



Norfolk County Council

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 14 February 2024
at 10am at County Hall Norwich

Present:

Cllr Steve Morphew (Chair)
Cllr Daniel Elmer (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Carl Annison
Cllr Lesley Bambridge
Cllr Phillip Duigan
Cllr John Fisher
Cllr Tom FitzPatrick
Cllr Brian Long
Cllr Ed Maxfield
Cllr Jamie Osborn
Cllr Brian Watkins

Substitute Members Present:

Cllr Fran Whymark for Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris

Also Present:

Titus Adam	Assistant Director of Finance
Debbie Bartlett	Interim Executive Director of Adult Social Care
Cllr Bill Borrett	Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing
Harvey Bullen	Director of Strategic Finance
Grahame Bygrave	Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services
Paul Cracknell	Executive Director for Strategy and Transformation
Kat Hulatt	Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Cllr Andrew Jamieson	Cabinet Member for Finance
Cllr Kay Mason Billig	Leader of the Council
Tom McCabe	Chief Executive
Cllr Greg Peck	Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance
Peter Randall	Democratic Support and Scrutiny Manager
Cllr Alison Thomas	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care
Laine Tisdall	Committee Officer
Sara Tough OBE	Executive Director of Children's Services

1 Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris (substituted by Cllr Fran Whymark), Cllr Keith Kiddie, and Paul Dunning.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 No declarations of interest were made.

3. Public Question Time

- 3.1 One public question was received, from Anne Landamore. The question and the written response from the Cabinet Member for Finance are appended to this set of minutes at Appendix A.

4. Local Member Issues/Questions

- 4.1 No local member questions were received.

5. Call In

- 5.1 The Committee noted that the deadline for the call-in of items from the Cabinet meeting held on Monday 29 January 2024 was 4pm on Monday 5 February 2024. No call-ins were received.

6. Norfolk County Council Budget 2024-25

- 6.1 The Committee received the annexed report (6).
- 6.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report, which was produced to support the Scrutiny Committee in its duty to provide oversight and challenge to the council's process for developing the 2024-25 budget.
- 6.3 The Cabinet Member welcomed the additional Local Government Settlement funding announced by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up on the 24 January 2024. Norfolk County Council would receive an extra £9.539m from this, of which £8.706m was additional Social Care Grant which would be used to ease pressures on Adult Social Care and home school transport. In addition, the Council had been allocated an extra £737,000 through the Rural Services Delivery Grant. The Cabinet Member commented that the extra settlement was most likely only for one year, which would require more difficult budget decisions to be taken to balance the books, such as service reductions and increasing council tax by the highest percentage possible without a referendum. A £46m budget gap had been identified for 2024-25 and successfully addressed in the Budget process.
- 6.4 For 2023-24, an overspend of £30m was forecast across Adult Social Care and Children's Services. This was partially mitigated by the use of the Council's reserves; however, such measures would not be available in the coming years. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that the initial Local Government Settlement was disappointing.
- 6.5 The Council's core spending power was forecast to increase by 6.8%, but the rise was based on the maximum 4.99% increase in council tax being applied. This would mean that council tax now represented nearly 56% of the Council's core spending power, which was reduced only marginally to 55% by the extra one-year funding.

