

CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2021

PRESENT: Councillors Phil Haseler (Chairman), Gary Muir (Vice-Chairman), Julian Sharpe, Lynne Jones, Simon Werner, John Bowden, Chris Targowski, Leo Walters, Amy Tisi and Helen Price

Also in attendance: Councillor David Hilton, Councillor Christine Bateson, Councillor Carole Da Costa, Councillor David Cannon, Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra, Councillor John Baldwin and Councillor Mandy Brar

Officers: Mark Beeley, Emma Duncan, Karen Shepherd, David Cook, Andrew Durrant, Adele Taylor, Alysse Strachan, Andrew Vallance, Duncan Sharkey, Hilary Hall, Kevin McDaniel and Louise Freeth

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Price declared a personal interest as she was a member of Maidenhead Golf Club. There was a line in the capital budget on the golf club, Councillor Price said that she would be considering the proposals in the budget with an open mind.

DRAFT BUDGET 2022/23 - SCRUTINY CHALLENGE

Andrew Vallance, Head of Finance, set out the budget report to the Panel. The draft budget was published on 17th November and was considered by Cabinet on 25th November. The finance settlement for the budget had recently been announced, officers were still assessing the details along with financial advisors who would prepare some analysis on the figure. At this stage, there would not need to be any changes to the figures in the budget as a result, with most of the assumptions being correct. Considering the risks, the fair funding review would be back on the agenda and could potentially impact the budget for the next financial year, after this budget. There was a growing risk of inflation but this was being closely monitored. RBWM needed to build up its reserves and there was still a pension fund deficit. Work was being done to look at the transformation of services to try and fill budget gaps. There was £1 million earmarked in the budget to respond to Covid pressures. This was focused on two main areas, leisure centre income and car parks.

By Friday 17th December, RBWM had received 208 responses as part of the budget consultation. 40% felt that if there was more funding, place services should be prioritised for investment, while 30% believed that adults services should receive more investment. 50% said that the council was not good value for money, 25% agreed that it was and 25% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Andrew Hill had registered to speak on the budget as a member of the public. He asked if the business case for the Vicus Way car park held up. Draft assumptions had been correct according to officers, Andrew Hill asked if the key assumption on core spending power of 6.2% was correct. He asked how much RBWM was getting from the services grant this year and was RBWM planning to respond to the government consultation on the financial settlement. Andrew Hill commented on another local authority who had ring fenced reserves

and expressed concern that there were lines in the budget showing that revenue items could not be placed into the revenue accounts. He asked why capital expenditure was therefore not being placed into the capital budget and where Deloitte had approved this process. Andrew Hill asked what the maximum levels of revenue allowed were. Other risks to residents were if another major scheme was delayed, he asked why no schemes that were likely to be delayed were outlined in the budget. Andrew Hill concluded by asking if officers believed RBWM was not exposed to any market risks.

Andrew Vallance explained that the assumptions on grant funding were very close. On the services grant, no assumptions could be made as it had only recently been created by the government, RBWM had received £877,000 out of this grant. The local authority which had been mentioned by Andrew Hill had legally funded their budget from a housing revenue account, RBWM did not have a housing revenue account and therefore Andrew Vallance felt that the example was not relevant. Deloitte had approved the capitalisation in previous years and there was a risk with inflation rates increasing as there were a lot of short-term loans. More long-term loans had been used to lock in the low interest rates.

Adele Taylor, Executive Director of Resources, continued on the capitalisation point. There had been a significant amount of money that should have been in the revenue account in previous years, this had now been moved to the correct area. This was always kept under review.

The Chairman explained the process for the meeting, the Panel would consider the key lines of enquiry which had been discussed at a pre-briefing.

Waste contract

The Chairman said it was important to see if RBWM was getting good value for money on the contract and whether there was confidence that the contract would be able to deliver the level of service that was expected across the year.

Alysse Strachan, Head of Neighbourhood Services, said that the capital requirements were primarily because of the vehicles that were used to collect waste. Originally, different types of waste were collected on the same vehicle. However, moving to a system of general waste and garden recycling being collected every two weeks and general recycling and food waste being collected weekly meant that the vehicles needed to be set up in a different configuration. Garden waste and general waste needed to be collected on separate vehicles due to the volume. Additional staff were also required which was another pressure on the revenue budget, mitigations were being monitored for these changes.

The Chairman asked if RBWM owned all the waste vehicles or if some were owned by the contractors, Serco.

Alysse Strachan explained that some were currently hired by the council but the plan was for RBWM to eventually purchase the vehicles.

Councillor Werner said that the logic of reducing collections would mean that less vehicles and staff would be needed. However, it seemed that the number of vehicles and staff had actually increased, he asked for an explanation of why this was the case. Councillor Werner asked for the detail of how many vehicles and staff RBWM currently had in waste services.

Alysse Strachan said it was primarily around the change to fortnightly collections on waste and the configurations of the waste vehicles which needed to be changed as a result. She outlined the different configurations that each vehicle needed to provide and confirmed that RBWM had required an additional six vehicles to cover these new changes. Alysse Strachan did not have the detail on the staffing of the new vehicles, the new configuration was the optimum way of collecting the rounds for all waste streams.

Councillor Werner suggested that this was something that could be taken to the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, who could consider this part of the budget in further detail.

Councillor L Jones said she was not aware of the increased costs in this service area before the budget was drafted. She agreed with the suggestion made by Councillor Werner that this could be scrutinised further by the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Borrowing, interest rates and inflation assumptions

Councillor L Jones said that she wanted to look at the assumptions across the budget in a number of different areas, she would look to take it through the paper over the course of the meeting.

