

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 6.00PM ON
MONDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2020
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Councillors C. Harper (Chairman), A. Ali, S. Bond, C. Burbage, R. Brown, G. Casey, N. Day, A. Ellis, John Fox, Judy Fox, J. Goodwin, T. Haynes, J. Howard, J. Howell, A. Iqbal, M. Jamil, S. Lane, E. Murphy, M. Nadeem, D. Over, S. Qayyum, B. Rush, N. Sandford, N. Simons, H. Skibsted S. Warren, C. Wiggin I. Yasin

Co-opted Members: Parish Councillors Neil Boyce and June Bull

Also Present: Councillors:
S. Bashir – Cabinet Advisor for Children’s Services
M. Cereste – Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and the Environment
W. Fitzgerald – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Public Health
M. Farooq – Cabinet Member for Digital Services and Transformation
D. Seaton – Cabinet Member for Resources
I. Walsh – Cabinet Member for Communities
S. Allen – Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Recreation
J. Holdich – Leader of the Council and Deputy Mayor of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
P. Hiller – Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Commercial Strategy and Investments

Officers Present: Jonathan Lewis – Director of Education,
Gillian Beasley – Chief Executive
Richard Pearn – Head of Waste, Resources and Energy
Peter Carpenter – Acting Corporate Director, Resources
James Collingridge – Head of Environmental Partnerships
Wendi Ogle-Welbourn – Executive Director, People and Communities
Graham Hughes – Assistant Director, Highways and Transport
Amanda Askham – Director of Business Improvement and Development
Sue Grace – Director of Corporate and Customer Services
Dr. Liz Robin – Director of Public Health
Dave Anderson – Interim Development Director
Amanda Rose – Business Partner for Communications

Rob Hill – Assistant Director, Prevention and Enforcement
Nick Harding – Head of Development and Construction
Paulina Ford – Senior Democratic Services Officer
David Beauchamp - Democratic Services Officer

5. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

The Senior Democratic Services Officer opened the meeting and advised the Committee that in accordance with *Part 4, Section 8 – Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules, section 13, Joint Meetings of Scrutiny Committees* a Chairman would be required to be appointed from among the Chairmen of the Committees who were holding the meeting. Nominations were sought from those Chairmen present who were Councillor Simons, Chairman of the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Harper, Chairman of the Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Goodwin, Chairman of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Harper was nominated by Councillor Simons and seconded by Councillor Goodwin. There being no further nominations, Councillor Harper was appointed Chairman of this committee.

The Chairman welcomed everyone present and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for all members of each Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Budget 2020/21 to 2022/23 Tranche Two proposal document as part of the formal consultation process before being presented to Cabinet on 25 February 2020 for approval and recommendation to Full Council on 4 March 2020.

6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

- Councillor Aitken
- Councillor Barkham
- Councillor Bisby (Councillor Nadeem in attendance as substitute)
- Councillor L. Coles
- Councillor Dowson
- Councillor Fower
- Councillor Hemraj (Councillor Murphy in attendance as substitute)
- Councillor Jones (Councillor Iqbal in attendance as substitute)
- Councillor Robinson

And apologies from Co-opted Members:

- Rizwan Rahemtulla – Independent Co-opted Member
- Junaid Bhatti – Parish Council Independent Co-opted Member
- Keith Lievesley – Parish Council Independent Co-opted Member
- Susie Lucas – Parish Council Independent Co-opted Member
- Peter Cantley – Statutory Education Co-opted Member – Church of England
- Flavio Vettese – Statutory Education Co-opted Member – Roman Catholic Church
- Clare Watchorn – Parent Governor Representative

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

8. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) 2020/21 - 2022/23 – TRANCHE TWO PROPOSALS

The Cabinet Member for Finance gave a short introduction to the Budget 2020/21 – 2022/23 Tranche Two proposals document as per the Cabinet report dated 25 February 2020 in the agenda and made the following points:

