

Statement to Cabinet – 3 October 2023

Comments from the Scrutiny Finance Task Group on Agenda item 20 - Medium Term Financial Plan & Capital Strategy

1. The Finance Task Group has met on six occasions over the August - September period to receive detailed briefings as the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) has been developed.
2. We would like to place on record our thanks to the Director: Finance and other members of the Finance team who have supported these briefings and for their ongoing openness and diligence in responding to our questions and points of clarification as these sessions have progressed.
3. At the forthcoming meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Commission on 12 October, scrutiny members will confirm their detailed comments on the MTFP in order that these can be shared with the wider council membership in advance of the consideration of the MTFP at the 31 October Extraordinary Full Council meeting.
4. At this stage, we would like to draw the Mayor and Cabinet's attention to the following points:

a. **Council Tax Reduction Scheme review:**

On 12 October, the Resources Scrutiny Commission will receive an update on the outcomes of the public consultation on the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and will formulate any further comments we wish to submit to the administration (further to the initial comments we submitted to the Cabinet on 4 July prior to the consultation being launched).

The MTFP assumes the delivery of the £3m saving in 2024/25 as determined at last year's Budget Council meeting; we note that any decision not to implement or fully implement this planned saving will create a significant additional pressure within the MTFP.

b. **Clean Air Zone income:**

Our understanding is that the administration will receive a report in December on the year 1 outcomes of the Clean Air Zone, including the detail on the financial income realised over that period. For completeness, we feel it would have been helpful for this figure to have been included in the 3 October Cabinet MTFP report. We will wish to understand this detail and any financial implications/impact in relation to the MTFP, noting that CAZ income is already identified as the source of match funding for projects being taken forward through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.

c. **Invest to Save:**

As flagged previously in our comments to the Budget Council in February and bearing in mind the ongoing seriousness of the budgetary pressures faced by the authority, we again flag the urgent need for greater emphasis on encouraging innovative Invest to Save

proposals, including capital investment. Linked to this, we feel the authority should review and look to refine as necessary its approach to risk management around future investment opportunities.

d. **Capital programme:** Given the budgetary pressures, we will continue to seek assurance/clarification as necessary on the action and measures being taken in relation to the governance, management and delivery of the capital programme, particularly in relation to slippage within the programme and addressing any inflationary impact of slippage/delay.

Councillor Geoff Gollop
Chair, Resources Scrutiny Commission & Finance Task Group
(on behalf of members of the Commission/Task Group)