

**Addendum to Executive Agenda
Responses to questions from Councillors**

Item 3 Stock Condition Survey

1. *What proportion of the £5.3-£6.4m very poor/poor funding required (5.5)*

a. already included in works undertaken since the survey was completed ?

In this current financial year, the programme has focused on windows/doors and kitchens/bathrooms in very poor condition. Contractors are currently working through this list.

b. already programmed into the HIP budget 2018-20 of £2.9m ?

Whilst the attributes assessed as being in very poor condition are the immediate focus, the budget is insufficient to address all attributes in very poor or poor condition.

2. *Has it been possible to defer any of the 2018-20 budget for cyclical renewals, given the good condition of the stock overall?*

No budget has been deferred as it is important to maintain the good condition of the attributes.

3. *What does programme preliminary costs mean and why is it an annual recurring figure of £228k, no a one-off costs spread over the duration of the different works ?*

Contracts for windows, doors, kitchens and bathrooms have preliminary costs associated with the delivery of the contract irrespective of the number of completions. The cost includes items such as the contract and site managers, quantity surveyors and tenant liaison staff, skips, protective clothing and labourers. The cost is applicable for each year that the contract runs.

4. *Since the survey was delivered 18 months ago and the numbers in 5.5 calculated, has it been possible to reduce the very large spread of estimates for roofing prelims and scaffolding ?*

No, these will be determined as the contracts are let.

5. *5.6 Are the works to the High Rise blocks included in the table of costs in 5.5.above ?*

No. Further work is required to confirm the optimum approach to the multiple occupancy blocks. These costs will be included at budget review stage.

6. *5.8 How much would it cost to bring the 93 properties identified as E or less to C?*

The costs identified in 5.8 will enable the property to achieve the maximum possible EPC rating and therefore we anticipate that 75% of these will achieve a C rating.

7. *Can an update be given on two of the questions raised at the last Joint Scrutiny*

a. Bullet 4 breakdown of the £701k costs mentioned in 5.8

£225,000.00 is the cost of bringing the known 93 dwellings below a 'D' rating up to a minimum of 'D'. Using this as an impressionistic survey across the remaining stock currently without an EPC, the projected cost of bringing those up to a minimum 'D' rating would be circa £701,650.

b. *Bullet 8 possible modifications to lifts for stretchers*

Further surveys would be required to assess the feasibility of modifying lifts in such a way. Even in traditional dwellings, emergency services tend to use specially designed wheel type chairs (designed to protect their staff from lifting injury) to transfer patients rather than using stretchers.

8. *How will the work be prioritised?*

Work is prioritised by condition with attributes in very poor condition being addressed first except where it is economically beneficial and sensible to undertake attributes in poor condition alongside very poor.

9. *Can the analysis/work be broken down by Ward, as requested at Joint Scrutiny?*
This will be provided at the next meeting.

10. *Can we be confident in the quality of the repairs to be carried out - quite a few anecdotal reports of poor quality repairs.*

These works are not undertaken by the repairs contractors but by the planned work team. The quality of works is checked as the works are in progress and upon completion. These are individually handed over to the high levels of quality we set at WDC by a Clerk of Works and a handover pack is provided by the contractor. We have a very high satisfaction rate on both of these works streams and have very few complaints about the quality of the work.

Item 4 – Budget Review

1. *3.8.2 How much is in the Car Park Repair Reserve?*
£732,000 as at 31 March 2018

Is the Linen Street refurbishment earmarked reserve (page 14) separate?

Yes, £218,300 out of the original £250k budget for feasibility works remains as at 31/3/18.

2. *App B Page 12 Why are the Manager estimates of Revenue out-turns on Crematorium and Planning so much lower than the calculation based on Prior Years ?*

Crematorium Income – comments from Bereavement Services Development Manager

"It is not possible to "calculate" cremation income from year-to-date data which then extrapolates on the basis of this years profile matching last years profile. Thus there is absolutely no consistency in the annual statistics and even less predictability for shorter time periods. National death trends offer little to no assistance as the relatively small geographical area Oakley Wood operates in does not provide samples of sufficient size to have any statistical validation. In addition to the hugely varying death rates, there may be factors affecting neighbouring crematoria causing further distortion of the figures. The managers estimated budget outturn, based on the current approved budget of £1,292,400 and similarly the managers up dated figure of £1,297,700 subject to the proposed fees and charges being agreed and implemented with effect 1st January are calculated using the mean average of total number of cremations established over the past 5 years as the basis, and adjusted to take into account anticipated changes, for example continuous review of market share by residence to best predict the negative impact of Rainsbrook which opened in 2014, and positive impacts from the implementation of service improvements introduced in April