- This second budget phase set a balanced budget.
- The Council was spending more than the income it received at a time of rising demand for services and the lowest ever levels of Government funding. These budget proposals contained plans to save money and generate additional income to enable the continued delivery of vital services. However, these savings and income generation measures were 'one-offs' and would not deliver ongoing benefits.
- Praise was given to officers for the reduction of the Council's in-year deficit from £9.7m to £4m which continued to decrease further. This had been achieved via the implementation of controls on recruitment and agency spend and approval had been required from the Acting Corporate Director, Resources for all spend over £1,000 and a business case required for spend over £10,000.
- £24m of new funding and savings had been identified in the Tranche 1 budget, leaving a budget gap of £9m, which had now widened to £15.62m. There were now additional budget pressures of £2.7m including from a reduction in school numbers lowering the amount of minor school repairs available for capitalisation, the move to Universal Credit reducing the Council's ability to chase Housing Benefit arrears, additional service demand for S.E.N. school transport (which now cost £4m/year) and the financing of the Capitalisation Direction discussed later.
- Certain items in the Tranche One Budget needed to be finalised such as the outcome of the Government's Spending Review (confirmed on 8 February and in line with predictions). Certain proposed savings from this tranche had proved undeliverable such as Serco and School Transport and had been removed from the Tranche 2 Budget.
- The Tranche 2 Budget contained £12.89m of savings and income and included the following significant savings:
 - The release of £1.9m from the Business Rates provision. Less appeals than expected had been received on Business Rate valuations which was positive for the Council.
 - Use of £3.9m in capital receipts to support debt.
 - An ongoing £1.5m reduction in housing budgets. Good progress had been made on improving the temporary accommodation situation.
 - £1.3m from the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Business Rates Pool.
 - £0.7m from the voluntary redundancy programmeThese savings were one-off in nature and future years' Budgets would need to be sustainable. The Council had used its Reserves leaving them at low levels. Investment was required to move towards sustainability.
- The Council had applied to the Government for a Capitalisation Direction to deal with redundancies allowing the Council to treat revenue expenditure as capital expenditure. This Tranche 2 Budget assumed that this request would be approved resulting in a £7.7

reduction in the use of reserves in the next municipal year and £22m in the following financial year.

- The Section 151 Officer had approved a Robustness Statement for this Budget. The state of Reserves in this Budget was dependent on the approval of the Capitalisation Direction. Otherwise, the Council's reserves would be low in 2021. A deliverable savings plan was being sought for 2021/22.
- The Tranche 2 Budget Gap of 1.5m would be met from reserves.
- The Council was investigating how to fundamentally change how services were delivered and would continue to make the case to Government for additional funding. It would not be possible for the Council to operate as it had done previously.
- Thanks to the work of Peterborough's MPs, Cabinet Members and Officers had met a minister in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for over 1hr to explain the challenges faced by Peterborough and made a strong case for fairer funding. Peterborough was one of the fastest growing cities yet also had issues with deprivation.

Questions and observations were made by Members around the following areas:

Item / Section of the Budget	Questions / Comment from Members	Response from relevant Cabinet Member / Corporate Director
<p>4. Presentation and Introduction of the Medium Term Financial Strategy Tranche Two Proposals Document</p> <p>Cabinet report dated 25 February 2020 (pages 1 to 33) of the MTFS 2020/21 to 2022/23 Tranche Two Proposals Document</p>	<p>Members referred to Page 9 of the Budget Book asked if the Government's Fair Funding Review would be beneficial to the Council and if there were assumptions in the budget that depended on its outcome.</p>	<p>The Cabinet Member for Finance responded that there was nothing in the Budget which took the Fair Funding Review into account. There were two key aspects to prove to Government – that Peterborough was a fast-growing City that also contained areas of deprivation. The City Council must also prove that it is well run. Evidence that this was the case includes the fact that the Council met the 100 criteria set by Eric Pickles in the past for a financially prudent Local Authority.</p> <p>The Acting Corporate Director, Resources added that the Council had responded to the Government's consultation on the Fair Funding Review. The Director also noted that since Boris Johnson had become Prime Minister, the Government's focus had shifted to providing additional funding to the North of England. Previous statements had focussed on areas of high growth. New information would be provided in the early part of Spring 2020. Systems would need to be in place for 2021.</p>
	<p>Members asked if there would be any opportunity for any of the proposed one-off Tranche 2 savings to become long term savings.</p>	<p>The Cabinet Member acknowledged concerns regarding the one-off nature of proposed savings and could not see much potential for these to be long-term savings, while not dismissing the possibility entirely.</p> <p>The Acting Corporate Director, Resources, responded that two of the savings were definitely one-offs; capital receipts and the reduction in business rates. Many savings would depend on fairer</p>

