APPENDIX 7

Budget Consultation Report

Public and Partner Feedback on Budget Proposals 2018/19

The council has proposed a series of budget options for 2018/19, to meet a further funding shortfall of £15m, on top of £162m worth of savings which have already had to be made since 2010, and a reduction in the workforce of over 1,800 staff.

Protecting the most vulnerable children and adults, whilst continuing to provide core services – like waste collection, road repairs and street cleansing – underpins the authority's budget for 2018/19.

From 6 December 2017 to 4 January 2018 the Council consulted with the public, staff and partners around the directorate cuts and savings proposed for the 2018/19 budget. The council asked the public to provide feedback on budget proposals via:

- Local media
- Council website
- Social media

A total of 55 responses were received to the corporate consultation exercise by the deadline (5pm Thursday 4 January 2018) by email, and separately responses from the Council's partners were received recognising the difficulties the council is facing.

From partners, individual responses were received from Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board, Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board, Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Sarah Champion MP and Unison:

- Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board – a response was received by Board Chair, Christine Cassell, on 19 January. The response acknowledges the significant budget challenges facing the council, but recognises and supports the council's ongoing commitment to children's social care services with no savings proposed in this area (other than through planned changes to Early Help provision). There is a request that the council continues to monitor the impact of any saving proposal on safeguarding issues

- Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board – a response was received by Independent Chair, Sandie Keene, on 4 January 2018. In it Ms Keene welcomes the proposal not to assign a savings proposal to adult social care in 2018/19 as a positive corporate approach as the service works towards the improvements that are needed. It is acknowledged that this recognises the significant pressures on the service, but the response notes that spending reductions in previous years are still having an impact on delivery.

- Rotherham CCG – a response was received from the Chief Executive, Chris Edwards, on 20 December 2017, stating that he understood the significant budget pressures which the council is facing, but strongly supports the council's commitment to maintain the adult social care budget and that the

CCG will continue to work with the council to get the best from the Health and Social Care budget. He would also like to see the children's services budget maintained as far as possible, along with investment in jobs and homes as these issues also have an impact on health.

- Sarah Champion MP – a response was received from the Rotherham MP on 19 December 2017. In it Ms Champion asks the council to reconsider the proposal to combine the roles of dog warden and pest control officer, believing that the two roles are not compatible and it would damage the dog warden service, which was a long-standing function valued by the community.

- Unison – a response was received by the representative on 11 January 2018, setting out their opposition to the proposal within Regeneration and Environment (Grounds Maintenance) to reduce the service by 10 permanent members of staff, and reduce agency workers. Unison has concerns about the impact that this will have on the services delivered to local communities. They propose that Unison work with the service to identify new working practices and use of agency staff that could result in savings of an estimated £630,000. In January 2018 the Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet Members accepted offer this offer to work with management to avoid redundancies where possible and reasonable

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) has closely reviewed and challenged the budget proposals included in this report. The budget process has included the referral of outline savings proposals to OSMB for its formal consideration as part of the council's budget scrutiny process.

OSMB has held formal sessions to consider these savings proposals (14 and 20 December 2017 and 10 January 2018) with the associated information placed in the public domain).

The OSMB broadly supported all proposals in principle but raised specific queries and challenge and received further information on some of the proposed savings:

- R&E 2a – Markets – Members asked for further information on the future plans for 2019-20 and sought to understand the split between reduced cost and increased income.
- R&E 4 – Transport Review Stage 2 – this proposal was deferred pending receipt of an equality impact assessment.
- R&E 11-4 – Cenotaphs – Members requested further information in respect of which cenotaphs would be affected and which parish councils undertake their own cenotaph maintenance and cleaning.
- ACX 4 – Reorganisation of the Communications Function – Members asked for the new Head of Communications and Marketing to attend in April 2018 to provide an update on the communications strategy.
- CYPS 5 – School Improvement – Members asked for more detail in respect of where the saving will come from and the impact on the service, including a description of the minimum service requirement.

- PH2 – Withdrawal of £25k funding from homelessness service – further information required detailing the impact of the reduction on the delivery of the homelessness strategy.

Members considered the following proposals on 10 January 2018:-

R&E2A - Markets - Members supported the option after being provided with reassurances on queries raised on 14 December.

R&E4 - Transport Review Stage 2 - Members had previously requested the detail of the equality impact assessment. Having received the current version of the EIA, Members provided support in principle, but confirmed that OSMB would reserve its views until the final report from the review was presented for pre-decision scrutiny.

R&E11 - Cenotaphs - Having received details of the cenotaphs for which the Council held responsibility, Members supported this budget option.

CYPS5 - School Improvement Service - This was brought back following concerns expressed on 20 December. Members were not clear as to what the proposals related to and following an explanation from the Cabinet Member and Strategic Director, Members determined that a further paper would be required. The proposal submitted did not reflect the explanation provided at the meeting on 20 December. Therefore, it was agreed that a written briefing on the proposal would be submitted on 31 January 2018.

