

Cabinet



Date of meeting:	10 February 2025
Title of Report:	Budget Scrutiny Recommendations
Lead Member:	Councillor John Stephens (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Northey (Service Director for Finance)
Author:	Ross Jago (Head of Governance Performance and Risk)
Contact Email:	Ross.jago@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	BudR24/25
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board met across two days to consider whether the Cabinet has an effective plan for the implementation of the budget for the next financial year, focusing on organisational priorities.

The Committee focused the majority of their time on the greatest areas of risk facing the Council in Childrens Services, Adult Social Care and Health, Homelessness and the cost of living.

Recommendations and Reasons

That Cabinet consider the following recommendations made by the Budget Scrutiny Select Committee.

Recommendations to Cabinet

1. That the Section 151 Officer undertakes a comprehensive review of the working balance threshold using CIPFA best practice guidance and comparisons against the Council's statistical neighbours to determine if 5% remains appropriate given current risks;
2. Subject to the advice of the Section 151 Officer, Cabinet prepares a detailed plan to rebuild the reserves within two years to provide an adequate buffer against financial risks whilst implementing a clear strategy to reduce the Council's reliance upon use of one-off resources and reserves;
3. That Cabinet updates the comprehensive Medium Term Financial Strategy when multi-year funding settlements are agreed, and submits to scrutiny for consideration before the council take a final decision;

4. That all significant capital schemes have a detailed risk assessment of the impact of further interest rate changes on scheme viability before proceeding;
5. That Cabinet consider a Council Tax Discount scheme for Service Personnel who are deployed more than six months, in a similar fashion to Single Person Discount;
6. That 6 monthly updates are provided to the relevant scrutiny committee on delivery of planned savings within homelessness services, where £0.724m additional funding has been required;
7. That planned work to bring together asset management plans is considered at a future meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board and that an asset register is provided for this purpose;
8. The Council should develop a comprehensive communications strategy to inform residents who are not digitally enabled about face-to-face services. This information, including service locations and operating hours, should be distributed through non-digital channels, with primary distribution through the annual Council Tax bill.
9. That Cabinet consider what additional funding may be available to commemorate Victory in Europe and Victory over Japan day;
10. The clear communication should be in place to ensure that residents are aware that direct cremations are available at the Park Crematorium;
11. That Cabinet review the effectiveness and sustainability of demand management approaches within Adult Social Care given the £12m of additional costs identified.
12. That the relevant Cabinet member is recommended to work with DELT shared services to ensure that internet connectivity is consistent across the PCC estate, particularly in libraries to enable residents to gain access to online services;
13. The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee undertakes a review of the work undertaken in the Dental Health Taskforce.
14. The committee welcomes the additional funding to process Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and that a regular update on progress against this backlog is provided to the Children Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel.
15. That Cabinet review the funding model for SEND transport to determine a sustainable long term solution, including consideration of independent travel training programmes where appropriate.
16. Write to the Government requesting a review of criteria in relation to home to school transport, such a review should consider whether receipt of a Motability vehicle or higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or PIP can be included in the Local Authority assessment of transport needs.
17. That Cabinet review the effectiveness and sustainability of demand management approaches within Children's Services given the £19m of additional costs identified and further accelerates the use of council assets in the approach to reduce demand on high cost placements;
18. That the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships establishes a robust monitoring framework to oversee the SEND capital programme ensuring clear accountability

for project milestones and progress. This should form regular reports to the Children Young People and Families Scrutiny Committee.

19. That the Leader to write to Government to request that notification of the Public Health Grant is received before the 31 December 2025 to enable adequate planning in the new year's budget.

Reason: The recommendations were made after careful consideration of the draft budget proposals and accompanying documentation.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Budget Scrutiny is a key part of the development of the 2025/26 budget and Cabinet are required to receive and respond to the recommendations of the Select Committee.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The Select Committee considered the themes within the Corporate Plan to ensure that proposals within the budget and business plans deliver against the council's vision.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Recommendations within the report impact on the 2025/26 budget and subject to the response from Cabinet could have impact on future years budgets within the scope of the current Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Financial Risks

There are no financial risks as a direct result of this report.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

There are no environmental implications as a direct result of this report.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

N/A

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
		<i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Background papers:

**Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)
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	<i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
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Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Northey (Service Director for Finance)											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes 31/01/2025											
Scrutiny Chair approval: Councillor John Stephens (Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board) Date approved: 31/01/2025											