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		funding – e.g. the new homes bonus. A call on the collection fund surplus could only be made once a year. If changes were not made on 1 April, the Council might be asked to apply for a business rates ‘pull’.
	Members asked how confident the Council was that its application for a Capitalisation Direction would be approved.	The Cabinet Member responded that he was very confident it would be approved. There was an indication that it would be approved by 31 March, but it would be backdated if this target was not met. The Acting Corporate Director, Resources agreed with these comments.
	Members asked if the Robustness Statement would still be applicable if the request for a Capitalisation Direction was not approved.	<p>The Cabinet Member responded that the Council would be moving into 2021 with limited reserves to fund transformation work to close the deficit. This is why the Robustness Statement highlighted the need for clear plans by the end of July 2020 to deliver a sustainable budget. This allowed a review of overall finances to be made, gave longer to implement savings proposals and allowed reserves to be replenished.</p> <p>The Acting Corporate Director, Resources stated that he was confident that the Capitalisation Direction would be granted. If it was not granted, the Council would need to make sure there were robust and deliverable savings plans to propose to Full Council in July. If approved in July, there would then be 9 months to implement these savings.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member stated that it had been proposed to remove the £6m general fund. There was however a risk if something unexpected took place, as had</p>

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		happened with the demolition of the Northminster Car Park.
	Members asked if closing the existing Budget Gap by July 2020 would be deliverable.	The Acting Corporate Director responded that the Senior Management Team (SMT) were undertaking intensive work to identify savings and efficiencies, develop news of working and develop new business cases. These would then be presented to Councillors.
	Members expressed concern that using capital receipts to pay off debt was not in the spirit of the spirit of legislation and asked if this practice was prudent. Members also noted the current financial pressures and asked if the Council could lobby the Government for additional funding, noting the 80% reduction in the Revenue Support Grant (RST), the £25m new towns fund and £700,000 to help the homeless in 2021.	<p>The Cabinet Member responded that the Council had not received £25m from the New Towns fund. There had previously been an issuing with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding the Council's policy of meeting minimum revenue provision by selling assets, which had since been resolved despite negative press coverage. Other Councils were now taking the same approach. Work underway to identify savings for July 2020 should be more effective than asking the Government for one-off funding.</p> <p>The Acting Corporate Director, Resources added that the Council needed to demonstrate to the Government that unit cost and Council Tax in Peterborough were low, and its demographics were akin to a London borough. The City was an outlier, and this needed to be considered in the Fair Funding review. In the Consultation, Growth and Deprivation had been highlighted as significant factors.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member added that there was a £14m gap in the</p>

