

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16 February 2015

Subject: Reference from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission – pre decision scrutiny of the Business Plan 2015-19

Lead officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services

Lead member: Councillor Peter Southgate, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Contact officer: Julia Regan; Julia.regan@merton.gov.uk; 020 8545 3864

Recommendations:

- A. That Cabinet, in taking decisions relating to the Business Plan 2015-19, takes into account the comments and recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and the outcomes of consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels:
- References made by the Overview & Scrutiny Panels - paragraphs 2.2 to 2.6
- B. That Cabinet adopt a general principle of bringing forward budget savings whenever that can be done, including for the financial year 2015/16.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To inform Cabinet of the recommendations and comments resulting from pre decision scrutiny of the Business Plan 2015-19 by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Overview and Scrutiny Panels at their meetings in January 2015.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. Each of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels has examined the budget and business plan proposals relating to the service areas within their remit. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission has received and discussed the findings of the Panels and has discussed the proposals relating to Corporate Services and Safer Merton. The Commission has also discussed the capital programme and the level of reserves and balances.
- 2.2. References from the Overview and Scrutiny Panels
- 2.3. The Commission agreed to forward to Cabinet the comments and recommendations made by the overview and scrutiny panels. These are set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.4. The Commission agreed to submit additional comments and recommendations as set out below.

2.5. The Commission asked that the Financial Monitoring Task Group work with the Director of Corporate Services to investigate the scope for alternative sources of revenue to fund some of the savings

2.6. The Commission asked Cabinet to note its concerns in three main areas:

The Commission expressed serious concern about the loss of the Council's Youth Service. (CSF06)

The Commission had serious concerns about proposed reduction in planning enforcement and ask that officers further develop the proposals and bring back suggestions for further scrutiny. (ER30)

The Commission has serious concerns about the reduction in services in day care centres. (CH13). A proposal to refer this saving back to Cabinet was lost by five votes to four.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. Cabinet is required under the terms of the constitution to receive, consider and respond to recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED.

4.1. The Constitution outlines the requirements for consulting scrutiny on the budget.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. Round two of scrutiny of the Business Plan was undertaken as follows:-

- Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel: 8 January 2015
- Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Panel: 13 January 2015
- Healthier Communities & Older People Scrutiny Panel: 14 January 2015
- Overview and Scrutiny Commission: 29 January 2015
- The responses from round two will be presented to Cabinet on 16 February 2015. A meeting of full Council will then take place on 4 March 2015.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. These are detailed in the substantive reports elsewhere on this agenda.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. The process for developing the budget and business plan is set out in Part 4C of the Council's Constitution. The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and panels with regard to the development of the budget and business plan is set out in Part 4E of the Constitution.

7.2. The legal and statutory implications relating to the budget and business plan are contained in the reports elsewhere on this agenda.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engagement.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. These were examined by the Commission and were taken into account in making their recommendations to Cabinet.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None for the purposes of this report.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix 1 – Comments and recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels at meetings in January 2015

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. None

References/Comments from Scrutiny Panels to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission 29 January 2015

Scrutiny of the Business Plan 2015-2019

Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel: 8 January 2015

CH42 housing options - Panel agreed to forward a recommendation that this proposal be kept under review to ensure that the council could be confident that this was a viable saving.

ER16 Waste Services – Joint Procurement - Take out ‘harmonizing’ and replace with ‘collaboration’ and clarify reference to any impact of saving on parks and waste services.

ER22/23 Waste Services – Dog Waste options 1 and 2 - The Panel support option 1 (ER22) and ask that Cabinet explore the issues of overflowing bins and bring back benchmarking data on the effectiveness of this approach.

ER30 Building and Development Control (Planning Enforcement) - That the shared service proposals be developed further to inform the decision to be taken in 2016/17 to make this change and the proposed associated savings.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel: 13 January 2015

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel noted with concern the implications of the proposed savings within the Children, Schools and Families Department, in particular with regard to the Youth Service, but reluctantly accepted them in the light of the overall budget position.

Healthier Communities and Older People O&S Panel: 14 January 2015

The Panel would like the Cabinet to ask officers to look again at the equality impact assessment of all the savings taking into consideration those all those who will be affected and particularly looking at the knock on effects on the voluntary sector.

There was some concern about the process for considering the feedback on the consultation on changes to adult social care. At the meeting it was confirmed that scrutiny will now have the opportunity to consider the outcomes before it goes to Cabinet.

The Panel have concerns that the current savings proposals are based upon an inflation rate of 1.5% when it currently stands at 0.5%. This differential could have a huge impact on the level of savings that need to be made