

MEMBER QUESTIONS

CABINET MEETING – 31 January 2018

Question 1: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	Respondent: Cllr Richard Boyles
<p>Agenda Item 5: Recommendations to Council - Council Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018-19 to 2020-2021</p> <p>The Children and Families budget refers to funding to 'recruit more social workers to manage demand'.</p> <p>Will this definitely include pay to all social workers at the regional rate?</p>	<p>I want to see improvements to the offer we make to children's social workers in Gloucestershire – and the draft budget will give me the funds necessary to do so. That will include improvements to working conditions, management, career progression, technology and pay.</p>
Question 2: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	Respondent: Cllr Ray Theodoulou
<p>Agenda Item 5: Recommendations to Council - Council Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018-19 to 2020-2021</p> <p>The Business Rates Retention pilot in 2018/19 is designed both for funding of 'financial resilience and growth initiatives'.</p> <p>The budget papers list the areas the extra cash will be used for but what are the growth initiatives for the county?</p>	<p>As outlined in paragraph 26 of the MTFS covering report, 20% of the total amount generated by the Business Rate Retention Pilot will be transferred to the Strategic Economic Development Fund – managed by the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee, (comprising all 7 Gloucestershire councils and the GFirst LEP).</p>

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<p>Question 3: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Tim Harman</p>
<p>Agenda Item 5: Recommendations to Council - Council Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018-19 to 2020-2021</p> <p>One of the administration’s priorities in the Draft Council Strategy 2018/19 is ‘protecting the most vulnerable in our county’ yet public health spending is being cut.</p> <p>This cut includes a slashing of mental health funds by 10.6% and sexual health funds by 13.1%. How is this ‘protecting the most vulnerable’?</p>	<p>The whole public health budget is targeted at reducing health inequalities – so it helps the most vulnerable directly. As we’ve made clear on a number of occasions, the changes in these budgets have led to improvements in services and continue to focus on those with the highest need/most vulnerable.</p> <p>In the case of mental health, the savings come primarily from the ending of one-off projects. The saving of £237k is dwarfed by the increase in the council’s mental health spending overall of over £8m.</p> <p>In sexual health, the savings come from helping patients get help from their own GPs where possible, and better use of technology – such as helping people get tested for STIs in their own homes.</p> <p>We’ve also increased our investment in contraception and sexual health services offered via GPs to increase service provision to all.</p>
<p>Question 4: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Ray Theodoulou</p>
<p>Agenda Item 5: Recommendations to Council - Council Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018-19 to 2020-2021</p> <p>In the budget consultation, 74% agreed with your budget proposals which recommended a 1.99% increase in Council Tax along with an extra 2% tax for the Adult Social Care Levy.</p> <p>Given that you’re now proposing an added 0.5% tax increase, taking the total hike to 4.5%, how will you get the public’s feedback on this new increase in tax?</p>	<p>The flexibility to increase Council Tax by up to 3% was announced on the 19th December, which was after the draft budget had been agreed for consultation on the 14th December.</p> <p>Consultation feedback clearly supports focusing resource on the most vulnerable.</p> <p>The Cabinet wishes to place as little burden as possible on Gloucestershire families, so are only taking half the additional amount allowed under the Draft Finance Settlement.</p>

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Question 5: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	Respondent: Cllr Mark Hawthorne
<p>Agenda Item 5: Recommendations to Council - Council Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018-19 to 2020-2021</p> <p>One of the public consultation's findings was that the Council should 'lobby for more money from central government'. How is that going?</p>	<p>The County Council continues to lobby effectively via local MPs, the CCA and the LGA. That has played an important role in delivering extra funding such as the Business Rate Retention Pilot, fairer funding for Gloucestershire schools, and a commitment to delivering improvements to the A417, among other issues.</p>
Question 6: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	Respondent: Cllr Mark Hawthorne
<p>Agenda Item 5: Recommendations to Council - Council Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018-19 to 2020-2021</p> <p>In the 'Our Values' section of the Council Strategy of the Cabinet papers, you state that two of the Council's values for its staff are to 'respect and value each other and 'proactively challenge'.</p> <p>Given the feedback from OFSTED in their latest 'Inadequate' rating for Children's Services, this has clearly not been the case in that area.</p> <p>How far from your stated values do you think the culture of that area is right now and what about the rest of the Council?</p>	<p>Following the Ofsted report into children's social care, we have been working hard on a comprehensive improvement plan. This includes work on organisational culture.</p> <p>The informal feedback from Ofsted during their recent monitoring visit is that inspectors observed a significant change to the culture in social care teams and improved confidence in senior managers.</p> <p>The proposed new values in the draft Council Strategy have been developed in consultation with staff. They will apply to the whole organisation. This is part of an ongoing dialogue with staff which will be test through regular staff surveys.</p>

