

Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel comments on the 'Corporate and Budget Planning 2019-20' report

During January 2019, the Corporate and Budget Planning report has been presented to each of the Policy Development and Scrutiny (PDS) Panels and Select Committee. Panels have concentrated on the parts of the plan relevant to their own remit and the comments made are set out below. *Please note that all minutes are draft at this stage until agreed and finalised at the next meeting.*

Planning, Housing and Economic Development – 15th January 2019

The Director for Partnership & Corporate Services introduced this report to the Panel. He explained that the Organisational Plan is an annual plan, which has been aligned with the budget planning process. He said that the Organisational Plan for the first time introduces the Council's new Core Service Offer and its 3 new priorities.

- (1) Protect and Care for our most vulnerable
- (2) Nurture residents health, safety and wellbeing
- (3) Provide ways for everyone in the community to reach their full potential.

He stated that in essence, a core services offer is the best service offer we can deliver based on the resources currently available to us.

He said that the plan outlines the draft budget savings proposals where appropriate, which will be proposed as part of the budget setting process for the Council 2019 – 20 budgets which will be considered by the Cabinet and Council at their meetings in February. He added that the plan also outlines the Emerging Capital Bids for 2019/20 that will be proposed as part of the budget setting process to be considered at the same meetings.

Councillor Liz Richardson queried whether the figures relating to supporting the 21 children with the most complex needs were necessary (P.34) in the plan.

Councillor Charles Gerrish replied that the figure is there to illustrate the costs associated with this type of support and that he felt it gives the public a better understanding of how resources are used.

Councillor Richardson asked if the proposal to remove the non-domestic rate exemption for listed buildings would affect local village halls (P.38).

Councillor Gerrish replied that it would not as they would not be classed as empty.

Councillor Richardson commented that she would have like to have seen Planning Services recognised on the list of examples on P.38/39.

Councillor Barry Macrae asked if manufacturers, alongside the public, will be encouraged to reduce waste and stop over-packaging items.

Councillor Gerrish replied that this was recognised as a national issue and that the Council has been lobbying through the LGA on this subject.

The Corporate Director added that the Council had responded to a recent Government consultation paper regarding managing waste.

Councillor Rob Appleyard commented that he was concerned at the time taken to assess and meet the needs of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. He also wished to raise the issue of the support given to Fostering / Adoption families when a diagnosis of this nature is recognised.

Councillor Gerrish replied this was more a matter for the Children & Young People Panel, but said that he was aware of the need to increase the speed in which Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) are carried out. He added that he felt that local Councils were not funded appropriately following the SEND reforms.

The Chairman queried the language used within the Organisational Plan, such as 'Offer' and 'Nurture'. He asked if a list of statutory services could be provided.

The Director for Partnership & Corporate Services replied that this was open to interpretation to a certain degree and that the Plan was supposed to highlight the key services that the Council are able to provide for the public.

Councillor Gerrish added that Waste Collection is a statutory service, but that the frequency with which it is carried out is not specified. He added that in terms of 'nurturing' all Councillors have a role through being Corporate Parents.

Councillor Liz Richardson stated that she was not wholly satisfied with the answers given in Appendix 4, which shared feedback from the Local Forums. In particular she referenced Response 3 on P.52 and Response 5 on P.53.

Councillor Gerrish replied that the document supplied reflects accurately what was said at those meetings.

The Director for Partnership & Corporate Services added that he would check the document for factual clarification.

The Chairman asked how Heritage Services planned to increase its income by £1m and explain how this is classified as a medium risk.

Councillor Gerrish replied that the figure is based on this year's performance and included sites such as the Costume Museum and the Victoria Art Gallery as well as the Roman Baths. He added that an increase in entrance fee to Roman Baths was planned in an attempt to reduce numbers and therefore

enhance the visitor experience. He said that the products available within the shop at the Roman Baths were also due to be assessed.