S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy

Councillor L Jones said that there had been a number of items around S106 to provide savings. There was concern that RBWM could need to find more savings going forward and suggested that it could be a stop gap.

Adele Taylor said the three items had been identified as being from S106 funds. Councillor L Jones was correct that these were one off funds but there was no other appropriate alternative use for this money. This capital had been applied in the most relevant places, the Capital Review Board had ensured that this was the case.

Councillor Price commented on lines 23 and 24 in the budget, she believed that the figure on these lines should be 0.

Andrew Vallance confirmed that Councillor Price was correct, this would be amended in the final budget.

Councillor Werner said that Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was zero-rated in Maidenhead town centre. He asked if officers had estimated how much income was being lost as a result, Councillor Werner had seen a report that suggested the figure could be around £45 million.

Duncan Sharkey, Chief Executive, said that no estimations had been made. CIL being zero-rated for Maidenhead was council policy therefore there was no loss, officers did not estimate figures where there was no way of knowing what they would be.

Children and adults

Councillor Tisi commented on the consultation document, some of the adults lines had been left out until today and therefore it was important that those residents who had already submitted their representations on the budget went back and considered these lines. On line 11, Councillor Tisi understood that this was around ongoing care packages and that some packages were delivered by the council rather than health. The assumption on this saving was that there would be a bigger health contribution than in the past, Councillor Tisi asked how confident officers were on this saving being delivered.

Kevin McDaniel, Executive Director of Children's Services, explained that the figure in the budget on this item was a net figure and the council was in some cases already receiving contributions from health. Following recent staffing changes in the CCG, the council was now working with a new team and there had been new thresholds. Kevin McDaniel was confident

that the new levels of contributions were not speculative, they were led by changes in staffing by health colleagues.

Councillor Tisi said that on line 38, home to school transport, she had noted a reduction in the tender process and she was not confident that this saving could be achieved. Councillor Tisi asked what factors were beyond officers control and could impact on this.

Kevin McDaniel said that there was no guarantee that the contract would run for five years. Officers were constantly looking for optimisation, routes could be changed and repurposed depending on circumstances which would impact the amount being spent. It was felt that this saving would happen, but it could not be guaranteed.

Councillor Tisi responded by asking about things that were outside the council's control, for example rising petrol costs.

Kevin McDaniel confirmed that a degree of inflation had been added in as part of the budget.

Councillor L Jones said that she was looking at demand but there was no evidence presented that demand was different to any other year. It would be useful to see the average number of cases for each area, she recommended that the detail would be considered by the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Councillor L Jones commented on savings from later entry into residential care and that this was supposed to be redistributed into the higher level of caring at home. She had not seen the evidence for this happening. On children's services, Councillor L Jones noted that an increased cost was coming from private facilities, she asked why the council had therefore not considered investing in house.

Kevin McDaniel confirmed that the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the five-year sufficiency strategy earlier in the year. RBWM could control the cost and number of places but the volume was relatively small. A national survey had recently been completed where the average cost of inflation in placements was 9.1% of all costs. The average weekly cost had risen by £600 a week which was around a £1 million extra pressure. For those of the highest need, the increase had been another £1.3 million. Every placement was reviewed on a monthly basis to ensure that children were on the right placements.

Councillor L Jones said that she would like to see the trend over the past five years and it would be good to have it evidenced in the budget.

Adele Taylor added that trend information was being added to budget monitoring reports.

Hilary Hall, Executive Director of Adults, Health and Housing, confirmed that she was happy to take the detail to the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel. During the pandemic, there had been a move to more people living at home than in care homes but this trend had now been reversed. People were likely to be frailer when leaving hospital which therefore meant that more intensive support was needed.

Councillor Werner commented on school transport, it seemed there had been a significant amount of monitoring for the past few years. He was surprised that this amount of money had not resulted in a big change to the service that was provided.

Kevin McDaniel responded by explaining that the school transport budget was around £2.4 million a year, the figure of £160,000 was a relatively small amount. A minibus hired with 10 seats would cost significantly more than a single seat taxi and it was therefore important that the optimum mode of transport and route was considered. The home to school transport team had managed to keep costs down and ensured that the service was cost efficient.

Councillor Werner asked for confirmation that the saving in this area had already been delivered in-year.

Kevin McDaniel clarified that a £250,000 saving had been made this financial year which had been included in the budget.

Councillor Tisi said that there was a lot of transformation, she wanted to understand why the savings were proposed before the transformation was carried out.

Hilary Hall said that in adult social care a transformation plan had been put together. The service delivery had originally been traditional, the service was therefore modernised by officers which was key to improving the service for residents. Hilary Hall used the example of the day opportunities, where a saving had already been delivered whilst a modernised offer had been put forward for residents as a result.

Kevin McDaniel added that the key point was about modernising practise to see what could be done earlier in certain situations.

Councillor Tisi suggested that this item could be referred to the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Walters said that these services were an expensive cost for the council. He asked if there was any way for the costs to be monitored or regulated.

Kevin McDaniel said that monitoring took the form of an inspection of the quality of services that the council provided. From a financial point of view, the competition and markets authority were undertaking a review of the marketplace for children's care after the high levels of growth that had recently been seen.

