



Item

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP AMENDMENT TO: Budget-Setting Report (BSR) 2020/21

To:

Councillor Richard Robertson, Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources Portfolio

Report by:

Caroline Ryba, Head of Finance

Tel: 01223 - 458134 Email: caroline.ryba@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

(All) Abbey, Arbury, Castle, Cherry Hinton, Coleridge, East Chesterton, King's Hedges, Market, Newnham, Petersfield, Queen Edith's, Romsey, Trumpington, West Chesterton

Key Decision

Foreword to the Liberal Democrat Group Amendment

Our amendment focuses on what is wanting in the budget brought forward by the Labour administration. As in previous years, the points that we are highlighting underline that, while the council is ambitious in its rhetoric, it is weak on delivery and consistency.

Nowhere is this more obvious than the maintenance of huge unused sums in the council's reserves, greatly in excess of the target to cover assessed risk. The financial return for holding this money is at an all-time low and there is an abundance of ways it could be invested to the benefit of the city. We are proposing to mobilise it for housing in two particular ways: to assist the return of homeless people into mainstream housing and to enlarge the supply of homes for key public service workers, using the model of 'living rents' based on household income.

The King's Parade Barrier represents poor judgement by the council leadership. We are providing for an immediate review of it, enabling a start on the development of a new custom-designed arrangement: proportionate to risk, functionally safer for cyclists and pedestrians, more efficient for essential vehicles, and sympathetic to its important heritage location – all of which could have been put in hand in the time the current barrier took to implement.

We are proposing to ensure that two important social issues are taken into the scope of the council's plans, as evidence suggests they should be. First, there is widespread concern that knife crime, which has until recently seemed like a problem mainly for bigger cities, has now emerged in Cambridge. Best practice suggests that a wider social and community approach, in addition to good

policing, is the most effective response. Second, rather than creating another uncommitted and opaque fund to address poverty, we are proposing that this fund should be mobilised for single parents on benefits, a group which has grown significantly in the city on recent figures.

Longer term strategy to tackle pollution from traffic is being developed by the Greater Cambridge Partnership. But this council's strategy to improve air quality at source, despite being described as a priority, still lacks short term action to promote behaviour change, to which urban councils elsewhere have committed. We are proposing a campaign to educate and discourage the unnecessary idling of vehicle engines and to use mobile monitoring equipment to improve the evidence base for regulatory interventions around sensitive locations, such as schools.

The administration's budget utilises income from fixed penalty notices to reduce the cost of keeping the city clean. Coming soon after a major cutback of the Streets and Open Spaces budget, we believe the priority with this income is to improve the level of service. So we propose to use it to increase staffing, enabling a particular focus on clearing leaves, which are a significant hazard for elderly, disabled and less mobile people, as well as cyclists.

Previous assurances that water fountains would emerge all over the city, aimed at reducing the consumption of sugary drinks from single use containers, have not been realised. We are therefore again proposing a programme for this to be achieved.

We are proposing to reverse two savings proposed by the administration, which contradict policies that are vital for the city's future. First, the administration proposed last year (but hasn't yet implemented) a reduction in the number of planning decisions taken in public by committee, and a narrowing of the proactive notification of neighbours about planning applications near them. We strongly disagree with this because the involvement of residents is vital as the city faces change from development pressures. Second, they are now proposing savings from grants to support cycling and walking. We think cycling and walking need support like never before and the priority should be to promote the grants.

We are providing for the introduction of a series of bee hives on council rooftops or other appropriate locations. This is an important and so far missing element in the council's biodiversity strategy. It is aimed at supporting the pollination of plants within the urban environment and the diversity within the bee population itself.

The deployment of needlessly under-utilised funds also makes it possible for the council to accomplish more in terms of capital projects. We are bringing forward schemes for the replacement of the neglected toilets on the Chesterton Recreation Ground, updated play equipment on the Scotland Road Recreation Ground, succession tree planting on Parker's Piece, and signage for "Happy to Chat" benches – all involving public consultation.

As Liberal Democrats we would not be starting from here: our priorities and methods are very different from Labour's. We will set out our approach to leading the city council at the elections in May. In the meantime this amendment will make the best of the budget that has been proposed.

Councillor Tim Bick, *Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group*

Councillor Jamie Dalzell, *Liberal Democrat Group Spokesperson on Finance and Resources*

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report sets out amendments proposed by the Lib Dem group to the overall set of budget proposals in the Budget Setting Report to be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 3rd February 2020, for recommendation to the Council on 13th February 2020.