The Director for Economy & Growth added that a review had been carried out relating to ticket prices and that a tiered ticketing system was to be introduced. He said that tickets would range in price from £16 in low season to £22 in high season. He stated that a contingency sum of £300,000 has been taken into account with regard to Brexit. He said that there would be a 10% discount for advance bookings.

With regard to the risk assigned he said that the Council have been working with consultants who have introduced this new ticketing system at other attractions across the country. He said that he felt that the Council could over achieve their target rather than under achieve.

Councillor Barry Macrae said that he was sceptical about the figures given and that the increase would affect peak season visitors from America and China.

Councillor Gerrish replied that the data available to support this decision should not be underestimated. He added that there is a growing market in visitors from India and said that holders of a Discovery Card would be unaffected.

Councillor Appleyard said that he supported the work of Heritage Services and that to enhance the visitor experience should be welcomed.

Councillor Colin Blackburn asked if an increase to the size of the shop at the Roman Baths had been considered.

Councillor Gerrish replied was being kept under review. He stated that a premises opposite the Baths had been previously considered, but was not viable.

Councillor Appleyard asked if consideration had been given to installing terminals within the shop so that orders can be made for products that may be out of stock or just available online.

The Director for Economy & Growth replied that he was aware that this had been discussed, but did not know the outcome. He added that he believed that the availability of online products was to be expanded.

The Chairman asked for further information regarding the figure of £350,000 relating to Destination Management.

Councillor Gerrish replied that Bath Tourism Plus (BTP) had become a Council owned company a number of years ago and that this figure related to a reduction in their subsidy. He added that BTP had already repaid a £150,000 loan from the Council. He said that the Christmas Market continued to be successful, but that a risk associated with this would be how the Market

would be affected if adverse weather conditions were in effect at this time of year.

Councillor Barry Macrae asked for further information regarding the income share from the Bath Casino.

The Director of Development and Public Protection replied that this was part of an agreement for the Council to receive an income split following the Gambling Act 2005.

Councillor Liz Richardson asked for the reason behind introducing a Section 106 Planning Obligations Compliance Advice Service.

The Director of Development and Public Protection replied that is intended to be a service to respond to enquiries from solicitors.

The Chairman asked if anything had gone wrong with the Neighbourhood Planning process in regard to the budget saving proposed.

The Director of Development and Public Protection replied that there was nothing wrong and that it was simply a case of the saving only being in place for two years and the requirement of it to be reversed.

The Chairman said that he was slightly concerned with the proposal to retain fees related to Permitted Development applications and how this would affect the Council's relationship with the public.

The Director of Development and Public Protection replied that the fee would be minimal, around £200 and said that decisions were borderline on occasions.

Councillor Appleyard stated that he would welcome the figure of £40,000 that was assigned to Air Quality Monitoring Equipment being used instead for the provision of back office support within the Music Service for Children & Young People.

Councillor Gerrish replied that the two items identified come from different budget streams, Capital -v- Revenue, and therefore whilst acknowledging the issue this would not be possible.

The Chairman thanked the Panel for their comments and said that their feedback would be given to the Resources PDS Panel on the 4th February to allow them to collate all PDS Panel responses to the Cabinet and Council.

Communities, Transport and Environment – 21st January 2019

David Trethewey, Director of Partnerships and Corporate Services introduced the report.

Councillor Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency, Martin Shields, Corporate Director, and Mandy Bishop, Director of Environmental Services, were also present to answer questions.

Panel members asked the following questions and made the following points:

Councillor Anketell Jones asked, regarding the Organisational Plan, what the critical point was if the amount in the pound spent on adult and children services kept on rising. The Director of Partnerships and Corporate Services explained that there is no categorical answer but that a Fair Funding Review was in place.

Regarding the Core Offer (page 61), Councillor Evans referred to the middle section and stated that he was concerned that safety was becoming the only criteria regarding roads rather than travel. The Director of Partnerships and Corporate Services explained that the Council has resources for core delivery but it can still influence others to affect results.

Councillor Anketell Jones asked about the PREVENT agenda and the Director of Partnerships and Corporate Services explained that the Council would continue to work with partners and the community.