Councillor Werner raised the point about transformation coming after savings had been identified, he commented that he had raised this issue at a previous Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting. He reiterated that this should go to the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Commercialisation and revenue generation opportunities

Councillor Price said that gaining new streams of revenue income was important, it had been mentioned in the budget report but she could not see any evidence on how this would be delivered. On the lottery, the money that came in would also come out but this was shown in the budget as an income. She suggested that this could go back to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Emma Duncan, Deputy Director of Law & Strategy and Monitoring Officer, said that the lottery was designed to replace revenue grant funding and allowed residents to choose where their money was spent. The system could potentially also generate more income than grant funding and was usually run by an external provider, therefore it was an income proposal rather than commercialisation. Emma Duncan said that by joining up opportunities and creating new ones allowed authorities to optimise income generating opportunities. The council could then investigate where additional income could happen to relieve pressure on the savings that needed to be made. Officers could not give complete guarantees but proposals had been made in the budget which officers thought were achievable.

Councillor Price believed that this did not apply to line 14 of the budget which was around advertising and sponsorship, she had not seen any evidence of this being achievable.

Emma Duncan explained that RBWM did a lot of work with the councils advertising network which investigated space on the website which could be sold.

Councillor Price felt that rooms and facilities that were owned by RBWM could be let out as another source of income generation but this was not part of the budget.

Emma Duncan responded by pointing out that this required dedicated resources. Where RBWM was light on officer resource, focus needed to be on the bigger items. Budget monitoring reports allowed Members to keep up to date with this over the course of the financial year, recommendations could then be made if needed.

Councillor Werner felt that there was a lot of speculative income projections which was a concern. He said that the income should be established before it could be put into the budget, rather than including the income before it had been established.

Emma Duncan said that RBWM had difficulty in closing the gap between income and expenditure and Councillor Werner's suggestion could be possible if the council was in a better financial position.

Adele Taylor added that all budgets were estimates based on assumptions and best estimates. Business cases should be able to generate a return on the salary. It was important to consider the consequences of actions arising out of budget decisions, it was about providing assurance where assumptions had been made.

Councillor Sharpe commented on the revenue items contained within the budget and that it was good to be making good use of resources. He proposed that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel received a quarterly progress report and asked to what extent were the projections calculated correctly.

Adele Taylor confirmed that the Panel would be able to see reports on budget monitoring over the course of the financial year. Emma Duncan said that more detail could be provided on the financial assumptions and projections which had been made in the budget.

Councillor Price said that she was not sure on the estimates and assumptions and how optimistic they were, it was therefore not clear what the risks were and she was unable to decide whether the budget was financially realistic.

Emma Duncan added that Members could be given a breakdown of the areas that officers had considered to provide further assurance to the Panel. Decisions would be made on the numbers by the officers who had authority over certain areas of the budget.

ACTION – More detail to be provided to the Panel on the assumptions in the budget and the evidence that officers had considered which showed that targets were achievable.

Councillor Walters said that the assumptions were guess estimates, officers were experimenting and provided figures which through their expertise they felt were achievable.

Corporate plan alignment

Councillor Price said the aims and objectives from the corporate plan needed to be considered as the budget was the financial driver behind the plan. She could not see where the support was in the budget for the poorest residents in the borough.

Adele Taylor said that the council had a responsibility to ensure that there was an efficient service provided for all residents, for example by providing a council tax support scheme. There was a line in the budget under welfare benefits which was focused on maximising income.

Louise Freeth, Head of Revenue, Benefits, Library and Resident Services, explained that there were a number of different schemes. Despite the end of the furlough scheme, officers had seen a decrease in the number of residents coming to the council for additional support. The council tax support scheme would allow up to a maximum of 100% support for certain

residents. The council tax reduction scheme allowed working age residents to get up to £150 off their council tax bill in the current financial year. Louise Freeth said that officers were looking at a potential underspend, which could potentially be rolled forward into the new financial year but could mean that customers received less than the current £150 in 2022/23. There were various forms of assistance available to residents in respect of housing costs.

Duncan Sharkey said that the council supported people in need and there were huge amounts of support in place. There was no specific line in the budget as it came across in a number of different service areas.

Councillor Price said that she was concerned about next year, a number of support schemes were funded by the government and distributed by the council. It would be good to have a list of support schemes available to residents so that they could see what was available.

Adele Taylor confirmed that the schemes discussed in the budget were for the next financial year.

Councillor Baldwin raised a point of order, he claimed that Councillor Walters was a non-Panel Member but the Chairman had given him permission to speak at the meeting.

Mark Beeley, Democratic Services Officer, explained that there were ten Members on the Panel for the meeting. The five standard Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members had been joined by three additional Conservative Members, one additional Liberal Democrat Member and one additional Local Independent Member, as detailed in the scoping document and agreed by the Panel. Councillor Walters was one of the three additional Conservative Members on the Panel.

Councillor Baldwin left the meeting.

Longer term view on financial picture

Councillor L Jones said it would be helpful to have an explanation of the effect this budget had on the reserves and how the reserves would be strengthened. On borrowing, it was stated that the council would continue to borrow but the cash flow figures were fairly static. Councillor L Jones was not sure if there would be increased levels of borrowing over the next few years. There was no evidence behind the cash flows coming in on the development partnership receipts. Councillor L Jones was concerned that without flexibility to increase council tax the council could be looking at another £2 million of savings each year. She asked how much of these proposed savings had already been identified.

