

CLLR PAUL MYERS DRAFT SPEECH TO CABINET 11th Feb. 2021

I am speaking today on the Budget as Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Panel rather than as leader of the Conservative Group. I have sought to summarise the draft minutes of the three Scrutiny Panels representing many hours of input. The challenge has been that the bulk of the minutes cover detailed comment rather than insightful resolution based summaries.

Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Panel 19th January 2021

Key points included:

- Will the proposed Adult Social Care precept increase of 3% would be ring-fenced.
- What effect would the proposed £603,000 saving have on the Re-ablement Service.
- How achievable will the savings prove in practice?
- Concern was expressed that the standard of our services regarding care package delivery should not be lowered.
- How will work be delivered in Early Years SEND when the vacant post is deleted?
- Concern was expressed at the proposed significant £43,000 saving relating to Children's Centres but reassurance was given that delivery savings cost would cover this rather than a reduction in services.

In conclusion, the Panel **RESOLVED** to accept the proposals made within the presentation on the basis they were given whilst awaiting clarification of how the Adult Social Care precept increase of 3% would be used.

Climate & Sustainability PDS Panel – 25th January 2021

- Concern was expressed about the impact of fly tipping if charging for building materials is introduced at the tip.
- There was interest in finding ways to reduce reliance on commercial income.
- Where has the increase in income in the waste and fleet operation come from as well as how is a reduction in plant maintenance possible.
- The need to find an alternative waste depot solution for the residents of Bath city centre, many of whom do not own a car was raised as a concern.
- Will the same level of service be maintained for Parks and Bereavement given a staffing reduction?
- On transport could the proposed savings on inspection gangs be mitigated by encouraging community reporting?
- Concern was expressed at Pay and Display machines being replaced with an App with respect to visitors to the area.
- Could there be unintended consequences of a reduction of security in car parks and in particular impacts on the use of Park and Ride
- Concerns about maintenance savings regarding flood and drainage issues and stated that 'Fix my street' did not always give a quick response.
- Queried whether new developments are not going to be adopted whereas it was confirmed that we are to be stricter about what we maintain.

- Is gully emptying being reduced – confirmed that this refers to inspections.

Corporate PDS Panel – 1st February 2021

- Concern was expressed that income from Heritage Services, Commercial Estate and Parking will be down and that the Estate maybe harder hit again as it contains retail. Importance of securing new income streams was noted.
- Raised that the Capital Project Resources had been hit by £1.8m but it was noted that the whole programme would be impacted rather than one project
- The Mental Capacity Act Fund was to be taken as a saving as no commitments have been made.
- Questioned whether £300k savings in senior staff is realistic.
- Raised if there was a risk of slippage regarding the Council Tax deficit which is set to be recovered over 3 years.
- Concern over proposed £22k savings in security cameras for Park and Ride –
- Clarification was requested on ‘borrowing’ £13m from the Council’s own reserves being paid back in years 4 & 5.
- Going digital – concerns about how this could be discriminatory for those without internet access.
- Adult Social Care – looking at these savings concern was expressed about ability to cover the cost of basics e.g. incontinence pads.
- Capital Expenditure for Climate Emergency – concern that renewable energy is spread across the district.
- Concerned about charging for waste resulting in more fly tipping with a disproportionate impact in rural areas.
- There will potentially be more deaths due to Covid – questions on the capacity of Bereavement Services.
- Concerns about road maintenance in rural areas.

Full details of the discussions and officer responses are included in the draft minutes for the three panels.

On behalf of the three panels I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak today and at the same time would like to thank officers for all their hard work.

ORIGINAL PANEL NOTES

[Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Panel](#) [Draft Minute - Corporate & Budget Planning 2021/22](#)

The Chief Operating Officer introduced this item to the Panel and gave a presentation, a summary of which is set out below and will be attached as an online appendix to these minutes.

