

Cabinet – 15 December 2021

Autumn Budget and Spending Review, and feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees on draft revenue and capital budget proposals 2022/23 to 2025/26

Portfolio: Councillor M. Bird – Leader of the Council (Lead Portfolio)

Related Portfolios: All

Service: Finance – council wide

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To provide an update on the impact of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review on the medium term financial outlook, and to consider feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the draft revenue and capital budget reported to Cabinet on 20 October 2021 to inform the final budget to be presented to Council in February 2022.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Cabinet on 20 October 2021 agreed the process and timeline for the setting of a four-year revenue budget and capital programme; an updated medium term financial plan; and first draft revenue and capital proposals, referring the latter to Overview Scrutiny Committees for consultation and feedback, to allow Cabinet to then consider this feedback in setting their final budget recommendations in February 2022.
- 2.2 This report covers:
- The impact of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review (SR21) announced on 27 October 2021 based on information released to date;
 - Feedback from Overview Scrutiny Committees on draft revenue and capital budget proposals;
- 2.3 The final budget, including: any changes arising from consultation and equality impact assessments of saving proposals; referendum principles and tax base changes; the S151 Officers S25 Statement on the Robustness of the Budget Estimates and the Adequacy of Reserves, recommended levels of reserves and contingencies; and the final allocation of direct Government funding and other specific grants, will be presented to Cabinet on 9 February 2022 for recommendation to Council, and will be considered by full Council on 24 February 2022.

3. Recommendations

Cabinet are requested to:

- 3.1 Note the feedback from Overview Scrutiny Committees, and consider this feedback in preparation for final budget recommendations in February 2022.
- 3.2 Note the main implications from the chancellors Autumn Budget and Spending Review announcement on 27 October 2021, and that any financial implications arising once the Provisional Settlement is received, will be included in the budget report to Cabinet on 9 February 2022.

4. Know - Context

Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2025/26 – Consultation

- 4.1 The draft revenue budget and draft capital programme for the period 2022/23 to 2025/26 was reported to Cabinet on 20 October 2021. Draft revenue and capital proposals were referred on to the respective Overview Scrutiny Committees for consultation, and the feedback and recommendations from each Committee summarised at **Appendix 1**. Cabinet are requested to note these and consider the recommendations and any changes Cabinet may wish to make, arising from these, in making their final budget recommendations to Council in February 2022.
- 4.2 The report to Cabinet on 20 October 2021 presented a balanced revenue budget for 2022/23, subject to the full delivery of £20.14m of savings identified, aligned to Proud service transformation plans on the re-scoping of future service delivery. This was based on known assumptions and cost pressures forecast as part of the council's Medium Term Financial Outlook (MTFO).
- 4.3 Whilst it is recognised that full Council will only set the council tax bands for 2022/23 in February 2022, the budget will continue to take a four year view, allowing for a more strategic focus to service re-design and savings aligning the finances more directly to the objectives, outcomes and markers of success of the council and maintaining/improving performance against these.

Autumn Budget and Spending Review (SR21) and MTFO Impact

- 4.4 The Autumn Budget and Spending Review (SR21) announced on 27 October 2021 sets out the government's economic forecast and departmental budgets for the three year period 2022/23 to 2024/25. Whilst this has provided some detail for 2022/23, total funding is still uncertain, as the announcement did not include details of our core grant settlement which is expected in December 2021.
- 4.5 The impact of SR21 on Walsall is as follows. This is subject to further clarification on final allocations, confirmation of allocation methodologies, and in some cases, national consultation taking place. The impact on the council's budget for 2022/23 is not yet known. Any allocations for Walsall are expected to be confirmed with the Provisional Settlement and will be included in the final budget report to Cabinet and Council in February 2022.

Council Tax and Universal Credit

- A council tax referendum threshold of 2% (this is already assumed within the budget);
- An additional Adult Social Care Precept threshold of 1% per year, for which conditions are awaited. A 1% ASC precept will equate to c£1.33m in additional council tax in 2022/23 to fund adult social care pressures if accepted;
- Universal credit taper rate to reduce by 8% from - 63% to 55 %, to be introduced by no later than 1 December 2021, as well as increasing work allowances by £500 a year;
- Investment of over £900m for each year of the Spending Review on work coaches who will help jobseekers on Universal Credit move into work and progress once in work, and support for older workers via an enhanced 50+ offer.

