

Labour Group Statement to Cabinet

Medium Term Service and Resource Planning and Budget and Council Tax

This budget is being developed during very tough economic times which are forecast to continue for some time to come.

The Labour Group therefore believes it would be inappropriate and insensitive to impose significant Council Tax increases on already hard-pressed residents. The Labour Group also believes that, more than anything else, we are here to provide frontline services. At a time of great uncertainty, we should be doing all we can to support and protect these services before we even think about making ambitious investment in any new provision.

We are very concerned about how this Council is going to fund pensions into the future. We are pleased to see that the cost of additional contributions during 2009/10 is to be met from headroom. However, we are concerned to read in the report that the cost of funding pensions represents an additional pressure which services will need to fund in future years. At a time when services are already under pressure to make significant savings, this proposal is bound to have an impact on our ability to maintain frontline provision.

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 services.

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

We 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 uncosted 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 that we achieve this end.