[Budget 2021/22 Headlines](#)

Revenue operating cost changes

- Council growth requirement of **£19.1m**, driven by:
 - Material rebasing of income budgets due to Covid
 - Funding new demand pressures, Children's and Adults Social Care
 - Contract Inflation
- Council Savings requirement of **£8.33m** across all portfolios
- Covid risk / contingency reserve of **£5m** proposed

Budget funding changes

- Reserve funding requirement of **£10m**, to be repaid in future years
- Council tax increase **1.99%** & Adult Social Care precept **3%** proposed

New 2021/22 budget pressures / Covid impacts

Emerging MTFs pressures £15.24m

- Commercial Estate £5m
- Parking £4m
- Heritage Services £4.24m
- Other pressures £2m

Strategic Financial Planning Themes

Stabilise – Short term

- Reduce reliance on commercial income.

Transition – Medium term

- Reset business plans looking at new delivery models
- Revise the Council's operating structure
- Maximise opportunity through IT and smarter working

Change – Long term

- Implement new strategies for:
 - Social Care delivery
 - Resident focussed service delivery model

Areas of strategic priority and focus over the next two years

- Continued investment to support the **most vulnerable** people in our communities.
- Continued commitment to secure action to address the **climate and ecological emergency**.

- Focus on supporting the **local economy** to recover from the impact of the pandemic.
- Support the “**Preparing for the Future**” programme to modernise the council with a focus on improved asset management and flexible working.

Adult Social Care Growth

Adult Social Care	2021/22 (£'000)
Pay Inflation	166
Demography	951
Contractual Inflation	1,216
Budget Pressures	0
Total	2,333

Adult Social Care Savings Proposals

Specialist and complex commissioning – contract and procurement review: £537,000. Strategically commission and procure a range of care and support services sufficient to meet identified needs and address gaps in B&NES and provide better value for money for people with complex and specialist needs.

Community – Review of care package delivery: £1,988,000. Review of existing packages to identify efficiencies

Public Health Savings Proposals

Services to be delivered in a different way: £153,000. Following the previous uplift to the Public Health Grant, and the securing of the Integrated Sexual Health Service into a fixed payment 5 year term, funds will be reallocated to cover Public Health services delivered elsewhere within the Council.

Reduction of Post: £112,000. Part time post removed, reduction in Senior Leadership posts to be actioned, alternative grant funding will cover the Senior Leadership requirement during the continued pandemic with the removal of the post being actioned once we are through it.

Children’s & Education Services Growth

Children’s Services	2021/22 (£'000)
Pay Inflation	120
Demography	2,173
Contractual Inflation	252
Budget Pressures	0
Total	2,545

Children’s & Education Savings Proposals

Children's Centres: £43,000. Service efficiencies, provision is maintained, delivered in an alternative way.

School Improvement: £87,000. School Improvement to be funded fully from grant. This is a decrease in financial provision but due to reduced number of LA maintained schools, there is still sufficient resource to support these schools. Should support needed increase, there is a contingent plan in place to enable alternative internal resource to be reallocated.

Early Years SEND: £53,000. Delete Vacant Post (approx. 1 yr vacant). No change to current provision, which already delivers the same outcomes from this reduced financial envelope.

Councillor Paul May asked if the proposed Adult Social Care precept increase of 3% would be ringfenced.

The Chief Operating Officer replied that it was likely to come in as one pot and be used towards the growth element of the service.

Councillor Alison Born asked what effect the proposed £603,000 saving would have on the Reablement Service.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning replied that the figure would not be coming out of the reablement budget, it is a reduction in the packages and purchasing budget. She added that the intention is to provide support to reduce the long-term needs / provision of services to patients.

Councillor Alison Born asked how confident were officers that the savings can be achieved.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning replied that a lot of work has been carried out so far on projections and forecasting, but acknowledged that there would be more to do to deliver these measures.

Councillor Paul May commented that the standard of our services regarding care package delivery should not be lowered.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning replied that it may be possible to achieve funding from another source on this matter and insisted the importance of making sure that eligible needs are met.