- 6.6 Total net savings of £41m were now required to balance the budget, which was a reduction from the £45m originally expected due to the additional funding announced in January. The Council was forecast to have a net budget of £527.7m in 2024/25, a record total. The level of inflation and the current economic climate had caused significant issues, meaning a number of difficult budget decisions had to be taken. Financial pressures were being caused by increased demand for services, the increase in the National Minimum Wage and inflation being £9m higher than originally budgeted. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that the number of local authorities issuing Section 114 notices had increased substantially since 2018 and it was prudent to put strategies in place to ensure Norfolk did not end up in the same situation.
- 6.7 The government now expected local authorities to produce productivity plans to set out how improvements would be made to service delivery and reduce wasteful expenditure. Officers in the Strategy and Transformation department had already conducted work in this area as part of the Council's transformation strategy. The Cabinet Member stressed it was important to be as open as possible regarding the strategies adopted to achieve these requirements. The transformation programme in Adult Social Care was forecast to generate £20m of savings per annum. Children's Services was also achieving efficiency savings through the adoption of new technology and working practices proven to be a success in other businesses. The Cabinet Member stated that departmental transformation programmes were the bedrock of achieving the required savings to balance the Council's budget.
- 6.8 Apart from the increase in council tax, no specific items in the October budget proposals required consultation. However, to achieve long term sustainable savings, a number of further items would go out to consultation before a decision was made.
- 6.9 **Norfolk County Council Revenue Budget 2024-25 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2028**
- 6.10 The Committee received the annexed report (6A).
- 6.11 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report, which presented a set of balanced Budget proposals for 2024-25
- 6.12 The primary aim of the strategy was to show a balanced budget over the four year period. Some budget gaps remained, requiring either further savings to be identified or additional revenue to be generated. There was an overall deficit of £135.908m across the medium term. The Cabinet Member stressed that a longer term funding settlement from the government was required to make budget planning more robust, however at present the single-year Local Government Settlement approach by central government appeared set to continue. This was making long term planning increasingly difficult.

6.13 The following points were discussed and noted:

- A Committee Member welcomed the final funding settlement as it was better than originally expected. The extra funding would mean that a one-off use of the Council's reserves to shore up gaps in Adult Social Care and Children's Services would no longer need to go ahead; however £50m of reserves would still need to be allocated over the medium term. The Committee Member questioned whether general reserves could be maintained at the 5% level in the meantime and whether there was scope to increase them. The Cabinet Member confirmed there was a focus on maintaining reserves at the 5% level. As the net revenue budget increased, the amount of reserves would also increase, but would be maintained at 5%.
- A Committee Member noted that Norfolk had among the lowest levels of useable reserves compared to other top-tier authorities and asked whether this was a cause for concern. The Cabinet Member stated that the government did not wish for local authorities to sit on large levels of reserves, which was part of the reason for the initial reduction in local government settlement. Replenishing the reserves depended on the level of risk and how the Council was managing its finances. If a local authority was able to balance books effectively and remain within its in-year budget, it could then operate with lower levels of reserves. If risk increased, the levels of reserves would be reviewed. It was considered that the Council had sufficient levels of reserves in place for the level of risk anticipated. The Committee Member commented on the aspiration that general reserves could be increased as part of the closure of accounts this year and asked officers whether they were confident this could occur. An officer stated that a balanced budget was forecast, but if there was any underspend the money could then be used to increase reserves.
- Committee Members asked how confident the Cabinet Member was that the budget strategy proposals were as robust and sustainable as they could be. The Cabinet Member commented that the budget proposals had to be taken as a whole rather than in isolation. It was the aim to prevent, reduce and delay the demand for social care in Norfolk. This was the best approach to both support vulnerable people in the county and ensure sound financial management of the services. The long-term management of the Council's finances enabled support to be provided to departments to assist with their long term programmes, ultimately allowing Norfolk County Council to deliver consistent, robust budgets each year. However, this could only be achieved if departments were able to find sustainable long-term savings.
- A Committee Member asked how the Council would protect vital services and retain jobs. The Cabinet Member stated that services were evolving radically due to the use of technology, which was part of the Council's transformation strategy. Innovative ideas across the UK were being tapped for inclusion. It was imperative that the Council was not static as the needs of residents would continue to evolve. It was also planned to make better use of data and reduce wasteful spend on systems. The Cabinet Member stressed this would be an ongoing process.
- A Committee Member expressed interest in how a future strategic review would be conducted. Specific questions were raised around whether outside consultants would be contracted or if skills from the Council's own workforce would be utilised. The

Cabinet Member stated that the Council's future transformation programmes had to be set out in public. Ongoing transformation and review processes would be built into the structure of the Council to ensure it was not a stop-start, haphazard process. The aim was to utilise the best new technology while continuing to deliver for the people of Norfolk.

