

The Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee received the report on the Business Plan and Budget 2025/26 – 2029/30 at its meeting on 16 January 2025.

The committee raised the following points around the draft proposals as part of its scrutiny role:

- Section 5 of the cover report on Capital Schemes – the table is shown as millions but should be £,000.
- Appendix 2 Proposed Fees and Changes for 2025/26 for services reporting to this committee – a question was raised about the Cherry Hinton library fees and charges and whether these had been determined, as they were absent from the list. It was clarified that the fees/changes and related income would fall to the Community Benefit Company who are one of the partners in this project.
- Paragraph 3.10 of the cover report – reassurance was sought on the Domestic Violence service grant reduction to ensure that the service offered would not be adversely impacted by the loss of this grant, and that this situation would be monitored. Assurance was given by the Head of Service that work was underway with partners so that alternative provision was available to people at medium risk of harm from the wider partnership with the council continuing to concentrate on its primary role of supporting those at high risk of harm.
- Paragraph 3.10 of the cover report table headed Budget Changes 2025/26 – It was confirmed that inflation was included twice in this table at £41k. It was clarified that whilst this error was in the word document in the cover report the detailed table of funding movement in Appendix 1 was correct.
- A question was raised about the level of detail provided in the cover report and associated appendices relating to underlying assumptions that had informed the budget setting given that Members are being asked to scrutinise these proposals. For example, paragraph 3.4 in the cover report referring to the extra responsibilities for Trading Standards and how this will be delivered within the current capacity. The Service Director: Regulatory Services gave assurance that discussions were on-going regarding this activity and the support required to deliver this.
- Clarity was requested on the Household Support Fund and whether it was all passed through from Government to be delivered by the council. It was confirmed that this was the case and that the council had a range of offers supported by this fund including direct support, food vouchers for families in need during school holidays and support for an income maximisation scheme delivered by Citizen's Advice. A number of councillors asked about what happens if this fund does not continue beyond March 2026. It was confirmed that the Citizen's Advice income maximisation support would continue into

2026/27 (as agreed by this committee at its meeting in December 2024) and that the outcome of the Poverty Commission would inform future work for the council and its partners in alleviating the impact of poverty.

- A question was raised about whether government grants are based on the latest population data? It was clarified that this is not the case and that discussions are underway with government on the future arrangements for government grants.
- A question was raised in relation to room hire in libraries on the fee structure for commercial and non-commercial hire and use of the facilities. Clarity was provided by the Head of Libraries, Archives and Culture.
- A question was raised about the robustness of the revenue forecasts within libraries. Reassurance was given about how trends were monitored and reviewed both in the budget setting process and during each financial year, with mitigating action taken as required.
- A question was raised about Table 1 on page 29 of the report. Officers have reviewed the table which shows the Net Revised Opening Budget for 2024-25 budget on the left-hand side. This is the current year 2024-25 budget, which is then revised to account for any base adjustments. The Household Support Fund Grant was correctly incorporated into the Net Revised Opening Budget on the expenditure side of the Strategic Management line, but not incorporated into the income side. This means that the net budget for 2024-25 was overstated by £6,163k. The total Net Revised Opening Budget for 2024-25 for services in the remit of CSMI Committee should have been £10,617k. The Gross, Income and Net budgets for 2025-26 are correct.

As a result of the debate the following action is recommended to be passed to the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee for consideration at its meeting on 28 January:

- To review the summary financial tables for the capital schemes for the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion committee to ensure the figures are shown as £,000s and not millions.
- To change the net revised opening budget for Strategic Management to £10,617k.

Following a vote, it was confirmed that the majority of the committee supported the Business Planning and budget proposals as considered at this meeting on 16 January 2025.