

POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
08/02/2022 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor McLaren (Chair)
Councillors Alyas, Curley, Hobin, K Phythian, Surjan and
Williamson

Also in Attendance:

Dave Arnott	Deputy Leader of the Conservatives and Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance & Low Carbon
Andy Cooper	Senior Finance Manager
Chris Gloster	Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats and Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance & Low Carbon
Andrew Hunt	Strategy Partnerships and Policy Manager
Abdul Jabbar MBE	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Low Carbon
Kaidy McCann	Constitutional Services
Andy Moran	Assistant Director of Finance
Anne Ryans	Director of Finance
Graham Sheldon	Leader of the Opposition Conservatives

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence received.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions received.

5 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th
January 2022 be approved as a correct record.

6 **LIBERAL DEMOCRATS BUDGET AMENDMENT
PROPOSALS 2022/23**

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Finance
Manager which outlined the Liberal Democrats' suggested
amendments to the Administration's budget proposals for
2022/23. The report identified additional savings proposals
totalling £0.987m in 2022/23 and £0.013m in 2023/24 which

could be considered individually or collectively. There were also initial investments that would be funded from the range of savings proposals put forward to offset the increased expenditure and suggested amendments to the Capital Programme.



The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance and Low Carbon commended Officers for their assistance in compiling these budget proposals. As an overview, the aims of the Liberal Democrat proposals were to offer common-sense practical solutions to the borough's problems and challenge the Administration to cut waste and provide the value-for-money local services the public want with a focus on making the borough safer, greener and cleaner.

The Liberal Democrats proposed capital investment of £6.950m from the £7.291m Funds for Emerging Priorities provision with the capital programme, thus not increasing any revenue budget financing requirement.

Liberal Democrat Alternative Revenue Budget Reduction Proposals

OPP-BR1-201 - Additional Vacancy Management factor to achieve greater efficiency including limiting the present use of agency staff and consultants (£0.550m)

The proposal sought to assist in reducing the number of agency staff and consultants used across the Council further by applying an Additional Vacancy Management factor of 0.75% to all Council mainstream employee budgets.

OPP-BR1-202 - Reduction in mileage budgets to reflect changes in work practices (£0.050m)

It was proposed that due to the increase in Council employees working from home and the increase of Teams based meetings, the requirement to travel on Council business using a personal vehicle had reduced.

OPP-BR1-203 - Review of car allowances as previously promised to reduce the amount paid as a lump sum to staff doing zero or minimal mileage (£0.037m)

It was proposed that a review of the posts which attract essential car user status be undertaken with the intention of removing the lump sum payment from posts where users routinely record zero or very few miles. It was noted to the Committee that many staff who did use cars regularly did not hold such status. In presenting the proposal, it was further noted that proposal had been before the Committee several times previously, with the promised review failing to appear.

OPP-BR1-204 - Reduction in the General Training Budget agreed in 2018/19 to be made permanent (£0.100m)

The proposed reduction would require all future training requirements, which cannot be funded via the apprenticeship levy, to be reviewed to ensure that best value is being secured. Priority would be provided to statutory and mandatory training. Any additional training and development would be assessed on the basis of value provided to the organisation, managing any identified risks to the Council in terms of building capability across all service areas.

OPP-BR1-205 - Reconsideration of Council priorities with regards to the Communications and Research service (£0.250m)

It was proposed to reduce the service budget for the Communications and Research team by £0.250m in 2022/23. This reduction would be met by generating £0.245m through ceasing the publication of @Oldham Council, Working for You' and deleting/ disestablishing 5.18 FTE posts. Alongside those reductions, it was proposed to generate revenue of circa £0.005m through income generation activities across the full range of Council media channels.

The Committee was advised that these budget reduction proposals generated funding to support a range of revenue investments of an equal value, £0.987m in 2022/23 and £0.013m in 2023/24, (£1.000m in total) to support Liberal Democrat priority investments. These investment proposals were:

- Reinstatement Parish Council Grant funding - £0.015m
- Investment in tackling environmental issues - £0.200m
- 20's plenty (introducing 20 mph zones) - £0.235m
- Early help and preventative services - £0.100m
- Bulk waste collection – 128 free collections per week – £0.200m
- Youth Service -events and activities - £0.100m
- Crime and Community Safety - £150m

RESOLVED that the Committee referred the Liberal Democrat revenue and capital budget reduction and investment proposals to Cabinet for consideration.

