that the economy is going through very tough times which are likely to continue for the foreseeable future. We cannot impose significant Council Tax increases on already hard-pressed residents. At the same time, we must protect our frontline services which surely are what we are here for. Any investment therefore needs to be fully justified as being part of the Council's core business.

We face very uncertain times, and we have to recognise that the impact of some of the proposals contained within the Cabinet's proposals is unknown.

As a Group, we are deeply concerned about the pensions issue. We are pleased to see that the cost of additional contributions during 2009/10 is to be met from headroom, but we are concerned to read that the cost of funding pensions represents an additional pressure which services will need to fund in future years. We worry about the impact this will have on frontline services, when they are already under pressure to make significant savings.

In this context, the Labour Group believes that it is appropriate only to make relatively modest spending proposals which are in keeping with the Council's priorities and represent investment in our frontline services.

The Labour Group's proposals have been costed and funding identified.

We would propose £20,000 to be allocated to providing free concessionary internet use in libraries funded on an ongoing basis from the unallocated £300,000 headroom available for ongoing funding as identified in Appendix 2, page 9.

We also propose £25,000 one-off to investigate further the extent of the youth homelessness problem. We anticipate that this could be met through the headroom for one-offs.

We propose putting £30,000 into increasing the number of detached youth workers, again funded from the unallocated £300,000 revenue.

In addition, the Labour Group wishes to identify two proposals for potential funding which are as yet uncostered pending the outcome of reviews.

We fully support the current review into transport to secondary school being undertaken by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel. We do not wish to pre-empt the outcome of this review. Instead, we would ask that consideration be given to using some of the unallocated funding available for one-offs to begin to look at how we might implement the outcomes of the review.

Finally, there are proposals to use Council Connect as an access point for Social Services assessment process. We want to ensure that it is adequately resourced to undertake this work and would be looking for a sum of money to ensure to achieve this end.