

<b>Public Accounts Select Committee</b>			
<b>Report Title</b>	Comments of the Select Committees on the Revenue Budget Savings Proposals 2013/16		
<b>Key Decision</b>	No	<b>Item No.</b>	3
<b>Contributors</b>	All Select Committees		
<b>Class</b>	Part 1	<b>Date</b>	12 November 2012

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. This report informs the Public Accounts Select Committee of the comments and views of the Select Committees (which met in October and November) on the Revenue Budget Savings Proposals 2013/16.

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1. The Public Accounts Select Committee is recommended to note the views of the Select Committees as set out in this report.

## 3. Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee Views

- 3.1. On 23 October 2012, the Safer & Stronger Communities Select Committee considered the revenue budget saving proposals within its terms of reference. The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:

COM01 (reorganisation of Cultural Services and Community and Neighbourhood Development divisions)

- 3.2. The Committee notes that the primary role of assembly coordinators is community engagement and development work within the wards, above and beyond the administrative tasks they also undertake. The Committee feels that any reorganisation of the Community and Neighbourhood division must take this important element of the local assembly coordinator's role into account. The Committee is also concerned that the proposal could result in less support to local assembly co-ordinating groups, putting more emphasis on citizens organising and administering meetings.

COM06 (Reduction to the Local Assemblies Fund)

- 3.3. The Committee feels that the local assemblies fund is an important resource for Lewisham's neighbourhoods and it concerned about the impact of any potential reduction on seed funding to small, local organisations and community groups. The Committee also notes that the fund has created community activities in parts of the borough where there previously had been none.

- 3.4. The Committee recommends that the reduction proposed be reconsidered. However, if the proposal to reduce the fund is agreed the Committee recommends that the reduction be minimised. Furthermore, the Committee believes that an identical amount of funding for each assembly should be maintained and the option of assemblies bidding for funds from a “centralised pot” should be rejected.

COM07 (Community Sector Grants)

- 3.5. The Committee recognises and supports the rationale for maintaining a 3 year grant funding programme. The Committee notes plans to engage with community and voluntary sector organisations throughout 2013/14, to discuss the impact of potential funding changes, and explore ways for organisations and groups to work together to reduce overheads and streamline service provision. Nonetheless, the Committee recommends that for effective discussions to take place a figure, for the reduction in funding for the grants programme, should be made available before the end of the 2012/13 financial year. The Committee feels that the disclosure of a potential figure for overall reduction will provide clarity and focus in discussions with the community and voluntary sector.

COM09 (Drug and alcohol rehabilitation, training and communications)

- 3.6. The Committee accepts that part B and part C of the proposals should proceed as planned. However, the Committee requests that more information be made available about the success rates of different approaches before any decision is made about this proposal. The Committee specifically requests that further information from the relevant expert medical and service providers be provided, which includes data on total number of beds available in past years and figures regarding their usage.

COM10 (Neighbourhood Community Safety)

- 3.7. Members were concerned about the impact of this proposal on the broad range of activities currently undertaken by neighbourhood community safety teams. The Committee resolved that more information about the review of the service be made available before any decision is taken.

CUS24 (Blue Badge applications)

- 3.8. The Committee recommends that the proposal should be rejected due to the negative impact on disabled people.

CUS25 (Discretionary Freedom Passes)

- 3.9. The Committee recommends that the proposal should be rejected due to the negative impact on disabled people.

#### **4. Children and Young People Select Committee Views**

- 4.1. On 24 October 2012, the Children and Young People Select Committee considered the revenue budget saving proposals within its terms of reference. The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:
- 4.2. That it noted that for many proposals details of staffing impacts and other information outlined on the Council-wide pro-forma for each proposal (which had been specified to enable select committees and other bodies to make informed and objective comparisons and decisions), had not been provided at this stage. Whilst the Committee understood the reasons given by officers for this lack of information at this stage of the budget process, it is essential that further details on staffing impacts of the proposals should be provided to the Public Accounts Select Committee and Mayor and Cabinet once consultations have taken place.
- 4.3. That with respect to all proposals involving recoupment of costs for services provided by the Council to schools and other organisations, further scrutiny should be carried out in the next municipal year looking at the approach Lewisham Council takes towards the trading and marketing of such services

##### COM11 (restructuring of the Youth Offending Service)

- 4.4. The Committee recommends that close monitoring of the impact of the proposed changes should be carried out. This should include whether a rise in crime among youth populations occurs. Any monitoring should take into account potential rising crime rates due to increased youth unemployment.

##### CYP14 (halting of projects funded by the Early Intervention Grant)

- 4.5. The Committee requests that a full and in-depth report outlining the details and impacts of the proposed changes is put forward to the Public Accounts Select Committee and Mayor and Cabinet when a decision is to be taken.

##### CYP17 (restructuring of the Youth Service)

- 4.6. The Committee endorses the rationale for the proposed changes to the youth service. The Committee recognises the risk involved in re-organising such a high profile service and the difficulty in quantifying savings at an early stage. While the Committee welcomes the increased focus on targeted groups of young people it would stress the importance in the youth service being accessible and welcoming for all young people.