2017. Therefore the budget manager does not agree with the "calculated" forecast of £1,587,400."

Planning Fees – Comments from Development Services Manager

At the time that we worked on the forecast, there was evidence from the 1st quarter of this year that the income coming in was at a lower level than the previous year, excluding the carry over from the previous year – this was the evidence that we used to inform the forecast at that time.

However, since then the level of income coming in has picked up and as part of our monthly review meetings, Gary and I have increased the forecast to £1,553K which we'll continue to keep an eye on and adjust in the forthcoming months as necessary.

3. *I notice that in the Budget Review on page 9 of the report it mentions "Risks" but fails to mention Brexit. Why is that?*

Brexit is an issue that impacts upon all of the Council's services, potentially adversely or beneficially. It is agreed that Brexit could have been included as a risk within the report.

Item 5 – Council Tax Reduction Scheme

- 1) *Is 85% discount the legal maximum?*

No – The Council Tax Benefit scheme was a national scheme and subsidy was received from the Government to administer the scheme. However from April 2013, each LA were responsible for determining their own reduction scheme and support from the Government was cut by 10%. In year 1 of the reduction scheme WDC continued to award up to 100% reduction, from April 2014 it was agreed by members that the maximum award would reduce to 85% meaning that all working age claimants must pay at least 15% towards their council tax.

- 2) *Are Council's lobbying the Government to re-instate the subsidy.*
I don't know the answer to this.

- 3) *Is this a statutory change? If not how many claimants are there with more than 3 dependants? How much would it cost to remove this option and recognise larger families?*

There are currently 3325 claimants of working age, the table below shows the no of children. If circumstances remain the same they will continue to receive 85%.

It is not a statutory requirement to limit the number of dependant children within the calculation to two, however this was agreed by members and has been the case since April 2017 in line with other benefits. Claimants who have been in continuous receipt of reduction since April 2017 and had 3 or more children prior to that date still benefit from an increased amount for more than two children and will continue to do so until either they have to claim Universal Credit or move to the new scheme in April 2020.

There are currently 3325 working age claimants in receipt of council tax reduction, in the following table, those customers who currently receive 85% reduction are likely to continue to do so whilst their circumstances remain the same.

No of children	1	2	3	4	5	6+
Currently receiving 85%	371	226	126	32	14	8
Receiving 85% or less.	267	248	100	26	15	3

If we don't limit the number of dependant children, the scheme would cost more than it currently does because they are not included in other means tested benefits.

4) *How many cases of non dependant deductions are there? How much would we save by retaining this deduction?*

Non dependant deductions are currently calculated based on the gross income and capital of the non dependant. Therefore we have to obtain information of all members of the household even those who are not liable. There are currently 423 claimants with non dependants, the following table shows the amount of deduction dependant on the gross income.

Weekly Deduction	Non-dependant's gross weekly income
£3.90	£0.00 - £202.84
£7.90	£202.85 - £351.64
£9.95	£651.65 - £436.89
£11.90	£436.90 +

5) *How many applicants with larger families, who would lose out and by how much? Would the costs of allowing an additional disregard for those families with high child care costs?*

There are 168 claimants with child care charges, up to 85% of child care charges are disregarded in the calculation of universal credit up to £646.35 for one child and £1108.04 for two children.

6) *Could two tables be provided setting out the impact of the banded scheme as proposed on couples with 3 & 4 children.*

To be explained

7) *What is the likely value of the discretionary fund that is mentioned on page 5.* £20,000.00 but this is split proportionately between all preceptors and would be reviewed throughout the year depending on demand.

8) *How is this going to be rolled out and how are we going to support people affected by this to engage with it.*

For the first year the new scheme will only be relevant to customers who claim universal credit, this means that we can closely monitor the impacts ready for when those transfer to the new scheme in 2020 and work with current claimants.

