

Budget 2021/22: additional feedback summary



This paper summarises the 52 additional budget consultation responses received between 15 and 31 January and should be read alongside the previous summary (to 14 January). All feedback is from individual citizens unless marked.

1. Common themes

Galley Hill Community Centre and Arts Centre

Feedback received from the Galley Hill Residents Association and 9 residents (further to those mentioned in the previous summary) pointing out the deterioration and vandalism of the previously much used facility, the historic discussions over its repair and renovation and the current need for around £300,000 of investment. In addition the Residents Association has carries out a local survey and of those contacted, 199 households said they would back the Community Centre and Arts Centre being renovated and given back to the local area for community use, and 77 households were prepared to help with the running of the centre.

Booking system at tips should be removed (x13 comments)

2. Additional points

In favour of greater investment/action

- General upkeep and litter collection
- Flooding prevention (x2) with specific mention to Holne Chase School on Buckingham Road and around additional development in villages
- Adult social care
- Making MK greener
- Repairing potholes
- Upkeep of Redways (x2)
- Making the Domestic Abuse Co-ordination Officer role permanent
- To encourage take up of the Government period poverty scheme by local schools while the Period Poverty Pilot is phased out

Against

- Rise in council tax (x3)
- Spend on MK Futures (x2)
- Cuts to bus subsidies and routes (x3) and disabled persons bus pass
- Cuts to funding for toilets in Albert Street, Bletchley
- Charging for non-household rubbish

Other comments

- More clarity needed on how to reduce child poverty
- Please collect council tax in 12 payments rather than 10
- Reduction in councillors and their allowances and expenses
- What measures do MKC take to ensure that 'Looked After Children' placements are value for money?
- Feedback for Finance team around clarity of proposals and how they could link to other local budgets (eg Thames Valley Police)

3. Summarised comments from organisations

Old Woughton Parish Council

The challenges facing MKC and its communities through 2020/21 have no parallel in the lives of most MK residents today. The operational demands plus the lack of a planning horizon have conspired against the doughtiest bureaucrat and yet MKC has kept the town and parish councils well informed enabling us to add value where we can and re-assurance too.

We would like to record our appreciation for the many individual and collective efforts that enabled this to happen. As a consequence, the budget consultation exercise has had to proceed with numerous assumptions behind it and it is difficult for any of those on the 'outside' to really challenge the numbers to any degree.

This PC, therefore, would like to comment on the headline proposal not to raise the maximum tax increases that the Government permits, highly limiting as these are even in ordinary years. MK's fine record of growth delivery has always resulted in an inability for funding streams to literally keep up - we see this not only in the provision of local government services, but in support for our hospital and transport infrastructure – and every year reports emerge of the very robust discussions which take place between local agencies and the various ministries. *It seems counter-intuitive to OWPC, at least, that MKC should itself offer up a non-collection of available income.*

The motivation is well understood, to protect the most hard-pressed, but the funding of Adult Social Care speaks to the very neediest, especially at this time, and when MKUH must have the optimum capacity to safely discharge older and disabled citizens. We read that the result of this proposal is £9m of further service reductions and a one-off call on reserves. Given the list of major uncertainties in your own Risk Assessment, we think this a very unwise precedent to set.

Stony Stratford Town Council (in addition to feedback shared in the previous summary)

We have reviewed the MKC draft budget presented to the Delegated Decisions meeting on held on 22 December 2020 and have the following comments/concerns:

1. This Town Council and residents are very concerned that the Galley Hill Arts Centre and Meeting Place, which are in a state of grave disrepair (and subject to frequent break-ins), appear to have been completely omitted from the MKC 2021/22 or future budgets. This is despite recent assurances that funding would be forthcoming and that Milton Keynes Council has accepted the Stony Stratford Local Plan, which included references to maintaining the Galley Hill local centre as a strategic asset. We would have expected to see this property (housing both the Arts Centre and Meeting Place) listed in either of the following two areas:
 - Capital 2.57 Table 12 (which summarises the Council's capital resources and expenditure needs) – there are no new projects for strategic allocation within the programme.
 - 2.59 Pipeline budget (Annex L Environment, Property and Cultural Services - EPCS and Annex L Pipeline)

We do however note that there is a Corporate Property Reserve (* sinking funds to fund one-off expenditure of the Council's Operational Buildings in line with approved Asset Management Plans). Please could you confirm that this property will be included in the MKC Strategic Asset Management Strategy which we understand is currently being developed and will identify further investment required in Council Operational Assets? As you may already be aware, 2022 will be the 50th anniversary of the estate. It would be entirely appropriate for work on the meeting place to coincide with this anniversary. We would like to be able to reassure residents that this property will be refurbished to bring it back into much needed community use and would appreciate a timescale for these works.