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		Council's finances. If the Council had average levels of Council tax, it would have £7m/year of extra income. Banding was also lower in Peterborough due to the low cost of housing in the City. If the average Council tax band in the City was 'D', the Council would have a £14m surplus from a £21m saving.
	Members followed up by asking for clarity on why the Council could not request additional funding from Government due to its special circumstances.	The Cabinet Member responded that the work to identify savings by July 2020 would render additional funding unnecessary
	Members referred to Page 7 of the Budget Book and asked why the Council did not increase Council tax to U.K. average levels.	The Cabinet Member responded that the Government imposed limits on increases to Council Tax
	Members referred to page 9 of the Budget Book and asked why the Council did not benefit from 'Negative RSG' and asked how Full Council Tax Equalisation functioned.	The Acting Corporate Director responded that in the last few years as RSG formulas were calculated some Councils ended up owing money to the Government. It was therefore decided to compensate Councils for this. When changes were introduced in 2014/2015 (and planned for 2021/22), some Councils benefitted, and others did not. Peterborough was a net contributor as it was a high growth area at a time when some areas were shrinking and had damping mechanisms applied.
	Members referred to section 5.6 on page 18 and asked for confirmation the total budget gap for 2020/21 was £23.7m in Tranche 1 and therefore the budget gap had widened further to £15.9m since then.	The Cabinet Member responded that this figure was not accurate and asked to defer the response to the question to later in the meeting.
	Members referred to pages 2, 3 and 9 of the budget Book and argued that the Budget Could not be considered as 'balanced' as	The Cabinet Member confirmed that selling assets and using reserves formed part of this Budget.

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	promised due to the use of reserves and the sale of assets which was dangerous and unsustainable.	
	Members followed up by asking for confirmation that the Council's budget situation had deteriorated and noted that the Cabinet Member for Finance had approved greater spend on consultants, asking how much more was saved as a result of their work compared with what was promised.	<p>The Acting Corporate Director responded that savings of £14.2m in Tranche 1 had been identified by Grant Thornton with robust processes in place to ensure they were deliverable.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member added that savings had been achieved working with officers and the Local Government Association (LGA), not just Grant Thornton. A benefit of Grant Thornton's involvement was their ability to benchmark across several local authorities.</p>
	Members felt that the savings expected from Grant Thornton's work had not been delivered.	The Cabinet Member responded that this was overly simplistic and substantial savings had been identified. Savings had only been signed off in January and work was now taking place to implement them.
	Member expressed concern about using capital funds to finance redundancy.	<p>The Acting Corporate Director responded that until 2014/15, the Council were permitted to apply for Capitalisation Directions. From 2014/15 to the present, the Government permitted the use of capital receipts to pay for capitalisation. This could be for transformation or redundancies. The Council had applied for the 'debt side'. Other Councils had applied and been successful over the last 3-4 years although this was rarely highlighted.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member added that by doing this, the Council could retain reserve levels for transformation work.</p>

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		The Leader of the Council stated that the budget would be balanced
	Members felt that the Budget was unsustainable, citing an extra spend required on homelessness on Page 9 of the reports pack.	The Cabinet Member responded that this was a grant to be received, not extra expenditure.
	Members sought an explanation on how the proposed savings would affect the people of Peterborough.	The Cabinet Member responded that he did not thinking the proposed Tranche 2 savings would affect Peterborough.
	Members commented that the Tranche 1 Joint Scrutiny Meeting had been told that provision for tackling the Climate Emergency and becoming a zero-Carbon city by 2030 would be included in the Tranche 2 Budget. Where could this provision be found?	The Cabinet Member responded that this had been discussed at Cabinet and the Climate Change Working Group would review and assess proposals on a case by case basis. It was suggested that the Member should put forward a proposal to make a revenue budget available to tackle climate change at Full Council, if they felt this should be done. It was difficult to predict what this amount would be.
	Members felt that difficulties in estimating funding levels were due to a lack of detailed plans. It was noted that other Councils, such as Norfolk County Council had allocated £3m to plant trees with a £3m contingency fund to tackle the climate emergency. Members felt that a zero-carbon city would not be achieved without specific proposals.	<p>The Cabinet Member for Finance responded that the governing administration's environmental plans were more ambitious than those of the opposition, e.g. achieving zero carbon instead of just cutting it and pursuing solar panels on buildings.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Waste Street Scene and the Environment added that the situation was more complicated that had been suggested by the member and the Council had started to pursue its Carbon reduction agenda sooner than most. Some measures did not require extra funding such as rationalising floor space, planting trees and reducing energy consumption. The impact that</p>

