

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee**

**9 February 2018**

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#### **Budget Scrutiny – Extraordinary Meeting Arrangements**

##### **Purpose**

- 1 To report on the arrangements for this extraordinary meeting.

##### **Background**

- 2 The Management Committee has retained the procedure agreed in previous budget cycles to provide opportunity for scrutiny of opposition group amendments to the budget.
- 4 The earlier steps in the process involving Overview and Scrutiny(OS) have already been reported:
  - Financial Planning Task Group – 1 February
  - Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee – 5 February

##### **Arrangements**

- 6 All opposition group leaders have been invited to submit amendments for scrutiny. Those received will be circulated as soon as possible but it is anticipated that this may not happen until after Cabinet on 6 February.
- 7 Amendments will be taken in the order they are submitted and one at a time unless agreed otherwise. Although some of the amendments may be interdependent in that they relate to combined savings and/or growth, OS will want the opportunity to comment on the merits or otherwise of each although with the ability to acknowledge their dependency if appropriate.
- 8 A formal view may also need to have been taken on advice ahead of the meeting relating to:
  - OS's ability to consider an amendment should it be on a matter which is regarded as falling outside its remit; and
  - the status of anyone presenting the amendment should they also be a member of the Management Committee.
- 9 The running order of speakers on each will be:
  - respective group leader and/or spokesperson(s) to present the circulated amendment explaining the purpose, implications, intended outcome and link to the Business Plan

- The Leader of the Council and/or responsible Cabinet Member(s) to respond
  - Corporate Leadership Team to comment (if appropriate)
  - Management Committee members to ask questions of the proposer(s) and respondent(s) in order to gain sufficient evidence to take a view
  - Clarification from statutory officers and other relevant associate directors (if necessary)
  - Contribution from any other councillors (if invited)
  - Chairman to sum up and seek consensus view of the Committee
- 10 In recognising the role of OS in budget setting and that it will be for full Council to exercise final decision on the budget, it is not expected that formal voting to force either approval or rejection of amendments would be appropriate. It would add no real value to the Council debate where amendments will be formally moved and determined. However, the Council debate will benefit from having the evidenced-based views of OS on both the proposed budget (from its meeting on 5 February) and potential amendments.
- 11 It should also be acknowledged that OS in valuing the opportunity to input to the budget setting process in this way has only been able to express its views based on the time it has with the information. The depth of its research and enquiry is therefore limited. Some issues raised in the debate may be appropriate for further scrutiny or signposting elsewhere.
- 12 The consensus views of the Committee (and not of individual members) will form part of the minutes of the meeting for report to Council on 20 February.
13. The Financial Planning Task Group will undertake a detailed review of the whole budget setting process and make any recommendations for change or improvement to the Cabinet Member for Finance via this Committee.

## **Conclusion**

- 14 Scrutiny of opposition amendments to the budget will provide:
- advance notice of the subject matter
  - cross-party, non-political evidence-based discussion on the merits or otherwise of each; and
  - a more informed Council debate and credible decision in support of resourcing delivery of the Business Plan.

**Paul Kelly**

**Head of Democratic Services (and designated scrutiny officer)**

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