##### CYP21 (ceasing provision of Generation Play clubs)

- 4.7. The Committee recognises the need to cease funding this service, but would ask that existing Children's Centres widely advertise their activities in the areas where Generation Play clubs will close, and that (given assurances by

officers) existing capacity in Children's Centres should be able to meet demands.

CYP31 (transport for SEN children)

- 4.8. The Committee recognises the need for the changes put forward in the proposal as well as the wider approach to changing personal transport arrangements across the Council. The Committee also recognises the complexity and importance of the work and asks that before the proposal proceeds, and following consultation, a detailed report looking at the wider potential impacts (including impacts on whole families with children with SEN) should be produced for the Public Accounts Select Committee and Mayor and Cabinet.

**5. Housing Select Committee Views**

- 5.1. On 31 October 2012, the Housing Select Committee considered the revenue budget saving proposals within its terms of reference. The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:

CUS30 (A review of staffing structures in environmental health (residential) and private sector housing grants)

- 5.2. The Committee recommends that (a) a more detailed impact assessment is carried out prior to this savings proposal being progressed further and (b) officers present some alternative proposals for achieving this saving, as it is the Committee's view that the proposal in its current form will have a significant negative impact on enforcement activity.

**6. Sustainable Development Select Committee Views**

- 6.1. On 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012, the Sustainable Development Select Committee considered the revenue budget saving proposals within its terms of reference. The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:

CUS02 (Increase in fees and charges for bereavement services)

- 6.2. The Committee is concerned about the impact of this proposal on recently bereaved people and asks that any changes be dealt with sensitively. Furthermore, members ask that a comparison of costs be made with other boroughs before any decision is taken.

CUS03 (Reduction in funding contribution to the Lea Valley Regional Park)

- 6.3. The Committee supports this proposal. Members ask that officers look for a higher level of saving than that proposed, with a preference for the Council to cease its contribution to the upkeep of the park altogether.

CUS13 (Reduction in sweeping frequencies –fortnightly)

CUS14 (Reduction in sweeping frequencies –monthly)

CUS15 (To cease sweeping Saturdays/bank holidays)

CUS16 (To cease sweeping traffic islands and central reservations)

CUS17 (To cease mechanical sweeping on Sundays)

CUS18 (To cease environmental development projects)

- 6.4. The Committee acknowledges that these savings may have to be looked at in order to see whether the shortfall in the Council's budget can be met. However, street-sweeping and refuse collection are for many people the only services that they benefit from, or are the only services they think they benefit from. If these universal services show a noticeable deterioration the Council's reputation and relationship with its citizens may suffer.
- 6.5. The Committee believes that efficiencies do need to be sought in this area. It recommends that the Mayor takes a strategic view of any savings related to these universal services, having regard to the reputation of the Council and its relationship with citizens.

RNR06 (Staff reorganisation- engineering/transport policy/network management)

- 6.6. In light of savings made in previous years, the Committee is concerned that further reductions in this area may impact on the Council's ability to effectively bid for funding. It asks that the ongoing capacity to identify and bid for funding be preserved.

RNR08 (2.) Reduction in highways winter maintenance

- 6.7. The Committee is concerned about the level of risk posed by this proposal. Members believe that it is important to find the right balance between reducing the budget for winter maintenance and incurring charges for emergency servicing.

RNR08 (3.) Reduction in periodic cleaning of road gullies

- 6.8. The Committee is concerned that this proposal, in combination with the proposals to reduce street sweeping would lead to an increase in blocked drains. The Committee believes it is important to find the right balance between reducing the budget for periodic cleaning and potential increases in charges for emergency servicing.

RNR08 (4.) To cease replacement of festive lights

- 6.9. The Committee recommends that this proposal is considered alongside other proposals in which the visible role of the Council's contribution to the community is likely to be reduced.

## **7. Healthier Communities Select Committee Views**

- 7.1. On 7 November 2012, the Healthier Communities Select Committee considered the revenue budget saving proposals within its terms of reference. The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:

COM15 (Reconfiguration of the care and assessment staffing structure, including the amalgamation of teams and a reduction in duplication and the cost of assessments)

- 7.2. The Committee is concerned that, should the proposals in the South London Healthcare Trust Special Administrator's draft report go ahead, staff may need to deal with a larger number of, or different, hospital patient pathways and this may have an impact on the achievability of this saving.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1. Should the Committees' referrals result in the budget being changed, this may affect the amount of savings achieved, potentially resulting in a savings shortfall that would mean that alternative proposals would have to be identified and built into the budget planning process. However, as these decisions are ultimately for the Mayor (in recommending his budget), and then the Council, there are no direct or immediate financial implications arising from this report.

## **9. Legal Implications**

- 9.1. The Constitution provides for Select Committees to make recommendations to the Executive or appropriate committee and/or Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Revenue Budget Savings Report 2013/16 – Officer Report to the Select Committees (October and November 2012)

If you have any queries on this report, please contact Andrew Hagger, Scrutiny Manager (ext. 49446).