- A Committee Member requested clarification regarding savings resulting from the Strategic Review, as the report suggested an increase in the budget by £3.8m over the next two financial years. It appeared that some of this increase was from the reversal of cuts which were planned during the 2023/24 financial year. The Cabinet Member stated the Strategic Review had identified a number of savings which could feasibly be delivered, however some of these were one-off and had therefore been reversed in the following year (2024-25). The Strategic Review had identified £17m in savings for the current year (2023-24), with a further £12m forecast for the 2024-25 budget (officers noted that the £12m in the table represented the position as at Cabinet and would be impacted by the final budget proposals to Full Council). The Committee Member requested clarification, as the £12m savings appeared to be from the transformation programme rather than the Strategic Review. The Cabinet Member clarified that the table in the report set out saving proposals from both the transformation programme and the Strategic Review, which had been developed using consistent principles with a focus on delivering services more efficiently with less money required. The Council had a large reserve of expertise to deliver this.
- A Committee Member commented that when the Strategic Review was launched in 2022, it set out to find £20m in savings annually. As the figures stated the review had identified £17m in savings during 2023, a further £12m forecast in 2024, and potentially £3.8m of reversed savings. The Committee Member queried if the Strategic Review had been successful. The Cabinet Member stressed that without the transformation programme it would be impossible to make savings without severe cuts to services. Officers clarified that the Strategic Review had a stated target to find between £15m and £20m of savings. The transformation programme aimed to bring in different ways of working, such as executive hubs, business support hubs, and stronger analytics teams. The Strategic Review effectively gave the Council the ability to move into a different stage of transformation. There was still a need to deliver a balanced budget, where transformation would play a key role. The Committee Member requested clarification on the savings target. Officers stated that certain savings identified for the 2023-24 Budget were one-off proposals. The way that the Council's Budget is prepared meant that these planned reversals were shown as a positive figure in the budget in the following year. The £17m of savings identified by the Strategic Review were built into the budget process for the 2023/24 financial year, and progress on delivering these was regularly reported to Cabinet. Further savings from the Strategic Review were built into the budget model for 2024/25. Officers confirmed that in total overall terms, £25m of net savings were built into the ongoing Budget from proposals for 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- A Committee Member commented there were significant budget pressures to deliver services in a largely rural county and asked what was being done to lobby the government for further funding. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Council had

responded to the consultation on the Settlement. Letters had been written to the government on numerous occasions to request a fairer funding settlement. Local MPs had also lobbied on behalf of the Council. Securing a long term funding settlement for local government was an important aim, as further increases in council tax were likely going to be unsustainable in the future. It was important to recognise the costs of delivering services in rural areas compared to urban areas. In addition, a reform of business rates and a meaningful reform of the way Adult Social Care was funded were also required. The Council had lobbied various governments regarding these issues over the years.

- A Committee Member stated the budget factored in a 1.65% increase in the taxbase for 2024-25, as opposed to 1% growth assumed in future years. There was a need to deliver more housing in Norfolk but it appeared this aim was being hampered by nutrient neutrality regulations and the inability to deliver new homes, which would also have a knock-on effect by reducing the sum total of council tax takings the Council would receive. The Cabinet Member commented that the 1% prediction was a prudent and conservative estimate, acknowledging that nutrient neutrality had made other local authorities cautious about the amount of new housebuilding that could be delivered in the short to medium term. Some local authorities were considering charging or amending council tax on second homes, which could potentially also slow down the amount of new builds.
- A Committee Member asked the Cabinet Member if he agreed that the Council delivered value for money for the residents of Norfolk, as the county was in line with many other local authorities by raising council tax. The Cabinet Member agreed with this statement, commenting that around 70% of the budget went towards delivering services to vulnerable residents. The Council also delivered a substantial amount of non-statutory services, while statutory services were delivered above and beyond the statutory minimum limit.
- The Chair asked what the current state of the Council was with regard to the Strategic Review, whether it was now “business as usual” or if the Council was continuing to monitor and adopt new methods of working. The Cabinet Member stated the Strategic Review was a defined one-year programme, but that it was the aim to provide continuity of this programme under a different name as part of the Council’s continuing transformation strategy. It was important to build upon the lessons learned from the review rather than considering it as a tick box exercise.
- The Chair stated the productivity plan was about further transformation and asked where the further transformation occurred beyond “business as usual”. Officers stated productivity was an important measure to consider in public services, with the aim to drive waste, inefficiency, and double handling of queries out of systems. It was expedient to bring in different methods of providing services while continuing to deliver value for money to taxpayers. Norfolk County Council had a tradition of committing to significant transformational programmes, which meant these were now considered “business as usual” as they were now tried and tested techniques. Technology would play a large role in future ideas, with the use of artificial intelligence possibly being a new frontier to improve productivity and deliver sustainable savings.
- The Chair requested evidence of the positive impacts delivered by the Strategic