PH2 - Homelessness - Members were reassured by the information provided and resolved to support this budget proposal.

The Chair confirmed that he would write to the Chief Executive in due course to confirm OSMB's comments on the proposals.

The letter confirmed:

- OSMB formally supported all the proposals put forward with the exception of three items, two of which are subject to forthcoming reports to Cabinet – the Corporate Transport Review and the Waste Review.
- OSMB could not support the proposal from Children and Young People's Services (reference CYPS 5 – School Improvement Service). This was not supported on 20 December 2017 and when invited back to provide further information on 10 January 2018 Members were once again unable to support the proposal due to the ambiguity of the information presented. There was concern that the proposal was submitted was not consistent with what was described previously at OSMB on 10 January 2018. There are implications arising from this in respect of the public consultation. We recommend that Cabinet Members and SLT rigorously review any proposal prior to publication to ensure they are consistent with the intended action.

- OSMB is not due to consider the formal budget until 14 February 2018, therefore we are unable to provide OSMB's formal commentary on the budget as a whole at this stage. The recommendations will be reported to Cabinet on 19 February 2018.

A number of the service specific budget proposals have been subject to further consultation over recent months and in accordance with relevant statutory requirements, including:

- Council Tax support scheme
- Home to school transport
- Learning disability services
- Waste and recycling

Detailed responses to all representations formally received have been provided by the relevant service. Individual responses have also been provided to those who submitted representations and an FAQ detailing all of the responses can be found on the Council's website.

Generally, when moving proposals forward, services will continue to engage the Trade Unions as early as possible where service change proposals impact on employees. The council will follow its HR processes to ensure that change is implemented in a fair and transparent way, and that every opportunity is afforded to mitigate any potential job loss.

The following table below provides a summary of all issues covered in the consultation responses received. Please note that some responses covered multiple issues.

Table: Summary of issues raised via invitation for public and partner comments on the budget proposals.

Issue/ topic	**Number of responses**
Concerns around changes proposed as part of the waste consultation – the council should recycle plastics and shouldn't be charging for basic services	11 NB. As outlined above this is subject to a separate consultation which has received 6998 responses
Grounds maintenance workforce reduction / too much is being taken out of the gardener's budget – will lead to health and safety issues	5 NB. As outlined above this includes one which has been submitted by Unison which puts forward an alternative suggestion that they work with services to review working practices and models, to make the required savings
Concern that proposed changes to grass cutting cycles will leave some areas overgrown and untidy	2

for too long	
Reduction in senior management (one request to specifically reduce the number of Assistant Directors per directorate)	4
Reduce salaries of all senior managers	4
A reduction in the number of councillors and their salary	3
Councillors should give up their allowance	1
Concerns that the dog warden / pest control role should not be combined	2 NB. As outlined above includes one response from Sarah Champion MP asking the council to reconsider the proposals
The proposed reduction in the workforce in education support looks like a lot when schools need more support following the Ofsted report which suggested that Multi Academy Trusts are not delivery support for teacher training / Schools need more support, not less	2
Stop funding translation services and support for immigrants	2
Reduce the light usage in Riverside House	1
Concerned about cuts to Public Health services and these should be protected, e.g. children's weight loss and obesity support	1
Suggestion that Rotherham should have a Christmas market to generate income and attract visitors	1
Invest more in repairing the roads	1
No longer have the Mayoral car, and sell the number plate	1
Just want to see good quality basic services – good schools, waste and recycling and roads repaired	1
Provide more incentives for shops and businesses to locate in the town centre	1
Postpone the relocation of the Central library from Riverside House until the return of a more favourable economic climate	1
Remove the focus on the tourism and community arts, to focus on 'core' services	1
Make savings from the catering budget for events	1
Cut back on agency staff	1
Consolidation of customer services (face to face and telephony) would save money and provide a better service	1
Should not be reducing council tax support	1
Do not agree with making no savings in adult social care	1

Should not have invested money into an upgrade of streetlamps	1
A full review of housing needs to take place foreclose on rogue landlords forcible possession of derelict properties	1
When the council tax demands are sent out a fuller breakdown is required on where the funds go. Coupled with this the town councils and parish councils need to show their incomes as well as the precept to show where the money is spent this again should be made readily available be that on the website or posted with the bills	1
Remove 'nice' things that are costly and only benefit a few people such as firework display in Clift	1
The cost of district heating should be cut to 4.0 per kwh	1
Agree with the proposal to protect children's services	1
Agree with the proposal to protect adult social care given the challenges ahead	1

There were also 5 comments that the way the budget proposals had been presented was unclear and people were unable to therefore make comment as they were unsure what was being set out.