

FRIDAY, 19 MARCH 2021

## SCRUTINY OF ALTERNATIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL

### **Purpose of report:** *Budget Scrutiny*

For the Select Committee to note a summary of the scrutiny work undertaken regarding Jonathan Essex's alternative budget proposals.

#### **Introduction:**

1. At the Council budget meeting of 9 February 2021 Jonathan Essex proposed several alternative budget proposals that relate directly to the work of the Environment, Transport, and Infrastructure Directorate (*the Directorate*).
2. Council voted on these budget amendments and they were not accepted. Council then chose to refer the amendments to the relevant Select Committee for in-depth scrutiny.

#### **Process:**

3. The 2021/22 Revenue & Capital Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy was adopted by the Council on 9 February 2021. However, Jonathan Essex's alternative budget proposal was subject to further scrutiny by the Communities, Environment & Highways Select Committee at a private meeting on 9 March 2021.
4. The Select Committee sought evidence as to the viability and value of the proposals via questioning of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change, Cabinet Member for Resources & Corporate Support and officers from the Directorate and Finance.

#### **Findings:**

5. The Members reviewed the response to each of the proposals (Annex 2) in turn and were satisfied that these adequately address the alternative proposals. Specific points relating to the Cabinet Members' response are listed below:

### Proposal 1.1: Dedicated Cycle Route Planner

6. Members wanted to see priority given to the implementation of Active Transport schemes and the necessary resources provided to the service to implement them. Members noted that Surrey had received less than the national average in government funding awards. They acknowledged the increase of £400K in revenue funding in the 2021/22 budget to increase staffing levels. The Members would seek assurances regarding implementation of the programme throughout 2021/22.

### Proposal 2.2: Energy Retrofit and Renewable Energy Every School in Surrey

7. Whilst the Members understood that school's budgets are held and managed by each individual school, and therefore the Council could only try and influence the sector, that this was a proposal worth further investigation.
8. A Member stated the importance of ensuring that the Council provided leadership to all schools in Surrey (including academy trusts) to increase their energy efficiency. The Member suggested a future task & finish group to analyse the conditions of the Surrey school estate, consider what strategy needed to be in place to deliver net zero buildings and to ensure there was a link to school health and wellbeing plans. The group were advised that the 25 biggest carbon emitting schools were very receptive and keen to work with the Council to deliver decarbonisation of their estate.

### Surrey Decarbonisation Fund

9. The key aspect to delivering decarbonisation was that the Council could not rely solely on its own resources, securing external funding and multiplying the effect of these funds and Council spending was crucial.
10. The Director – Environment explained that there was a lot of funding in totality around environment, technology, and carbon reduction but it was held with different organisations and thus very fragmented. The Council's Greener Future Investment Multiplier was about being able to identify need, evidence, required action, and where to get funding.

<b>Conclusions:</b>
---------------------

1. The Select Committee, having reviewed the response to the alternative budget proposals, was satisfied that the Cabinet Members and the Directorate had given due regard to the suggestions and that plans were in place to realise many of these objectives. Where plans were not in place the Select Committee were

assured that reviews were underway that would provide options for the Council to increase workforce capacity, secure external funding and make the transition to using electric vehicles across its fleet.

2. The Select Committee retained an interest in the implementation of active travel programmes across the county and further identified the energy efficiency of school estate in Surrey as a priority area for scrutiny. These topics would be developed as part of the Select Committee's next annual forward work programme to be agreed post-election and Annual General Meeting.

---

**Report contact**

Ross Pike, Scrutiny Business Manager, Democratic Services

**Contact details**

[ross.pike@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:ross.pike@surreycc.gov.uk) / 07805 803 593

**Annex 1**

Alternative Budget Proposal Commentary

**Annex 2**

Cabinet Member Response to Jonathan Essex's Proposal

This page is intentionally left blank