Review, along with the difference these interventions made at the Council. The Leader of the Council stated the Strategic Review and transformational strategy were unilateral decisions taken by Norfolk County Council, as there had been several cases of local authorities struggling and ultimately having to issue a Section 114 notice due to imprudent financial decisions. Transformation was now considered part and parcel of the Council's structure, to the point where Norfolk was now ahead of the schedule set out by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up. The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing commented it was important that transformation was appropriately scrutinised, as it was a key part of the Council's future plans. Adult Social Care began their transformation journey in 2017, which reviewed everything that the department was doing. Outside consultants were an important part of the process in order to challenge the status quo and consider different methods of working.

- A Committee Member requested clarification regarding elements of the productivity plan and how this would be constructed. An officer stated that a government template was not expected for the productivity plan; instead local authorities were expected to incorporate certain points outlined in the Supplementary Agenda within their plans. Norfolk County Council had a good track record of supporting, equality, diversity and inclusion for its staff and the communities it served. The Committee Member asked how the Council's internal timeline was set out prior to the plan being submitted to the government. The officer stated the Leader of the Council would need to give final approval before the plan was submitted. Prior to this, the productivity plan would go through the formal council policy pipeline. The Chair commented it would be good to see the papers as part of the corporate strategy, along with a submission at a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.
- A Committee Member asked if the additional government settlement would mean that proposed reductions to the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) would no longer go ahead. The Cabinet Member stated that any changes to the MIG required consultation, which would go ahead as it was important to seek the views of Norfolk residents. A final decision would be taken by Cabinet in July 2024. The Committee Member asked what weight the responses would have on the final decision. The Cabinet Member stated that the consultation could not be prejudiced. As the Council had a legal responsibility to produce a robust budget for 2024/25 and for future years, departments were asked to review a range of items to find savings, with some requiring a consultation to take place. The Committee Member asked if there was a threshold where changes could be made to the MIG. The Cabinet Member affirmed that the consultation could not be prejudiced; however a wide range of views and impacts would need to be reviewed.
- The Chair stated that there had been a national increase to the MIG, commenting that this change would make a difference to the level of savings generated by any cut in the MIG. The Chair asked how the savings would change and what work was being carried out to accommodate the increase. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care stated that officers in the department had met with a charging reference group regarding proposed changes to the MIG. The reference group represented many parties who would be impacted by the proposed reduction in the MIG. At present, the Cabinet recommendation was to hold a consultation on the MIG changes before taking a final decision. Regarding the government decision to increase MIG, the level had increased

the previous year and an assumption was made by officers that a further increase in line with inflation was likely this year. This had been factored into any calculations. The Cabinet Member commented that a decision was yet to be taken regarding the changes and that the consultation could not be prejudiced. The Chair requested clarification that the MIG level would increase in accordance with the cost of living but would then decrease, depending on the consultation outcome. The Cabinet Member confirmed that this would be the case.

- A Committee Member requested assurance that library services would be maintained and possibly expanded across Norfolk, citing local experience in the King's Lynn area. The Cabinet Member gave assurances that services would be maintained across all 46 libraries in Norfolk. There was a work programme to create multi-use communities hubs following a pilot scheme in the Great Yarmouth area, with plans in place to expand it into Hunstanton and King's Lynn.
- A Committee Member asked how long term risks were identified and mitigated in the budget setting process to build resilience. The Cabinet Member stated that prudential treasury management was at the centre of the Council's financial management. Sustainable savings were required for long-term funding decisions to be taken. The Council had secured borrowing at a time when interest rates were much lower than at present. Borrowing at a 1.8% rate was naturally a different order of magnitude than borrowing at current rates. It was the intention that the Council would not make any further borrowing in the 2024 calendar year.
- A Committee Member commented that a General Election was due to be held later in 2024 and asked the Cabinet Member what would be requested from a new government post-election, The Cabinet Member expressed hopes that resources would be allocated towards implementing a multi-year settlement for local government funding, a sustainable fair funding programme, and an updating of the relative needs formula. In addition, a reform of the council tax system would be well received, to tackle inequalities in the current system and to recognise the additional costs of providing services in rural areas.
- A Committee Member affirmed there was a fundamental issue with the council tax system when it came to rural areas, as these were disadvantaged by inadequate funding and their location. The Cabinet Member stated it was important to deliver a balanced budget and that the County Deal would have a significant impact on the amount of funding that could be delivered for rural areas.
- A Committee Member mentioned there had been 260 responses in total for the whole budget consultation, which meant only 0.03% of the county's population had responded. The Committee Member requested clarification regarding the consultation process and what was being done to improve response rates. An officer and the Cabinet Member acknowledged that the response rate was disappointing. Practices learned from the County Deal consultation were incorporated into the budget consultation, as there had been a high response rate. Ways of providing residents with more access to officers and different methods of capturing data were also considered. The Committee Member commented that a broad review of the consultation process across the Council was required, as there appeared to be a degree of opacity about how information was being fed back into the process. It was also unclear if there were

certain percentages of responses required before the Council would take notice. The Chair intervened at this point, stating that a consultation review would need to be incorporated on the Scrutiny Committee's forward work plan.

- The Chair requested clarification regarding the social care market and how its transformation programme would tackle issues raised in the report. An officer stated that the Council worked closely alongside its partners and providers in the care market. Support was being offered to improve recruitment and retention, with progress already being seen in this area. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) were currently behind with their inspections. To assist the CQC, officers had written to them with a list of providers who were believed to now pass the threshold of being good or outstanding. Commissioning would shape how the social care market would look in future, but the Council would have to work with the market to effect changes. More nursing care and improvements in quality across the board were planned. The Chair commented that there appeared to be nothing in the transformation programme to address that Norfolk had been assessed as "poor quality" in this area, along with financial impacts. An officer stated that it was possible to bring another report to a future Select Committee or Scrutiny Committee meeting to illustrate how Adult Social Care was working to achieve these goals; however there were no "silver bullet" solutions available to improve the situation.

6.14 **Capital Strategy and Programme 2024-25**

6.15 The Committee received the annexed report (6B).

6.16 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report, which presented the proposed capital strategy and programme, including information on the funding available to support the strategy. The report also summarised the development of the proposed capital programme, including proposed new schemes, and a summary of forecast capital receipts.

6.17 The following points were discussed and noted:

- A Committee Member stated that the cost of borrowing had become prohibitively expensive over the past 18 months, commenting that the Council had previously taken the view to borrow when interest rates were low to fund capital projects. It now appeared the official position was that there would be no further borrowing in the 2024/25 financial year. The Committee Member asked if the Council was still able to utilise existing cash balances or apply for external funding, while querying the prioritisation strategy for capital projects should no external funding be forthcoming. The Cabinet Member for Finance estimated that borrowing would not increase during 2024, but the possibility remained that it could increase. The rise in interest rates had meant there was a fundamental shift in the way Council allocated capital. This involved screening, plus a Capital Review Boardp which was chaired by the Cabinet Member. Capital projects would continue to be scrutinised carefully, to see if they could be deferred or potentially removed from the programme if necessary. Confidence was expressed that the headline borrowing number of £50m per year would be met through

the screening process. The Committee Member asked if the Cabinet Member envisaged any project in the capital programme being scrapped. The Cabinet Member stated that no projects were expected to be scrapped.

- A Committee Member observed that the Council's external debt now stood at £822m, pondering if this was a cause for concern for the Cabinet Member and if there were any forecasts as to whether the debt level would fluctuate over the next two to three years. The Cabinet Member remarked that he was not relaxed about the situation but expressed confidence that the debt level was manageable. Robust treasury management was key to this. At present the interest level was 7%, meaning that 10% of the Council's net budget was spent on servicing interest. The Cabinet Member stressed that debt was being closely watched by officers.
- The Chair asked how the County Deal would impact the capital strategy, given that it had previously been remarked that the extra £20m funding per year could be used to finance the interest on capital projects. The Cabinet Member stated that the additional funding was ringfenced for additional infrastructure projects to benefit the Norfolk economy and not to plug gaps in the Council's budget. In theory, the opportunities that the County Deal could bring were unlimited.
- A Committee Member queried the Council's borrowing limit, asking officers if it would remain at £1.06bn or would reduce to reflect the lower level of borrowing at present. Officers explained how the cap was set, based on the additional borrowing planned by the Council while subtracting repayments already made. Projects in the capital programme were also taken into consideration. The cap was reviewed each year and tended to increase as the Council was borrowing more than it repaid. This was not an abnormal situation due to the inflation rate and the number of new schemes added to the capital programme.
- A Committee Member queried the minimum revenue provision, which was now estimated at £3.2m for 2024/25, given that the Council had paid £32m in interest on the capital programme in 2023/24. The Committee Member asked what the level of interest payments would be with the additional £3.2m. An officer confirmed that the minimum revenue provision increased each year, as it was an amount of money set aside to ensure debt repayments could be serviced. The provision increased as the capital programme was funded by borrowing. Officers had to work within a framework determined by government legislation to achieve this.

6.18 The Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT** on the suite of 2024-25 budget reports presented to Cabinet on the 29 January 2024, with particular focus on the Cabinet recommendations to County Council in relation to:

- The Norfolk County Council Revenue Budget 2024-25 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-28
- The Capital Strategy and Programme 2024-25

7. Annual Investment and Treasury Strategy

7.1 The Scrutiny Committee received the annexed report (7).

7.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report, which provided an overview of the Annual Investment and Treasury Strategy 2024-25 and associated Cabinet papers. The plans formed part of Norfolk County Council's Policy Framework.

7.3 The following points were discussed and noted:

- The Vice-Chair noted that the criteria for overseas investments stated that the Council required an AA+ credit rating for any country where investments were held, which appeared restrictive as other local authorities had substantially lower thresholds for investment. The Vice-Chair asked officers if they could provide advice regarding the criteria and whether this was due for review. An officer confirmed that the criteria was reviewed each year. A cautious and prudent approach to lending was followed, shaped by lessons learned from the 2008 global financial crisis. The criteria could be reduced in future; however this would expose the Council to greater levels of risk.

7.4 Having considered the proposed Annual Investment and Treasury Strategy 2024-25, the Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** the following:

1. **PROVIDED** comments and recommendations where appropriate.
2. **ASKED** officers to produce a report to the Leader and Cabinet Member on behalf of the committee in accordance with section 11b of the Norfolk County Council Constitution (Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules), providing feedback and recommendations where appropriate.

8. Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

8.1. The Scrutiny Committee received the annexed report (10), which set out the current forward work plan for the Committee.

8.2 A report on the Council's Climate Change strategy had been added to the work plan for consideration in March. Due to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting featuring representatives from Anglian Water, officers suggested the 20 March meeting be extended, or for an additional meeting to be scheduled. On a show of hands, Committee Members **AGREED** that the March meeting be extended to cover all business.

8.2 The Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the current forward work programme.

The meeting concluded at 13:03

**Cllr Steve Morphew, Chair
Scrutiny Committee**

Scrutiny Committee 14 February 2024

3. Public Question Time

3.1 Question from Anne Landamore

What is the criteria the Cabinet is using for there to be sufficient impact on people who have disabilities so that it would not consider going ahead with the cuts to the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG)? If there isn't any criteria the consultation is pointless.

3.2 Response from the Chair:

Thank you for your question, which ideally requires a response from a Cabinet Member. I am grateful to Cllr Andrew Jamieson, the Cabinet Member for Finance, for providing a written response.

3.3 Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance:

The principles of consultation are not based around a fixed criteria to inform decisions, unlike for example a more rigid decision making process for such as a procurement exercise. The purpose of the consultation is to better understand the issue and to seek a broad range of views and impacts – including from people with lived experience. In reaching a decision, Cabinet will need to consider what people have said about the impact of any changes, and any mitigation for the impact. Alongside this, Cabinet will take into account other factors including the local and national context for both Adult Social Services and the council as whole.