

Councillor Barnacle

Revenue Budget Debate,

22 February 2018



At the debate, I focused on the Environment Service, giving credit to the sterling work done by my fellow conveners, Cllrs Stewart and Purves, in protecting that budget and proposing additional expenditure.

I had written to PKC administration leaders in November last suggesting a number of budgetary concerns within the Service and was really pleased that most of them were addressed in the partnership's budget motion.

I particularly mentioned full reinstatement of the budget for Recycling Centres to ensure current facilities remained in place (SNP proposals advocated a four-day service in the rural areas), along with full reinstatement of the budget for Winter Maintenance to maintain the current level of footway and road network treatment (although I acknowledge the need for improvements). We also fully reinstated the budgets for Grounds Maintenance that had been a proposed cut by officers.

In my Autumn submission, I had noted the need to maintain the Community Greenspace budget and increase support for Bloom Groups and we managed to do this.

I have long called for the restoration of the footpath budget (set at £325,000 when frozen around 2008/09 with the SNP's council tax freeze having its effect) so the additional £300,000 in 2018/19 will really help address the list of requests (no SNP proposals for this).

The Planning Service clearly needed extra resources and I am pleased we've been able to find extra money for planning enforcement and tree protection, areas that needed strengthening (not recognised in SNP proposals).

The budget for ditch management at road verges has been protected (although it's insufficient) and we have found additional money for road safety measures of £300,000 for both 2018/19 and 2019/20, without borrowing for same, which will help delivery of Route Action Plans (we have three in Kinross-shire to progress). Furthermore, I had suggested restoring the recently lapsed and popular budget for adopted road schemes at £50,000 and so am pleased we have found a top-up for these (unlike the opposition).

I'm not a fan of the nationalist Greens but pressing the SNP Government to put extra money into local authority budgets has helped for this 2018/19 financial settlement, which is a much improved outcome on what we were facing at the end of 2017 when no budget headroom was seemingly available (it always seems to magically appear by the end of the budget process).

Finally, much has been made by the SNP of the administration's decision to implement the charge for brown bin garden waste collections (£25 per annum in 2018/19 that was their previous budget decision, going to £35 per annum in 2019/20 and £50 per annum in 2020/21, subject to a review of the charging scheme). It is important to realise that this is not a PKC statutory responsibility and some areas don't get the Service but they may in the future, subject to our review!

Councillor Mike Barnacle
Vice Convener of Environment & Infrastructure