Through the Liberal Democrat Group Budget amendment:

- 35 homes will be acquired to let to key public service workers at local living rents
- Provision of shared housing to help homeless individuals quickly back on their feet will be increased through the purchase of a further 5 houses
- An immediate review of the King's Parade Barrier will be undertaken to urgently replace it with more satisfactory arrangements
- The council will work with the Police and other agencies to stem growing knife crime in the city
- Increasing opportunities for single parents will be adopted as a target for uncommitted anti-poverty funding
- Monitoring of air quality will be enabled at sensitive locations around the city to assess the need for further action
- An education campaign will be initiated to discourage drivers from leaving their engines idling in stationary vehicles that are out of traffic
- Income from fixed penalty notices will be used to restore some of the funding for the Streets and Open Spaces service cutback in 2018 and instead targeted on improved leaf clearance
- 10 public water fountains will be provided across the city
- There will be no cutback in notification of residents in the vicinity of planning applications, nor in the determination of applications by elected councillors in public
- Grant funding to support cycling and walking will be promoted and not eliminated
- A partnership will be established to provide and care for beehives on civic rooftops or other appropriate public locations
- Signage for selected "Happy to Chat" benches will be provided across the city to promote engagement and mitigate loneliness
- Capital schemes will be developed for the replacement of the neglected toilets on the Chesterton Recreation Ground, updated play equipment on the Scotland Road Recreation Ground and succession tree planting on Parker's Piece – all involving public consultation

2. Recommendations

Changes to recommendations are highlighted *in italics* referring to the recommendations of the Executive to this Council, as being presented at their meeting on 3 February 2020, subject to any Executive Amendment agreed by The Leader at this committee or the Executive are further amended as follows:

The Leader is recommended to:

For the existing recommendation “2: Recommendations”, add:

General Fund Revenue Budgets: [Section 5, Page 20 refers] add:

- *Together with the changes in the attached Appendix 1 - Lib Dem Budget Amendment to Appendices [C (b), (c)]*
- Incorporate and replace the tables shown in *Appendix 4 - Lib Dem Budget Amendment at the pages so annotated*

Capital: [Section 6, page 22 refers]

- For the existing recommendation 2 e) After *“Agree any recommendations to the Executive add “together with the changes in the attached Appendix 2 - Lib Dem Budget - Budget Amendment to Appendix [D(a)]”, specifically to recommend that Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources Invests in housing by utilising the £11.9m resources (Proposal CAP0003 refers).*
 - Incorporate and replace the tables shown in *Appendix 4 - Lib Dem Budget Amendment at the pages so annotated*

General Fund: Expenditure and funding 2019/20 to 2024/25: [Section 7, page 28 refers]

- Incorporate and replace the tables shown in *Appendix 4 - Lib Dem Budget Amendment at the pages so annotated*

Risks and Reserves: [Section 8, page 38 refers]

- Incorporate and replace the tables shown in *Appendix 4 - Lib Dem Budget Amendment at the pages so annotated*

Equality Impact Assessment [Appendix F, Page 98 refers]

- Append *Appendix 3 - Lib Dem Budget Amendment Appendix G Equality Impact Assessment to the existing Equality Impact Assessment*

Section 25 Report [Section 10, Page 52 refers]

- Replace in Section 10 *Appendix 5 - Lib Dem Budget Amendment*

3. Council Tax

3.1 No changes are being proposed by the Lib Dem Group.

4. Capital Plan

4.1 The Lib Dem Group are proposing items identified "***Lib Dem Budget Amendment to [D(a) Capital proposals]***".

5. Implications

All budget proposals have a number of implications. A decision not to approve a revenue bid will impact on managers' ability to deliver the service or scheme in question and could have financial, staffing, equality and poverty, environmental, procurement or community safety implications. A decision not to approve a capital or external bid will impact on managers' ability to deliver the developments desired in the service areas.

(a) Financial Implications

Financial implications of budget proposals are summarised in the General Fund Budget Setting Report 2020/21, ***as amended by [Lib Dem Budget Amendment]***.

(b) Staffing Implications

Staffing implications of budget proposals are also summarised in the General Fund Budget Setting Report 2020/21.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

A consolidated Equality Impact Assessment for the budget proposals is included in the BSR, ***as amended by [Appendix 3 - Lib Dem Budget Amendment]***. Individual Equality Impact Assessments have been conducted to support this and will be available on the Council's website.

A local poverty rating (using the classifications outlined in the BSR (Appendix B) has been included in each budget proposal to assist with assessment.

(d) Environmental Implications

Where relevant, officers have considered the environmental impact of budget proposals which are annotated as follows:

- +H / +M / +L: to indicate that the proposal has a high, medium or low positive impact.

- Nil: to indicate that the proposal has no climate change impact.
- -H / -M / -L: to indicate that the proposal has a high, medium or low negative impact.

(e) Procurement Implications

Any procurement implications will be outlined in the BSR 2020/21, **as amended by [Lib Dem Budget Amendment]**

(f) Community Safety Implications

Any Community Safety Implications will be outlined in the BSR 2020/21, **as amended by [Lib Dem Budget Amendment]**.

6. Background papers

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Budget Setting Report 2020/21 **updated (as appropriate) for Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and the Executive on 3 February 2020, and for the [Lib Dem Amendment]**.
- Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) October 2019
- Individual Equality Impact Assessments

7. Appendices

Lib Dem Budget Amendment:

Appendix 1 - Amendment to Appendix [C (b), (c)] Revenue Budget proposals

Appendix 2 - Amendment to Appendix [D (a)] Capital Budget proposals

Appendix 3 - Appendix [F] Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 4 - Replacement of relevant tables in the BSR

Appendix 5 - Section 25 Report

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

Authors' Names:

Caroline Ryba

Authors' Phone Numbers:

01223 - 458134

Authors' Emails:

caroline.ryba@cambridge.gov.uk