



Mayor and Cabinet

Report title: Scrutiny committee comments on the budget cuts

Date: 3 February 2020.

Key decision: No.

Class: Part 1.

Wards affected: All.

Contributor: Public Accounts Select Committee

Outline and recommendations

This report informs Mayor and Cabinet (M&C) of the comments and views of the Public Accounts, Healthier Communities, Safer Stronger Communities, Sustainable Development, and Children and Young People select committees, arising from discussions about proposals for budget cuts.

Mayor and Cabinet is asked to consider the views of the select committees as part of its overall consideration of the budget cuts and, where applicable, ask the relevant officers to provide a response.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

26 February 2020 – budget report to Council

10 June 2020 – Council's response to COVID-19 – financial update report to M&C

9 July 2020 – first 2020/21 financial monitoring report to M&C

September (various dates) 2020 - financial stabilisation and medium term budget update report to scrutiny committees

7 October 2020 – Financial stabilisation and medium term budget update report to M&C

November/December (various dates) 2020 – budget cuts report to scrutiny committees

9 December 2020 – budget cuts report to Mayor and Cabinet

January/February (various dates) 2021 – second round budget cuts report to scrutiny committees

3 February 2021 – budget cuts and budget report 2021-22 to Mayor and Cabinet

1. Summary

- 1.1. On Tuesday 2 February 2021, the Public Accounts Select Committee considered a report from officers on budget cuts proposals ([link to the agenda for the meeting on 2 February 2021](#)). The Committee received a summary of the budget cuts report from the Executive Director for Corporate Resources. It also received written comments from the Healthier Communities, Safer Stronger Communities, Sustainable Development and the Children and Young People Select Committees - following the respective committees consideration of the same report. Chairs of the Children and Young People and Healthier Communities select committees, as well as the Vice-Chair of the Safer Stronger select committee, also addressed the Committee.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Mayor and Cabinet is asked to consider the committees' comments, and where applicable, ask the relevant officers to provide a response.

3. Scrutiny committee comments on the cuts proposals

Healthier Communities Select Committee

- 3.1. At its meeting on Wednesday 13 January 2021, the Healthier Communities Select Committee received the report on proposed budget cuts ([link to the agenda for the meeting of Healthier Communities Select Committee on 13 January 2021](#)). Following discussion, the Committee resolved to refer its views as follows:
- 3.2. In relation to proposal **B-08 Review of the Power of Attorney Service** (Round 1) the committee noted that the power of attorney service is an extremely important and trusted service to the small number of very vulnerable people who are supported by it and recommended therefore that the council continues to provide the service in-house, charging users a fair price for its provision.
- 3.3. In relation to proposal **C-02, Adult Learning and Day opportunities** (Round 1) the committee noted that many service users could potentially struggle to find meaningful daytime occupation during the long breaks in adult education that there are, such as during the summer holidays. The committee recommended therefore that the council consider making adult learning available all-year round for service users.
- 3.4. The committee also recommended that the adult learning service work closely with the council to make sure there are appropriate job opportunities available following any training and education, and that the council consider developing a corporate approach to employing more people with disability itself, particularly those with learning disability – looking to the approach of our local partners, such as health, for guidance.
- 3.5. In relation to proposal **E-04 – introduce charging for certain elements of self-funded care packages** (Round 1) the committee recommended ongoing monitoring of this change to ensure that the council's brokerage service, and bulk purchasing power, continues to provide a financial benefit for users, compared to users approaching service providers as individuals.
- 3.6. In relation to proposal **C-13, Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in Primary Care** (Round 2) the committee expressed concerns about the possible adverse impacts of reducing LARC (Long-Acting Reversible Contraception) activity and recommended that work continues to be done to monitor and address high levels of abortions and teenage pregnancies in the borough.

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Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee views

- 3.7. At its meeting on Thursday 14 January 2021, the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee received the report on proposed budget cuts ([link to the agenda for the meeting of Safer Stronger on 14 January 2021](#)). Following discussion, the Committee resolved to refer its views as follows:
- 3.8. That Lewisham Council agree in principle the proposed cuts to close the budget gap created by the Government, subject to the completion of Equalities Impact Assessments and feasibility studies as necessary. Where possible we would urge the Council to provide additional income generation support to partner organisations and in particular charitable, voluntary and community organisations.

