



Doncaster
Council

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Date: Friday, 8th February 2019

Mayor Ros Jones
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Dear Ros

Overview and Scrutiny's Response to the Mayor's Budget Proposals 2019/20

I am writing to confirm the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee's (OSMC) response to your Budget Proposals 2019/20 and am pleased to confirm Members were supportive of the proposals.

Following publication of your budget proposals, OSMC Members initially reviewed the details at meetings held on 1st and 7th February, 2019 with Directors.

At these meetings the Committee used four specific lines of enquiry to focus on its review and assist in providing a commentary on the overall budget proposals.-

The four key areas considered included:

- i. To what extent are the Mayor's proposals in line with central government policy, pressures and directives?
- ii. To what extent will the Mayor's proposal ensure that the Council is able to contribute to the outcomes detailed within Doncaster Growing Together bearing in mind the constraints detailed at i. above?
- iii. To what extent do the Mayor's proposals demonstrate that the results of any consultation, research or other evidence have been taken into account?
- iv. To what extent are the challenges in delivering the savings within the timescales and the capacity to deliver services with reduced resources being addressed?

The Committee's response is attached to this letter and I would welcome the opportunity to present this to your Cabinet meeting on 12th February 2019. I would also be grateful if you could take account of OSMC's response when you present your final proposals to Council on the 4th March 2019.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank the Directors and Assistant Directors for attending our budget review sessions, answering questions and providing clarification on issues raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Kevin Rodgers
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

cc OSMC Members
Cabinet Members
Jo Miller, Chief Executive
Debbie Hogg, Director Corporate Resources
Steve Mawson, Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Director of Finance
Scott Fawcus, Assistant Director, Legal and Democratic Services

APPENDIX A OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUDGET REVIEW OUTCOMES

In respect of the Mayor's budget proposals, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee:

1. Recognised the difficulties in setting a balanced budget that delivers considerable savings, value for money and seeks to protect services delivered to the most vulnerable in the Borough. Additionally the delivery and implementation of the proposals, once agreed are crucial to delivering a balanced budget.
2. Acknowledges the part the budget will play in achieving the Council's vision and its focus on ensuring that Doncaster and its people thrive despite continued budget constraints.
3. Recognises the hard work that has gone into creating the budget as part of the 3-year plan aligned to the Doncaster Growing Together programme. The Committee can see the clear challenges on the horizon with the review of Fairer Funding Review, removal of the Revenue Support Grant and reliance in large part on Council Tax and Business Rates.
4. Acknowledged the achievements made by the Council over recent years to deliver services with reducing resources. It was recognised that the Council would need to continue to transform services to provide better services at a reduced cost at a faster pace.
5. Recognised that with the level of uncertainty that exists, balancing 2020/21 will require delivering on-going savings to bridge the gap between funding available and rising costs; the use of one-off reserves is not a sustainable solution and carefully rebuilding the position on a risk-based approach.
6. Recognise the work that has been undertaken enabling organisations to allow social groups to deliver intensive services with fewer resources and encourage more joined up working within the voluntary sector, to deliver much needed resources and leverage. To have a greater focus to encourage this market through the commissioning process may yield better social value than the straight commodification of adult social care.
7. Acknowledges the shift towards commissioning to work jointly with the private sector, key partners and the third sector organisations.
8. Recognised the work undertaken to modernise and integrate services and direct them to the areas of greatest need through maximising utilisation of resources. That through the Doncaster Growing Together (DGT) Plan and Team Doncaster Partners, this has already achieved some of the greatest transformations. This focus, in particular, fits with partners in the health service who work with similar groups with protected characteristics. Concern has been raised how the Council can continue to meet different needs with such limited resources.

9. Ask that consideration be given to utilising redundant land and buildings through the asset review, which will require a further focus to deliver community benefit. It was recognised that with a concentration on achieving greater social value in commissioning this could create the right environment for joint working where achieving greater outcomes with less resources may be possible.
10. Express concern with regard to the uncertainty around Brexit, particularly around emergency planning and the potential impact on place. Members acknowledged the Strategic Policy Unit was tracking the position but recognised that it was difficult to plan. The Committee look forward to receiving future updates on this issue as part of its ongoing work plan.
11. Supports the ongoing positive and commendable work undertaken to address budget pressures in Adult Social Care whilst ensuring improved outcomes for adults. It was noted for this to continue, effective plans needed to be in place to reduce overspends and to control the amount of spend over coming years by transforming services. The Committee accepted the need to balance support for vulnerable people through prevention and early intervention.
12. Express concern with regard to the ongoing overspends by the Doncaster Children's Services Trust, although it is recognised that there are financial pressures arising from increased demand. The Committee welcomed the steps taken in developing a more robust process and achieve greater management oversight.
13. Accepted, in terms of Council Tax, that there will be a proposed increase of 4.99% and acknowledge the difficulty in making such a decision, although recognising the need for additional resources in areas where most needed.
14. The Committee understand the need to manage carefully the implementation of staffing reductions as services are transformed and the need for careful monitoring of the use of agency staff, given the reduction in the total staff compliment within the authority.
15. Welcomed its involvement in the budget process and particularly the opportunity to review the proposals to meet the future funding gap. The Committee wish to continue to receive regular updates on the implementation of the key budget proposals, to what extent is value for money being achieved and how any slippage or key risks are being addressed.