7

CONSERVATIVE BUDGET AMENDMENT PROPOSALS 2022/23

The Committee considered a report of the Finance Manger which outlined the Conservatives' suggested amendments to the Administration's budget proposals for 2022/23. The report identified additional savings proposals totalling £0.892m in 2022/23 and £0.013m in 2023/24 which could be considered individually or collectively. It was also proposed that there was a partial reversal of the Administration's Development Fund investment proposals saving £0.500m per annum. There would also be an additional contribution from reserves of £0.986m in 2022/23 and £0.032m in 2023/24. Creating a resource of

£2.423m, this would therefore support the Conservative proposals to:

- invest £0.300m in fly tipping enforcement
- postpone the 10p increase in school meals for 12 months costing £0.154m
- not increase the Council Tax for general purposes in 2022/23 costing £1.969m

The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group and Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance and Low Carbon commended Officers for their assistance in compiling these budget proposals. As an overview, the aims of the Conservative proposals were to alleviate the cost of living pressures many families were facing, especially from higher gas and electricity bills as well as increases in the price of many other goods and services caused by worldwide supply chain disruption exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To help finance the proposals set out at paragraphs 3.2 to 3.4 of the report, the Conservatives recommended the reversal of two Development Fund investment initiatives proposed by the Administration which would reduce expenditure by a total of £0.500m per annum:

- District Partnership Working (£0.300m per annum)
- Improved Customer Engagement (£0.200m per annum)

Conservative Alternative Budget Reduction Proposals

Inclusion of an Additional Vacancy Management factor within the budget estimates to achieve greater efficiency including limiting the present use of agency staff and consultants (£0.550m)

The proposal sought to assist in reducing the number of agency staff and consultants used across the Council further by applying an Additional Vacancy Management factor of 0.75% to all Council mainstream employee budgets.

Reduction in the amount of stationery purchased across the authority (£0.010m)

The purchase of stationery is completed by individual teams across the organisation on an ad hoc basis which did not always ensure best value for money through economies of scale. The purchase of stationery could be centralised in specific locations across the borough such as the Civic Centre, which would ensure that better value for money was being achieved through increased understanding of which items were required.

Reduction in car allowances and mileage budgets to reflect changes in work practices (£0.087m) in 2022/23 and £0.013m in 2023/24.

It was proposed that due to the increase in Council employees working from home and the increase of Teams based meetings,

the requirement to travel on Council business using a personal vehicle had reduced.

It was proposed that a review of the posts which attract essential car user status be undertaken with the intention of removing the lump sum payment from posts where users routinely record zero or very few miles. It was noted to the Committee that many staff who did use cars regularly did not hold such status.

Reconsideration of Council priorities with regards to the Communications and Research Service (£0.245m)

It was proposed to reduce the service budget for the Communications and Research team by £0.245m in 2022/23. This reduction would be met by halting production of the Current version of Borough Life magazine and disestablishing 5.18 FTE posts which may include redundancies.

RESOLVED that the Committee referred the Conservative revenue budget reduction and investment proposals to Cabinet for consideration.

8

OLDHAM GREEN NEW DEAL - 2030 CARBON NEUTRALITY TARGET AND GROWING THE GREEN ECONOMY

Consideration was given to a report of the Green Energy & Sustainability Manager which provided an update on initiatives in the Oldham Green New Deal programme which would contribute to achieving the 2030 carbon neutrality target for Oldham Borough. The initiatives would also bring co-benefits such as supporting growth in Oldham's Green Technology and Services sector, creating and supporting jobs and training opportunities for residents; enabling Oldham's households and businesses to upgrade the energy efficiency of their properties; and supporting the Council to achieve its 2025 carbon neutrality target for Council Buildings and Street Lighting.