Adele Taylor responded by explaining that she had to put together a personal report on the robustness of estimates and position on reserves, this would happen at the final budget stage. The budget was neutral on the reserve position, there was a reserve strategy in place where a contingency sum had been set aside in the budget. This was to cover any legislation changes or other circumstances that had not been predicted. If the contingency sum was not used, Adele Taylor had recommended that this was either put back into the general reserves or used as reserves for specific areas. She had to make a judgement call on what level the general fund reserves should be at, considering things like the strategic risk register to decide what this should be. RBWM was above the minimum level of reserves required. In the Medium Term Financial Plan, a 2% increase in council tax had been added in. Officers were looking at a five year resourcing plan which would help to understand what could change and the impact that this could have on the council.

Andrew Vallance said that the text in the budget report which Councillor L Jones had referred to would be reviewed. The cash flow was regularly updated after discussions were held with capital project managers which was at least once a quarter. This process was overseen by the Capital Review Board.

Councillor L Jones understood that a number of the answers to the questions that she had would be answered by the report that Adele Taylor had mentioned. On capital cash flows, there was no detail on how assumptions had been made. Councillor L Jones said that she would like to see how assumptions had come about, this could take the form of a Member briefing if information was commercially sensitive. Considering borrowing, there was a lot of borrowing to cover the capital spend. Councillor L Jones wanted to see borrowing reduced.

Adele Taylor said that she was happy to provide a confidential Member briefing. Borrowing was for capital expenditure and this was kept under review by officers.

ACTION – Adele Taylor to explore whether a Member briefing was required to provide evidence on how assumptions had been made by officers in the budget.

Andrew Vallance confirmed that the number of bids financed by borrowing had been reduced through meetings of the Capital Review Board.

Councillor Sharpe asked if the RBWM budget was different to other local authorities and was the budget robust and achievable over the next couple of years.

Adele Taylor said that it was similar to most other local authorities. On robustness, there were a number of significant risks but using network groups like a meeting of the Berkshire S151 officers had proved to be useful. The draft budget was the best that could be put forward at that point in time.

Councillor Sharpe suggested that if interest rates were to rise over the next twelve months, what would that do to the finances at RBWM. He asked what level of inflation had been predicted.

Adele Taylor said that interest rate rises and inflation had been included within the budget. It was assumed that there would be an inflation rise but officers would need to consider the figures. The assumptions on inflation had been made on each contract rather than being a flat, general figure.

Parking fees and charges

Alyse Strachan explained that the assumptions on parking had been based on the advantage card data from 2020/21. The model was based on the number of transactions and usage of each car park. It was anticipated that the inflation rate increase for fees and charges would cover the cost of implementing a resident discount scheme.

Councillor L Jones said it was hard to provide further comment on this as the Panel had not yet seen the full fees and charges. She suggested that it would need to come back to the Panel in the New Year.

Adele Taylor confirmed that the fees and charges would be considered by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel at the next meeting in January 2022. The document would be circulated at the start of January so that Members had time to consider it.

Councillor Tisi asked why the 2021 advantage card figures had been used when this was an inconsistent period of car parking usage which would not reflect normal patterns. She was informed that data from previous years had also been considered.

Councillor Price felt that it would be better to split the scrutiny of the fees and charges amongst the four scrutiny Panels.

Adele Taylor said that scrutiny of the budget was following a different process to last year and officers had recommended that it should be considered by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny.

Councillor Werner argued that the fees and charges could still be delegated to relevant scrutiny Panels if the Panel decided to.

RBWM Property Company and the impact on the budget

Councillor Price asked if the property company was contributing to the revenue budget.

Adele Taylor confirmed that there was a line in the budget on income from trading companies.

Referring back to the discussion on CIL, the Chairman mentioned that it was on the work programme for the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Price said that she had read through all the Equality Impact Assessments which had been submitted as part of the budget. There were varying levels of quality and completeness. She asked if there should be more guidance provided to officers on a standard template of how to complete the Equality Impact Assessment.

Emma Duncan commented that each Equality Impact Assessment had been completed by the relevant officer. Each assessment would therefore vary slightly, Emma Duncan asked if there were any issues that Councillor Price could discuss these with her outside the meeting.

Councillor Price said that once the Borough Local Plan had been approved, there would be a significant amount of work on the Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). After the current Borough Local Plan was approved, work would start on the next one and Councillor Price wanted to know if there was the budget and resource available to complete these tasks.

The Chairman commented that the SPDs would be a requirement for the council.

Duncan Sharkey said that a number of the SPDs would be funded by CIL and S106 money, developers would also contribute to some SPDs.

Councillor Price said that there was a 'review of costs' in the budget to the total of £170,000. These reviews had not taken place and Councillor Price wanted to know how the savings could be made before the review.

Adele Taylor explained that some of the reviews had staffing implications, Councillor Price was welcome to contact her if there was anything specific she would like to know and she would co-ordinate responses from the appropriate teams.

Recommendations

Councillor Werner said that waste collection, income generation, evidence to achieve the transformation savings, level of need for children's services, exploration of new edge of care service, health contributions and parking charges had all been mentioned during the course of the meeting as potential topics for the other scrutiny panels to consider.

Councillor L Jones recommended that the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the evidence of growth demand over the past five years and the number of cases against the average cost per case. This would allow the Panel to explore the evidence around that growth demand assumption.

Emma Duncan said that the Panel needed to be precise in the referrals that were being made. This allowed officers to understand what was being looked at and would encourage effective scrutiny.

Councillor L Jones said that the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel had knowledge in this area and she wanted the Panel to be reassured that growth in the budget was evidenced for demographic demand and that they believed it was a robust growth bid.