Kevin Burnett asked how work will be delivered in Early Years SEND when the vacant post is deleted.

The Director of Education, Inclusion and Children's Safeguarding replied that proactive enabling work is ongoing to make sure that children continue to have a voice within this work area.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that she was concerned at the proposed significant £43,0000 saving relating to Children's Centres.

The Director of Children's Services replied that as part of the proposal we are aligning our early years support to St Martins akin to our support to other children's centres and early years settings. She added that savings in rent from St Martins is about delivering from a different location and reducing building costs, not a reduction in services.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to accept the proposals made within the presentation on the basis they were given whilst awaiting clarification of how the Adult Social Care precept increase of 3% would be used.

Draft minute from the Climate & Sustainability PDS Panel – 25th January 2021 – Corporate and Budget Planning item.

David Trethewey, Director of Partnerships and Corporate Services, gave a presentation which covered the following:

Lisa Bartlett was also present.

- The Budget Challenge 2021/22 Headlines
- The Budget proposal 2021/22 – 25/26
- New 2021/22 budget pressures/Covid impacts
- Strategic Financial planning themes
- Areas of strategic priority and focus over the next two years
- Service Achievements 2020/2021
- Portfolio Savings Summary
- Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services Savings Proposals
- Community Services Savings Proposals
- Housing, Planning and Economic Development Savings Proposals
- Transport Savings Proposals

Panel members asked the following questions and raised the following points:
(Officer responses shown in italics)

Councillor Born stated that she was concerned about the impact on fly tipping if charging for building materials is introduced at the tip. *The officer explained that benchmarking has been done and she is confident that it can work. It will be kept under review.*

Councillor Bromley asked how we reduce reliance on commercial income. The Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Samuel explained that this would be a gradual process. We do not get the revenue support grant anymore, the system is based on rates which has been hugely affected by the pandemic. We receive income through Heritage (Roman Baths) but the pandemic has also affected this income. We need to reduce reliance on this and get the property estate to perform.

Councillor Grant Johnson asked the following questions:

- Where has the increase in income in the waste and fleet operation come from? *The officer explained that the team operates on a commercial basis and works with neighbouring authorities. There is a lot of experience within the team. We have put forward the savings – this will be monitored.*
- How is a reduction in plant maintenance possible? *The officer explained that there is always a bit of tolerance, there is experience within the team. We will review this on a regular basis.*

Councillor Craig asked about the waste depot and if finding an alternative solution for the residents of Bath city centre, many of whom do not own a car, has been taken into account. *The officer explained that this work is underway.* Councillor Walker asked

about the early morning and late evening suggestion. *The officer responded that this was based on modelling – it will allow for more efficient routes if the day is lengthened. In response to a query from Councillor Walker about the effect on elderly people, the officer responded that impact assessments will be carried out.*

Councillor Davies commended the Cabinet Members and officers that work on net zero has not been cut despite incredibly difficult circumstances.

Community Services (slide)

Councillor Crossley updated the panel that the Urban Gulls issues has been deferred to 2022/23. A meeting with Government will look at piloting a license.

Councillor Johnson asked if the same level of service, which is higher than neighbouring authorities, will continue regarding Parks and Bereavement. Can the level of service be maintained with a staffing reduction. *The officer reassured the panel that the aim is to continue to provide the level of service.*

In response to a query from Councillor Walker regarding Entry Hill, Councillor Crossley (Cabinet Member) explained that the tender process finishes this week and a report will be considered by Cabinet on 11th February.

Housing, Planning and Economic Development (slide)

No questions

Transport (slide)

Councillor Hirst asked the following questions:

- Regarding the proposed savings on inspection gangs – can this be mitigated by encouraging community reporting? *The officer explained that there would be a promotion of 'Fix my street' App and other ways of reporting. There may be an impact on complaints.*
- Will pay and display machine be replaced with an App? Councillor O'Brien added that she had concerns about removing credit card payments in car parks as we have many visitors to the area.

