

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS & AUDIT SELECT COMMITTEE
29 October 2014

Budget savings discussion record sheet for reporting to Cabinet

Proposal	Support	Support with recommendations for adjustments (see comments)	Do not support (see comments for reasons)	Comments
Reduce Council Tax exemptions (CEX/SAV/52a)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Committee raised concerns regarding the collection of Council Tax on unoccupied properties and a potential impact on the HRA in relation to properties where the Council is the landlord.</p> <p>It was suggested that unoccupied properties that remain unoccupied for more than a year which currently receive a 50% premium, i.e. pay 150% of the Council Tax due, be increased to 200%.</p>
Amend the Council Tax support Scheme (CEX/SAV/52b)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Committee raised concerns over potential changes to the backdating of benefit claims and how the Council compared to other Boroughs in London. There were also serious concerns raised about the ongoing effects of the “bedroom tax” and that coupled with the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme, there was a real danger that sections of the community would be forced into increasingly unmanageable levels of debt.</p> <p>Having received assurances from the Cabinet Member for Finance about providing support for those families in greatest need</p> <p>The Committee supported the savings proposal on the understanding the consultation with affected residents (as set out in the report) would take place and requested figures of those residents who would be affected by both the “bedroom tax” and the revised Council Tax support proposals are provided.</p>

<p>Review of the corporate accommodation strategy (CEX/SAV/45a)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Committee whilst accepting the need to rationalise council accommodation noted that the projected savings for each of the major buildings were not substantially different and therefore based on the arguments of history, maintaining the democratic process and for the unity of the borough the suggestion was that Roycraft House should be closed, with a sustainable plan for the future of the building put in place</p> <p>The Committee also suggested that other properties currently utilised by the Council within the Borough could be reduced.</p> <p>In response to the points raised by the Committee, the Cabinet Member for Finance advised that other properties used by the Council were already being considered as part of other budget saving proposals. With regard to the major buildings, efficiency savings were currently being worked out for each premises.</p> <p>The Committee supported the proposal and recommends the closure of Roycraft House, with a sustainable plan for the future of the building put in place.</p>
<p>Elevate overheads (CEX/SAV/55)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Committee raised concerns in relation to changes such as the extension of the contract to 2020 and the removal of the 40 day break clause. The Committee were also concerned that the Council may lose its current level of control in Elevate if the proposals were to go ahead. The Cabinet Member for Finance advised that negotiations were still taking place and no change in control would take place.</p> <p>The Committee supported the proposal on the understanding more scrutiny would take place on the extended contract before it was agreed.</p>
<p>Withdrawal of the Benefits Direct Services at One Stop Shops (CEX/SAV/58)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Committee raised concerns regarding access for vulnerable residents, in particular the elderly and those with disabilities. The Committee were aware there could potentially be further major changes to the benefits system following the General Election in 2015 and in those circumstances:</p> <p>The Committee supported the proposal in principle but are recommending that implementation should be deferred for up to four months to await the outcome of the General Election in May 2015.</p>

B&D Direct – Customer Services Channel Shift (CEX/SAV/56)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Budget saving supported
Automation of inbound email/post processing (CEX/SAV/60)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Committee supported the proposal and requested that a rigorous examination of the figures provided be undertaken of this and the other budget proposals involving Elevate.
Charging for discretionary face to face contact services (CEX/SAV/71)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not supported on the basis of the disproportionate impact of the budget saving on the more vulnerable sections of the community
Introduction of premium rate number to the Contact Centre for discretionary service calls (CEX/SAV/57)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not supported on the basis of the disproportionate impact of the budget saving on the more vulnerable sections of the community
Relocation of Barking Contact Centre to a lower cost area (CEX/SAV/59)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Committee were concerned that there would be a significant number of redundancies brought about by the proposals meaning the loss of local jobs with no guarantee of the new jobs paying the London living wage which this Council was committed to. On that basis:</p> <p>Budget saving not supported</p>

ICT Technologies, service management and infrastructure (CEX/SAV/63a, b and c)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Committee were concerned that the proposals were too ambitious to be delivered and that a self service approach to ICT would place considerable pressure on an already stretched workforce Furthermore it was felt that more financial information was required before informed scrutiny of the proposals could be undertaken. Questions were raised about the level of savings the proposals would generate and despite assurances from the Cabinet Member for Finance that the savings which amount collectively to £4.6m are guaranteed and not negotiable with Agilisys,</p> <p>Budget saving not supported</p>
Accountancy service (CEX/SAV/30a)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Budget saving supported
Investment income – increase risk appetite (CEX/SAV/29)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Budget saving supported
Discretionary business rate relief (CEX/SAV/53)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Budget saving supported
Reduce the size of the HR Business Partner team (CEX/SAV/22a)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Budget saving supported
Stop Employee Relations team (CEX/SAV/22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Budget saving supported

Reduce spend of Trade Union representatives (CEX/SAV/23) - <u>withdrawn</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not applicable
Reduce Democratic Services structure (CEX/SAV/09)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Committee in considering each of the posts put forward for deletion expressed the view that with the growing member demands and expectations on the service and seeing the limited officer support currently available that the post of Scrutiny Officer should be retained. With regard to the role of the Political Assistant, despite the findings and recommendations in the Peer Review, the committee questioned the need to fill a similar role in light of the current political and financial climate. On that basis,</p> <p>The Committee supported the proposed budget saving with the exception of the Scrutiny Officer role being retained.</p>
Reduce Member training (CEX/SAV/12a)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Committee were concerned with the original proposals and in linking this to the previous budget saving would be prepared to:</p> <p>Support the alternative approach to achieving the saving which would allow for the retention of the post combining member training with additional support to scrutiny.</p>
Streamlining Building Cleaning (ES009A)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Budget saving supported