Kevin McDaniel said that he would be happy for a paper to be brought forward on the growth bid to the relevant scrutiny panel, this could be taken to the meeting in January 2022. He suggested that the work would involve the Panel satisfying themselves that the evidence existed for the growth items in the adult's and children's budget.

The motion was proposed by Councillor L Jones and seconded by Councillor Tisi.

A named vote was taken.

That the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel satisfied themselves that evidence existed around the growth items in the adult's and children's budget. (Motion)	
Councillor Phil Haseler	For
Councillor Gary Muir	For
Councillor Julian Sharpe	For
Councillor Lynne Jones	For
Councillor Simon Werner	For
Councillor John Bowden	For
Councillor Chris Targowski	For
Councillor Leo Walters	For
Councillor Amy Tisi	For
Councillor Helen Price	For
Carried	

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel satisfied themselves that evidence existed around the growth items in the adult's and children's budget.

Councillor Werner suggested that the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel analysed the evidence and mechanisms that led to the increased cost of the waste contract.

Duncan Sharkey said that this could be something looked at by scrutiny in due course, rather than as part of the budget scrutiny in January 2022.

Councillor Price said that it was important to consider that the budget would deliver what the council wanted out of the waste contract.

Emma Duncan said that Members needed to consider whether items were adding to the budget scrutiny process. Considering the waste contract was a separate piece of work that the Panel could look at should they choose to.

Councillor Werner commented that officers did not have the relevant detail at this meeting and therefore the item should go to Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for further detail and information.

Councillor Walters said that he was satisfied with the explanation by officers about the new configuration of the waste vehicles.

Councillor L Jones said this was the first time Members had been aware of any increase in the waste contract and that Members had not been informed before the decision was made.

The Chairman said that the Panel could do a scoping document if they felt the waste contract needed to be scrutinised.

Duncan Sharkey said that the additional cost was for changes that had already been approved.

Councillor Targowski said it was important that the other scrutiny panels were aware of this discussion so that they could decide what they wanted to do.

Councillor Sharpe felt that the budget position had been solidified, Members were discussing the process which was not relevant to the budget.

Councillor Price commented that the council should be looking at the lessons learned from this process.

Councillor Werner said it was important that the Panel satisfied themselves. He proposed a motion that the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel analysed the evidence and mechanisms which had led to an increased cost in the waste contract and that the Panel were satisfied these increased costs would not be repeated for the length of the contract.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Werner and seconded by Councillor Price.

A named vote was taken.

That the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel analysed the evidence and mechanisms which had led to an increased cost in the waste contract and that the Panel were satisfied these increased costs would not be repeated for the length of the contract. (Motion)	
Councillor Phil Haseler	Against
Councillor Gary Muir	Against
Councillor Julian Sharpe	Against
Councillor Lynne Jones	For
Councillor Simon Werner	For
Councillor John Bowden	Against
Councillor Chris Targowski	Against
Councillor Leo Walters	Against
Councillor Amy Tisi	For
Councillor Helen Price	For
Rejected	

The motion fell, this was recorded as a minority comment.

Councillor Werner recommended that the proposed income proposals satisfied the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel and showed that they were achievable. He wanted more depth and evidence to be provided.

Councillor Sharpe said that he was not sure that bringing this item back to the Panel would be beneficial, he was not sure if there was anything that the Panel could add.

Emma Duncan said that the Members would be monitoring this as part of the budget monitoring reports during the year.

Councillor Walters commented that they were guess estimates and they were the best that officers could do at this stage.

Councillor Bowden said that there were lots of matters to be resolved over the coming months, he was not in favour of the item coming back for further scrutiny.

Councillor L Jones said that the Panel needed to feel satisfied that they had seen the evidence behind the income proposals. The item did not necessarily need to be brought back to the Panel but Members needed to at least be briefed on the evidence.

Councillor Werner said that he did not want estimations going into the budget that were not achievable.

Councillor Sharpe said that officers had used their professional judgement to make estimations on income, he was not in favour of this motion.

Councillor Price supported Councillor L Jones proposal on evidence being supplied to Members separately, outside of the meeting.

Councillor Werner proposed the motion that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel satisfied themselves that the income proposals were achievable. It was agreed that instead of the item being brought to the Panel, a briefing document would be provided by officers to Members which outlined the evidence that the income proposals were achievable.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That officers would provide a briefing document to Members on the evidence behind the income proposals so that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel could satisfy themselves that they were achievable.

Councillor Werner proposed that the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel analysed the details of the increase in parking income once the fees and charges were revealed to satisfy themselves that the income targets could be reached.

Councillor Bowden felt that Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel was at the delivery end of this topic rather than the financial side. He would rather the topic was considered by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor L Jones said that she was happy to second the motion put forward by Councillor Werner, she argued that it would be a good topic for the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel to consider.

Emma Duncan said that it was a significant issue and amount of income, the topic was more suitable for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Sharpe believed that the item would need to be considered at the scheduled meeting of the Panel on 26th January 2022, he asked if there was space on the agenda.

Emma Duncan said that the performance management framework would be considered at that meeting and this was a key item for Corporate going forward. Officers felt that scrutiny could do some good work on the income generation for parking and other areas, it could be rolled into an item to be considered by the Panel later in the year.

Councillor Werner said it was essential to the budget, an extra meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel could be arranged if required.

Adele Taylor said that assumptions in the budget could increase due to things like inflation. It was important to consider the fees and charges document too once it was available.

A named vote was taken.

