



CABINET

24 SEPTEMBER 2014

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

5 THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL STRATEGY (Pages 1 - 16)

(i) Replacement Appendix I

Due to an administrative error, an incorrect version of the draft notes was submitted. This version replaces and supersedes that attached to the agenda papers.

(ii) Alternative savings proposals by the UKIP Group – attached.

Subsequent to the dispatch of agenda papers, alternative savings proposals have been submitted by the UKIP Group and are attached for consideration by Cabinet.



**Please note that this meeting will be webcast.
Members of the public who do not wish to appear
in the webcast will be able to sit in the balcony,
which is not in camera range.**

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Agenda Item 5

APPENDIX: JOINT MEETING OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES, 8 SEPTEMBER 2014, ANSWERS TO MEMBER QUESTIONS ON THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Questions were asked by Members on the areas shown below and answers were given by officers or Cabinet Members as follows:

1. Consultation on 2% Council Tax increase – It was not feasible to consult on this as the final decision on the level of Council Tax would not be taken until February 2015. A referendum would be required if a higher increase was wanted and there would not be the time to organise this which would also be a costly exercise. A question relating to the Council Tax increase may be able to be included in the consultation.
2. Transformation Costs – These costs were built in for the first two years only and there were no budgeted transformation costs by the end of year 4.
3. Pensions – It was not the case that an additional £40m had been paid into the Council pension scheme although there had been a large increase. This had been stipulated by the Council's actuary in order to balance the pension fund, given that both assets and liabilities had increased substantially. A one-off contribution of £10m had been made last year in order to reduce annual extra contributions and to allow the pension fund to invest in local infrastructure. The Council had to keep to its legal requirements on this issue.
4. Funding for maintained schools – It was the case that academies currently received slightly more funding than maintained schools but this gap had now almost closed. Schools were generally funded equally per pupil although there were different weightings given for each borough. Further information on the variation in schools funding between boroughs could be provided by officers.
5. Impact of change in national Government policy – The proposed cuts were for a period of two years and it was possible that the position may change after this. The Shadow Minister for Local Government had however recently indicated in a letter to the Leader that there would not be any increase in funding for Local Authorities and that money may also be transferred to more 'needy' Councils.
6. Use of reserves – Reserves had been used to for example fund the £10m contribution to the pension fund and would also be used to meet redundancy costs. Strategic reserves were earmarked for specific purposes and verified

by an auditor. The in-year contingency had been lowered from £2m to £1m and Members regularly took advice on how to best use the reserves. The current General Fund balance of £11m was not earmarked but it was felt that at least £10m of this would be needed to fund changes required under the Care Act. The Group Director was happy to discuss the use of reserves with Members further.

7. Proposed Development Company – The Council was currently working with Capita to assess the viability of this proposal. The final cost would be known in approximately two months. The cash amounts held by the Council could be used for this sort of scheme. Risks would be factored in and a report on the Development Company would be brought to Cabinet.
8. Other savings from Economic Development – The Council was supporting businesses to come into Romford. The proposed saving was a stretch target based on economic conditions and the amount of vacant office space. Members could be briefed separately on this.
9. Interest shortfall – There was not an interest shortfall of £5m as this was mixing up General Fund borrowing with Housing borrowing. Housing borrowing had increased to £200m two years ago when the Government changed the housing finance system. The Housing Revenue Account was ringfenced and maintained separately from the General Fund Account.
10. Streetcare – Non-contractable items related to recharges for support services. A full survey of lamp columns was needed to check they were suitable for LED lighting. A further risk was a change in energy prices although this could be mitigated. The current energy budget was £650k.
11. Communications – The annual cost of producing Living Magazine is approximately £60k although not all of this could be delivered as a saving as the staff involved also work on other, separately funded publications which offset the budget. A likely general fund saving from not producing Living would be around £30k. A list of events run by the Council and their cost could be provided. There is no set twinning budget as twinning activity is not consistent and costs are sometimes covered by the twinning partner. There has been no twinning expenditure for some time. Reputation management referred to dealing with the press, social media and managing emerging issues related to the Council. It was planned to reduce the budget for the Havering Show by £17k through attracting more sponsorship.
12. Customer Transformation and Channel Shift – While more people were using on-line Council services, it was still proposed to retain a face to face channel.

