

Public Accounts Select Committee		
Title	Budget cut proposals 2019-20	
Contributors	All select committees	Item. 5 (supplementary)
Class	Part 1 (open)	07 November 2018

Reasons for lateness: The report is late because not all of the select committees had held their meetings before the agenda despatch date for the Public Accounts Select Committee meeting.

Reasons for urgency: The report is urgent because the views of the select committees need to be considered alongside the report from officers on the budget cut proposals.

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report informs the Public Accounts Select Committee of the comments and views of the select committees and the full Overview and Scrutiny Committee (which met in October and November 2018) on the 2019-20 revenue budget cut proposals report. Each committee considered the proposals that were within its terms of reference.

## 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 and then append its own comments for referral to Mayor and Cabinet.

## 3. Select committee views

### Healthier Communities Select Committee views:

- 3.1 The Healthier Communities Select Committee discussed the revenue budget cuts on 9th October 2018. The Committee agreed to refer its views on the following proposals to the Public Accounts Select Committee:

*COM1: Managing demand at the point of access to adult social care services  
COM2: Ensuring support plans optimise value for money*

- 3.2 The Committee notes the greater demand on voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations which would result from the proposals in COM 1 and COM 2 and expresses concern about the impact of funding reductions for VCS partners (as set out in COM 12) at a time when they are being expected to do more. Given this, the committee requests that Mayor and Cabinet does not decide to make these budget cuts until it has carried out and considered an assessment of the extent to which VCS organisations will be able to meet the increased demand as a result of the proposals in COM 1 and 2.

### **Children and Young People Select Committee views:**

- 3.3 On 17 October 2018, the Children and Young People Select Committee considered the revenue budget cuts. The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:
- CYP1: More efficient use of residential placements*  
*CYP3: Systematic and proactive management of the market for independent fostering*  
*CYP5: Residential framework for young people – Joint South East London Commissioning Programme*
- 3.4 The Committee noted the proposals, and supported them in principle, but was concerned that the savings were aspirational rather than deliverable.
- CYP2: Improved placement process and more efficient systems with rigorous control through operating model and IT*
- 3.5 The Committee was not satisfied that the shared IT service had the capacity to support the intended process improvements, and therefore considered that the saving would be unachievable.
- CYP4: Commission semi-independent accommodation for care leavers*
- 3.6 The Committee felt more positively about this proposal as there had to date been some success in achieving better value for money in commissioning semi-independent accommodation for care leavers.
- CYP7: Early help redesign*
- 3.7 The Committee noted the proposal but feared that cuts to early help services would result in greater cost pressures elsewhere that would exceed the value of the saving.
- 3.8 The Committee was unable to properly assess the impact of the cut without information on what the redesigned service would look like. No such information had been supplied.
- RES19: School crossing patrol*
- 3.9 The Committee rejected all options outlined in the proposal in the strongest terms, citing the following reasons:
- Any increased road safety risk to children was unacceptable
  - The service enables older primary children and families to walk to school. Removal of this support could result in more car journeys to school, which would negatively impact on delivery of the Council's road safety, air quality and public health objectives
  - Removal of the school crossing patrol would result in a breach of planning conditions in at least one instance that the Committee knows of.
  - Loss of the school crossing patrol would likely impact disproportionately on various groups with characteristics protected under the Equalities Act.

### **Sustainable Development Select Committee views:**

- 3.10 On 29 October 2018, the Sustainable Development Select Committee considered the revenue budget cuts. The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:

*CUS2: Increase in the garden waste subscription*

- 3.11 The Committee recommended that the Council should improve the payment options available for the garden waste subscription service - to include pro-rata payment for mid-year subscription as well as the facility to pay in monthly instalments. The Committee also proposed that the Council should consider the feasibility of including the cost of subscription service as an option with council tax payments.
- 3.12 The Committee recommended that further work should take place to advertise the subscription service to new residents. It suggested that the Council should include information about the service with information sent to new homes about their council tax.
- 3.13 The Committee urged that the impact of the increase in the charge be carefully reviewed following the first period of implementation and that the options for further increasing the charge be considered accordingly.

*CUS3: Events in parks*

- 3.14 The Committee recommended that the Council should review its policy for managing commercial activities taking place in the borough's parks. The Committee suggested that this should build on best practice in other boroughs and that it should include options for charging for the full range of commercial activities taking place in the borough's green spaces (including but not limited to: commercial dog walking, commercial exercise classes and other profit making activities).

*CUS4: Increase in commercial waste charges*

- 3.15 The Committee recommended that the Council should reconsider previous proposals to make the Council's trade waste service more competitive, commercially minded and profitable.

