

## **Statement: CS30.02**

**Cabinet – 5 MARCH 2024**

**Re: Agenda item 30 – Safety Valve Programme**

**Statement submitted by: Cllr Andrew Brown**

### **Statement on Item 30 – Safety Valve Programme**

My group and I are disappointed that this item has been published so late and with so little time for public statements to be submitted, and no opportunity for public questions.

We understand that there are immense pressures in the DSG, that the current position is unsustainable – not just for the service but for the council – and that the current over-ride is not guaranteed beyond the 2025/26. We also understand that the Council frequently has to undertake confidential negotiations with Central Government on all sorts of areas in order to receive or maintain grant funding.

We further understand that if a deal is rejected once it has been negotiated, there may not be a further opportunity to enter into negotiations again or that the same terms could be achieved.

That being said, we are concerned that having reached the point where the Council was able to publish this paper that it wasn't published in good time for there to be reasonable public examination. As I understand it, the Chair of OSMB agreed to invoke APR16 on Friday, but the paper still wasn't published until just before noon on Monday. Again, as I understand it, a decision is required by the Department for Education by 11<sup>th</sup> March – was consideration given to holding an extra Cabinet Meeting for this one issue in order to allow public scrutiny of the proposal?

Finally, as Chair of Audit, I note that the committee is listed as having been consulted on these proposals. I would like to put on record that we were not "consulted"- and neither was the Finance Task Group I sit on – rather we were briefed in exempt session and on the strict understanding that absolute confidentiality was a requirement of the DfE throughout the process. I – and other members – were clear we expected there to be some form of public scrutiny at the end of the process.

Cllr Andrew Brown  
Deputy Leader, Lib Dem Group  
Chair, Audit Committee