Core Funding

- Local Government adjusted departmental expenditure limit has increased from £9.1bn to £10.8bn, and core spending power (Settlement Funding Assessment, council tax requirement including adult social care precept, Better Care Fund, Social Care grant, and New Homes Bonus) has increased by £3.26bn from £50.44bn to £53.70bn. Until full details are published, it is unclear what the impact will be on Walsall. Our provisional settlement for 2022/23 is expected sometime in December;
- An additional £4.8bn over 3 years for Local Government - with English councils receiving £1.6bn of new grant funding in each of the next three years, on top of the funding to implement social care reform. Details are not yet available on Walsall's allocation, any conditions, etc. The Government advises that this funding will ensure the Government can reform social care, increase investment in supporting vulnerable children and enable local authorities to continue to provide the other local services that people rely on.

This funding is expected to include:

- An additional £200m for the cross-government Supporting Families programme;
- £37m of additional funding over the SR21 period to tackle cyber security challenges facing councils and invest in local authority cyber resilience, protecting vital services and data;
- £34.5m of additional funding over the SR21 period to further strengthen local delivery and transparency. This funding will help strengthen the sector's procurement and commercial capacity, establish the Audit Reporting and Governance Authority as the new local audit systems leader, and help local councils meet new transparency requirements.

Business Rates - Local authorities will be fully compensated for all business rates measures announced in the review.

- Confirmation of business rates triennial revaluations from 2023;
- Freezing of the business rates multiplier in 2022-23, a tax cut worth £4.6bn over the next five years. This will support all ratepayers, large and small, meaning bills are 3% lower than without the freeze;
- A new temporary business rates relief in England for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties for 2022/23, worth almost £1.7 bn. Over 90% of retail, hospitality and leisure businesses will receive at least 50% off their business rates bills in 2022/23 up to a maximum of £110k;
- From 2023, a new business rates relief will support investment in property improvements so that no business will face higher business rates bills for 12

months after making qualifying improvements to a property they occupy. This will enable businesses to adapt to meet rising demand and make improvements to their premises that support net zero targets and enhance productivity as employees return to the workplace;

- From 2023, the government will introduce exemptions for eligible plant and machinery used in onsite renewable energy generation and storage, and a new 100% relief for eligible heat networks, to support the decarbonisation of buildings.

Other Direct Funding

- Introduction of a £500m Household Support Fund to help the most vulnerable families with the cost of living this winter (Walsall allocation of £2.8m);
- Schools budget to increase by £4.7bn by 2024/25 to restore per pupil funding to pre 2010/11 levels. A further £150m for training in early years plus funding for holidays and food programme, and the commitment to the creation of 30,000 new school places;
- On 7 September, the government set out a series of reforms for the adult social care sector, worth £5.4bn over the SR21 period, funded from the 1.25% health and social care levy. The settlement confirms that £3.6bn (£0.2bn 2022/23, £1.4bn in 2023/24, and £2bn in 2024/25) of this will be allocated to local authorities in order to implement the charging reforms and support local authorities to better sustain their local care market by moving towards a fairer cost for care. Further detail will be set out by the Government in due course;
- £104m by 2024/25 for reforms to unregulated children's social care, and £7m by 2024/25 to improve access to services and support for adopted children and their families. In addition, a further £259m over the SR period so more children and young people can receive the care they need. It is assumed that this will be included in the additional £4.8bn grant allocation referred to above.

Public Sector Pay

- National living wage to rise by 6.6% from £8.91 to £9.50 per hour from 1 April 2022. Walsall currently pays the living wage that is set by the living wage foundation (Real Living Wage). Personnel Committee on 8 February 2021 approved the pay policy for 2021/22 including the continuation of the living wage of £9.50 per hour from 1st April 2021. The council therefore currently pays the Government's intended national living wage, but there could be an impact on contracted out services e.g. domiciliary care provider payments;
- Increase in national insurance (NI) contributions by 1.25% from 1 April 2022 to fund the Health and Social Care Levy as announced in the Government's Social Care Reform Paper 'Build Back Better – Our Plan for Health and Social Care' on 7 September 2021 to make an additional £12 billion per year for health and social care on average over the next three years, which aims to support LA's being put on a sustainable financial footing post the pandemic. We anticipate this will cost the council c£788k in employee NI contributions, which should be compensated for through grant.

Infrastructure Initiatives

A number of new infrastructure initiatives were announced that may impact on local councils, for which we await formal confirmation:

- £5bn to remove unsafe cladding from highest risk buildings – partly funded from Residential Property Developers Tax;

- £620m of new investment over the next three years to support the transition to electric vehicles;
- £5bn on cycling infrastructure and local minor roads;
- £3.9bn to decarbonise buildings, including £1.8bn to support tens of thousands of low-income households to make the transition to net zero while reducing their energy bills;
- £2.6bn for UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), to help people access new opportunities in places of need. Funding will rise to £1.5bn a year by 2024/25.
- Significant investment in high-quality transport infrastructure will bring communities across the country closer together and connect them to opportunity. This includes High Speed 2, rail enhancements and vital renewals to boost connectivity across the country – focusing on the Midlands and the North, dramatically reducing journey times;
- £201m in 2024/25 to transform Start for Life and family help services by creating a network of Family Hubs, investing in infant and parent mental health, breastfeeding support, parenting programmes, and expanding the Supporting Families programme, delivering on key recommendations from the Early Years Healthy Development Review;
- £560 m in youth services in England, including through the Youth Investment Fund and National Citizen Service;
- £9m Levelling Up Parks Fund will create over 100 new parks to ensure access to green space in urban areas. Funding for up to 8,000 multi-use community sports facilities and football pitches, as well as refurbishing more than 4,500 tennis courts;
- £52m for museums and cultural and sporting bodies next year to support recovery from COVID-19 and an additional £49m in 2024/25;
- £850m over the SR21 period for cultural and heritage infrastructure to safeguard national treasures and boost culture in local communities and on high streets;
- £2bn new funding for schools and colleges;
- £2.2bn courts and rehabilitation services;
- £21bn roads and £46bn on railways;
- £20bn in research and development by 2024/25 with ambition for £22bn by 2026/27;
- Allocation of £1.7bn from the first round of the £4bn levelling up fund. Walsall have received £150k;
- More than £300m to implement free, separate food waste collections in every English local authority from 2025, supporting the near elimination of biodegradable municipal waste to landfill by 2028 (funding via Defra).

4.6 The budget is an evolving process, with recognition that funding assumptions may change as the budget develops. The council awaits publication of the Provisional Settlement for 2022/23, which is likely to impact on our MTFO projections. Any changes resulting from this, along with confirmation of any impact to the announcements in the Spending Review as above, will be reported in the final budget report to Cabinet on 9 February 2022.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities

4.7 Resource allocation is an annual cycle aiming to support delivery of council priorities within available resources. It aims to achieve this through the delivery of efficiencies, income reviews and service reviews and redesign to redirect existing and reducing resources to areas of high council priority.

- 4.8 In order to meet the council's purpose and vision, the council will be focussing its' energy over the next four years on the councils key priorities, aligned to the council's Corporate Plan, recognising that it must do so with decreased and decreasing resources and concentrating efforts on those most in need:
- Economic growth for all people, communities and businesses;
 - People have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities;
 - Internal Focus – all council services are efficient and effective;
 - Children have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well;
 - Communities are prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.
- 4.9 The revised Corporate Plan will be presented to Cabinet in February 2022 for recommendation to Council to approve and endorse the council's key outcomes and ambitions. This will inform the 2023/24 budget process starting in Spring 2022 where the 2022/23 budget will be fully mapped to the council's key outcomes in the Corporate Plan 2022-25.

Risk Management

- 4.10 There is still uncertainty around Government funding for 2022/23 and beyond. The full details of the Governments Provisional Settlement will be assessed when received, and the final Settlement in the new year, and any implications on the budget and MTFO will be reported as they become clear. There is a risk that funding will reduce more than anticipated or that further pressures will emerge, which will require the council to make changes prior to setting the budget in February 2022.
- 4.11 The budget is risk assessed and this is used to formulate the recommended level of contingencies and reserves. The outcome of this will be reported to Cabinet and Council in the final budget report.

Financial Implications

- 4.12 The Council must set a balanced revenue budget and capital programme to meet its legal requirements. A four year plan provides for sounder financial planning and management of financial risk.

Legal Implications

- 4.13 Under the Local Government Act, an authority must set a council tax and balanced budget, giving 14 days' notice of the council tax level prior to the date of billing. The council must set a budget before 11 March of each year. This will include the S151 Officer's report that deals with the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of the reserves for which the budget provides, together with an assessment of risk.

Procurement Implications / Social Value

- 4.14 None directly arising from this report. Any proposed changes arising from Proud change activity will be considered alongside proposed changes to service provision.

Property Implications

- 4.15 None directly arising from this report. Any proposed changes arising from Proud change activity will be considered alongside proposed changes to service provision.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 4.16 The health and wellbeing of communities in Walsall have direct implications on the resources required within the council and the wider public sector, and how resources are allocated. Any proposed changes arising from Proud change activity will be considered alongside proposed changes to service provision.

Staffing Implications

- 4.17 None directly arising from this report.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.18 The council uses an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to check the lawfulness of council decisions in relation to the impact on people with certain characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. An EqIA must contain relevant data and sufficient analysis to enable Members to understand the equality implications of a proposal and any alternative options before any decisions are arrived at. Whilst there are no directly equalities implications arising from this report, equality impact assessments will be undertaken on service and organisational change options as they develop and arise from Proud change activity and any implications reported, to allow Cabinet to consider and make any revisions required.
- 4.19 Assessing the impact of proposed organisational changes and changes to policies, procedures and services is a positive opportunity for the council to ensure good decisions are made, based on robust evidence. It is clear that the decisions taken by individual services do not operate in isolation. Thus, when making policy changes, it is important not just to look at the potential impact of individual measures, but also to ensure that their interaction is properly understood and that the cumulative impact is taken into account. Understanding the cumulative impact on protected groups should be a pre-requisite of any policy making process.

Climate Change

- 4.20 None directly arising from this report. Any proposed changes arising from Proud change activity will be considered alongside proposed changes to service provision.

Consultation

- 4.21 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 placed a general duty on every local authority in England to take such steps as it considers appropriate to secure that representatives of local persons (or of local persons of a particular description) are involved in the exercise of any of its functions, among other things by being consulted about the exercise of the function. The 2010 Equality Act whilst not imposing a specific duty to consult, lays a requirement to have due regard to the equality impact when exercising its function.

4.22 All Overview and Scrutiny Committees have received the draft revenue and capital budget proposals for consultation in respect of the portfolio of services falling within their remit, and their recommendations are reported at **Appendix 1**. Since 21 October 2021, consultation on proposed changes to services has been taking place and remains ongoing. Findings along with equality impact assessments will be reported to Cabinet for their consideration and to inform Cabinet's final budget recommendations to Council in February 2022.

5. Decide

5.1 Cabinet are asked to consider the feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees as appropriate.

6. Respond

6.1 Cabinet will report their final revenue budget and capital programme recommendations on 9 February 2022, along with any feedback from the final settlement, stakeholder consultation and equality impact assessment.

7. Review

7.1 The final budget report to Cabinet in February 2022 will be recommended to Full Council on 24 February 2022, where the 2022/23 budget and council tax levels will be approved.

Background papers:

Various financial working papers.

Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2022/23 – 2025/26 as approved by Cabinet on 20 October 2021.

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Deborah Hindson
Interim Executive Director of Resources
& Transformation (s151 Officer)

15 December 2021



Councillor M. Bird
Leader of the Council

15 December 2021

Appendices: -

1 Feedback from Overview Scrutiny Committees –

- a. Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (1 November 2021)
- b. Scrutiny Overview Committee (9 November 2021)
- c. Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee (18 November 2021)
- d. Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (23 November 2021)
- e. Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee (25 November 2021)

Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2022/23 – 2025/26

Recommendations of the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee following Budget Consultation

Summary of report

This report presents the comments and recommendations from the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee following consideration of the draft revenue and capital budget proposals for consultation for 2022/23 to 2025/26 at the Committee's meeting on 1 November 2021. This will enable consideration by Cabinet on 15 December 2021.

All overview and scrutiny committees have received the draft revenue and capital budget proposals for consultation in respect of the portfolio of services falling within their remit.

Any changes to these options, following consultation, will be reported to a future meeting of the Committee, providing an opportunity to make further recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet are requested to consider the feedback contained within this report in formulating their draft budget proposals.

Response to the draft budget options

Members considered the budget proposals in detail, at the request of the Committee the Executive Director provided further information on each of the savings proposals.

Members sought assurances on the level of savings being made in the service area and requested clarity on the Walsall Proud programme, in order to seek to understand, proposed efficiencies and their impact on services. Assurances on these areas were provided by the Executive Director who described how this would change the delivery of services. She added that the Adult Social Care Directorate was receiving £9.4m of investment.

A discussion was held and strong concern was expressed by some members at the following savings proposals:

- OP90 - Review of Older People existing long term and new residential nursing & domiciliary
- placement costs support packages for learning disabilities including supported living and mental health.

Members expressed concern that this would impact upon the most vulnerable members of society and that mental health needs within the Borough may be exacerbated by the pandemic.

- OP91 - Reduction of day care funded by direct payments

A Member expressed concern that care payments to day care providers were being driven down by the Council, and this may affect their viability in the future.

The resolution was put to the vote and subsequently declared carried, with 5 Members voting in favour and four voting against.

The Committee Resolved:

The Committee considered and noted the draft revenue budget proposals that related to the remit of the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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Signed:

Councillor K. Hussain

Councillor K. Hussain
Chair, Social Care and Health Overview Scrutiny
Committee

Signed:



Kerrie Allward
Executive Director
Adult Social Care

Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2022/23 – 2025/26

Recommendations of the Scrutiny Overview Committee following Budget Consultation

Summary of report

This report presents the comments and recommendations from the Scrutiny Overview Committee following consideration of the draft revenue and capital budget proposals for consultation for 2022/23 to 2025/26 at the Committee's meeting on 9 November 2021. This will enable consideration by Cabinet on 15 December 2021.

All overview and scrutiny committees have received the draft revenue and capital budget proposals for consultation in respect of the portfolio of services falling within their remit.

Any changes to these options, following consultation, will be reported to a future meeting of the Committee, providing an opportunity to make further recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet are requested to consider the feedback contained within this report in formulating their draft budget proposals.

Response to the draft budget options

The Committee received a presentation from the Leader who outlined the Medium Term Financial Outlook, investment and savings proposals and the draft capital programme.

He highlighted that, assuming all planned savings were made, there was a balanced budget for 2022/23. However, he added that there was a budget gap of £43.88m to address from 2023/24-2025/26. He reported that the draft capital programme included £150m of investments that were planned over the next four years.

Members sought to understand what the impact of the budget savings would have on services to residents. The Executive Director (Resources & Transformation) explained that by utilising different ways of working it was possible to generate operational efficiencies but maintain services. Members noted the importance of scrutiny in reviewing the budget proposals and asked about the delivery plans for the proposed savings.

Following questions about which Directorates were the most financially vulnerable the Executive Director (Resources & Transformation) explained that this was areas which operated demand led services, such as Adult Social Care and Children's Services. This was because they were always vulnerable to significant unexpected demands and were the main source of risk within the budget and MTFO.

A Member asked how much Walsall Proud was due to save? The Executive Director (Resources & Transformation) explained that £20m of savings through Proud would come through implementing new ways of working and new approaches across third party spend, income generation, customer access and technology during 2022/23.

OP saving 90 'Review of Older People existing long and new residential nursing and domiciliary placement costs support packages for learning disabilities including supported living and mental health'

A Member expressed concern about the potential impact this saving could have on local residents and asked for reassurances that impact assessments had taken place? The Leader explained that no individual would be placed at risk and that the Council was making significant investment in mental health.

The Panel Resolved:

That:

- 1. Further details on OP saving 90 'Review of Older People existing long and new residential nursing and domiciliary placement costs support packages for learning disabilities including supported living and mental health' be provided to Members;**
- 2. Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2022/23 – 2025/26 be noted.**

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Signed:



Councillor John Murray
Chair, Scrutiny Overview Committee

Signed:



Deborah Hindson
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Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2022/23 – 2025/26

Recommendations of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee following Budget Consultation

Summary of report

This report presents the comments and recommendations from the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee following consideration of the draft revenue and capital budget proposals for consultation for 2022/23 to 2025/26 at the Committee's meeting on 18 November 2021. This will enable consideration by Cabinet on 15 December 2021.

All overview and scrutiny committees have received the draft revenue and capital budget proposals for consultation in respect of the portfolio of services falling within their remit.

Any changes to these options, following consultation, will be reported to a future meeting of the Committee, providing an opportunity to make further recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet is requested to consider the feedback contained within this report in formulating their draft budget proposals.

Response to the draft budget options

The Lead Accountant presented a report which provided an extract of the Proud draft revenue savings proposals, investments/cost pressures and draft capital programme which fall within the remit of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. There were no questions or comments from committee members.

The Panel Resolved:

That the report be noted.

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Councillor Harrison
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Paul Gordon
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Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2022/23 – 2025/26

Recommendations of the Children's Services Scrutiny Overview Committee following Budget Consultation

Summary of report

This report presents the comments and recommendations from the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee following consideration of the draft revenue and capital budget proposals for consultation for 2022/23 to 2025/26 at the Committee's meeting on 23 November 2021. This will enable consideration by Cabinet on 15 December 2021.

All overview and scrutiny committees have received the draft revenue and capital budget proposals for consultation in respect of the portfolio of services falling within their remit.

Any changes to these options, following consultation, will be reported to a future meeting of the Committee, providing an opportunity to make further recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet are requested to consider the feedback contained within this report in formulating their draft budget proposals.

Response to the draft budget options

Members considered the budget proposals presented and sought further information and assurances on a number of the proposals contained within the report, including:

- OP11 - Foster carer support - placement disruption

The impact, of this proposal, on the recruitment and retention of foster carers was challenged. Officers provided assurance that this proposal aimed to avoid foster placement disruption, through the provision of a support team for foster carers. It was explained that savings would be achieved by preventing placement breakdown and avoiding the use of residential care. This would also produce better outcomes for children and young people.

- OP7 – Mother and Baby – Daisy Project

At the request of Members, further detail on this project was provided. The Committee was informed that this was a perinatal programme for parents who have had a previous child removed from their care and were at risk of having a recurrent infant removal. Where successful both savings and better outcomes were achieved. In situations where the intervention was not a success, earlier planning for the child was possible which also created improved outcomes for the child. The services seeks to remove the need for high cost residential assessment units, with purposeful assessments taking place pre-birth.

- OP9 - Adolescent service - Turning Point - reduce number of adolescents coming into care

The Turning Point service worked with families to prevent family breakdown, to prevent young people from becoming looked after and/or needing residential care.

- OP13/45 - Grandparents plus - build in for future years

Officers confirmed that 'Grandparents plus', supported the identification of children who could be transferred from being a looked after child to being subject to a special guardianship orders. The service offers dedicated support to kinship carers.

The Panel Resolved:

That the draft revenue budget proposals that related to the remit of the Committee, as shown in Appendix 1 and 2, and which will be presented to the meeting of the Cabinet on 15 December 2021, be noted.

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Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2022/23 – 2025/26

Recommendations of the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee following Budget Consultation

Summary of report

This report presents the comments and recommendations from the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee following consideration of the draft revenue and capital budget proposals for consultation for 2022/23 to 2025/26 at the meeting of the Committee held on 25 November 2021. This will enable consideration by the Cabinet on 15 December 2021.

All overview and scrutiny committees have received the draft revenue and capital budget proposals for consultation in respect of the portfolio of services falling within their remit.

Any changes to these options, following consultation, will be reported to a future meeting of the Committee, providing an opportunity to make further recommendations to the Cabinet. The Cabinet are requested to consider the feedback contained within this report in formulating their draft budget proposals.

Response to the draft budget options

The Committee discussed a number of issues and appropriate clarification was provided by officers, as follows:

- Reductions in the use of agency and temporary staff, and the possible implications for the workloads of other staff. It was confirmed that there had been agreement for an increase in staffing, and it was expected that caseloads would be reduced accordingly and that there would be investment to encourage staff development.
- Increased traded services to schools. It was noted that there were services that schools needed to purchase and the Authority had been assessing what services were offered or could be offered to schools. This could also include packaging several services together in three-year programmes that would be beneficial, both to Walsall's schools and the Authority.
- The on-going design and build of the capital programme. It was confirmed that the Authority currently used the Solihull framework for contractor procurement processes. However, the ambition was to develop similar frameworks for the Walsall area or use national frameworks available through the sector.
- The number of schools anticipated to become academies and the impact for the Authority's budgetary focus. It was noted that the decision to become an academy lay with the school and that there were different types of federations and governance arrangements for academies. The focus for the Authority was school improvement and to work collaboratively with Walsall's schools.
- The arrangements to retain and develop existing skilled staff. The formal and informal arrangements were outlined, and included rigorous recruitment processes, induction, training and buddying programmes, together with other programmes to identify and develop new team leaders, and techniques to increase team efficiency and support staff, including huddle groups.

The Committee Resolved:

1. That the draft revenue budget proposals that related to the remit of the Committee, as shown in Appendices 1 and 2, and which will be presented to the meeting of the Cabinet on 15 December 2021, be noted;
2. That the draft capital schemes included in the draft capital programme that relate to the remit of the Committee, as shown in Appendices 3 and 4, and which will be presented to the meeting of the Cabinet on 15 December 2021, be noted.

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