Sustainable Development Select Committee views

- 3.9. At its meeting on Thursday 14 January 2021, the Sustainable Development Select Committee received the report on proposed budget cuts ([link to the agenda for the Sustainable Development Select Committee meeting on 14 January 2021](#)). Following discussion, the Committee resolved to refer its views as follows:
- 3.10. Better contract management is key to a number of the cuts proposals. The Committee believes that Mayor and Cabinet should assure itself that through good organisational development and training for senior, mid and junior managers, the Council is able to effectively manage contracts at every stage of the cycle and attain the cost savings as proposed.
- 3.11. The Committee recommends that Mayor and Cabinet asks officers to carry out a review of the Council's online services (particularly those provided by third parties, such as online parking facilities) ensuring a good user experience and quality integration with existing systems.
- 3.12. In relation to proposal F22 (Motorcycle parking charges) – the Committee recommends that, if Mayor and Cabinet is minded to agree the proposal to introduce charging for motorcycles, the Council should work with other enforcement partners to ensure those who are illegally parking on the pavement also have enforcement action taken upon them.
- 3.13. In relation to proposal F20 (Emission based charging for short stay parking) - the Committee recommends that the Council should move to a cashless parking system as soon as possible. Members of the Committee believe that £400K is too much to spend on upgrading pay and display machines. The Committee also believes that any reference in the budget cuts report to re-investment of parking charges in transport improvements should be removed – because the reality is that the Council will be using the money to support transport costs already contained within the general fund.
- 3.14. The Committee understands that a large cut needs to be made in waste management and street cleaning and that a comprehensive review will be done to enable this to happen in the most efficient way possible. However, it regrets that this will mean redundancies amongst the Council's lowest paid workers and it highlights that this has been imposed upon us due to Government austerity. The Committee believes that any cuts to staffing must be done with sensitivity and care. The Committee welcomes Mayor and Cabinet's response to its previous referral on staffing cuts, flexible working and redeployment and it reiterates the importance of supporting and redeploying staff wherever possible.
- 3.15. In relation to proposal F18 (controlled parking zone extension) the Committee believes that any proposed changes should be carried out with the utmost sensitivity and care – in full consultation with Lewisham's communities. Members also emphasise the importance of strategically and carefully integrating the timing of any changes with

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plans to improve Lewisham's walking and cycling routes.

Children and Young People Select Committee

- 3.16. At its meeting on Thursday 21 January 2021, the Children and Young People Select Committee received a report on proposed budget cuts ([link to the agenda for the Children and Young People Select Committee meeting on 21 January 2021](#)). Following discussion the Committee resolved to refer its views as follows:
- 3.17. The Committee, taking into account compelling evidence of the escalating and damaging effect of the Pandemic on children and young people's mental health, warnings expressed by specialist Health Professionals, Academics, Educators, Charities, Parents and Campaign groups, and the indefinite third national lockdown along with prolonged school closures (which were not anticipated when this proposal was initially drafted) recommend not to go ahead with Proposal C-22 (£250,000 cut in Council contribution to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services) in the financial year 2021/22.
- 3.18. The Committee recommends that the proposal C-23 (that £350,000 of the Health Visitor budget transfers to other parts of the public health budget) is not made in the financial year 2021/22, considering the risk to families with children under 2 and our existing poor Healthy Child Programme (HCP) coverage. This would enable efforts to be made to improve contract management and recruit and retain health visitors. Failing this, Councillors can be presented with a clear plan for support which will be given to families with 0-2 year olds to achieve the goals of the HCP in terms of support and surveillance. The Committee feels strongly that a detailed comparison of the public health budget for 2020/21 and 2021/22 and understanding of prioritisation is necessary to fully understand the impact of the proposal before any decision is made.

Public Accounts Select Committee views

- 3.19. At its meeting on Tuesday 2 February 2021, the Public Accounts Select Committee received the report on proposed budget cuts and asked questions of officers. It also received the views of the other select committees. The Committee agreed to refer its views to Mayor and Cabinet as follows:
- 3.20. The Committee reiterates its concerns about the challenging financial situation facing the Council and it is aware of the difficult task facing officers in identifying and delivering cuts.
- 3.21. The Committee notes the views of the select committees but it recognises the need to make the cuts as proposed.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. However, there may be implications arising from them implementation of the committees' recommendations. These will need to be considered as part of the response.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1. The Constitution provides for select committees to refer reports to the Mayor and Cabinet, who are obliged to consider the report and the proposed response from the relevant Executive Director; and report back to the Committee within two months (not including recess).

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality

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duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

- 6.2. The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.3. There may be equalities implications arising from the implementation of the committees' recommendations – these will need to be considered in the response.

7. Climate change and environmental implications

- 7.1. There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. There may be climate change and environmental implications arising from the implementation of the committees' recommendations – these will need to be considered in the response.

8. Crime and disorder implications

- 8.1. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. There may be implications arising from the implementation of the committees' recommendations – these will need to be considered in the response.

9. Health and wellbeing implications

- 9.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. There may be implications arising from the implementation of the committees' recommendations – these will need to be considered in the response.

10. Background documents

- 10.1. [Budget cuts report to select committees \(item four\)](#)
- 10.2. [Healthier Communities Select Committee on 13 January 2021](#)
- 10.3. [Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on 14 January 2021](#)
- 10.4. [Sustainable Development Select Committee on 14 January 2021](#)
- 10.5. [Children and Young People Select Committee on 21 January 2021](#)
- 10.6. [Public Accounts Select Committee on 2 February 2021](#)

Report author and contact

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