13. Culture and Leisure – The proposed Music School saving was considered robust given the successful new model operating in the Music School. MyPlace savings could be found via increasing income and efficiencies from integrating management between MyPlace and the neighbouring sports centre. The Stubbers Centre had been leased to a charity for a peppercorn rent. Both the lease and rent level expired in two years and this would need to be renegotiated and hence produce more income.
14. CCTV – The two CCTV systems would be moved onto one site at Waterloo Gardens. There was however no reduction proposed in the CCTV hours of service. Officers would provide details of the numbers of prosecutions brought about the use of CCTV. Number plate recognition software was being introduced with the Police although the Police would not be making any financial contribution to this, they would be using personnel to work jointly with the CCTV to detect crimes associated with cars.
15. Supporting People Review – A number of options were being considered, and staff proposed to consult with tenants before deciding on the way forward. One option was proposed that support and housing management tasks could be combined in one role and that a dedicated scheme manager be provided for every two schemes. Some Members felt this was a high risk strategy. It would not be possible to run a pilot scheme as the saving needed to be made next year.
16. Private Sector Leasing – There were around 1,000 properties managed in this sector. Complaints received were responded to in the same way as for a council tenant. The proposed £500k saving over four years was based on increasing the number of units let although the market was changing. The rent paid by landlords was based on levels at the lower end of the market as seen in areas such as Harold Hill and Rainham. Several Members felt that many landlords in Harold Hill were sub-dividing properties excessively. Officers accepted this but it was noted that, for some people, a single room in a shared house was their only affordable option. A vetting system for landlords was in place for larger HMOs. Some Members felt there was a danger of ghettoisation in Harold Hill with too many people being put in the area. Officers responded that they had to procure properties where they could afford to do so, and unfortunately they did not control the market.
17. Meals on Wheels – The current provision of Meals on Wheels would be reviewed. A new staffing model would be considered in order to generate savings.
18. Care Act and Better Care Fund – More successful reablement was now seen in people's homes than at Royal Jubilee Court although Royal Jubilee Court

continued to very effective as a step-down facility following hospital care. Community Treatment Teams had demonstrated an impact and this had led to the use of pooled funding opportunities from the Better Care Fund. The performance element of the Better Care Fund would be decided later that week at the Health and Wellbeing Board. This was a new and complex area and work was progressing with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on e.g. undertaking joint assessments at Queen's Hospital. Commissioning work such as this would be taken through the Health and Wellbeing Board and Individuals Overview and Scrutiny Committee for monitoring. The proposed cap would apply to existing clients.

19. Social Care Agency Staff – Officers were looking to retrain permanent staff to take on new roles and make processes more effective. Eight new children's social workers had started work that week. The allocation of admin work would be looked at as part of the review but it was also important that social workers took ownership of their assessments. Modelling of the impact of the Care Act was continuing but this had been factored into the proposals as far as possible. It was important to get the balance right in the use of agency staff.
20. Social Care Staffing – It was not possible to guarantee that serious incidents seen in areas such as Rotherham would not occur. The implications of the Rotherham inquiry for Havering would be looked at shortly by the Crime & Disorder Committee. Services were however scrutinised by Members. Social worker pay was benchmarked and a recruitment & retention strategy was in place. Havering social workers were more interested in support, career progression and a manageable caseload than they were in money.
21. Younger Adults – While current users would be affected, the assessment criteria for younger adults was not going to be altered. It was aimed to deliver services in the most appropriate way and appeal procedures would be in place.
22. OneSource – It was planned to change the Council's job evaluation scheme and avoid any negative impact on lower paid staff. A new pay line for lower paid staff would be introduced if necessary. A new job evaluation scheme for the highest paid staff was also likely to be introduced. There were approximately 2,500 staff that may be affected but the proposed saving was only £500k from a £95, total wage bill. It was hoped to introduce a consistent set of practices and to agree these with the unions.
23. Council Tax Support – The GLA precept made up 20% of Council Tax bills and it was also necessary to consult with the GLA on changes to the Havering scheme. The second person rebate normally applied to households that were

not eligible for other Council Tax support and the Council's preferred option proposed therefore to abolish this. It was emphasised that the proposal only applied to working age applicants, not retired people.

