

AMENDMENT PROPOSED FOR STRATEGY, RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Item 6 – Business Plan and Budget 2026-27 – 2028-29

Thursday 29 January 2026

Proposer: Cllr E Murphy

Introduction

Following debate at both Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion and Children and Young People Committees as part of the scrutiny of the budget proposed at the December 2025 meeting of Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee, there were concerns raised that the lack of a transition for those in receipt of holiday food vouchers and how this lack of transitional arrangements could impact those most in need. It is a key priority for the administration to invest in targeted interventions that help move people out of poverty and build long-term financial stability and independence, ensuring no child goes hungry.

Given the understanding so far of the Crisis Resilience Fund grant conditions published in mid-January and the Provisional Settlement position in relation to the previously reported budget gap now being addressed, it is proposed to amend the 2026/27 budget to create a fund that will:

- **Support the transition to the new national Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) arrangements, which build on the work of the Poverty Commission;**
- **Enable a revised holiday free school meals offer during the transition period, providing a buffer for affected families;**
- **Support the transition period leading up to the September 2026 changes to free school meals eligibility.**

The Liberal Democrat and Independent Group therefore proposes the amendment circulated to the 2026-27 revenue budget allocations as set out in Tables at Appendix 1c. This has been passed through the statutory officers and is deemed affordable and deliverable, and we ask for the Committee's support.

AMENDMENT

a) **Amend** Revenue budget allocations, funded from reserves, resulting from the following changes:

Type of Proposal	£000	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	Remarks from amendment proposer and seconder
	Budget Gap in Draft Business Plan	0	15,172	21,711	27,273	26,347	
Reduce H/R.6.003	Local Government Reorganisation Reserve	-1,000	+1,000	-	-	-	Reducing the LGR reserve (funded from general funds) to £4.1m, releasing £1m for the purpose below.
New Priority [P&S]	Crisis and Resilience Transition Reserve	+1,000	-1,000	-	-	-	Creating a new earmarked reserve of £1m to support the transition to the incoming Crisis and Resilience Fund arrangements. This enables some continuing investment into a revised holiday free school meals offer during this transitional period. This timing enables extended notice to families and coincides with the September 2026 revisions to free school meals eligibility
	Revised Budget Gap	0	15,172	21,711	27,273	26,347	

END OF AMENDMENT

Remarks from Statutory Officers

Chief Finance Officer (§151) technical comments

The amendment would change priorities within earmarked reserves to enable a one-off £1m investment to support the transition to the new crisis and resilience fund (CRF). The CRF is a ringfenced fund supplied by the Department for Work and Pensions. Adding Council funds enables some greater flexibility in deployment of resources, with these expected to be spent by 31 August.

Based on current eligibility, this level of investment would enable funding of approximately £58 per recipient to extend a reducing level of support through to the summer of this year covering the 2025-26 academic year.

The planned increase in expenditure towards crisis and transition is fully offset by a decrease in expected expenditure on local government reorganisation and there is no impact on the planned expenditure total. There is no impact on Council Tax requirement and the budget remains balanced for 2026-27.

This will leave £4.1m for LGR funded by revenue reserves, as well as a further £1.5m which we plan to make available through flexible use of capital receipts.

Monitoring Officer technical comments

Further to the confirmation above that the amended budget would remain balanced for 2026-27, in accordance with Local Government Finance Act 1992, there are no additional implications raised by the Monitoring Officer.

Head of Paid Service technical comments

The proposed investment is aligned with the proposed and revised Strategic Framework and ambitions the Business Plan sets out.