Councillor Samuel stated that the Council had a long way to go to make it's online services more transactional which would lead to huge savings. He added that the One Stop Shop is not a comprehensive service and the current website is not fit for purpose. The Director of Partnerships and Corporate Services responded by explaining that there is a proposal in the digital transformation plan a move to a transactional service around parking and a new website is being worked on. Councillor Bull raised an equalities issue with transactional services by stating that not all people have access to or can use online services. Councillor Hale sought assurance that we never move away from the human voice on the phone system. The Director of Partnerships and Corporate Services stated that this would be considered in the roll out of services and residents access needs would be assessed but could not give an ongoing assurance regarding the phone system. Councillor Hale stated that an automated phone system would be a backwards step. Councillor Symonds gave an example that there were 650 members of Dial a Ride in his area and only 50 have access to email so many would have problems accessing the Council if any services were online only.

Councillor Samuel asked why the parking strategy (page 63) was marked as high risk. Mandy Bishop, Director of Environmental Services explained that this will now be reassessed as medium risk.

In response to a query from Councillor Neil Butters regarding parking income, Martin Shields, Corporate Director explained that the income can be used to support the highway (for example safe routes to schools).

Councillor Bull noted the large savings that were predicted from 'Getting from A to B', the officer confirmed this and added that the savings will be mainly in 2020/21.

Regarding a query about pothole repairs, the Director of Environmental Services explained some permanent pothole repairs would become part of the Capital programme. She explained that the CIPFA guidelines had changed recently. The Panel supported this.

There was some discussion on Green Waste collections. Councillor Gilchrist stated that there was a proposed increase in charges but reduction in this service and asked if some residents could pay more to get a full 12 month service. The Corporate Director explained that there had been a review of the service which found that it would not be cost effective to pick up small amounts of waste. Councillor Samuel pointed out that if the service operates on a cost recovery basis, it would not matter if there was a gap in the service. He added that when services are intermittent, they are not used. Councillor Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency, stated that he had heard the points made.

Councillor Samuel stated that the 'Fix my street' App is a great innovation but still did not provide adequate feedback on what had been reported. The Corporate Director explained that it was a mechanism to make clear what was in the system but in the future it could be refined to link with back office systems to give more information. The Director of Environmental Services said she would check out Councillor Samuel's suggestion of sending a picture of a repair to the complainant.

In response to a question from Councillor Butters, the Cabinet Member explained that strategic work is funded by WECA and local work by BANES.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the gulls nest removal programme will continue in response to a query from Councillor Gilchrist.

Regarding Air Quality monitoring, Councillor Samuel explained that he had asked if the Council had considered bidding to DEFRA for real time monitoring in the city. He explained that diffusion tubes were in place currently and they only looked backwards. The Corporate Director explained that the Council was in detailed discussion with DEFRA regarding what they would fund.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to pass on the following comments to the Cabinet:

- Regarding the digital transformation and core service redesign – consideration be given to those residents who cannot access or use online services.
- Consideration be given to the possibility of giving residents the option of paying more for a full 12 month green bin service.

- Consideration be given to refining the 'Fix My Street' App, which is a great innovation, so that it can provide adequate feedback to complainants.
- Consideration be given to getting real time monitoring (regarding Air Quality) across the city.

Children and Young People – 28th January 2019

The Director for Partnership & Corporate Services introduced this report to the Panel. He explained that the Organisational Plan forms an important part of Bath and North East Somerset Council's strategic planning framework.

He added that the plan translates the Council's strategy and vision for the future into a more detailed annual Organisational Plan, setting its key activities and projects for the Council to achieve this.

He said that the plan outlines the draft budget savings proposals where appropriate, which will be proposed as part of the budget setting process for the Council 2019 – 20 budgets which will be considered by the Cabinet and Council at their meetings in February.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what is the total Children & Young People budget, what was the percentage overspend last year and to what extent are we going to be within budget this year.