Officer to get a more information on this to the panel. (The following information was sent to the panel after the meeting: The removal of credit card payments within the car parks has been considered based on usage statistics, convenience and national trends. Current statistics suggest that 84% of population own a smartphone (with much higher rates in all age categories under 55) and over 95% of the population has access to a basic mobile phone. As the MiPermit cashless parking service offers payment by telephone and text as well as the App we are confident that a great majority of users will be able to access the system. Cash will continue to be offered in many locations for those who chose not to pay by mobile or App.

- Regarding coach parking at Oddown – there will be an impact on traffic on Wellsway? *Officer to get a note on this to the panel.*
(The following information was sent to the panel after the meeting: The removal of use of the Weston Island site for coach parking will have a negligible impact on the amount of coach traffic going to Odd Down Park and Ride site during the majority of the year. However, this impact will be larger during the peak periods such as the Christmas Market period where the numbers of coaches coming into the city is higher.)

- Could there be unintended consequences of a reduction of security in car parks? Councillor Johnson added that he was also concerned about security in car parks, we encourage the use of Park and Ride and we do not want to jeopardize this.

Officer to get a note on this to the panel. (The following information was sent to the panel after the meeting: The Park & Ride security contracts specified currently provide an opening and closing service for the main entrances of the Lansdown and Odd Down Park and Ride sites between 9pm and 5am. The Park & Ride service does not prevent entry of the site before this time of closure or exit from the site post the closure time and as such is deemed not to provide value for money. Further consideration of the long term overnight security of these sites will be undertaken and business cases developed as appropriate.

After consideration and analysis the car park patrol is considered to provide limited value and deterrent to ASB and community issues raised are better served by the response of the Police who have powers to deal with the issues on the spot or through their wider powers.)

- What is the latest situation regarding Terrace Walk? *The officer explained that staff marshalling was cancelled during the pandemic. We may have to review this as things start re-opening.*

Councillor Craig stated that she was concerned about maintenance savings regarding flood and drainage issues and stated that 'Fix my street' did not always give a quick response. *The officer explained that any emergency flooding issues would be dealt with.*

Councillor O'Brien asked the following questions:

- Are new developments not going to be adopted? *The officer explained that there are a series of assets that we traditionally maintain, we are being stricter about what we maintain.*
- Is gully emptying being reduced or just the inspections? *The officer confirmed the reduction applies to inspections.*

Councillor Johnson stated that a lot of working hours are going adrift – who is picking up these hours and what about the stress that falls on others. *The officer explained that the Council is conscious of the impact on other staff. There has been consultation. This is a fair point but we are comfortable that we have covered this. We will review the impacts. We have systems in place.*

Annex 3 (a)

Councillor O'Brien asked what the £900k capital expenditure under Climate Emergency 2021/22 refers to and where the funding for the implementation of LTN would be - in Climate emergency or Transport- as it wasn't highlighted in the capital spend figures shown. *The officer explained that this was primarily for energy schemes not transport schemes. Regarding the Renewal Energy Development Fund, this is about working with communities to enable schemes.*

Councillor Johnson asked about tree planting – more detail on streams of funding - *Officer to get a note on this to the panel.*

(The following information was sent to the panel after the meeting: £60k Tree and Woodland Strategy + £75k from CIL (One off)).

Draft minute from the Corporate PDS Panel – 1st February 2021 – Draft Corporate and Budget Planning item.

The Chair, Councillor Myers reminded the Panel that they have received the draft minutes of the Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing PDS Panel (19th January) and the Climate & Sustainability PDS Panel (25th January) detailing each Panel's discussion of the Corporate and Budget Planning item. He explained that these discussions and this Panel's considerations at this meeting will be fed through to the Cabinet.

