

Annex A Public Questions / Statements

1. Nigel Behan, Unite

These Questions relate to **Item 4. Request of Extraordinary Council Meeting**

<http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s8317/extraordinary%20meeting%20report%20to%20council.pdf>

It states in paragraph 3.4 (Purpose of the Extraordinary Meeting) that:

Following the financial disclosures around our revenue & reserves, that have come to light during the latest round of saving proposals, our confidence in the Cabinet and their ability to deliver a balanced budget at the end of this financial year has plummeted.

We feel that following the decision of Cabinet to implement the saving proposals at today's meeting, a number of important points need to be urgently answered, these being:-

1. What contingency plans are in place should these proposed savings fail?
2. If no contingency plans are in place, then how can the people of Somerset be assured that this plan is robust?"

Whilst paragraph 3.9 (**Procedural advice for the meeting**) that:

"Questions or statements relating to any key decisions taken since the July Council meeting (including the Month 4 2018/19 Revenue Budget and savings proposals decisions agreed at Cabinet on 12 September 2018) by the Cabinet, Cabinet Members or Officers can be raised at the next ordinary meeting in November."

- a) Is this too restrictive since the reason for the meeting was a consequence of the decision(s) made on 12 September?
- b) What contingency plans are currently in place to address the Minimum Revenue position (based on the assumption of the savings made at the Cabinet meeting being achieved) which is forecast to be only £7.8m at the end of the financial year and therefore has the likelihood (risk) of issuing a Section 114 notice diminished?
- c) Will the underfunding of Local Government be taken into account, when considering the answers to the questions above?

A response was provided by David Fothergill, Leader of Council and from Cllr Mandy Chilcott – Cabinet Member for Resources

The meeting has been called to address the resolutions signed by a number of members. It would be inappropriate for the meeting to go beyond that remit into a more general discussion.

There is some confusion in the terminology used in this question. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) refers to the provision that the Council must set aside each year to provide for the repayment of debt. The £7.8m referred to is the anticipated sum of the General Fund at the end of 2018/19. As explained in the report to the Cabinet, there is a sum of £2m in the base budget to rebuild the General Fund to the required sum. The range of actions being taken by the Council in response to the current financial challenges means that more formal interventions are not appropriate.

As Mr Behan is well aware, the lack of funding from Government, the lack of flexibility to generate funds through local taxation and the growing service pressures on this Council all contribute to the financial challenge that we are dealing with.

2. Alan Debenham

Subject for discussion states that the movers' "confidence in the Cabinet and their ability to deliver a balanced budget at the end of this financial year has plummeted".

Precisely how does the Cabinet explain this dramatic loss in confidence over their recent performance and what explanation do the movers put to explain their derogatory judgement of the Cabinet ?

When I would say, from the viewpoint of an attender and public questioner at all recent County Council budgetary crisis meetings, that myself and probably the vast majority of Somerset 's other residents, have NO remaining confidence in both this Tory controlled Cabinet, nor the whole County Council's Tory administration, to provide any sort of acceptable performance in defending and developing our services and our officers jobs against their hard-right Tory government's premeditated and relentless year-on-year severe cuts in revenue support grant funding, soon to be reduced from nearly two-thirds of total budget requirement ten years ago to ZERO

Councillor Fothergill, Leader of Council gave a verbal response at the meeting.