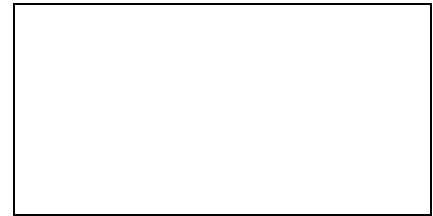


Calderdale MBC

Wards Affected All

Cabinet 14 February 2022



Cabinet Budget Proposals - Comments and Recommendations from Scrutiny Boards

Report of the Strategy and Performance Scrutiny Board

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to summarise any recommendations and comments from the Scrutiny Boards relating to the Cabinet Budget proposals, that were adopted for consultation when Cabinet met on 17 January 2022.

2. Need for a decision

The comments/recommendations made by each of the Scrutiny Boards will be reported to Cabinet at its meeting on 14 February 2022 and will be considered as part of its consultation process.

3. Recommendation

The Strategy and Performance Scrutiny Board requests that Cabinet takes account of the observations by Scrutiny Boards in response to the budget proposals from Cabinet when Cabinet reviews their budget proposals after the consultation period has ended.

4. Background and/or details

4.1 Children and Young People's Scrutiny Board met on 19 January 2022 to discuss the budget proposals relating to the children and young people's services. The Board made the following observations:

- Members discussed the implications on mental health following recent reports of increased need for support for young people, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Director and Cabinet Member, CYPS advised there has been recent funding to enable schools to deliver this work in settings, as well as the Open Minds Partnership which Calderdale CCG fund the array of online resources that are accessible to children, young people, and parents.
- Members discussed the proposed changes to Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH) funding and the Director, CYPS advised that this would still be available for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds, however it would change for other children up to 18 years, and that the implications should be lessened by the current patterns of wraparound care having changed - e.g., due to parents being able to work from home and care for children outside of school hours more flexibly. Members raised concerns over the impact on families, especially if working patterns return to pre-pandemic ways, and the implications for children, young people and the providers who were delivering wraparound care. For example, would children be able to access the provision they were used to attending? The Director, CYPS advised that this proposal was trying to have the least effect on families, whilst making a modest saving, and would bring Calderdale more in line with other local authorities in West Yorkshire and the current offer they are providing.
- Members commented on the potential of offering Council Tax relief for care leavers. This is something other Councils in West Yorkshire offer, and was something that might be considered by Calderdale. The Director, CYPS advised that there had been initial conversations about this between the Cabinet Member and Finance Team in recent weeks.

4.2 Adults Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board met on 25 January 2022 to discuss the budget proposals relating to the adults, wellbeing, and public health services. The Board made the following observations:

- Concerning the reimagining of day services, which included reducing sites from three to two, members asked if the relevant ward members could be kept involved in the changes. This was agreed, although it was pointed out that the centres would serve the whole of Calderdale. It was agreed to report back to the Scrutiny Board on this and other savings for year 2 and year 3 in around six months' time.
- Members said that several of the proposals seemed like they may increase the burden on informal carers and that risk is identified in the Initial Equality Impact

Assessments included in the Cabinet Budget Proposals for consideration. Cabinet members and officers replied that they did not think that there would be an impact on carers.

- The Director, Adult Services and Wellbeing advised that the Assistive Technology proposal would reduce the need for formal care.
 - Members enquired as to whether there were any risks in the saving on the Community Social Work Team, which proposes changing the skill mix of the team replacing experienced and qualified social workers with people with a variety of other experiences. Support to people with complex needs will still be provided by qualified social workers. There may be a risk that there will be some slippage in achieving the savings. The Cabinet Member, Adult Services and Wellbeing, advised the service would be deploying skills where they would be best used. It was agreed that an item on early intervention will be considered by the Scrutiny Board at a future meeting.
 - The Director, Adults Services and Wellbeing advised that all in-year savings have been achieved.
 - Members asked what assurance we get from care providers that uplifts in wages will be passed on in full to the workforce. The Cabinet Member, AHSC, advised that if a pay uplift was to be offered, it would be through contract variation and as such will be paid by the provider directly to their workforce.
 - Public health budgets are “flatlining” – what differences will be the impact of this? The Director, Public Health advised that there are efficiencies to be made on joining up services and taking an outcomes-based approach. A question was asked about whether there would be any change in funding of health visiting and school nursing. Children’s Centres are re-tendering over the next 12 months which is an opportunity to make the public health offer more efficient. Useful to have a Public Health reserve which gives some flexibility.
 - There is growth in AHSC budgets already built into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to take account of demographic changes.
 - There are challenges in terms of long-term commissioning. There needs to be a national long-term funding solution for social care.
- 4.3 Place Scrutiny Board met on 20 January 2022 to discuss the budget proposals relating to those services within its remit. The Board made the following observations:
- Members asked about the proposal to fund an increase in pay for HGV Drivers employed by Suez on the waste collection contract, to help address the shortage of HGV drivers. Members asked why we were providing additional funding to a multi-national company. Officers gave an assurance that all the additional resource would go to HGV drivers and not to the profits of the

company. Members also asked whether there are opportunities to recruit from a wider field by seeking to employ more women and people from an ethnic minority background.

