

## COUNTY COUNCIL: 11TH FEBRUARY 2020

### Agenda Item No. 7 – Council’s Business Plan and Budget Proposals 2020-21 To 2024-25 – Liberal Democrat Amendment

#### Proposals:

##### ***Introduction***

For most of the last ten years, public services in Cambridgeshire have been relentlessly squeezed. This is evident in the condition of our roads and pavements, in the closure of children’s centres, in the challenges facing the NHS and social care, in the gaps in public transport particularly in rural areas, and in the difficulties in funding schools generally, and services to children with special educational needs and disabilities in particular.

The County Council budget is being decided at a time of enormous uncertainty for our country, with a Conservative government seemingly relaxed about taking enormous risks with our economy and public services in pursuit of vain ideological policies. Brexit is yet again set to dominate the public debate for the coming year, as the government negotiates a new relationship with the EU.

At the same time, awareness of the global threat of climate change has become increasingly acute. Floods in the UK and fires in Australia should act as a wake-up call to us all that more urgent action is needed to tackle climate change.

This alternative budget focuses on three key priorities:

- climate change;
- social justice; and
- early local action.

##### ***Climate change***

Cambridgeshire County Council has declared a Climate Emergency, and that is extremely welcome, but this needs to be backed with action. Liberal Democrats would invest to phase out oil and gas use more quickly in County Council owned premises. We would also move a significant sum from the Council’s Transformation Fund into a specific climate fund, to be drawn on for schemes that contribute to the Council’s emerging Climate Change & Environment Strategy.

Equally importantly Liberal Democrats are committed to investing in better public transport to ensure more people have a real choice about whether to get in their car. Improving out of hours bus services would allow more people to have a realistic choice of using public transport. Cross-company ticketing is well overdue, and this investment would help to ensure real progress in this frustrating area.

Junior Travel Ambassadors promote active and safer travel to and from school. Pupils are empowered to make their own decisions about what they think needs to change to improve road safety for their school, and encouraged to become more active and lead healthier lifestyles. Demand for this scheme has outstripped the funds available, so we would invest in the Junior Travel Ambassadors scheme to spread this opportunity to more schools in Cambridgeshire.

##### ***Social justice***

Liberal Democrats have argued for many years now that the cuts being made to our social care system, for both children and for vulnerable adults of all ages, are cruel and counter-productive.

This year the Conservative budget yet again puts further pressure on those most in need by introducing new charges for many adults in receipt of social care, who will be charged increased fees. We are very concerned that the introduction of such fees may lead to considerable hardship in some cases. The fees will not be levied on those below the government's minimum income guarantee, but this is a very low bar, and may well leave individuals above that level facing considerable difficulties. For this reason we are proposing a support fund open to those facing higher fees and at risk of financial hardship.

We are also proposing significant investment in children's centres and early years support. The Liberal Democrats believe strongly in early help for families, and that investing in a good early start for children and parents pays off in the long term. With numbers and costs for children with special educational needs rising fast it is crucial to get help to children as early as possible to try to ensure they are ready for school. Where children are not well supported in the early years, and start school behind, the deficit at age four tends to increase over time, leading to ever more serious and expensive problems.

### ***Early local action***

For similar reasons we believe the cuts to the youth service have gone too far, and now mean there is no universal youth offer across the County. This means many teenagers do not get the support they need at an early stage. Without an effective youth offer, problems often escalate leading to increasing mental health issues, with huge costs for both the young people concerned and for overstretched NHS services. With school budgets also under enormous pressure too often services are simply not there when young people need them.

As active local councillors the Liberal Democrat group are also very aware of the frustrations felt by many communities that sufficient funds are not in place for small maintenance tasks to be carried out promptly by local highway officers on local roads, verges, and footways. Our alternative budget would provide more disposable funds to the local level to tackle these small tasks before they become big ones.

Anti-social parking, on junctions, on double yellow lines, obstructing pedestrians, cyclists and other road users is a constant source of frustration for residents. Outside the city of Cambridge, this county is almost unique in relying on the police to enforce on-street parking—something the police have been very clear is not a priority for them and that they will not do. We would invest in a trial to demonstrate whether civil parking enforcement could be cost neutral and thus a sensible investment for the council.