24. Parking – The proposals had been amended but it was wished to allow a period of free parking for everybody. A breakdown of expenditure on parking could be supplied to Members. It was not possible to be certain of the impact of the proposed new tariffs. The additional schemes referred to related to the introduction of a broader parking strategy. Officers would look at the impact of a 40p rather than £1 charge after the free first 30 minutes in order to assess whether this would reduce parking in side streets. It was proposed to introduce charges for car parking in parks but a free period for the first 30 minutes was under consideration. The 10 minute grace period applied to any duration of parking ticket. It was noted that revenue gathering was not the purpose of parking enforcement. It was planned to introduce parking at football pitches and some Members felt this could result in people parking in nearby streets. Officers agreed to consider this.
25. Moving Traffic Offences Powers – These had now been adopted by all but six London Boroughs. Once adopted, decisions would be made on how these powers would be applied. Details could be provided to Members on the advantages of using these powers. A report on adopting the powers would also be brought to full Council. Some Members felt that taking on these powers could make the Council unpopular with local residents.
26. Trading Standards – Savings could be made via a restructure and no longer undertaking some of the non-statutory functions carried out by Trading Standards. While enforcement of underage alcohol sales would continue it was felt that e.g. the training of shop staff did not need to be carried out by Trading Standards officers. The banking protocol also no longer needed to be led by Trading Standards. Enforcement work would not be affected and there was not felt to be a risk to revenue generation from the proposals. Officers wished to move the service to a more intelligence-led way of working. Officers would supply details of the income recovered from proceeds of crime.
27. Voluntary Sector Review – The reduction of the grant to HAVCO was due to the closure of their Community Accountancy Service. Rate relief for charities would be unaffected by any of the proposals. It was clarified that Council grants were often given to not for profit organisations in order to employ people so it was not simply a matter of increasing volunteer numbers. Other Members felt that most volunteers in Council services did come from charities. It was also possible that some extra work could be commissioned from charities in connection with the requirements of the Care Act.

28. Libraries – All libraries, including the four strategically most important libraries, would have reduced opening hours compared to the current position. Officers could provide further details if necessary. There was no suggestion that any libraries would close. Officers had thought seriously about the viability of the proposals which were based on library service models that ran successfully elsewhere. The local studies library was a valuable service and efforts would be made to recruit more volunteers to help operate it. Officers would supply details of library footfall. The new Rainham and Harold Hill libraries would continue to operate. There were a total of 93 people currently employed in Council libraries although as many of these were part-time staff, this equated to 53.1 FTE posts.
29. Health and Wellbeing – This category related to leisure centres and ‘Policy, Marketing and Administration’ referred to expenditure on support services. Services provided by the Health and Wellbeing Team included the arts service and sports development, as well as the leisure services client role.
30. Queen’s Theatre – Officers met on a quarterly basis with the Queen’s Theatre and had discussed the budget options. Full details of options would be shared with theatre management once the consultation had started. The grant figure of £400k was not correct and the total grant to the Queen’s Theatre for this year was £546k.
31. Youth Service – It was proposed to no longer provide discretionary services. All youth services provided by the Council would be mapped by officers. Work with vulnerable young people such as dealing with any gangs in Romford town centre would be protected. It would also be possible to signpost to other youth provision. Some Members felt that Overview and Scrutiny should look at this area. An initial proposition had been received from staff to form an employee led mutual to take on aspects of the service and this would need to be worked through. Some staff would transfer to the over 12 service which would be combined with Early Help & Troubled Families. The Youth Service had direct contact with more than 200 young people but did a lot of other work with young people in addition.
32. Troubled Families – Savings in this area, after the first year, would be challenging and officers accepted there was a lot of work to do.
33. Children’s Centres – There would be more reliance on volunteers to run Children’s Centres but there were no current plans to involve the private sector. It was hoped to retain five or six of the current Children’s Centres but this could not be guaranteed at this stage.

34. Equalities Impact Assessments – All compulsory assessments had been completed and the complete set would be appended to the next Cabinet report on the budget. These would remain in draft as final decisions would not be taken until February 2015.

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CABINET

24 September 2014

Subject Heading:

Alternative Budget Proposals

Cabinet Member:

Cllr Roger Ramsey

CMT Lead:

Andrew Blake-Herbert

Report Author and contact details:

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Policy context:

Financial summary:

Is this a Key Decision?

Is this a Strategic Decision?

When should this matter be reviewed?

Reviewing OSC:

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Championing education and learning for all	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

As part of the budget setting process for 2015/16 opposition group leaders were asked to submit any alternative budget proposals, by midnight on 15th September. This would allow any proposals to be properly scrutinised ahead of a Cabinet decision on whether to include them in the forthcoming public consultation.

The proposals received and set out in this report do not affect the proposed Council Tax level, and although the proposed amendments have degrees of risk associated with them, the sums involved are not significant enough to change the overall budget strategy.

Therefore, should these amendments be accepted, the overall budget is unlikely to carry a materially higher risk than it does in its current form and the proposals present no overall net adjustment to the Council's overall budget.

Members are however, reminded of the risks, and advice of the Chief Finance Officer on budget robustness, which are set out in the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

1. Note the alternative proposals and officer views on their feasibility.
2. To determine whether any of the proposals are to be added into the Council's overall budget strategy consultation.

REPORT DETAIL

1. As part of the budget setting process for 2015/16 opposition group leaders were asked to submit any alternative budget proposals, by midnight on 15th September. This was to enable the Chief Finance Officer to consider whether any proposals enabled a robust budget to be set. Although this is not for the final Council Tax setting meeting, this is in effect following the same Council Procedure Rules (constitution, Part 4 Rules of Procedure, rule 11):

Rule 11.9(b)

“upon receipt of such amendment, the Chief Finance Officer shall consider whether it meets the “robust budget” test and:

- i) If it does meet the test, the Proper Officer shall include it on the agenda for the meeting.
- ii) If it does not meet the test but the Chief Finance Officer considers that, duly altered, it will do so, that officer shall consult the proposers and, if they accept the alteration(s), the Proposer Officer shall include it, as altered, on the agenda for the meeting.
- iii) If it does not meet the test and the Chief Finance Officer considers that, whether or not altered, it will not do so, that officer shall refer the amendment to the Proper Officer who shall proceed with it as an improper amendment under Rule 11.9(b).”

These amendments are acceptable for consideration in accordance with the Procedure Rules as stated above, subject to Cabinet having regard to the comments set out below.

The impact of the proposals would have no net overall impact on the proposed budget requirement, or the current assumptions around the Council Tax levels.

2. Alternative Proposals:

2.1 UKIP 1 Outside Bodies

The Council currently makes contributions to a number of outside bodies and the proposal is to end the Council's membership of the following bodies: the Local Government Association (LGA) and London Councils (LC).

We are not aware of any other Council pulling out of LC, however some have pulled out of the LGA, including the London Borough of Bromley. There is a requirement to give 12 months notice, so although the savings is not available for 2015/16 it could be available for the second year of the budget strategy. However, the LGA is the national voice of local government, providing the Council with an opportunity to influence government policy in issues that matter to local government. Membership provides the Council with:

- Free/discounted attendance at events e.g. we recently attended a data sharing and transparency event that's been invaluable for the data warehouse project
- Policy information through daily e-bulletins and legislative briefing papers, which inform the Council's wider policy work
- A free corporate peer challenge every three years – our last one was in late 2012
- Information and training to support Councillors in their decision-making role.
- Cross council support on wider local government challenges such as land changes and Icelandic banks.

London Council's represents all 32 of London boroughs, ensuring the best deal from Government, the Mayor of London and other bodies on a range of issues, including transport, crime and health. Membership provides the Council with:

- Information sharing and benchmarking through political and professional networks, which help us inform our services and policy development across a range of areas, including HR and workforce planning, enterprise and skills, environment, transport and health.
- Provides London-wide services, such as the *Freedom Pass* for 60+ year olds on behalf of all London councils.
- Hosting bodies, such as the London Regional Employers' Organisation and London Safeguarding Children's Board (which helps councils and local safeguarding boards fulfill their safeguarding duties by sharing information, intelligence and best practice).

- Bringing together of the London pensions collective investment vehicle (CIV) to save costs for all participating Councils.

Following the recent outcome of the Scottish referendum, and subsequent announcements about devolution, Havering needs to ensure that it has a strong position within the London grouping. London Councils, along with the Mayor of London is a significant and influential voice in the debate about future devolution to London local authorities.

The funding to London Councils could not be the full saving as for example we would either need to continue to make a contribution towards the delivery of the administration of the freedom pass, or the Council would need to replicate this locally.