The Corporate Director replied that they have a budget of £25.3m, they were overspent by 5% on the budget last year and are currently 9% overspent on the budget for this current year.

Councillor Hardman asked if this figure could be accommodated in the current year and in the budget going forward.

Councillor Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency replied that these figures were largely due to the number children in care within B&NES which was currently 191. He said that the Council is in a position to deal with this having received a Government grant under the care envelope and if necessary the revenue contingency reserves and has made budgetary provision within the proposals for next year.

Councillor Hardman asked how the Youth Connect Services redesign is progressing and to what extent has the Youth Services staff mutual progressed.

The Corporate Director replied that the proposal had received support in principle from the Cabinet at the end of October 2018, that the due diligence process was still ongoing and that further meetings were due this week, so he was optimistic that it would be concluded shortly.

Councillor Paul May, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People added that the sources of funding need to be secure as the contract is due to be for five years to enable a degree of stability for those concerned.

Councillor Hardman asked if the Council would commission services from the Staff Mutual.

The Corporate Director replied that they would.

Councillor Matt Cochrane asked if the figure of £3m was the true cost of supporting the 21 children with the most complex needs in 2018-19.

The Corporate Director replied that it was as there are a number of young people that have expensive placements.

Councillor Charles Gerrish added that a number of these placements are outside of B&NES.

Councillor Cochrane asked if the site of the Bath Studio School were to be used for further SEND provision would that potentially lead to families moving to the area to use it and has that happened historically.

Councillor Gerrish replied that he was aware of families that have moved to B&NES to access SEND provision and that potentially this could occur in the future.

Councillor Hardman asked what has been the impact on low income families of the changes to the Music Service.

The Director of Education Transformation replied that children from low income families should have the opportunity to access a musical instrument through whole-class teaching programmes. She added that funding is received from the Arts Council, but that this is set for a specific criteria and that information is returned to the Arts Council on an annual basis.

Councillor Paul May said that it was important to him to have within the Plan the wording 'Protect and care for our most vulnerable' and 'ensuring a 'Think Family' approach'.

The Chair asked regarding Appendix 3 what was meant by alternative provision in the line 'Refurbishment and renovation of a premises that was previously a primary school (St Johns, Lower Bristol Road), into alternative education provision for secondary age pupils in B&NES'.

The Corporate Director replied that this was intended to be a site for pupils that have been excluded or were having behaviour / attendance issues as a place where they could be educated, pending being reintroduced / reintegrated into the mainstream education system.

Councillor Gerrish stated that the site was situated in Lower Weston rather than the Lower Bristol Road as mentioned within the appendix.

Councillor Hardman asked how the Council will identify children missing out on education and act to meet their educational needs without a Children Missing Education Officer.

The Corporate Director replied that the Council still has a Children Missing Education Service - this is a statutory service that has a range of functions within it.

The Head of Education Inclusion Services added that it was possible for parents to be prosecuted if they were found to be negligent and that pupils could be monitored when notified that they have left a school. He said that it was the Council's role to ensure that every child has access to a school place. He informed the Panel that a piece of joint working was being carried out in partnership with School Nurses.

The Chair thanked the Panel for their comments and said that their feedback would be given to the Resources PDS Panel on the 4th February to allow them to collate all PDS Panel responses to the Cabinet and Council.

Health and Wellbeing Select Committee – 30th January 2019

The Director for Partnership & Corporate Services introduced this report to the Select Committee. He explained that the Organisational Plan forms an important part of Bath and North East Somerset Council's strategic planning framework.

He stated that it was well recognised that a high percentage of the Council's budget is used within Adult Care, Health and Wellbeing

He said that the plan outlines the draft budget savings proposals where appropriate, which will be proposed as part of the budget setting process for the Council 2019 – 20 budgets which will be considered by the Cabinet and Council at their meetings in February.

He explained that the Organisational Plan for the first time introduces the Council's new Core Service Offer and its 3 new priorities. He added that a core services offer is the best service offer we can deliver based on the resources currently available to us.

The Corporate Director added that the majority of figures within appendix 2 were contained within the previous year's budget.