9) *How can we ensure the survey is meaningful.*

We will be notifying all working age claimants about the consultation and how they can participate. We will also contact support agencies inviting their views.

10) Are we consulting with support agencies and what weight will you give to their views.

We will consult with supporting agencies, a full report will be presented to members following consultation and ultimately it will be for members to decide whether the scheme should be changed.

11) Have we consulted other Councils who have gone through the UC process and introduced similar simplifying reforms?

No but we can do this as part of the consultation. In the first year of UC one other council in the District reported 72,000 notifications from UC and only 6,000 of these resulted in changes to council tax reduction, however each notification needed to be checked to and applied to the claim.

Item 7 – Assets redesign

1. On page 5 at paragraph 5.4 it mentions the current 60/40 split of costs that is reviewed annually. Has the split of costs always been 60/40?

It is based on the annual returns that we receive in accountancy each year for the split on time each member of staff has worked between HRA (including Capital works on the Housing Improvement Programme) and GF. These can vary slightly each year depending of workload priorities.

Item 8 – Bid for Local Authority Housing Programme

1 How is affordable defined? What priority is being given to houses at social rents, to replace Right to Buy sales, to reflect need and to seek to recover the huge shortfall of 60% (over 500 houses not built) against our original local Plan in the last 6 years? Will at least 80% be let at social rents?

The government's intention for the programme is that it will deliver new homes within the Housing Revenue Account and therefore 'affordable' is defined as social rented, affordable rented and shared ownership. The mix for each scheme will be part of the detailed reports to Executive seeking approval to proceed with them

2 Is the Turpin Court development still going ahead?

This is one of the schemes that we are including within the bid to seek additional headroom. We are currently awaiting pre-app advice from planning regarding the proposed development.

3 2.7 Why is it necessary to employ a consultant for this work? Is there a commitment long-term to building more Council & HA Houses at social and 'affordable' rents? (The approved Plan plus WDC guidelines indicates 225 a year are needed out of a total affordable of 374 are needed, without any catch-up of the recent shortfall). If so, would it not be more efficient and less risky to employ a full-time officer?

The funding is for "consultancy services" rather than just a consultant. A wide range of professional advice may be needed on many different aspects of development processes e.g. project management, planning, scheduling, engineering and architectural, highways, legal, building, etc. It would be very unlikely that we would find a single individual with a set of professional skills and expertise that covered the entirety of this.

4 3.1.7 & 3.2.1 To what extent will WDC be working in collaboration with Waterloo Housing to deliver this housing – and using their access to borrowing?

The initiative concerns the Council gaining additional borrowing approvals to spend on developing its own housing to sit within the Housing Revenue Account. It will not be undertaken in collaboration with Waterloo.

5 *3.5.1 What opportunity cost is referred to here?*

If the bid is not successful but we nevertheless want to take these schemes forward and fund them from the Capital Investment Reserve then the "opportunity cost" is that the money that comes out of the Capital Investment Reserve is no longer available to spend on other things.

6 *How has the costs of the sites been determined?*

Land costs have been estimated from a number of sources, including any specific knowledge of land prices for individual sites, indications from land owners and valuations where available. Build costs have been estimated using local rates from a recent valuation report and assuming properties are built to the national space standard. Allowances have been added for on-costs.

7 *Are the officers aware of additional costs that could arise with some sites?*

All costs that officers are aware of have been included in the figures and an on-cost including contingency has been allowed for. That is not to say that unforeseen costs will not arise as the schemes are worked up in further detail.

If approval is given by Executive for the bid and it is successful then detailed scheme appraisals will be carried out for each site and fully costed schemes will be presented to Executive for approval in due course.

8 *How many of the garages for development are currently occupied?*

This detail is yet to be worked through and will be considered as the individual sites are brought forward for approval. Where possible and practicable, alternative provision can be offered.

9 *Are any contractually linked to occupants of local housing?*

This detailed information is yet to be worked through. It will form part of the work in delivering the site if the bid is approved and be considered in future reporting.

10 *What will we do with the remaining Garage sites?*

We will undertake an appraisal exercise to determine if other sites have potential to deliver additional housing.

11 *Will we restart a programme of repairs?*

Once the appraisal exercise has been undertaken, we will determine a programme of repairs to sites not available for development.