Although not recommended, this savings could be deliverable.

2.2 UKIP 2 Consultancy

The Council uses consultants at particular times, to bring in skills and or capacity that the Council doesn't currently have within existing resources. They are not brought in lightly, and when they are we try to ensure there is a process of up skilling existing staff to ensure the organisation learns and benefits from the use of external expertise. The Council also does not hold a specific budget for consultants, as they are used for stand-alone pieces of work and funded through one off monies such as the transformation reserve. We could however reduce the level of that base budget transformation sum, although not without risk in respect of having sufficient resources to deliver the budget strategy. Given that this level of adjustment would not be significant, this saving should be deliverable, however these funds were growth in the first two years of the budget strategy so as such are one off so should not be used to deliver on going services beyond the first two years.

2.3 UKIP 3 StreetCare

A proposal to turf or chip over many of the flower beds, leave more grass areas to meadow, reduce the frequency of grass cutting in general and stop the use of leaf blowers post-cutting. The proposal would also reduce maintenance of shrubs and bushes to once every two years, rather than once a year and would reduce the frequency of herbicide spraying.

Use of tree chippings is already in place in the hard wearing highway shrub beds. The highway grass verge grass cutting regime has already reduced to 9 cuts per year which equates to approximately 3 weekly cuts commencing March through to October.

It is felt that any further reduction would have a severe impact on the image of the Borough. It is not recommended to reduce shrub pruning as in recent time an additional team has been used to maintain the level of service following numerous complaints from residents and Members over recent years. The weed control contract allows for 4 sprays per year, and is again an area of concern for residents and Members. This saving is not considered to be feasible, without a significant negative public reaction.

2.4 UKIP 4 Parks

A proposal to give more park area over to meadow, increasing the amount of composting which could then be sold to householders to cheaply generate revenue. The proposal would also consider a reduction in the number and frequency of replacing bedding plants.

About a third of our parks and open spaces are set aside for meadows and there is limited scope for further meadows because of the need to provide sports pitches and other amenity use. Officers estimate that up to approximately 2% of additional amenity grass in parkland could be converted to grass meadows, however it is felt savings would be limited to around £5k per annum.

The composting proposal could be considered using the old nursery at Bedfords Park and in areas at Hornchurch Park, but there would be significant work required to clear and then install the necessary bays and additional staff resources needed to manage the activities and processes associated with composting. So although there is merit in the composting proposals, including environmental sustainability, officers do not consider that the costs of proceeding would be covered, as these are estimated at up to £10k.

Regarding a reduction of bedding, the Council has largely removed the old bedding areas over the last few years. There are only four or five sites where there is still bedding, including at the Town Hall. The Council currently spends about £5k per annum on bedding.

The use of leaf blowers after cutting ensures that clippings are not left to cover hard surfaces throughout the borough. This could result in slips and falls claims and would undoubtedly lead to public complaints, especially in residential roads. Ceasing this activity could deliver a small level of saving, it would not be on the level originally proposed.

2.5 UKIP 5 Executive Pay Cuts / Freeze

The proposal is to consider coming out of National Terms and Conditions and therefore being able to locally determine pay rises for the future, with a proposal to hold or cut senior management pay over the next three financial years, on a sliding scale from those earning above £30k, with the biggest impact at the higher end. This would then have a second impact of cutting assumptions in the actuarial forecast which would in turn cut the need for the growth in funding to the pension fund.

The proposed cutting or freezing pay on a sliding scale would deliver approximately £226k in savings. However, to be able to do this, the Council would be required to come out of national terms and conditions.

The impact on the pension fund would not deliver the savings assumed. The proposal cuts pay by approximately 4% over a three year period and a recently modelled actuary impact of a one-off 5% pay cut only reduced the

deficit by around £1m. The deficit relates to the shortfall in pension commitments already earned, changing pay levels is only one component in the calculation of pensionable pay, so would have a minimal impact on the Council's contribution level.

