

Budget Review Group Recommendations and Responses

No	Recommendation	Agree?	Comments
1	That the Council provides clarity around how it intends to avoid double counting in the Change savings, e.g., in the procurement savings already in the Budget proposals.	Yes	Change programme is integrated with the budget setting process and MTFP. It has taken an evidence led approach using volumetric data where available. The change programme team have worked directly with service managers and teams to identify savings over and above their existing MTFP contributions and avoid double counting. Service managers have signed off the savings. Confidence ratings have been applied to savings across the years to allow for any delay/slippage in the programme delivery. The CMT Steering Group will be accountable for benefit realisation and tracking of the savings contribution of the change programme.
2 →	That the Council provides details of relevant comparator IT savings in recent budgets, comparing the forecast savings with those which have been delivered.	yes and provided herewith	<p>There was £140k staff saving in ICT identified in the 2020/21 budget which was achieved.</p> <p>Within this year's budget setting process £300k to cover the increasing costs of data storage offsite by an external supplier is set to be saved over the next 2 year period commencing 2022-23</p> <p>There is £95k per annum in respect of Servitor and other licences to be saved in 2022-23 from decommissioning legacy systems and implementing QL. As you know this has been delayed but is now set to be removed as per the MTFP and we are on track to deliver that.</p> <p>The revs and bens system implementation which went live in September 2021 delivered around £100k of staff savings which have been removed from the budget in 2022-23.</p>
3	That the Council uses audit fees from the past few years as a basis for estimating full audit fees.	Yes	For the coming year the budget for external audit fees is estimated at £86,400. Last year the actual fee was £23k more than this. The overspend was financed from reserves and balances and should this occur this year then a similar process will be followed. For the next round of budget setting since the indications are that increased fees are highly likely we will propose to increase the fees to accommodate. In terms of internal audit fees the

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			budget is £57k per annum and whilst this occasionally overspends we do try to adjust the days in the internal audit programme to align with the budget
4	That the Council reinitiates discussions with the County and Cherwell District Council about potential re-provision of Investigations Team services.	Yes	It was disappointing that the County Council and Cherwell District Council terminated their contracts for the provision of Investigation Service with the City Council in preference to undertaking the work in house. With the recent news of the dissolution of the management arrangements between the 2 authorities the council will indeed look to approach the 2 authorities to explore the potential for providing Investigation services to either or both Councils.
5	That the Council presents how much of its fee generation by lawyers in respect of s.106 and conveyancing is secure (i.e., that it originates from OCC, ODS or OCHL) and how much is non-secure (is generated from external sources)	N/A	All of the s106 and conveyancing income is from external sources. Income from OCHL and ODS is recorded separately. But the Legal Services team have significantly over achieved on their conveyancing and s106 income for at least the last two years and consider there is minimal risk of this income significantly decreasing.
6	That the Council reduces its spend on external biodiversity consultants by investing in its own in-house expertise instead.	No	The Council has already increased investment in in-house biodiversity expertise, with the officer resource having moved from 0.4FTE to 1FTE. However, changes being introduced as a result of the Environment Act 2021 mean we will need to retain the ability to use external consultants when necessary, depending on the type of work and the volume of work at any one time and the capacity we have available at the time. The resources for this type of work will always be kept under review, given workloads.
7	That the Council undertakes a review at 3 and 6 months of car park revenue to check if income is on track, and if not that this is escalated for consideration of in-year adjustment of car park fees	Yes	The Council undertakes monthly monitoring of income and expenditure and with quarterly reports to Cabinet. Car park income is a key risk area for the council which will be subject to more in depth scrutiny. Variations will be reported to Senior Management and Members with any recommendations for any in year budget adjustments that may be required to bring the budget back on target
8	That the Council works with the County Council to model the expected impact on car park and Park and Ride revenues of the city	Partially	The Council already monitors the usage of the park and ride and other car parks and liaises with the County Council on this. There are currently a range of factors affecting the Park and Rides stemming from the pandemic due to changes in behaviours. We are working with the County Council to