*CUS7: reduce sweeping frequency to residential roads to fortnightly*

- 3.16 The Committee was concerned that cuts to the sweeping service, which leave streets noticeably dirtier, would have a significantly detrimental effect on the environment and on the public perception of the borough as well as on the reputation of the Council and on residents' confidence in local services. As such, the Committee recommended that alternative cuts be found.
- 3.17 The Committee recommended that any proposed changes to street sweeping be coordinated to ensure services are responsive and demand led - in order to minimise potential negative impacts on residents.

*CUS8: Close the four remaining public toilets*

- 3.18 The Committee noted the reasons for making the cut and recommended that work to remove the facilities and ‘make good’ the vacant space should happen swiftly in order to avoid the facilities becoming dilapidated and unsightly.

*CUS14: parking service revenue review*

- 3.19 The Committee expressed concern about insufficient enforcement of rules for parking in the borough. It noted that it would be considering the performance of the parking service at a future meeting and that it would seek assurances that effective enforcement was being carried out.
- 3.20 The Committee welcomed the intention to introduce emissions based charging and it was noted that it would consider further updates on this issue as part of its future work programme.

*RES17: Beckenham Place Park – income generation*

- 3.21 The Committee was concerned about the proposal to offer ‘repairing leases’ for buildings in the park. The Committee recommended that careful consideration be given to the set up and management of the contracts for the lets. The Committee recommended that a stringent, tightly managed and documented approach be taken to future letting. The Committee questioned whether it would be more cost effective to repair the buildings in the park before letting them rather than offering reduced rents for repairs.

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee views:**

- 3.22 On 30 October 2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report entitled ‘The Budget’. The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:

*COM9: Cut to intensive housing advice and support service*

- 3.23 The Committee was concerned about the additional work that this proposal might generate for the Housing Options Service and the SHIP (Single Homeless Single Intervention and Prevention) Service, notwithstanding the additional resource that might become available via new burdens funding attached to the Homelessness Reduction Act; and felt that it should not be progressed until the associated impact and risks had been fully assessed.

*COM12: Cuts to main grants budget*

- 3.24 It is clear that a number of other proposed budget cuts are reliant, to some extent, on the Voluntary and Community Sector meeting needs that are currently being met by council funded provision. The Committee was therefore of the opinion that this proposal should not be progressed until an analysis has been carried out of the impact that this will have on the sector’s capacity to meet the additional need that might be generated from other proposed budget cuts, should they be accepted.

*COM14: Local Assemblies Fund*

- 3.25 The Committee felt that this proposal was not yet fully worked up and clarification on the exact parameters within which Neighbourhood CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money could be spent was required. Members felt that it might be helpful if the proposal to remove or reduce Local Assembly funding was disaggregated from the mitigating proposal for Local Assemblies to be involved in spending Neighbourhood CIL money.

**Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee views:**

- 3.26 On 5 November 2018, the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee considered a report entitled 'Budget Cuts Proposals'. The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:

*COM10: Crime enforcement and regulation reorganisation*

- 3.27 The Committee stated that whilst it understood the severity of the budget situation, it felt a decision should not be made on the part of this saving proposal relating to the review of CCTV Service (£161k (20/21)), without a complete assessment of the full impact of this cut. This should include consideration of how often CCTV is used to stop crime taking place as it happens and retrospectively in prosecutions, as well as the extent to which the capacity being reduced would affect residents and partner organisations.

*COM 11: Hub libraries - cuts to staffed opening hours*

- 3.28 The Committee felt the proposals in their current form were unacceptable and further consultation was necessary before a decision could be made. A full Equalities Impact Assessment should also be undertaken. The Committee highlighted that section 9 of the budget pro-forma stated that those affected included 'some of the most vulnerable in our society (who) will have been signposted to the library service by other public sector bodies such as Job Centre Plus, Central Government Departments, council services, GP etc.'

*COM 12: Cuts to main grants budget*

- 3.29 The Committee was concerned that the proposed cut of 30% was too high and there should be further consideration as to whether the scale of the cut could be reduced before a final decision was made.

*COM 14: Local Assemblies Fund and COM 17: Ending the Small and Faith Fund*

- 3.30 The Committee felt that these two proposals should be considered together. The Committee stated that the retention of some form of small grant programme, accessible to community and neighbourhood groups, was essential to building strong communities. The Committee believed that Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money could not achieve this and that not all wards would receive regular CIL money. As such the Committee felt a new scheme must be created that would

provide funds for small groups/initiatives and that this funding should be subject to approval of Ward Assemblies to retain local democracy and accountability.

#### **4. Financial implications**

- 4.1 Should the committees' referrals result in the budget being changed, this may affect the amount of cuts 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.

#### **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 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**

2019-20 revenue budget cuts report – considered by all select committees and the overview and scrutiny committee (October – November 2018)

If you have any questions about this report, please contact Timothy Andrew, Scrutiny Manager ([timothy.andrew@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:timothy.andrew@lewisham.gov.uk)).