

Fife Council – 11th March, 2021

Liberal Democrats amendment to the 2021-22 General Revenue Budget

Liberal Democrats budget proposal

The Liberal Democrats propose the following amendment in terms of the Council's 2021-22 General Revenue Budget:

This has been an exceptional and extraordinary year proving beyond doubt that none of us can predict the future with complete certainty in any area of life. We can, however, predict with some certainty, that our roads will continue to be essential to every single resident, and business operating in Fife, and to tourists who are recognised as a vital source of revenue and jobs in Fife.

The Liberal Democrats believe there has been a chronic under-investment in our roads and streetlights and that these continue to deteriorate year on year.

The ten-year period from 2010/11-2019/20 saw a total investment of £92 Million in our roads and streetlight programme; the ten-year plan for 2021/22-2030/31 adds up to £92 Million. Fifers should not expect the roads to improve over the next decade.

The Transportation service has a capacity to deliver approximately £11.2m of road infrastructure investment per year and £2.4m of street lighting infrastructure investment per year over the current plan period. Over a ten-year period that amounts to £136 Million and that is the level of expenditure we should aspire to. We are some £40 Million short over the lifetime of the current plan.

The capital plan, even allowing for the administration's welcome investment, falls well short of what is required and continues to under-utilise the capacity of the Transportation service to deliver.

A crisis is coming home to roost and we believe that every year we fail to make a long-term commitment to our road infrastructure, we fail the people of Fife, and we fail the transportation service. We should not have to discuss this every year and argue the case for our roads.

The administration acknowledges the roads crisis in their own budget proposals by proposing additional investment, and by advancing some capital spending on roads. They have achieved this by re-profiling their existing capital plan, robbing future years of capital to spend now.

Roads are a long-term project and they require a long-term funding commitment to permit effective and efficient management planning. They are, in normal times, an excellent candidate for prudential borrowing as a new road is expected to last for years before significant maintenance expenditure is required. In normal times we would recommend approving recurring revenue savings and re-directing these to fund prudential borrowing to correct what we see as an underinvestment. However, these are not normal times and we have been advised by the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services as the Section 95 officer of the Council that this

would not be prudent at a time when the Council faces significant financial uncertainty due to the pandemic.

Approving the savings as detailed in our budget amendment will, however, generate the capacity to invest **an additional £7.022m in capital investment in 'Roads and Street Lighting' over the next 3 years above the administration proposals**, increasing the capacity of the service to deliver the essential infrastructure that we all rely on.

The service savings the Liberal Democrats now propose for approval are detailed in Appendix 1 to this amendment. These are £0.540m of recurring savings also included in the Administration's budget proposals, and in addition, a further £3.282m of recurring savings within services.

In terms of investment, we accept the investment funded from Covid monies as detailed on page 8 (Appendix 3) of the Administration's Draft Revenue Budget. However, in addition to the proposal for additional capital investment in our roads and street lighting detailed above, there are several one-off investment opportunities we would propose, using the budget surplus available, which would replace the Administration's proposals as detailed on page 7 (Appendix 2) of their proposed budget. These are:

- In year 1: £3.739m to provide a fund for Area Committees to invest according to their local needs, with an additional £0.320m reserved to meet the funding gap currently facing St Andrews Town Hall. This work is urgent, and essential.
- In year 2: £2.622m to invest in an Active Travel Infrastructure Fund for North East Fife. This will provide frontline staff with the resource required to seek external funding to deliver the SesTrans Strategic Network vision for North East Fife. The vision identifies routes that link Pittenweem, Anstruther and Crail to St Andrews, Cupar to St Andrews, and Newport, Leuchars, and Guardbridge to St Andrews. As a major tourist destination, we believe that this investment, if approved, will further enhance the region's attraction, and bring further additional economic and wellbeing benefits to the whole of Fife.

The proposals above are detailed in Appendix 1 to our amendment, and would result in significant investment without impacting on the budget gap over the three-year period.

PROPOSER Cllr Jonny Tepp

SECONDER: Cllr Tim Brett