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		<p>financial savings would have on Carbon would be appraised. Additional examples were raised of Carbon reduction plans as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replacing the Mayor’s car with a zero-emissions model. • The highest levels of solar panels per capita anywhere. • Renewable energy used in Council officers with an ongoing assessment of other buildings owned by the Council. • L.E.D. street lighting in the City. • Investigating new technology with for zero-carbon highways schemes with Skanska. <p>Work was underway to review everything the Council did to see how it could be improved and made Carbon neutral and this did not necessarily have a high cost and could result in cost savings. While the Members’ stance was understood, the lack of specific funding in the Budget did not mean the Council would not meet the target.</p>
	<p>Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Ellis proposed that the Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees recommends that Cabinet takes the reduction in CO2 emissions in the City more seriously, especially by ensuring properties acquired by the Council are energy efficient and CO2 neutral, including temporary accommodation for</p>	

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	homeless people. A vote was taken (14 in favour, 11 against, 1 abstention). This recommendation was therefore carried.	
	Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Howell proposed that the Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees recommends that Cabinet should reconsider the proposed increase in parking charges as this may reduce footfall in the town centre. Cabinet should instead consider making improvements to public transport to reduce the pressure on city centre car parking, increase town centre footfall and tackle climate change. A vote was taken (14 in favour, 11 against, 1 abstention). This recommendation was therefore carried.	
	Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Yasin, proposed that the Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees recommends that Cabinet considers deferring the capital expenditure on the replacement of refuse collection vehicles so that models that are better value and more eco-friendly may be acquired in the future. A vote was taken (13 in favour, 11 against, 2 abstentions), This recommendation was therefore carried.	
		The Cabinet Member for Waste Street Scene and the Environment stated that there was currently a

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		green paper being considered by Government. Until a decision had been made to Central Government, it would be impossible for the Council to make any decisions on vehicle replacement. The whole system of collection may also change.
<p>The Committee RESOLVED to note this section of the budget.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees RESOLVED to recommend that Cabinet takes the reduction in CO2 emissions in the City more seriously, especially by ensuring properties acquired by the Council are energy efficient and CO2 neutral, including temporary accommodation for homeless people. 2. The Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees RESOLVED to recommend that Cabinet should reconsider the proposed increase in parking charges as this may reduce footfall in the town centre. Cabinet should instead consider making improvements to public transport to reduce the pressure on city centre car parking, increase town centre footfall and tackle climate change. 3. The Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees RESOLVED to recommend that Cabinet considers deferring the capital expenditure on the replacement of refuse collection vehicles so that models that are better value and more eco-friendly may be acquired in the future. 		
<p>5. Appendix A (a) Page 35 to 36 2019/2020 – 2021/22 MTFS Detailed Budget Position And Appendix A (b) Page 37 to 39 2019/20-2021/22 MTFS Detailed Budget Position outlining the Gross, Income and Net Budget position</p>	<p>Members queried the accuracy of figures given for expenditure on directors on page 38 of the budget book</p>	<p>The Acting Corporate Director responded that these figures included both chief officers and support staff.</p>
	<p>Some members felt using 'Directors' here was misleading and should be</p>	

