

Leader's response to Cllr B Heatley's amendment to Budget.

I normally have much respect for the diligence and constructive challenge which Brian Heatley brings to a debate, but this is not one of those occasions.

The amendment is to use £8.1m of reserves, rather than the same amount from efficiency savings from the first phase of OUR FUTURE COUNCIL transformation. The amount identified in the budget is only a part of a possible £15/20m potential for such savings; to be achieved through a review of structures and processes. This approach will help to safeguard future years from the need for service cuts to balance budgets.

As a member of the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee, it is disappointing that he did not take the opportunity to have his suggested amendment included in the recommendations from that committee. In mentioning scrutiny, it would be remiss of me not to give credit to Cllrs Gill Taylor and Shane Bartlett for the diligence and rigor that they and their respective committees have once again brought to the budget setting process this year.

This amendment goes against the amazing success this Council has achieved by embracing transformation, rather than service cuts to balance budgets. £100.0m saved to date, projected to be circa £120.0m by the end of this term.

We have never used reserves to achieve a balanced budget and we should not be starting now. Other Councils, some of whom are our immediate neighbour's, who have not embraced transformation in the way Dorset Council has, are now faced with the consequences of having to make cuts to services to achieve balanced budgets.

The use of one-off money compared with long term reductions in revenue expenditure must never be seen as a long-term solution Chairman. I therefore can't support this amendment this evening and urge other members in this chamber not to do so either.

Thank you Chairman