



## Mayor and Cabinet

### **Scrutiny committee comments on the budget reductions report**

Date: 2 February 2022.

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 and Sustainable Development select committees, arising from discussions about proposals for budget reductions.

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

### **Timeline of engagement and decision-making**

9 December 2020 – budget cuts report to Mayor and Cabinet

3 February 2021 – budget cuts report to Mayor and Cabinet

3 March 2021 – budget report to Council

14 July 2021 – 2021/22 financial monitoring report to Mayor and Cabinet

14 July 2021 – medium term financial strategy to Mayor and Cabinet

6 October 2021 – 2021/22 financial monitoring report to Mayor and Cabinet

27 January 2022 – budget reduction proposals to Public Accounts Select Committee

2 February 2022 – budget reduction proposals to Mayor and Cabinet

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. On Thursday 27 January 2022, the Public Accounts Select Committee considered a report from officers on budget reductions proposals ([Public Accounts Select Committee agenda 27 January 2022](#)). The Committee heard from the Mayor and the Chief Executive before receiving a summary of the budget cuts report from the Executive Director for Corporate Resources. It also received written comments from the Sustainable Development Select Committee - following that committee's consideration of the same report. The Chair of the Sustainable Development Select Committee was also in attendance at the meeting. No comments on the report were referred from other select committees.

## 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. Select committee comments on the cuts proposals

### Sustainable Development Select Committee

- 3.1. On Tuesday 18 January 2022, the Sustainable Development Select Committee considered a report from officers on budget reduction proposals ([agenda for the meeting of the Sustainable Development Select Committee on 18 January 2022](#)). The Committee received an overview of the report from the Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm. Following questions to the Executive Director, the Committee agreed to refer its views to Public Accounts Select Committee, as follows:
- 3.2. The Committee notes the scale of the challenge facing the Council and it recognises the difficulties facing officers in proposing these cuts. It also recognises and commends the work of officers as they deliver day to day services as well as responding to the ongoing effects of the pandemic and giving consideration to sustainable options for making significant reductions in Council expenditure.
- 3.3. Members recommend that the Public Accounts Select Committee should give further consideration to proposal D10 (Commercial estate review) - with further information provided by officers on the assumptions made about the potential return on investment. The Committee is concerned that – in the absence of detailed figures – it is unable to determine whether the implications of the proposal have been adequately assessed.
- 3.4. The Committee recommends that consideration should be given to the level of subsidy that is provided for organisations through rental agreements in the commercial estate. In the interests of transparency, the Committee would welcome assurance that consideration has been given to making the best return on all properties – with reasons given (in line with Council's strategy for asset optimisation) for any subsidies or reductions.
- 3.5. In reference to making the best use of the Council's assets – and taking a strategic approach to regeneration, the Committee notes the motion on 'unlocking the potential of local high streets' agreed by the full Council in July 2021 ([link to the motion on the Council's website](#)).
- 3.6. The Committee recommends that every endeavour should be made to ensure that the implementation of proposal F25 (Road safety – new yellow boxes) is carried out carefully and sensitively. Furthermore, the Committee asks that – as part of the implementation of this proposal - every consideration be given to options for improving the pedestrian and cycling environment.

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## Public Accounts Select Committee views

- 3.7. At its meeting on Thursday 27 January 2022, the Public Accounts Select Committee received the report on proposed budget reductions and asked questions of officers. It also received the views of the Sustainable Development Select Committee before agreeing to refer its views to Mayor and Cabinet as follows:
- 3.8. The Committee recognises the difficult task facing officers in bringing forward cuts proposals, especially in the context of ongoing economic uncertainty and a prolonged period of austerity.
- 3.9. Members welcome the comments of the Sustainable Development Select Committee – particularly in relation to the ‘theme D’ *asset optimisation proposals*. Members would welcome further careful, strategic consideration of the approach to the use of Council assets - in order to maximise both the social and economic benefits for the people of Lewisham.
- 3.10. The Committee recommends that – in relation to proposal E-15 (seek corporate sponsorship for festive lights) the initial approach should be to the providers of the Council’s current street lighting private finance initiative.

## 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 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.

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## **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. [Sustainable Development Select Committee agenda 18 January 2022](#)  
10.2. [Public Accounts Select Committee agenda 27 January 2022](#)

## **Report author and contact**

If you have any questions about this report then please contact: Scrutiny Manager, Timothy Andrew on 020 8314 7916 or [timothy.andrew@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:timothy.andrew@lewisham.gov.uk)

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