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	changed to 'Directors and Staff'.	
The Committee RESOLVED to note this section of the budget.		
6. Appendix B Page 40 to 41 Tranche One Budget Proposals	There were no questions on this section of the budget.	
The Committee RESOLVED to note this section of the budget.		
7. Appendix C Page 42 to 51 Tranche Two Budget Proposals – Future Years	Members praised the Council's receipt of additional Better Care Fund grant money and asked how this would be spent.	The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Public Health responded that the funding would be targeted towards residential and nursing care. The Cabinet Member Praise the record of the social care team in managing demand well.
	Members asked of why £1.15m from the sale of the Peterborough United Football Ground would be paid to the Council over 3 years, rather than immediately.	The Acting Corporate Director responded that negotiations had been underway with Peterborough United Football Club for over a year and a final deal was ready for delivery, including the repayment of back rents.
	Members asked if the Council was serious about tackling the Climate Emergency given that that tree planting budget was due to be cut by £25,000.	The Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and the Environment responded that the Council was serious about tackling the Climate Emergency.
	Councillor Sandford, seconded by Councillor Wiggin, proposed to recommend that Cabinet increases the budget for tree planting rather than reducing it. A vote was taken (11 in favour, 11 against, 5 abstentions). This recommendation was therefore defeated.	
		The Cabinet Member for Resources felt that the recommendations agreed by the Committee all involved spending

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		money and members should consider cuts needed in other areas for this to happen.
	Members commented that the recommendation passed on the acquisition of energy-efficient properties was intended for Cabinet to investigate the issue so that the Council could acquire properties that would not contribute to climate change.	
The Committee RESOLVED to note this section of the budget.		
8. Appendix D Page 52 to 54 Grant Register	There were no questions on this section of the budget.	The Acting Corporate Director noted that this section only covered one year, instead of the usual, three due to the upcoming Local Government review. Some settlements were still unknown.
The Committee RESOLVED to note this section of the budget.		
9. Appendix E Page 55 Council Tax Information Appendix F Page 56 – 57 Business Rates – Discretionary Retail Relief Appendix G Page 58 to 60 Fees and Charges	Members referred to page 56 of the Budget Book and asked how much Discretionary Retail Business Rate Relief would cost the Council to deliver Members praised the relief given to live music venues and invited any further comments.	The Acting Corporate Director responded that much of this relief would be covered by a Section 31 grant. Relief levels followed instructions from central government so would be similar across all councils.
10. Appendix H Page 61 to 65 Capital Programme Schemes 2019/20-2023/24	There were no questions on this section of the budget.	

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The Committee RESOLVED to note this section of the budget.		
11. Appendix I Page 66 to 72 Financial Risk Register	Members requested an explanation of the cash flow risks to the Council posed by debts owed to the Council by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and small NHS organisations.	The Acting Corporate Director Responded that the CCG debt was £10m and work was underway with them to reduce this. Other Councils throughout the country faced similar issues. If the debt was unpaid, it affected the Council's Working Capital which was used to fund other items in the short term rather than taking out loans and short term debt.
12. Appendix J Page 73 to 81 Carbon Impact Assessments	There were no questions on this section of the budget.	
The Committee RESOLVED to note this section of the budget.		
13. Appendix K Page 82 to 110 Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 to 23.		The Cabinet Member for Finance noted that the Strategy had been considered by the Audit Committee.
	Members referred to page 103 of the Budget Book and asked why the Council was not borrowing more to invest in infrastructure given current low interest rates.	<p>The Acting Corporate Director responded that the Council had to take into the account the cost of interest and maintain minimum revenue provision.</p> <p>The Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Local Government Association (LGA) had commented that interest rates charged by the Public Works Loan Board had limited Councils' ability to borrow to buy properties and invest in city centres.</p> <p>It was noted that Lancashire County Council had borrowed from the UK Municipal Bonds Agency at a rate that was likely cheaper than that offered by the Public Works Loan Board but with conditions attached.</p>