The Oldham Green New Deal (OGND) Strategy was adopted by the Council in March 2020. The Strategy set a number of objectives and pledges for delivery on environmental issues in a range of work areas, which broadly fitted into three over-arching 'pillars':-

- Growing the green economy
- Low carbon infrastructure and a Local Energy Market
- Northern Roots

The OGND Strategy also set two carbon neutrality targets:-

- For Council Buildings and Street Lighting by 2025
- For the borough by 2030

The most recent data available showed that in 2019, overall emissions for the borough fell by 6% on the previous year to 772.6 ktCO₂. Oldham retained its position within Greater Manchester as the borough with both the lowest total carbon

footprint and also lowest per capita emissions at 3.3 tCO₂ per Oldham resident. Emissions for Council Buildings and Street Lighting fell to 8,059 tCO₂, which was a reduction of 4% on the baseline of 8,395 tCO₂ in the Oldham Green New Deal Strategy.



It was noted that the most recent update report on the Oldham Green New Deal programme was presented to the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2021, which provided a funding update on a number of projects and initiatives and set out the potential for the Council to work with the private sector to deliver low carbon infrastructure in the borough. A further update was requested once further work had been done to develop the concept of a public-private sector partnership to deliver low carbon infrastructure in the borough.

Since the report in September, the Council had carried out soft market testing exercise, inviting private sector low carbon infrastructure companies to provide feedback to the Council on its proposed approach to setting up a public-private sector partnership to deliver against the 2025 and 2030 carbon neutrality targets. Alongside this exercise, a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) had been developed for Oldham by Energy Systems Catapult who were leading delivery of the GM Local Energy Market project. The LAEP showed that an investment of around £5.6 billion would be required in energy infrastructure in the Oldham borough to achieve carbon neutrality.

Members were advised that in October 2021, the Council commissioned Aleron social impact consultants to prepare a SWOT analysis and Regional Action Plan looking at how the Council and other key stakeholders could support growth in Oldham's Green Technology and Services sector. For the study, Aleron carried out both a desktop analysis and interviews with a wide range of stakeholders including green businesses in Oldham. The study showed significant potential for Oldham's Green Technology and Services (GTS) sector to play a key role in delivery of the 2030 carbon neutrality target whilst creating jobs and training opportunities for Oldham residents.

Members were informed that work had been completed on a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) for Oldham, which had been prepared by Energy Systems Catapult, the lead partner in the GM Local Energy Market project. The LAEP had identified a requirement for £5.6bn to be invested in Oldham's energy infrastructure, to enable the borough to achieve its 2030 carbon neutrality target. Whilst this was seen as a significant challenge, it presented a significant commercial opportunity for private sector providers of low carbon infrastructure and provided an evidence base supporting an over-arching strategic business case for decarbonisation of the borough.

The Oldham Green Economy study and the LAEP were two key documents which would support any strategic public-private sector low carbon infrastructure partnership:-

- The green economy study provided an evidence base which showed how the local Oldham supply chain could support delivery of low carbon infrastructure in the borough, and benefit from the investment
- The LAEP provided an evidence base which highlighted the extent and prioritisation / targeting of low carbon infrastructure opportunities in the borough.

Taken together, the two documents would not only give confidence to any private sector infrastructure provider partner that potential commercial opportunities did exist in Oldham, making Oldham an attractive investment, but would also set out how such a private sector partner could engage Oldham's local green business sector to deliver (or support delivery of) a significant part of the borough's decarbonisation programme.

Members were advised that, following the conclusion of the soft market testing exercise, twelve organisations that represented a wide range of viewpoints responded which provided valuable feedback which would help the Council to further develop and refine its proposed approach. Highlight of the respondents were set out in section 3.4 of the report. From the feedback, a proposed structure for the strategic partnership had been developed. The proposed approach envisaged the Council appointing two main contractors:-

- The Primary Contractor responsible for investment in, and delivery of, low carbon infrastructure in Oldham borough
- A consultancy service providing independent assurance of the overall delivery programme and individual projects / initiatives, supporting the Council with governance and accountability, and supporting the infrastructure provider as a 'critical friend'

RESOLVED that:

1. the progress on three key complementary strategic initiatives be noted:-
 - Mapping the green economic sector to identify opportunities for growth;
 - Mapping the low carbon infrastructure opportunities across Oldham borough; and
 - Soft market testing exploring the potential for a Strategic Low Carbon Investment and Delivery Partnership with the private sector
2. the proposed approach to developing a Strategic Low Carbon Investment and Delivery Partnership for more detailed consideration by senior officers and Cabinet members be endorsed.

10

**POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK
PROGRAMME 2021/22**

RESOLVED that the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme be noted.



The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.06 pm