That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel analysed the details of the increase in parking income to satisfy themselves that income targets could be reached. (Motion)	
Councillor Phil Haseler	For
Councillor Gary Muir	Against
Councillor Julian Sharpe	For
Councillor Lynne Jones	For
Councillor Simon Werner	For
Councillor John Bowden	Against
Councillor Chris Targowski	For
Councillor Leo Walters	For
Councillor Amy Tisi	For
Councillor Helen Price	For
Carried	

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel analysed the details of the increase in parking income to satisfy themselves that income targets could be reached.

Councillor Tisi commented on the amount of transformation which was proposed to happen in adult and children's services. She felt it was important that this was reviewed in six months' time to understand how effectively the transformation had been delivered. An example was the commissioning of services, Councillor Tisi was concerned about whether the timeframes meant that the savings were still deliverable.

Kevin McDaniel said that the performance framework and the budget monitoring reports would allow Members to review and monitor certain elements of the budget.

Hilary Hall suggested that the assumptions could be taken to the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel so that the Panel could satisfy itself around the assumptions made on savings in adult social care.

Adele Taylor said that the Cabinet Transformation Sub Committee would be a better place for a review. This could be discussed with Councillor Tisi, there could be assurances given by officers over the ability to deliver the savings and the transformation that had been outlined in the budget.

Councillor Tisi wanted to see how the council would hit the targets in the budget.

Emma Duncan said that the suggestion could be recorded as a minority comment and then Councillor Tisi could discuss with officers outside of the meeting whether the item should be added to the work programme of the scrutiny panel or whether it should be considered by the Cabinet Transformation Sub Committee.

The Chairman said a scoping document could be completed to add any items to the work programme.

Councillor Tisi said that on health contributions, officers had been confident that savings could be delivered. She asked if Kevin McDaniel could report back to scrutiny that things were progressing as planned.

Kevin McDaniel said that he would be happy for this to be picked up through the budget monitoring reports.

Councillor Price asked if edge of care services were also considered as part of the proposal that Councillor Tisi had suggested. Councillor Tisi clarified that it was part of the transformation savings.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 10.15 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....

CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 26 JANUARY 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Phil Haseler (Chairman), Gary Muir (Vice-Chairman), Julian Sharpe, Lynne Jones and Simon Werner

Also in attendance: Councillor David Hilton, Councillor Samantha Rayner, Councillor Christine Bateson, Councillor David Cannon, Councillor Ewan Larcombe and Councillor Donna Stimson

Officers: Mark Beeley, Emma Duncan, Adele Taylor, Rebecca Hatch, Alysse Strachan, Andrew Vallance, Nikki Craig, Duncan Sharkey and Neil Walter

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record.

Councillor L Jones suggested that the Panel should go through the actions from the previous set of minutes, to ensure that they had all been completed.

The Chairman suggested that it would be good to bring all the actions together at the bottom of the minutes.

Mark Beeley, Democratic Services Officer, said that at the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Panel, the clerk produced an actions table, listing each action and what the result of the action had been. This was circulated amongst the Panel after the meeting and ensured that all actions were picked up and completed. The Panel agreed that this would be a useful addition for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

ACTION – Mark Beeley to produce actions table after each meeting and circulate it amongst Panel Members.

BUDGET 2022/23 - FEES AND CHARGES

Andrew Vallance, Head of Finance, explained that the fees and charges were raised where they could be by inflation, this would look to offset contract fees where they had also been raised. Some fees were statutory and were therefore controlled by the government, some were ring fenced and could not make a profit and in other areas the council had benchmarked against other local authorities. Considering some of the major fees and charges, Andrew Vallance said that:

- Parking had increased by inflation.
- Roads and street works had to be considered on a case by case basis but was nearly at inflation.

- Green waste had been increased by 4.8%, in previous years RBWM had increased this above inflation.
- The figure on Building Control should be 3%, this had been missed out on the original report which had been included in the agenda pack. Building Control had recently come in house so RBWM was able to set the fee.
- Marriages and civil partnership ceremonies had gone up by 3.5% due to statutory obligations.
- Cemeteries and church yards had gone up by inflation.
- Local Land Charges was an example of where officers had benchmarked against another local authority.
- Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders and Highway Licenses were at inflation.

The Chairman asked what the rationale was for the increase in car parking prices which RBWM was looking to implement and why they varied across the borough.

Alysse Strachan, Head of Neighbourhood Services, said that the parking fees and charges were set out with the same principle as all the other fees and charges. A number of factors needed to be considered, for example usage, parking patterns, considering previous increases, considering fees in similar car parks both in and out of the borough and the cost of administering any changes. The cost of the residents discount parking scheme also needed to be considered. The 4.8% increase was the overall budget position rather than individual tariffs. Most of the difference had been due to rounded up car parking charges, with the biggest increase being 50% which was for commercial permits.

Councillor Sharpe said that there was a reasonable level of inflation. He asked if changes had been made due to other local authorities and how much they were charging.

Alysse Strachan said that other local authorities parking charges were considered by the team. RBWM offered a residents parking discount to encourage residents to park in the borough.

Adele Taylor, Executive Director of Resources, said that fees and charges were determined on a service by service basis. For things like Building Control, RBWM needed to consider other competition in the market. The 4.8% was not necessarily on the fee itself but on the budgeted amount.