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	centre Zero Emissions Zone		<p>encourage use of the park and rides, bus services and active travel as we move forward.</p> <p>We do not consider it possible to attribute changes directly to a single measure like the ZEZ. Our pricing strategy across our car parks is aimed at encouraging alternatives to driving into the city centre where possible and city centre charges have been increased as part of the budget setting process, while Park and Ride has been frozen. The County Council has introduced significant increases in the charges for on street parking in the city centre, with the stated intention of disincentivising usage.</p>
9 ω	That the Council proposes in its discussions with County and the Westgate ways to improve the convenience of the Park and Rides to shoppers, such as arranging delivery of city centre purchases to collection points.	Yes	The County Council and City Council are engaging with the Westgate and other employers, as well as Experience Oxfordshire, to identify options for improving the usage of the Park and Rides. We are happy to raise this point.
10	Restricted recommendation.		
11	Restricted recommendation		
12	That the Council provides a baseline figure of the carbon savings generated by ensuring that 95% of its properties achieve the lowest level of 'C' EPC ratings.	Yes	It is not yet possible to model the carbon savings given the significant variety in property types and different types of measures that might be applied. However, the data gathered from the LAD1b retrofit programme already under way should enable us to start developing such a model.
13	That so far as practically possible the Council ensures that energy inefficient homes are prioritised for retrofitting, notwithstanding the complexity of the task.	Yes	It is typically a requirement of the Government grant-funded schemes that those buildings which would qualify must be rated EPC D or below. This has informed our approach to retrofitting which is targeting the energy inefficient homes first. However, it should be noted that in some cases across the Council's housing stock it would not be realistically viable to achieve an rating of EPC C or above, and it may be more appropriate to demolish and build new homes.
14	Restricted recommendation		
15	Restricted recommendation		
16	In view of the greater tenant		

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	engagement needed arising from the Social Housing white paper, that Council's decisions over how best to respond to that include the work of existing teams, particularly the Tenant Involvement Team.	Yes	Officers are considering how best to incorporate the additional resources within the budget into the organisation to respond to the new legislative requirements. An integrated approach with existing teams will be adopted
17	That the Council provides an estimate of the implications for the City Council of both the capital costs of a reconfiguration of Floyd's Row away from its current triage service back towards something closer to the original design and the associated operating costs as part of the transition to life after Covid.	Yes	Officers are continuing to pursue options for minor alterations to the building to allow maximum usage whilst uncertainty continues with regard to the application of covid restrictions to communal settings such as that planned at Floyds Row but without prejudicing the use of the building as envisaged by the original project. The current estimate of costs is £70k for which budget provision already exists.
18 ↳	That the Council makes it a priority to publicise the Noise app, particularly in areas with known noise problems.	Yes	The Noise App is already promoted on the landing page for Report a Noise Problem and by officers discussing noise problems with members of the public, but we will also update our other noise webpages to publicise it further.
19	That a fuller justification of for phasing out of the £500,000 leisure contingency is provided in the post-consultation budget proposals.	N/A	<p>The proposal is a gradual reduction of the leisure contingency of £500k (increased cost or reduced income) originally forecast in 2022-23 to reduce the risk between 2022-23 and 2024-25.</p> <p>We have seen usage levels increase to c70% pre pandemic levels and Fusion believe usage levels will be closer to pre pandemic levels towards the end of 2022 justifying the gradual removal of this contingency</p> <p>While there are a number of uncertainties, these factors do provide useful insight to help our financial modelling.</p>
20	Restricted recommendation		
21	That the Council reverses its proposals to make £25k cuts to	Yes	The administration's budget proposes reversing the £25,000 saving

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	advice centre base budgets.		
22	That the Council provides clarity over the actual cash cost of Green Flag accreditation, that it reviews the cost-benefit of making this efficiency against this figure, and that it investigates (and includes in its deliberations if appropriate) the possibility of accessing CIL monies to cover these costs.	N/A	The CIL money received to date by the council has been fully allocated through the budget setting process (this excludes that received in Parish and Neighbourhood Plan areas as this is not allocated by the City Council). The cost of re-instating the accreditation is estimated at around £18k per annum. CIL money is for the provision and improvement of a wide range of infrastructure in the city to support development. The accreditation does not fulfil that criteria.

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