Councillor Richard Samuel, Cabinet Member for Resources introduced the item by explaining that this is not a normal budget and not a normal year. There has been a significant shock to Council finances as a result of the ongoing pandemic which will also have repercussions into future years. There will be a report to Cabinet on 11th February – we expect to balance the budget. He explained that the aim is not to disturb frontline services. He explained that the money borrowed from reserves would be repaid over a longer period. He also added that there is a proposed rise of 1.99% in Council Tax and a 3% Adult Social Care precept. Councillor Samuel thanked Andy Rothery, Director of Finance and his team for their extraordinary work.

Andy Rothery, Director of Finance and S151 officer explained that there has been some budget rebasing in order to reduce reliance on external income and the temporary government Covid grants received in 2020/21. There have been adjustments in Heritage, Commercial Estate and Parking. He explained that, along with the proposed Council Tax increase, extra money has been allocated to the Welfare and Hardship Service and also money put into a Covid risk reserve.

Panel members raised the following points and asked the following questions:
(Officer responses shown in italics)

Councillor Furse noted that income from Heritage Services, Commercial Estate and Parking will be down and that the Estate maybe harder hit again as it contains retail. He asked what assumptions the forecast has been based on. *The officer explained that the Commercial Estate re-basing is based on market trend. A calculation has been made also taking into account analysis of void levels (factoring in an increase) and debt risk.*

Councillor Elliot referred to the Council Tax benchmarking graph and asked what level of increase would take the authority into the middle of the table. *The officer explained that this would involve an approximately 11% rise and bring in an additional £6/7million over and above the proposed 4.99% increase. However as rise of this level is beyond the Council tax cap and would require a local referendum.*

Councillor Warrington asked what the £900k Capital Expenditure under Climate Emergency was for. *The officer explained this was for feasibility work and initial capital expenditure on various ways the Climate Emergency priority can be taken forwards such as retro fitting Council assets or investments in alternative energy.*

Councillor MacFie referred to the Capital Project Resources which had been hit by £1.8m – he asked if this related to a particular project. *The officer explained that the saving was across the whole Capital Programme, it means that some delivery timetables have slipped a couple of years.*

Councillor MacFie asked about the Mental Capacity Act Fund. *The officer explained that funding for this was previously held in a Corporate Contingency budget, as no commitments have been made it is being released to generate a saving, when the relevant legislation has been passed the Council will seek new burdens government funding to meet the costs.*

Councillor MacFie asked if £300k savings in senior staff is realistic. *The officer explained that the saving is across the whole senior management structure. This has been tested. Councillor Samuel, Cabinet Member for Resources added that the bulk of this saving has already been made as the Corporate Director posts have not been refilled. The Chief Executive is confident, and the figures are robust.*

Councillor Singleton asked about Climate spending – the Renewal Energy Development Fund supports projects but there is a gestation period in these schemes, is the money carried forward. *The officer explained that this covers 5 years and if not accessed in year one, it is re-fazed into the following year.*

Councillor Singleton asked if there was a risk of slippage regarding the Council Tax deficit which is set to be recovered over 3 years. *The officer explained that there is some risk – Council Tax general growth assumptions have been pared down.*

Lucy Hodge asked the following questions:

- Last year we had two other tables, new capital projects etc. Do we have less growth this year or is the information presented differently. *The officer explained that this is a recognition of the financial situation – there is not the same scale of investment. Funding is on essential activity only. There will be more detail on this in the pack for Cabinet and Council.*
- Regarding the £50k saving under Transport – suggested areas are gully emptying, grit filling and drainage systems. I get a lot of emails on these issues. I would like more detail. *The officer stated that a further note will be sent with details.*
- Regarding the proposed £22k savings in security cameras for Park and Ride – I would like more detail. *The officer stated that a further note will be sent with details.*
- The New Capital Recommendations for office reconsideration costs, is this for Keynsham Civic Centre improvements. *The officer explained that this does refer to the re-imagining of the Civic Centre and efficiencies that this investment will help achieve from lower utilisation of other buildings.*

Councillor Duguid asked the following questions:

- There is a lot of concentration on savings and reduction. Are you satisfied that we are looking at new income streams.
- Tourism – hard to predict, what assumptions have been made.

