

Cabinet



Date of meeting:	10 February 2025
Title of Report:	Cabinet Response - Budget Scrutiny Recommendations
Lead Member:	Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Northey, (Service Director for Finance)
Author:	David Northey, (Service Director for Finance)
Contact Email:	Ross.jago@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	CabR24/25
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report sets out the response to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Management Board following its consideration of the draft 2025/26 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme.

Recommendations and Reasons

That the responses to the recommendations made by the Committee itemised in Appendix A to report are agreed.

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 Overview and Scrutiny Management Board 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:

Financial and resources implications relating to the initial response to individual recommendations will be explored in detail as related proposals are brought forward.

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Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Cabinet Response to Recommendations							

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) 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.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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											
Date agreed: 31/01/2025											
Cabinet Member approval: Cabinet Members											
Date approved: 03/02/2025											

	Recommendation	Cabinet Response
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.	Agreed
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	Partially Agreed , subject to the findings from Recommendation 1. the required timescale might need to be over the period covered by the Medium Term Financial Plan rather than two years.
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	Agreed. There is a commitment to refresh the Medium Term Financial Strategy on an on-going annual cycle. All future strategies will reflect multi-year settlement information.
4.	That all significant capital schemes have a detailed risk assessment of the impact of further interest rate changes on scheme viability before proceeding	Agreed. As the Scrutiny Board are aware, there have been refinements to the approval and monitoring of all capital projects during 2024/25 These include improved business case requirements to include risk registers. Fluctuations in interest rates and their impact are considered, but this can be further strengthened to reflect this recommendation
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	Agreed , Cabinet will consider but subject to further information from the Board on requested criteria. Any amendments will result in an additional financial burden and will be subject to public consultation

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	Agreed - It's important to note that the recent increase in the homelessness budget is directly attributable to additional grant support provided by the new Labour government. This funding is specifically allocated to help address the impact of the national housing crisis within our community.
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	Agreed.
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.	Partially agreed – We will prioritise the support for residents who are unable to access online services based on clear eligibility criteria. We will continue to target communications to those residents are not digitally enabled, however as our offer is not universal this information will not be included in Council Tax bills.
9.	That Cabinet consider what additional funding may be available to commemorate Victory in Europe and Victory over Japan day,	Agreed.
10.	That clear communication should be in place to ensure that residents are aware that direct cremations are available at the Park Crematorium.	Agreed.
11.	That Cabinet review the effectiveness and sustainability of demand management approaches within Adult Social Care given the £12m of additional costs identified.	Agreed.
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.	Agreed. This work is underway, and a report will be shared with the relevant Cabinet member.

13.	The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee undertakes a review of the work undertaken in the Dental Health Taskforce.	Agreed Cabinet is aware that the Scrutiny Function may request items for review. The Cabinet member will provide a report on progress when invited to do so, although it must be understood that the council is not responsible for dental provision in the city.
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.	Agreed.
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.	Agreed. The council has already developed independent travel training programmes, and the relevant Cabinet member will provide a report on this issue to the relevant panel when requested.
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 Personal Independent Payments (PIP) can be included in the Local Authority assessment of transport needs.	Agreed.
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.	Agreed.
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.	Agreed.

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.	Agreed, subject to public health funding being not being included in the settlement. The Government have announced their intention to reform local authority funding ahead of the 2026/27 Settlement and the Cabinet will review this recommendation again if Public Health funding is not included in any changes.