- Members commented that the budget proposed a Council Tax increase of 2.99%, whereas inflation is currently running at 5.4% and asked whether this leaves a gap in funding. Cabinet Members assured the Board that this is a balanced budget proposal.
- Members asked whether the in-house development company, Weave, is providing value for money and whether an additional saving could be made by "winding up" the company. It was agreed that Weave would be discussed at a future meeting of the Scrutiny Board.

4.4 The Strategy and Performance Scrutiny Board met on 26 January 2022 to discuss the budget proposals relating to finance, human resources, and legal services; to discuss authority wide and strategic budget proposals; and to consider the observations made by the other Scrutiny Boards. The Board made the following observations:

- Members commented on the rise in Council Tax, and acknowledged this was not always popular, however as in previous years - 70% would support adults and children's social care, with the remaining 30% supporting the delivery of all other services. The Council remains committed to protecting the most vulnerable in Calderdale and the Cabinet Members advised this is a fair budget under difficult circumstances.
- There was opportunity for investment and Members sought assurance that social value would be maintained through commissioning, investment and how funding is spent as we moved forward. Added social value in commissioning is an issue that the S&P Scrutiny Board has been interested in and will return to in the future. Members discussed the need to source and invest locally, and ensure deals were fairly made at local level.
- Members were eager to explore how savings were calculated in more detail and asked how the Council ensures savings are made in the right places. The Cabinet Member advised that for the budget, a list of options is prepared by the Head of Finance and Corporate Leadership Team, which consisted of issues identified and other savings which could be brought forward. There were a range of processes in place, including Budget Council, budget challenge sessions and audit processes to ensure challenge when getting value for money. The Council had been 'drilling down' on all possible ways of making savings for the last 12 years, and it can often be difficult to find new savings when funding has not increased. There were a number of savings options which are put forward to each political group as part of this process, and ideas put forward would be considered within the relevant directorates.
- Members commented that the process of how savings were arrived at seemed ad-hoc in some cases compared to previous years and how could the Cabinet substantiate that further savings could not be made? Cabinet Members advised that every year it becomes harder to find savings, and the budget process itself

was not the only way to look at savings. This was something which is done throughout the year, and further detail could be provided. The budget process was just a small part of the Council's financial management.

- Members acknowledged the areas relating to ICT and digital growth, specifically that cyber security was a critical area for the Council, and it was positive to see some growth in the budget for these areas. Cabinet Members advised digital development and cyber security were crucial for the Council now and in future years, both in terms of staff use of technology as well as upgrading out of date systems for our residents. Cyber security remained one of the significant threats for the UK and it was hoped this investment would support the Council's delivery of services and digital security.
- Members acknowledged the challenges in setting a budget with only a 1-year settlement. The final version of the Local Government settlement was due in late January or early February and a provisional settlement plan was being worked on. Members commented that it was good to see growth in the budget.
- Members consider that the equality impact assessments for all budget proposals should be to be completed and reflected in Cabinet's final budget proposals as indicated in Cabinet's document containing budget proposals for consultation. Members were keen to better understand what these budget proposals would mean for important issues such as equalities, social value and how these equality impact assessments would be reviewed in the years ahead; as well as how they aligned to the Council's corporate priorities and objectives.
- Members commented on the apparent reliance on the pension windfall of £900k to 'balance' the budget, and there were concerns that there may be a risk in relying on this if the performance of the Pension Fund deteriorates in future years. Cabinet Members assured the Scrutiny Board that this will have no impact on the pensions received by staff.
- Members have noted that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy identifies resources to fund a 3% increase in salaries in 2022/3. Members asked whether this is sufficient given that inflation is currently 5.4%.

5. Options considered

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Financial implications

6.1 The Scrutiny Boards received all relevant reports from the Head of Finance, including the Budget Proposals for Consultation (Cabinet report, 17 January 2022)

6.2 Strategy and Performance Scrutiny Board received a summary of observations made by all Scrutiny Boards at its meeting on 26 January 2022. The Head of Finance attended the meeting and addressed questions.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Human Resources and Organisation Development Implications

8.1 The HR implications of Cabinet's budget proposals are contained within the Equality Impact Assessments.

9. Consultation

9.1 Cabinet's budget proposals for 2022/23 are subject to public consultation until 14 February 2022. Cabinet will consider the comments from the public, Scrutiny Boards and any other feedback at the meeting on 14 February 2022.

10. Environment, Health and Economic Implications

10.1 The environment, health and economic implications of Cabinet's budget proposals are contained within the Equality Impact Assessments.

11. Equality and Diversity

11.1 The equality and diversity implications of Cabinet's budget proposals are contained within the Equality Impact Assessments.

12. Summary and Recommendations

12.1 There are no formal recommendations made by the Scrutiny Boards in relation to the Cabinet Budget Proposals for 2022/23, however Members request that the observations made by Scrutiny Boards are taken into account by Cabinet when they prepare a revised budget proposal to present to Council.

For further information on this report, contact:

Scrutiny Team	Legal and Democratic Services, Chief Executive's Office
Telephone:	01422 39 3249
E-mail:	scrutiny@calderdale.gov.uk

The documents used in the preparation of this report are:

Cabinet Budget Proposals for Consultation (report to Cabinet, 17 January 2022);

The documents are available for inspection from:

Scrutiny Team Office, scrutiny@calderdale.gov.uk