Councillor Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency commented that although savings have been identified, the Adult Care budget was due to increase by £4.1m due to demand / demographic pressure.

Councillor Eleanor Jackson said that she appreciated the budget parameters the Council were working within and asked for further information regarding the review all social care packages and the possibility of in-house care provision.

The Acting Director for Integrated Health and Care Commissioning replied that planned reviews took place each year on existing care packages and new approaches such as Three Conversations were helping the Council to look at different ways of meeting people's needs.

Councillor Jackson asked if there was adequate support in place to enable residents to live longer in the community.

The Acting Director for Integrated Health and Care Commissioning replied that one of the Council's aims is to reduce the numbers of people placed in care homes and to support residents to stay at home and we have a range of services to help achieve this, such as the reablement service.

Councillor Jackson asked if there were enough care places available within the Council.

The Acting Director for Integrated Health and Care Commissioning replied that a review of home care services was ongoing with the aim of improving the amount of care available and how it is provided, for example by looking at ways of supporting people in rural areas where it can be more difficult for care agencies to cover.

Councillor Jackson commented that she would like to see communications to the public improve, primarily the elderly.

The Acting Director for Integrated Health and Care Commissioning replied that they were working on this issue with Virgin Care and that Virgin Care were developing Care Navigator roles in the community who would specifically help people to navigate their way around health and social care services but would also help people to find out what community options were available in their area.

The Corporate Director added that a great deal of information was available on the Wellbeing Options website (<http://www.wellbeingoptions.co.uk/>). He said that the site provides information about local care providers, services and activities, along with links to other useful websites and resources.

The Director for Partnership & Corporate Services said that recently there had been an increased involvement from the voluntary sector, including a group called Compassionate Communities B&NES.

Councillor Jackson asked if the Council had considered lending money to small family run residential homes for them to make adaptations / enhance their site provision.

Councillor Gerrish replied that the Council is not a bank and said that the likelihood would be that the proposal would be an expensive process for both parties.

Councillor Tim Ball referred to page 72 and asked if it were possible to squeeze more out of residential and nursing recommissioning.

The Acting Director for Integrated Health and Care Commissioning replied that the Council will look to ensure consistency and equity in care home fees by implementing a new commissioning and contracting model.

Councillor Ball asked how savings would be achieved with regard to Adult Mental Health.

The Acting Director for Integrated Health and Care Commissioning replied the Council would be looking to see that specialist placements for adults with mental health needs were good value and achieving the best outcomes for people.

Councillor Ball commented that he feared some care homes may close due to the new fees arrangements and that this could cost the Council more if the service ceases.

The Corporate Director replied that the Fair Price of Care process has been carried out to reflect the true costs to provide the care and at the same time ensure best value for money for the Council.

Councillor Vic Pritchard stated that the Council are normally unaware of a care home's financial circumstances until the 11th hour, sometimes merely a month's warning. He added that the intention is now for the Council to work far more closely with care homes and to have more of a dialogue regarding their finances.

Councillor Lin Patterson asked if more information could be provided on Compassionate Communities B&NES.

The Director for Partnership & Corporate Services replied that it has been setup by the 3rd sector and has received support from the Council and Virgin Care, but was not commissioned or funded by the Council. He added that one of their intentions is to be a focal point for receiving and disseminating strategic information. He said that further information could be found on their website (www.3sg.org.uk).

Councillor Jackson said that it was a little ironic given the earlier Public Health presentation that they are being asked to do more work with less resources.

Councillor Pritchard replied by saying that the preventative agenda was a significant factor for the Council to consider as it moves forward.

The Corporate Director added that the Public Health budget reflects the Public Health Grant which has been reduced nationally.

Dr Bruce Laurence said that support for the team is welcome and that he feels that the Council is doing its best with what it has available.

The Chair thanked the Select Committee for their comments and said that their feedback would be given to the Resources PDS Panel on the 4th February to allow them to collate all PDS Panel responses to the Cabinet and Council.