Cuts in pay are likely to generate a fall in pension fund membership and consequentially the level of contributions, the impact of which is likely to impact detrimentally on short to medium term cash flow and investment returns. However, savings would come from a pay freeze, removing the 1% budget provision for pay increases would save approximately £750k. As already noted, this change would require the Council to come out of national terms and conditions and so could not be achieved by April 2014, and would be to likely require the Council to have to dismiss and re-engage the staff on new contracts. One of the savings currently being considered is a change to the pay structures, moving to a new grading system and changes in work days. This is required to modernise the Council's approach for the future, so would be a necessary step before considering coming out of national terms and conditions.

Councillors will also be aware that we have not yet bridged the assumed budget gaps for years three and four of the budget strategy, so this may well be a savings item that we need to return to at a later stage.

2.6 UKIP 6 Library Opening Hours

A proposal to use half of the freed up monies to keep as many of the smaller six libraries open, as much as possible during school holiday times.

All of the Libraries are due to be open in the school holidays, although the smaller ones on reduced hours. With this level of funding the Libraries could be open an additional 16 hours a week during the 13 weeks of school holidays, which could be transmitted in to a variety of opening arrangements, but the "smaller" libraries (currently proposed to be open on 4 days) could open an additional 2 days a week during the school holidays.

2.7 UKIP 7 Youth Service

A proposal to use the other half of the freed-up monies to reduce the reduction in provision of the youth service. This would enable several posts (3-4) to be retained and a potentially a number of existing activities at the Myplace and Robert Beard youth centres could continue, including advice and support, as well as positive activities for young people.

Ref	Description	£'000
UKIP 1	LGA 40k London councils 120k	160
UKIP 2	Consultancy	0
UKIP 3	Streetcare:	0
UKIP 4	Parks:	20
UKIP 5	Changes to Terms and Conditions	0
UKIP 7	Reduce savings in Youth Services	90
UKIP 8	Libraries	90
	Sub Total	0

These proposals do not affect the proposed Council Tax level, and although the proposed amendments have degrees of risk associated with them, the sums involved are not of great significance. This does mean that, should the amendment be accepted, the overall budget is unlikely to carry a materially higher risk than current. The proposals present no overall net adjustment to the Council's overall budget. Members are however, reminded of the risks, and advice of the Chief Finance Officer on budget robustness, which are set out in the report.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Reasons for the decision:

It is essential that the Council's financial strategy takes due account of Government plans, and any other material factors where these are likely to have an impact on the Council's financial position. Further the main report on the agenda this confirms the position in relation to alternative budget proposals.

Other options considered:

None. The Constitution requires this as a step towards setting the Council's budget.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

The Council's budget process will ensure that financial implications and risks are fully met. There are continuing risks with the potential impact on funding arising from both the Budget and CSR announcements, as highlighted in both this and the previous report to Cabinet. The steps already taken by the Council should mitigate this, but it is evident that a longer term approach now needs to be considered, as the potential scale of the future budget gap could prove to be even bigger than the gap the Council is currently addressing.

As part of this process, Members need to be suitably aware of the background to the Council's current financial position, and the context within which the budget strategy has been developed.

Legal implications and risks:

The Council is subject to a number of duties in relation to revenue, capital and procurement. For instance, as a Best Value Authority the Council is under a duty to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness." s 3 Local Government Finance Act 1999. The Council is also under an implied duty to set a balanced budget.

Case law has established that when consultation is undertaken it must be done at a time when final decisions have not yet been taken. It is appropriate nevertheless to have a preferred option. Consultees must have sufficient information and time to comment meaningfully. Once the responses have been received they must be conscientiously taken into consideration before a final decision is taken. There is nothing within the Report to indicate any legal risk in putting the Budget and other proposals out to a 3 month consultation.

Otherwise there are no apparent specific legal risks in adopting the Recommendations set out in the Report.

Human Resources implications and risks:

The Council continues to work closely with its staff and with Trades Unions to ensure that the effects on staff of the savings required have been managed in an efficient and compassionate manner.

Equalities implications and risks:

As this report merely sets the background and context to the Council's Financial Strategy, there are no specific equalities implications or risks at this stage. However any savings that need to be considered following publication of details of the Local Government Financial Settlement may carry equalities implications and risks and accordingly, these will need to be analysed to ensure that mitigating action can be taken to reduce any disproportionate impact on protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act.

Other Risks:

There are no particular other risks arising, but Cabinet is asked to be mindful of the risks inherent with forecasting as well as the general economic background and its volatility over the last 5 or 6 years.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Previous cabinet reports on the budget.