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	Members asked if the use of the U.K. Municipal Bonds Agency had been considered for Peterborough.	The Acting Corporate Director responded that the return on investment would not be adequate.
14. Appendix L Page 111 to 132 Capital Strategy 2020/21 - 2022/23	There were no questions on this section of the budget.	
The Committee RESOLVED to note this section of the budget.		
15. Appendix M Page 133 to 151 Asset Management Plan	Members referred to the People and Communities Strategy on page 138 of the Budget Book and expressed concern that the move towards a Commissioning role could result in reduced accountability and volunteers being overloaded.	<p>The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Public Health responded that he viewed this approach as a strength in terms of social care. Sharing key officers across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough was beneficial in terms of adding strength and experience. Commissioning social care services across both Councils meant there was less competition and a market overview of the whole county was available.</p> <p>The Acting Corporate Director added that the Asset Management Plan needed to ensure assets were being used in the best way possible to deliver the key strategies mentioned on page 138.</p>
	Members repeated concerns that the Strategy involved the Council delivering fewer services and moving towards commissioning services (e.g. Kingdom), potentially reducing the Councils control and oversight over them and relying too heavily on communities for voluntary work.	<p>The Cabinet Member for Finance responded that this section related to the use of the Council's property portfolio and this could be made clearer in the future.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Communities responded to concerns raising about 'volunteer overload' by saying that this could have been expanded upon in the Budget Book but the Think Communities Approach was used in Cambridgeshire and throughout the U.K. This approach was being</p>

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		looked at by Public Service Boards. People were stepping up and undertaking work they would not have done previously. Strength and resilience was being built in communities. A programme of works would be available in the future.
	Referring to the People and Communities Strategy on page 138 of the Budget Book, members asked if there were plans in place to ensure minimum standards of community provision were in place in all areas, noting the possibility of staff reductions and the dangers of overburdening volunteers.	The Cabinet Member responded that the Council's Community Asset Transfer (CAT) scheme demonstrated the commitment to keeping community centres open. Think Communities would enable more capacity and resilience to be provided in communities.
	Members asked if the Cabinet Member was aware that 5 play centres had closed, village halls were in jeopardy and community centres had closed. Members felt that people should have access to a pre-school within 15 miles as a 'floor target'.	The Cabinet Member for Communities responded that she was aware but it was not relevant to this section of the Budget.
16. Appendix N Page 152 to 174 Investment Acquisition Strategy	There were no questions on this section of the budget.	
The Committee RESOLVED to note this section of the budget.		
17. General Comments, any overall recommendations	Members requested how Full Council Tax equalisation worked.	The Acting Corporate Director responded that this occurred when the government made changes to how money was collected across the country. Councils in High growth areas would typically give money to low growth areas. Peterborough's levels had remained at the same level for several years as damping mechanisms typically worked for

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		2-3 years and then levels were maintained at the year 3 level.
	Members asked for an assessment of the risk of a future increase in interest rates.	<p>The Acting Corporate Director responded that it was difficult to predict how interest rates would change. The Council should be prudent and take advantage of high or low interest rates, e.g. longer term borrowing if rates are low and vice versa.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member added interest rates had been at 20-25% in the past. There had now been 12 years of the base rate being very low. It was difficult to judge how this would change in the future.</p>

ACTIONS AGREED

The Joint Meeting of Scrutiny Committees considered the following updates within the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21- 2022/23 - Tranche Two, which is outlined in Appendix 1.

1. The Budget Position for 2020/21-2022/23
2. The Tranche Two service proposals, outlined in Appendix C, within the attached MTFSS report;
3. Future strategic direction for the Council;
4. The Robustness Statement, including the reserves position;
5. The revised capital programme;

Recommendations made below by the Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees were reported to Cabinet on 25 February 2020 for consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees **RESOLVED** to recommend that Cabinet takes the reduction in CO2 emissions in the City more seriously, especially by ensuring properties acquired by the Council are energy efficient and CO2 neutral, including temporary accommodation for homeless people.
2. The Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees **RESOLVED** to recommend that Cabinet should reconsider the proposed increase in parking charges as this may reduce footfall in the town centre. Cabinet should instead consider making improvements to public transport

to reduce the pressure on city centre car parking, increase town centre footfall and tackle climate change.

3. The Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees **RESOLVED** to recommend that Cabinet considers deferring the capital expenditure on the replacement of refuse collection vehicles so that models that are better value and more eco-friendly may be acquired in the future.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting began at 6.00pm and ended at 7.32pm