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CABINET MEETING – 31 January 2018

Question 7: Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Respondent: Cllr Vernon Smith
Agenda Item 5: Recommendations to Council - Council Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018-19 to 2020-2021 Why do you feel it necessary to cut the Highways Local budget by two thirds compared to this financial year?	The highways local funding is exactly the same as proposed by cabinet last year.
Question 8: Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Respondent: Cllr Ray Theodoulou
Agenda Item 5: Recommendations to Council - Council Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018-19 to 2020-2021 As the cabinet's finance guru, are you content with the level of general fund balances projected to be £18.553 million on 31st March 2018?	The level of general fund balances are within the recommended range of 4-6% of net expenditure and the Director of Strategic Finance confirms in the Cabinet papers that she believes the level of reserves are sufficient to meet the known risks within the budget, taking into account the Council's financial management framework.

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CABINET MEETING – 31 January 2018

<p>Question 9: Cllr Jeremy Hilton</p> <p>Agenda Item 5: Recommendations to Council - Council Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018-19 to 2020-2021</p> <p>Could you provide me with the details of the council tax base growth for each district council collection authority in percentage terms and cash terms?</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Ray Theodoulou</p> <p>£4.542million was built into the consultation budget based on early estimates from District Councils – the current budget contains an additional £1.727m (as detailed in the cabinet report) based on updated information from Districts.</p> <p>The total amounts from each District Council are:-</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 20%;"></th> <th style="width: 15%;">17/18 Taxbase</th> <th style="width: 15%;">18/19 Taxbase</th> <th style="width: 15%;">Taxbase increase</th> <th style="width: 15%;">£ increase</th> <th style="width: 10%;">% increase</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>Cheltenham</i></td> <td style="text-align: right;">41,041.30</td> <td style="text-align: right;">41,745.20</td> <td style="text-align: right;">703.90</td> <td style="text-align: right;">867,350.28</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1.72</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>Cotswold</i></td> <td style="text-align: right;">39,045.55</td> <td style="text-align: right;">40,297.79</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1,252.24</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1,543,018.48</td> <td style="text-align: right;">3.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>Forest of Dean</i></td> <td style="text-align: right;">28,154.45</td> <td style="text-align: right;">28,551.32</td> <td style="text-align: right;">396.87</td> <td style="text-align: right;">489,025.86</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1.41</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>Gloucester City</i></td> <td style="text-align: right;">36,706.40</td> <td style="text-align: right;">37,254.40</td> <td style="text-align: right;">548.00</td> <td style="text-align: right;">675,249.26</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1.49</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>Stroud</i></td> <td style="text-align: right;">42,699.32</td> <td style="text-align: right;">43,539.30</td> <td style="text-align: right;">839.98</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1,035,028.96</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1.97</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>Tewkesbury</i></td> <td style="text-align: right;">32,512.32</td> <td style="text-align: right;">33,858.60</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1,346.28</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1,658,895.20</td> <td style="text-align: right;">4.14</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">TOTAL</td> <td style="text-align: right;">220,159.34</td> <td style="text-align: right;">225,246.61</td> <td style="text-align: right;">5,087.27</td> <td style="text-align: right;">6,268,568.03</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2.31</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		17/18 Taxbase	18/19 Taxbase	Taxbase increase	£ increase	% increase	<i>Cheltenham</i>	41,041.30	41,745.20	703.90	867,350.28	1.72	<i>Cotswold</i>	39,045.55	40,297.79	1,252.24	1,543,018.48	3.21	<i>Forest of Dean</i>	28,154.45	28,551.32	396.87	489,025.86	1.41	<i>Gloucester City</i>	36,706.40	37,254.40	548.00	675,249.26	1.49	<i>Stroud</i>	42,699.32	43,539.30	839.98	1,035,028.96	1.97	<i>Tewkesbury</i>	32,512.32	33,858.60	1,346.28	1,658,895.20	4.14	TOTAL	220,159.34	225,246.61	5,087.27	6,268,568.03	2.31
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Question 10: Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor
Agenda Item 7: Financial Monitoring Report Trading Standards is projecting an overspend this year of £87K. Why is this and do you consider the Trading Standards Budget to be robust enough to take forward into 2018/19?	<p>The overspend within the Trading Standards (TS) budget comprises of £36k Proceeds of Crime Income which was received earlier than forecast and retained within the 2016/17 budget.</p> <p>The remainder of the overspend comprises of monies owed to TS from the Home Office Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme for work done in relation illegal tobacco and will be paid to TS in due course.</p> <p>TS carried out a resource mapping exercise in 2016/17 to ensure that resources matched the priorities for the service as outlined in the annual business plan. This robust assessment has ensured that we maintained a focus on the issues that matter to the consumers of Gloucestershire and the county council by matching resources including financial to these priorities. This approach has proved successful and will continue in 2018/19.</p>
Question 11: Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor
Agenda Item 7: Financial Monitoring Report The report predicts, with a fair degree of confidence, that we shall be awarded £2m from the growth fund to go towards the Gloucester South West Bypass upgrade. How confident are you that we shall succeed in getting this funding?	<p>The scheme's Business Case has been assessed by an independent assessor who concluded that, with a benefit to cost ratio of 12 to 1, the scheme is considered to represent very high value for money.</p> <p>While the final funding decision lies with the LEP Board, I am confident that the £2 million Growth Deal funding allocation will be confirmed.</p> <p>I hope Cllr Hilton will welcome this scheme, alongside the other vital infrastructure improvements the county council has delivered for the city of Gloucester in recent years, including Elmbridge Court and the Walls and C&G roundabout improvements.</p>

