

## **Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Scrutiny Panels**

**Councillors Gillian Peet, Kevin Welsh and Yvonne Cartey**

Dukinfield Town Hall, King Street, SK16 4LA

**Ms Kathy Roe**  
**Director of Finance – Section 151 Officer**  
**Tameside MBC**

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Our Ref	Budget Consult 2018/19
Ask for	Paul Radcliffe
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Date	6 February 2018

Dear Ms Roe,

### **Consultation with Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Scrutiny Panels on the 2018/19 Budget**

We are writing in response to the recent budget consultation meetings that have taken place to provide a comprehensive overview of the Council's budget and saving plans for 2018/19 and beyond.

The following content provides an account of the discussions captured from the meetings held and we would be grateful if you could share this letter at the joint meeting of Executive Cabinet and Overview (Audit) Panel on 7 February 2018. We would like to thank the Chief Executive and yourself together with other colleagues for the helpful summary of the Council's financial position and future priorities.

It remains evident that the Council continues to face significant financial pressures. With a combined resource of around £1bn and a £174m capital programme, it is pleasing to hear that despite future levels of uncertainty bold and transformational decisions are being made in Tameside.

With the Council now half way through a four year settlement, it is clear that organisations are working to promote a shared vision to ensure spending power is as effective as possible. Decisions made through the Strategic Commission aim to remove duplication and allow for the most effective use of resources through an integrated neighbourhood model. It is positive that work is underway to ensure the best quality of care is delivered to our residents in the most appropriate settings and we welcome this.

The Chief Executive talked in detail of the excellent work that is being achieved through the Care Together Programme and the need to accelerate certain elements in order to achieve our ambitious plans. It was added that Tameside has started to see some of the associated benefits, with costs being removed from the system, the hospital performing well and improvements in healthy life expectancy levels.

It was explained that Tameside, similar to other areas, is currently experiencing an unprecedented level of increased demand on Children's Services. This is something which requires the Council to place a significant level of budget attention towards, with a short-term investment commitment needed. The Council is clear in its plans to work closely with Ofsted to improve services and to understand the reasons behind such a spike in demand. It is important that focus is placed on improving outcomes for children, providing earlier support for families and securing a long-term resource plan for the service.

The Chair of the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the pressures faced by Children's Services and the improvement journey that is already well underway. During recent months the Scrutiny Panel has remained well informed of activity and will continue to develop connections with the service and monitor outcomes.

The Director of Finance was clear that financial decisions of the Council need to be as robust as possible and do not generate greater exposure to risk. There must be a clear business case and need for a service to receive extra short-term funding, with an identifiable and recurrent impact achieved from the additional spend. The Council has a practical and prudent approach to funding gaps and saving requirements and it is positive to hear that the Council and CCG have a clear strategy for managing the delivery of substantial and progressive projects for the borough.

The Chair of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel sought further clarification on the Council's ability to mitigate risks associated with external factors, which may be out of our control. This also touched upon the Council's approach towards 'invest to save' projects and the associated benefits.

The Chief Executive commented that financial risk and uncertainty has, and will continue to be, a key factor for the Council to monitor and manage effectively. It is important for the Council to continue to make bold and progressive decisions. Resource and budget commitments are made well in advance, which means that any external factors outside of the Council's control will not generate any direct funding issues. With extensive experience of working with public and private sector organisations the Council will continue to deliver best value for money for residents and its wider workforce.

Assurances were provided by the Director of Finance that the Council's current financial position is as strong as it can possibly be in the circumstances, which is a credit to the planning and decisions made over previous years. It is clear that certain pressures will continue and future decisions will be made on the success of certain capital programmes. Where possible the Council will have a prudent approach to borrowing and take account of achievable capital receipts.

It was made clear that under no circumstance will the Council use reserves to simply fill funding gaps across organisations. Savings will be generated by looking at ways to deliver services differently and collectively to reduce elements of demand. 'Invest to save' projects are something that the Council will continue to deliver, with a clear evidence base needed to guarantee future and recurrent benefits from an initial investment.

Yours sincerely,

**Councillor G Peet - Chair of Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel**

**Councillor K Welsh – Chair of Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel**

**Councillor Y Cartey – Deputy Chair of Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel**