

CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 20TH DECEMBER, 2021

At 7.00 pm

by

VIRTUAL MEETING - ONLINE ACCESS AND ON [RBWM YOUTUBE](#)

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

PART I

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>PAGE NO</u>
	<u>QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED IN ADVANCE ON THE BUDGET</u>	3 - 6

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Cllr Price

SERVICE SAVINGS AND INCOME GENERATION Ref 65 Corporate Business Development.

I don't understand what this is about. The schedule states " income target increased to align with activity levels" whilst the EQIA states "aims to maximise level of funding and reduce net cost of service". At first I thought this was generation of commercial income, but don't know from what activity, but then it refers to funding, which I thought refers to making bids to some funding body. Please can you explain so I can understand.

This is a budget correction – i.e. increasing the budget to expected levels of income. The Eqia relates to more than one of the children's savings.

SERVICE SAVINGS

Ref 25 Subjective Savings. I've looked at the EQIA but just don't understand what this is about. I've seen reference to savings on mileage and stationery elsewhere in other lines. So unsure if this is in addition, it is a significant sum so please explain.

This saving line is made up of 17 different types of saving across many services in each case, as a result of a line-by-line review by Finance. It includes rents and hire charges (£50k), employee mileage payments (£40k), service charges (£35k), equipment (£25k), conferences, publications, maintenance, refreshments, stationery etc.

These savings are in addition to those offered up by some services and shown elsewhere.

Please could you explain the following as they just don't make sense to me.

1. Appendix B items 12 and 13. These involve increases in staffing and yet the financial columns show zero. If there is an error here, it would be worth checking this isn't replicated in other lines. **These are self-funding items, included to ensure that the projects are approved in a transparent manner, even if it is self-funding.**
2. Appendix C items 45,47, 48 49,50, 64. These show a negative in 23/24. I do not understand why there is a negative figure as any figures in this column relate to the base year ie 21/22, and I understand that there will be no changes in 23/24 compared to 21/22. **These are one-off items – so the savings effectively reverse out in 23/24. This is a change to prior years and has been included this year so that the impact of these one-off savings can be seen across the MTFP.**
3. Appendix B and C. Towards the end is a section entitled Bids to Note. What does this mean and how does it differ from "for Decision". If it means these items are beyond our control and have to be paid, then why, for example, is there £250k for Climate Partnership as this is our choice to spend such sums? **These include items where decisions have already been made, such as the Climate Partnership, which was approved earlier this year. Other items may be budget corrections.**

Cllr Larcombe

A question for the scrutiny panel please -

Much public money (over £150,000) has been wasted over recent years by RBWM failed attempts to fix the Wraysbury Drain. There is some money in the budget for flood defence and land drainage infrastructure maintenance. How can the public be assured that any new spending on flood defence and land drainage will be focussed, efficient and effective?

The Council has allocated very significant capital funding to reduce flood risk in the Borough and is working very closely with the Environment Agency to identify how best to maximise its impact. As part of this joint working, we are working closely with the Environment Agency's Programme Management Team to implement strong project management techniques to ensure the funding is spent effectively. This work is overseen by a Programme Steering Group made up of senior officers from both the Environment Agency and the Council along with the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Parking.

In addition to the major capital funding, any smaller schemes will be developed by the Council's Principal Flood Risk Manager (PFRM) in collaboration with partners both internal and external to the Council. The PFRM has extensive experience of flood risk management and will be supported by the appropriate Service Lead and Head of Service. They will work closely with the relevant Cabinet Member to ensure schemes deliver what they set out to.

Cllr Luxton

Appendix C from the budget proposal 22/23. Ref 18, proposes review of civic services resources with what appears to be reduction of one Mayor's Officer? How is this going to work? Specially if you take away the car than a female Mayor is left venerable to drive herself everywhere at night with no security which would include wearing the Mayoral chain etc. etc.

Secondly, a taxi would cost more than having a Council owned car? A detailed explanation on cost between the two would be appreciated.

We will be reviewing the service as a result of changes and potential efficiencies identified due to the impact of Covid which has necessitated different ways of operating. It is likely to involve a restructure as the demands on the service have changed and there is an opportunity to reorganise workloads and change some of the way in which we provide civic services. Whilst there is the potential for redundancies it is not possible to confirm at this stage until the review has been undertaken and consultations carried out. I am sure you will understand that it is not appropriate to be publicly discussing individual posts, particularly given the size of the team. If the Panel decided that this was an area of focussed discussion at the Panel meeting, it would likely need to be in Part II.

Cllr Bond

Please explain saving 58 (public toilets – Council Tax expenditure no longer required)? **There is a relief available from NNDR for public toilets so this budget is now being removed.**

Which month's inflation figure will be used for the increase in fees & charges? **August 2021 RPI was the guide for these; services have been encouraged to benchmark and ensure that fees and charges are reasonable, so there is variability across services.**

With the latest inflation figure of 4.2% and short term interest rates of 0.5% or less, the real (after inflation) interest rate is -3.7%. Do you expect this to continue for more than a couple of months **Yes and get worse** and if so what do you see as the opportunities and risks from a significantly negative real interest rate? **In terms of opportunities we anticipate that our borrowing costs will not significantly rise in the near future. Although we have adequate working capital we are not in the position of having large investments which may lose "real value" and we are not dependent on investment income that may be a risk for other councils.**

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