Councillor L Jones said that there was a large range of car parking charges across the borough, particularly in Windsor. The residents parking discount scheme did not apply in shopping areas and was a particular issue for those with mobility issues who needed to park close by. Victoria Street was a good option and was close to the shops in Windsor, Councillor L Jones understood that Windsor was a tourist town but she wanted this to be reconsidered by officers, either by incorporating this car park into the residents discount scheme or bringing down the parking charge. She asked how much extra income RBWM would look to receive from the increase in parking charges. Councillor L Jones continued by explaining that she was pleased to see that parking permits were not increasing however she expressed concern with the visitor vouchers, where a one hour restriction meant that two hours permit needed to be paid for.

Councillor Werner and Councillor Muir joined the meeting.

Alysse Strachan said that the Victoria Street option was included in the report that had been considered by Cabinet, but this was not agreed due to the cost that the council would incur. Alma Road and Alexandra car park were the options which had been agreed would be where the residents parking discount would apply. Regarding the visitor vouchers, the two hour charge was £1 and therefore the charge was minimal but this could be explored in future years.

Councillor L Jones said that it cost £2.40 for one hour at Victoria Street and £3.90 for two hours, these prices were unfair on those that needed to use the car park. She asked if there was any way that this charge could not be increased, it was something that Councillor L Jones felt should be revisited. She requested that this comment was recorded in the minutes as a minority comment.

Alysse Strachan confirmed that the offer would be reviewed and that officers could consider Victoria Street car park as part of this review.

Adele Taylor added that it would be part of the review on the residents discount scheme, officers had to consider the impact on the budget if Victoria Street had been included. Any recommendation would need to consider what the alternative method of funding would be.

Councillor L Jones asked if the figure in terms of income that would be lost could be provided, if the parking charges were kept the same and were not increased.

Alysse Strachan explained that to include Victoria Street in the residents discount scheme would cost the council £100,000. For the figure on how much it would cost the council if car parking charges were not increased, Alysse Strachan said that she would take this away from the meeting and report back.

ACTION – Alysse Strachan to find out information on how much it would cost RBWM if car parking charges were not increased at Victoria Street car park.

Councillor Werner said there was a similar issue in Maidenhead, two open air car parks were part of the residents discount scheme but these were scheduled to be closed and built on in the immediate future. He asked if officers had done analysis on the level that parking could be increased by before a decrease in usage would see the council lose money.

Alysse Strachan said that officers monitored usage and trend data constantly to see any impact an increase in fees had. Once the residents discount scheme had been implemented, this could be reviewed. West Street car park was in high demand and would be part of the discount scheme.

Councillor Werner asked if officers felt the Nicholsons Shopping Centre car park was too expensive to include in the residents discount scheme.

Alysse Strachan said that various data and models had been used. It was a balance of cost and use, she was happy to share the models and data with Councillor Werner outside the meeting.

ACTION – Alysse Strachan to provide the Panel with the data and models used to decide which car parks in Maidenhead would be part of the residents discount scheme.

Adele Taylor added that the decision on the residents discount scheme had already been made by Cabinet and the call in period had expired. However, the feedback would be useful to consider as part of the review.

Councillor Werner commented on the Platinum Jubilee celebrations for the Queen, which would be taking place in June 2022. He asked what permissions residents would need from the council to hold things like street parties.

Adele Taylor said that information on this would be coming out in due course, a dedicated website would also be created which residents could easily access. A message would also go out in the Borough Bulletin.

Councillor L Jones considered the income targets that had been set for parking. There had been a significant impact on the modelling from Covid but this had predicted an uplift after the

pandemic. However, this was not to the level of previous parking targets, she asked what rationale had been applied to ensure that parking targets were achievable.

Neil Walter, Parking and Enforcement Manager, said that officers had modelled the effect of the pandemic on parking and this had been very accurate. RBWM was back to about 80% of its expected parking income and there was an ambition for this to eventually rise back to 100%. A number of car parks across the borough were above pre pandemic levels in both usage and income targets. However, season tickets were a concern. Workers were not returning to the office and therefore parking season tickets had not been renewed. An example was one business which usually had over 250 parking season tickets, they did not currently have any and this was a significant lose to parking income.

Councillor L Jones asked if the 80% for parking income was the average across the borough. On season tickets, she asked if this was a risk in achieving the proposed parking income targets.

Neil Walter confirmed that it was 80% average across the whole borough. Season tickets were already a concern for officers and this had been budgeted for.

Adele Taylor said that the season ticket risk had been factored into the budget, any income budget was a risk as it was demand led. She explained that it would be considered as part of her report, income was harder to predict. Adele Taylor was confident that best estimates had been made but this would be monitored closely.

Councillor Cannon, Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Parking, responded to a question by Councillor Werner earlier in the meeting about street parties. He said that any fees for the road closures would be waived by the council.

Adele Taylor said that she would confirm the details after the meeting and report back to the Panel.

ACTION – Adele Taylor to provide information on street closures for street parties for the Queens Platinum Jubilee.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Panel was asked to comment, and make recommendations to Cabinet, on:

- i) The proposed fees and charges for 2022/23 as set out in Appendix A.**

BUDGET 2022/23 – CAR PARKING INCOME TARGETS

This was discussed as part of the agenda item above.

2021/22 Q2 DATA & PERFORMANCE REPORT AND FUTURE PERFORMANCE REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Adele Taylor said that the new Corporate Plan had recently been approved by Full Council and this document set out the key strategic priorities of RBWM for the next five years. The performance of the council for Q2 had been outlined in the report. New performance monitoring arrangements would take effect from April 2022, Members had been informed at the start of January of the new arrangements. Considering the Q2 report:

- 6 measures were meeting or exceeding targets.
- 2 measures were short of target but within the set tolerances.
- 1 measure was off target and out of tolerance.