- It would be good to look at the risk register (although not duplicate the work of the Audit Committee)

Councillor Samuel, Cabinet Member for Resources, explained that it is difficult to predict what will happen with the Commercial Estate income. In the past we have negotiated with tenants with rentals based on the market but now many businesses are struggling. There no business relief or furlough after March. This means the Council cannot predict with certainty. He explained that the Council does not hold all of the cards (for example Government policy on dealing with the pandemic) so it is hard to de risk our budget. Things will be clearer later in the year. The risk is acknowledged but cannot be completely mitigated. This particular income stream is highly volatile.

Councillor Duguid asked if a special task force is needed or if we are already looking at new income streams (although understandably, the focus is on savings). *The officer explained that, in terms of the budget, we will pursue new income streams. It is difficult to mitigate this risk in the short term but we are thinking about the commercial components of the Council. We need to carefully consider options and income diversification. We need to look at building back income.*

Councillor Elliot asked the following questions:

- There is a post reduction in Children and Adult services. This is surprising and should it be revisited. *The officer explained that the post reduction has been planned for some time, it will be grant funded for a year and then reviewed.*
- There is a post reduction in a Children's Centre, are there more details on this). *The officer explained that the post has been vacant for some time, we can deliver the service as it is now.*

Councillor Myers asked for an explanation regarding borrowing from reserves. *The officer explained that:*

*Years 1 & 2 - c£13m borrowed from reserves
Years 4 & 5 – the money is paid back*

The officer explained that this is factored into the budget setting. He added that there will be a more detailed section in the Cabinet report that sets out the use of reserves.

In response to a query from Councillor Hughes on how things have changed from the October 2020 Medium Term Financial Strategy *the officer explained that the numbers have been completely refreshed, taking into account the 2021/22 provisional settlement. There has been a fundamental re-basing of the numbers. He also stated that the loss regarding parking was the result of a number of factors including Covid and Climate Emergency considerations.*

Councillor Hodge asked why the Corporate Plan Maintenance had changed (£10m to £13m). *The officer stated that a further note will be sent with details.*

Councillor Hodge asked if the highways maintenance funding was a normal level? *The officer responded that this was linked to an asset-based assessment.*

Councillor Myers thanked officers for the responses and asked Panel members if they had anything to add:

Councillor Warrington stated that she had a few concerns which could hopefully be negated:

- Going digital – concerns about how this can be discriminatory. This has been shown with home schooling. Also issues such as Broadband connection and capability issues.
- Adult Social Care – looking at these savings, this service cost money (such as incontinence pads)
- Capital Expenditure for Climate Emergency – concerned that we make sure renewable energy is spread across the district.
- Concerned about charging for waste. Fly tipping has a disproportionate impact in rural areas more than the city.
- We need a Bath Waste Centre
- There will potentially be more deaths due to Covid – questions on the capacity of Bereavement Services.
- Concerns about road maintenance in rural areas.
- Concerns about much of the budget being Bath centric such as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods.

Councillor Duguid stated that it was useful to have clarification on the reserves. We don't know what we will get from the Government for the loss of Heritage and Commercial Estate income. This is not a normal budget and we need to work with officers regarding the Risk Register.

Councillor Macfie stated that there was a lot of positive information from the WECA scrutiny panel and we need to focus on where the money is available from WECA and how to access it. Also buses may be funded by the Government in the short term but in the long term, this will become an issue for Local Authorities. Hopefully rural buses will be protected. Also we need to see more money going into North East Somerset – there has been none for the Enterprise Zone in Midsomer Norton.

As Chair, Councillor Myers thanked the officers and Panel members for their contributions and explained that he would be reporting PDS Panel feedback to Cabinet and Council (Note – the minutes from each Panel will also be circulated)