### ***Finally***

The Liberal Democrats have consistently objected to the level of waste and duplication in this council, especially now that the Mayor's Combined Authority has taken over so much of the council's role. A huge number of Conservative councillors receive substantial special allowances. We would cut the number of committees by two and abolish the unnecessary role of 'Area Champions'.

Conservatives both in Westminster and on this Council are cutting services for some of our most vulnerable citizens, while at the same time wasting money on excessive committees and unjustifiable roles.

Our alternative budget reduces this waste and duplication, while investing in the key priorities of climate change, social justice, and early local action.

## AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Nethsingha, Seconded by Councillor Jenkins

Delete recommendations 1, 2 and 3:

- ~~1. Approves the Service/Directorate budget allocations as set out in each Service/Directorate table in section 3 of the Business Plan.~~
- ~~2. Gives consideration to a total county budget requirement and precept level~~
- ~~3. Gives consideration to a Council Tax for each Band of property, based on the number of "Band D" equivalent properties notified to the County Council by the District Councils as set out in section 2, Table 6.4 of the Business Plan.~~

Replace recommendations 1, 2 and 3 as follows:

- 1a Approve the Service/Directorate budget allocations as set out in each Service/Directorate table in Section 3 of the Business Plan, to be balanced and amended with the following adjustments:

<b>Revised budget gap as proposed £000</b>		<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>
		4,029	4,836	7,831	10,910	10,689
<b>Permanent change by year £000</b>		<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>
<b>b</b>	General Council tax at 1.99% rather than 0% for 2020/21	-5,847	-392	-226	-233	-233
<b>Revised budget gap after financing adjustments</b>		<b>-1,818</b>	<b>4,444</b>	<b>7,605</b>	<b>10,677</b>	<b>10,456</b>
<i>Additional Savings</i>						
<b>c</b>	Reduce the number of committees	-53	-	-	-	-
<b>d</b>	Reduce the SRAs paid to chairs and vice-chairs	-49	-	-	-	-
<b>e</b>	Remove the Area Champion role	-20	-	-	-	-
<b>Revised budget gap after additional savings</b>		<b>-1,940</b>	<b>4,444</b>	<b>7,605</b>	<b>10,677</b>	<b>10,456</b>
<i>Additional spending commitments</i>						
<b>f</b>	Adult Social Care financial support fund	+250	-	-	-	-
<b>g</b>	Civil Parking Enforcement trial	+20	-	-	-	-
<b>h</b>	Junior Travel Ambassadors	+40	-	-	-	-
<b>i</b>	Children's Centres and Early Years	+500	-	-	-	-
<b>j</b>	Local Highways Officer disposable budgets	+500	-	-	-	-
<b>k</b>	Youth Services	+120	-	-	-	-
<b>l</b>	Accelerated phase-out of oil/gas on CCC property	+220	-	-	-	-
<b>m</b>	Expansion of out-of-hours bus services and cross-company bus ticketing	+290	-	-	-	-
<b>Revised budget gap after additional savings</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>4,444</b>	<b>7,605</b>	<b>10,677</b>	<b>10,456</b>

- 2a Approve a total county budget requirement in respect of general expenses applicable to the whole County area of £842,879,000 as set out in Section 2 Table 6.1 of the Business Plan.
- 2b Approve a recommended County Precept for Council Tax from District Councils of £315,077,617.44, as set out in Section 2, Table 6.3 of the Business Plan (to be received in ten equal instalments in accordance with the fall-back provisions of the Local Authorities (Funds) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 1995).
- 3 Approve a Council Tax for each Band of property, based on the number of “Band D” equivalent properties notified to the County Council by the District Councils (230,927.6), as set out in Section 2, Table 6.4 of the Business Plan reflecting a 2% ASC precept increase and a 1.99% increase in the Basic Council Tax precept:

Band	Ratio	Amount (£)
A	6/9	909.60
B	7/9	1,061.20
C	8/9	1,212.80
<b>D</b>	<b>9/9</b>	<b>1,364.40</b>
E	11/9	1,667.60
F	13/9	1,970.80
G	15/9	2,274.00
H	18/9	2,728.80

Add an additional recommendation as follows:

- 8 Create a Climate Change Action fund by transferring £10m from the Transformation Fund.