The continued impact of the pandemic meant that business rate collection was off target. It had been challenging to set targets in this area due to government driven benefits for some businesses. A recovery strategy had been launched which involved a number of campaigns ensuring that residents were given confidence, there had been an encouraging increase in footfall in town centres. The council had secured some additional funding for the climate strategy and this would allow decarbonisation plans to be developed.

The Chairman asked when the new portal for monitoring performance would go live and be available to both Members and residents.

Rebecca Hatch, Head of Strategy, confirmed that this would go live in April 2022.

Councillor Sharpe asked if there was anything in the performance report that officers were concerned about.

Adele Taylor said that business rate collection was a concern as it was off target but the reasons for this had been explained and much of this was out of the council's control. This was also similar to other local authorities and was therefore not unique to RBWM. The percentage of calls abandoned could be improved but there was a variety of reasons why this could be the case.

Councillor Sharpe asked if RBWM was taking over 5G transmission stations in the borough.

Adele Taylor did not have this information and did not think this was within the remit of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor L Jones said that the Panel was considering the performance report from Q2 but this was now Q4 and therefore the monitoring information related to a period which was a significant amount of time ago. She asked if this was the normal timeframe for the Panel to consider the report as she felt that comments made by the Panel would not have much of an impact. Considering the new performance monitoring arrangements, Councillor L Jones expressed concern about the Panel taking on oversight of the process and that the Panel therefore needed to have the right Member cohort. She suggested that more Members could be needed on the Panel. Councillor L Jones concluded by explaining that the report was dense and contained a lot of words, she would prefer to see a highlights or summary section at the beginning. She asked if the Panel was able to influence the areas of the council that would be monitored going forward.

Rebecca Hatch said that the role of scrutiny was to hold the council to account and make recommendations on how things could be improved. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel would take on the overarching responsibility and would receive quarterly progress reports. Reporting would be focused and by exception, with key areas being picked out where issues had occurred. Panel Members would be able to review the data through the new Citizens Portal and this would address the issue of the time lag in reporting as data on the portal would be live, up to date and accessible on demand.

The Chairman asked if a Member briefing would be organised on the Citizens Portal so that all Members understood how it worked.

Rebecca Hatch said that this was planned when the portal was launched in April 2022.

Councillor Sharpe asked if Members would be able to drill down into the data detail through the portal.

Rebecca Hatch confirmed that this would be possible and that Members would be able to compare and contrast data in a number of different ways too. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel would have the ability to recommend any parts of the report for further consideration by one of the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

The Chairman asked if a scoping document would be required for work to be delegated to another Panel and if so, which Panel would have the responsibility for creating the scoping document.

Emma Duncan, Monitoring Officer and Deputy Director of Law and Strategy, said that a scoping document would not be needed. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny could make a recommendation for another Panel to consider a specific topic area, the Panel in question could then make a decision on what they wanted to do with this recommendation.

Councillor L Jones said that if the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel identified an issue, would this fall to Corporate to initially investigate the issue or would the issue only be identified before being sent on for consideration by one of the other Panels.

Emma Duncan said that this was a good point and suggested that it would be sensible for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel to do some initial work on the area before deciding if it should be referred to another Panel.

Rebecca Hatch suggested it would work like the Corporate Plan challenge session in October 2021, once issues had been identified officers could then be invited to the relevant Panel to allow Members to ask questions and understand the reasons behind any issues, for example.

Emma Duncan added that the Panel could also ask why certain information had not been included in performance monitoring reports.

Councillor Sharpe asked how the new performance monitoring arrangements would fit in with the Panel's meeting schedule.

Emma Duncan said that additional Panel meetings could be arranged if required, but it was hoped that the performance monitoring would fit into the current system fairly easily. Performance monitoring with live data would improve the process. There was the issue of the work programme to consider too, with some issues being urgent and needing to be considered at the next meeting of the Panel.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the report and:

- i) Noted the new and transitional performance reporting arrangements as agreed by Cabinet on 16 December 2021 and the role of the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Panel within these arrangements.**
- ii) Noted the 2021/22 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel Q2 Data & Performance Report in Appendix A.**

ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT

The Chairman explained that the annual scrutiny report for the Panel needed to be completed. He asked for any contributions from Panel Members to be sent via email outside of the meeting.

Councillor L Jones asked if the previous annual scrutiny report could be sent to Panel Members so that they could review the progress.

Mark Beeley said that he would be able to send the last two years reports, from 2020 and 2021, out to the Panel after the meeting.

ACTION – Mark Beeley to send out copies of previous annual scrutiny reports to Members of the Panel.

The Chairman suggested that any comments on the report should be sent to him in the next couple of weeks.

WORK PROGRAMME

Mark Beeley gave an update on the communication and the customer journey topics, which had been suggested by Councillor L Jones. A meeting would be arranged with the relevant officers and Councillor L Jones to determine the scope of the suggestion and whether there was an overlap of work.

Councillor L Jones said that the two suggestions and the RBWM App item all overlapped and therefore could be considered as one item, rather than three separate items.

Councillor Werner suggested an item on the procurement process and the different levels of approval for different contracts. Some contracts were signed off by officers under delegated authority and it would be good if Members had oversight and were aware of what contracts had been signed.

Adele Taylor said that she was happy to point Councillor Werner in the right direction and discuss this topic with the relevant officers.

Councillor L Jones said that there was a similar item on the Audit and Governance Committee work programme, it would therefore be worth discussing this with the Chairman of the Committee to avoid duplication of work.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 8.40 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....