

2025/26 REVENUE BUDGET & MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2026/27 TO 2029/30); INCLUDING THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

5.0 Overview and Scrutiny Comments

- 5.2 The Panel discussed the 2025/26 Revenue Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2026/27 to 2029/30); including the Capital Programme report at its meeting on 5th February 2025.
- 5.3 Following a question from Councillor Martin, the Panel heard that the provisional Local Government Settlement had been released in December, and that no significant changes were anticipated with the release of the final Local Government Settlement this week. It was noted that some additional monies would be made available to Councils who were experiencing significant increases to the charges made to them by Internal Drainage Boards, however it was not felt that this would make a material difference to Huntingdonshire District Council. It was also advised to the Panel that HDC's response to the provisional Settlement had been made by the Section 151 Officer as part of the response from the Society of District Councils Treasurers.
- 5.4 Councillor Jennings enquired how the approach to budget setting by the Executive Councillor had changed over the past three years and how the budget setting was managed. The Panel heard that the budget process had evolved in recent years with more onus on services to work with their Executive Councillors to manage the process throughout the year. The Executive Councillor confirmed that he took more of a governance role in budget setting and oversaw the robustness overall whilst leaving the detail to portfolio holders and officers.
- 5.5 In response to a question from Councillor Blackwell relating to the Stonehill property within the Commercial Investment Strategy, the Panel heard that the property was undergoing repairs and would be placed back onto the rental market, it was confirmed that this was being actively managed by the estates team.
- 5.6 Concern was expressed by Councillor Blackwell over the proposed increase in parking fees being after the expected implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) within the district. The Panel heard that the introduction of CPE was expected to affect the current car park income but that the approach detailed within the budget was an inflationary increase to support a prudent

approach. It was suggested by Councillor Gleadow, that this would be an opportune time to review the existing parking strategy to ensure consistency across the district before CPE comes into force

- 5.7 Following a question from Councillor Jennings, the Panel heard that wage growth for the proposed budget had been budgeted at 4%. The Panel also heard that this was a prudent budget based on what was known at the moment, it was noted that there were differing predictions from economic forecasters and therefore a medium of these had been used within the proposals. It was further noted that as capital spend was to be expected over the coming year, the budget looked to balance all factors to provide a sensible way forward.
- 5.8 It was clarified to the Panel, following a question from Councillor Wells, that following a recent restructure of Heads of Service, the proposed budget followed the new structure.
- 5.9 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for an informed decision to be made on the report recommendations.