

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL **SUMMARY OF 2023/24 BUDGET SCRUTINY**

Introduction

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee and three scrutiny panels (Customer & Community and Place held joint meetings) have extensively scrutinised the savings proposals for the 2023/24 budget in six dedicated meetings held between December 2022 to February 2023.

Key budget issues, risks and savings proposals were presented at the meetings of each Panel by Lead Members, Executive Directors and other senior officers. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee had agreed Key Lines of Enquiry for budget scrutiny in July 2022 and councillors on scrutiny received training on local government finance before scrutiny of the savings proposals commenced.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee and panels reviewed each savings and were tasked with:

- constructively challenging each savings proposal;
- questioning whether the proposed savings were realistic, deliverable and robust;
- Examining the key risks; and
- Considering the implications for Slough's residents and the community.

Summary

Before considering each individual savings proposal the Committee/Panels were presented with an overview of the Council's financial position and Members agreed with the overall savings target in line with the Corporate Plan objective for the Council to 'live within its means'.

Whilst each directorate savings proposal was tested and challenged during the discussions, no amendments or alternative proposals were agreed to be made to Cabinet. The savings proposals were therefore accepted.

The following is a summary of the key issues covered at each Committee/Panel with links to the minutes.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee was responsible for scrutiny of corporate savings proposals covering COO/Strategy & Transformation and Finance & Commercial Directorates.

Meeting: Thursday 1st December 2022:

- The savings reviewed included IT contract savings (£0.505m); business administration reductions including the cessation of some corporate events (£0.150m); and a vacancy factor saving (£0.500m).

- Members commented on the importance of ensuring good quality corporate services to support frontline service delivery. Members queried whether corporate services could be improved at the same time as reducing some staffing budgets but were assured that service redesign, restructures and transformation could deliver 'more for less'.
- In relation to Finance & Commercial savings, the Committee asked about the targeted collection rate and asked a number of questions about how efficiencies would be achieved in practice.

Meeting: Thursday 2nd February 2023

- The Committee reviewed a second tranche of savings proposals, which included scrutiny of 'overhead cleanse' savings. The principle of removing historic budget provision for activity that had ceased e.g. events, was supported on the basis that any future re-introduction of such activity would be subject to business cases.
- Members also reviewed the capital programme. The discussion focused on whether the reduced capital programme could still deliver the required maintenance and investment in property and infrastructure, including Council housing.

No amendments or alternative proposals were made to any of the proposed corporate or Council wide savings by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Customer & Community / Place Scrutiny Panel (Panels met jointly)

Meeting: Wednesday 7th December 2022

- The Panels met jointly to review savings proposals relating to the Place & Community and Housing & Property directorates.
- Discussion focused on issues such as the resources available to deal with the backlog of housing repairs and it was agreed the problems could be managed through improved contract management.
- The introduction of charges at household waste and recycling facilities was reviewed and Members accepted the principle of mirroring charges of neighbouring authorities.
- The reductions in bus service subsidies and parking regulations were also considered.

Meeting: Wednesday 1st February 2023

- The Panels reviewed savings in areas including library services and CCTV. Members emphasised the importance of these services to residents and agreed if the savings were to be made they needed to be properly implemented and well managed, including working with partners.
- The dimming of street lights was discussed at length and Officers explained the rationale for the changes.

No amendments or alternative proposals were made to any of the proposed Place & Community and Housing & Property savings by the Panels.

People Scrutiny Panel

Meeting: Thursday 15th December 2022

- The Panel reviewed savings proposals from the People (Adults) directorate.
- Members welcomed the success of the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme and agreed the savings relating to improved commissioning and contracting arrangements.
- It was recognised that there were significant demand pressures on adult social care services and the Panel sought assurance that the Council would continue to meet its statutory duties whilst delivering the savings.
- The Panel also asked whether best practice and new ideas from other authorities was being explored and it was confirmed that it was.

Meeting: Tuesday 31st January 2023

- A second tranche of People (Adults) savings were scrutinised including Assistive Technology and contractual arrangement for care home placements.
- The People (Children) proposed savings for home to school transport was reviewed and the staffing restructure was supported.
- The Slough Children First savings were considered alongside the overall financial position of the company.

No amendments or alternative proposals were made to any of the proposed People (Adults), People (Children) and Slough Children First savings by the Panel.

Links to agendas and minutes

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

[Agenda for Overview & Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 1st December, 2022, 6.30 pm \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)

[Agenda for Overview & Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 2nd February, 2023, 6.30 pm \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)

Customer & Community and Place Scrutiny Panels

[Agenda for Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel on Wednesday, 7th December, 2022, 6.30 pm \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)

[Agenda for Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel on Wednesday, 1st February, 2023, 6.30 pm \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)

People Scrutiny Panel

[Agenda for People Scrutiny Panel on Thursday, 15th December, 2022, 6.30 pm \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)

[Agenda for People Scrutiny Panel on Tuesday, 31st January, 2023, 6.30 pm \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)