2. Please could we seek clarification on the MKC position regarding Annex O Earmarked Reserves. The Budget Report appears to suggest that the Parking Facilities EMR (c£7K For spend on parking schemes arising from reviews in Bletchley and Stony Stratford) is due to Close from 31 March 2021 and monies will be put in a General Covid-19 Fund. Is there any way we can access this money to spend on High Street improvements which are in progress (working with Jacobs and MKC)?
3. It also appears that there will be Zero investment in off-street parking? Is this correct? Parking is a perennial problem in Stony Stratford and Milton Keynes as a whole. Off-street parking helps to alleviate some of the pressure in the on-street parking places. If MKC is not investing in Off-street parking maintenance and provision, is this coming from external investment?'

HC One (care home management company)

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge and thank the Council for having the foresight and sectoral understanding to offer a 4.2% fee increase from April 2021. This is a positive move given the pressure on the sector and the council's own financial challenges.

In regards to the offer and to put into context, whilst we are aware the proposed increase is above the threshold of the increase in National Living Wage and CPI increase, we would add that the Council need to consider the increased costs associated to COVID-19.

To summarise, we would add the following factors that are not business as usual increases:-

- Increased PPE costs to ensure Infection Control procedures are adhered too, above free PPE costs. This equates to £491 per bed per annum (Additional 1.7% weighted increase)
- Increased sick pay costs to accommodate colleague's absence due to self-isolating. This equates to £403 per bed per annum (Additional 1.4% weighted increase)
- Additional payroll being additional hours in grid above establishment hours and homes where occupancy would allow units to be consolidated but infection control prevents this. This equates to £300 per bed per annum (Additional 1.1% weighted increase)
- We anticipate an extra 1 hour per resident per week associated to domestic / housekeeping due to added infection control measures, circa £6 per Resident per week extra.

MK Cycling Forum

Milton Keynes Cycling Forum is a group of experienced Cyclists and Cycling Groups in Milton Keynes dedicated to promote project and enhance the Opportunities for Cycling from a Cultural, Environmental, Health and Well-being and physical built Infrastructure perspective working in partnership with Milton Keynes Council, Parish Councils , Parks Trust and other Stakeholders. It's advice has been sought by the Council and Council Officers over a number of years.

This is a brief representation focussed on a number of detailed queries and concerns in relation to Funding provision over the forthcoming Budget Cycles for Cycling and Walking to 25/26 in particular to maintain and enhance infrastructure spend on MK's unique Redway System - missing links thereto and maintenance thereof AND the relevant Ring Fencing of Funds for Cycling provision within new Devts in the Growth Areas of Milton Keynes by way of Section 106/Tariff- Govt Funding from HIF - DFT Incentive schemes Single Pot Grant and Prudential Borrowing.

Firstly it has to be acknowledged with thanks the Councils continued commitment to Cycling as articulated both in MK2050 and the adopted Local Plan it has focussed with success on securing Funds from Govts Incentive Schemes including the Active Travel Fund -Autonomous Vehicle projects - 5 G rollout - E-Scooter Trials and is commencing Work on the important Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and its allocation of Funds for Cycling from the Covid Recovery Fund was really appreciated BUT a number of key questions arise from the Budget Proposals which are set out below and to which we look forward to an early response before the Budget is adopted at full Council on the 24th Feb

1) Capital Programme Transport 2021 /22 and onwards to 2025 /26

- a) item 936 isn't the sum of 1.1 million pounds over 5 yrs wholly inadequate for Redway Improvements and if so what steps can be taken to increase this Amount as a Priority
- b) b) Item 438 isn't 100 k wholly inadequate over 5 yrs to Fund Redway Super Routes and what steps can be taken to increase this Funding other than waiting for Govt Grant Funding which may never happen
- c Item 265 East West Rail - how much of the £7.2 mil spend will be on Cycling and Walking Infrastructure
- d Item 937 Footpaths - since it's impossible in many cases to separate Footpaths from Redways why is only 1 mil allocated over 5 yrs see item a) above
- e item 934 - why is only £40 k allocated over 5 yrs for Redway signage ?

2 Available Funding

- a) Of the HIF Funding Grant how much of the £91 million has been allocated to Cycling and Walking Infrastructure provision and connectivity
- b section106/Tariff - why is there no expenditure at all over the next 5 yrs out of the Tariff for any Cycling Schemes and why have the related SPD,s not required a specific contribution to Cycling and Walking it continues to be part of the overall Highways pot ? Ring fencing these Funds would have ensured that there was no temptation to divert Funds originally allocated for Cycling to other Highways projects !

SUMMARY The Council has an understandable huge dilemma in how it prioritises spend in a Pandemic Year huge challenges and difficult decisions are required but this is a 5 yr Plan it must focus on a Vision for Cycling and Walking over that period a Vision which must make our Redway System an exemplar as important in many ways as the 2050 MRT proposals and one which is truly deliverable and value for money. The debate and comments at the Budget and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the Transport Budget on the 12th March were extremely helpful and appeared positive in identifying the importance of Funding for Cycling and Walking and hopefully the opportunity will be taken for Cabinet at its meeting on the 2nd Feb to consider and respond to both this representation and those of the Scrutiny Committee prior to the full Councils consideration on the 24th February 2021

YiS Young People's Mental Health

Additional PDF document supplied