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<p>Question 12: Cllr Rachel Smith</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Ray Theodoulou</p>
<p>Agenda Item 5: Recommendations to Council - Council Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018-19 to 2020-2021</p> <p>Reference the budget summary table at point 11 on page 4 of the report, (page 20 of the agenda pack): -</p> <p>For consideration before the meeting, can the cabinet member provide a breakdown for each area of the proposed 2018-19 budget to show ‘one-off investments’ as separate figures?</p>	<p>One off investments included in the 2018/19 base budget summary table on page 20 are: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1.12 million in C&F to fund the implementation of the OFSTED Improvement Plan • £0.052 million of the £0.068 million in Business Services for HR Scanning • £0.115 million of the £0.122 million in Business Services for Archiving SAP data <p>It should also be noted that some of the additional funding is one off in nature, i.e. the additional council tax surplus.</p> <p>In addition, Cabinet is proposing the following one off budgets outside of the base budget summary on page 20: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Rate Pilot estimated £4.6 million – pages 24-25 • £7.176 million of one-off adult social care grant funding – page 99 • £4.86 million; £1.590 million Growing Our Communities Fund, £0.530 million Lengthsman Scheme, £2.740 million A417 contribution all funded from the transformation reserve.
<p>Question 13: Cllr Lesley Williams</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor/Cllr Vernon Smith</p>
<p>Agenda Item 6: Recommendations to Council - Minerals Local Plan for Gloucestershire 2018-2032</p> <p>The threat of flooding is present across many parts of Gloucestershire. Significant flooding events in the recent past have highlighted the need to be better prepared and for greater resilience. Over the coming decades the risk of flooding is set to rise (please refer to footnote 153/point 319/page 130). Which areas in the county have been identified as currently needing work to alleviate flooding?</p>	<p>Areas at risk of flooding are identified by the Environment Agency on their website at http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/37837.aspx</p>