

Budget 2023/24 and MTFs 2023/24 – 2025/26 – Scrutiny Select Committee questions and responses

Questions on the budget following the informal meeting of the Children's Select Committee on 19 January 2023

This document also includes questions submitted by email or in conversations by members of the Children's Select Committee.

Please note that the page numbers refer to the Budget Paper as considered by the committee on 19 January which can be accessed on:

<https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=1160&MIId=15027&Ver=4>

Q1 - On page 13, paragraphs 40 & 41, investment of £0.3m (ceasing of charging academies – White Paper) and savings planned of £0.3m (school effectiveness) are planned. Does WC ever not go ahead with an investment because it needs to be covered by savings?

The two are separate;

- Investment - the statutory duties around education welfare are changing which mean two things, 1. Increased levels of service to ALL schools (both maintained and academies); meaning additional staff are required, and 2. Equity of service to ALL schools which means trading with academies is no longer possible.
- Investment - the savings are in school improvement where the new Head of Service is introducing a new model with both improvement and efficiencies.

Q2 - Latent demand When questions have been asked at Children's Select Committee we have been told that the latent demand had not been seen / felt, or at least not at the levels originally anticipated. [Cllr Helen Belcher]
Furthermore, with our Children subject to a Child Protection Plan, Children currently looked after and Children In Need figures still at such low levels (which can be seen as good news and evidence of the impact of our early help work), **Q** what is the rationale behind the estimated latent demand of £1m for Children's Social Care which will be funded from a drawdown from the latent demand reserve? (page 14, paragraph 50)

Page 60 - Latent demand earmarked reserve

Education and Skills – Inclusion and Send £0.117

This comprises two elements, fixed term contracts for a S19 (alternative provision) enquiry officer and two additional education welfare officers to support learners in alternative provision where they are unable to attend school full time. The pandemic has impacted many learners' school attendance and it is imperative that these children can access learning and where possible, return to mainstream school.

Families and Children – social care placements £0.926

The placement sufficiency challenges mean the unit cost per placement of our children in care has increased, so whilst our children in care numbers have not risen significantly; the cost of each placement This is much higher.

Families and children – families and children - £0.197

Reflective of the increased volume of contacts into our Integrated Front Door at an Early Help level; additional capacity in our Early Support Hub along with increased capacity in our support service is required.

An increase in care experienced young people requiring the support of Personal Advisors (PA) means a need for increased capacity within our PAs.

Paragraph 106 - £4.7m to be drawn down from the latent demand reserve over the MTFs (only £0.3m used in 2022/23)

106. The latent demand reserve is being held to specifically mitigate any unquantified risks facing the authority on social care, particularly children's social care. £0.3m is being drawn down from the reserve in 2022/23 and a further £4.7m is planned to be utilised over the MTFs to offset increased costs in Children's Social Care, Planning and Adult Social Care.

Q – what is actually the total to be drawn down from latent demand reserve relating to children's services?

£2.8m across 2022-23 to 2025-26 financial years for children's services.

Q3 - Page 27, paragraph 125. Is this the first school in Wiltshire with "mental health" in its title? What happened to children with MH needs in the past and were they moved to other specialist units?

The needs being addressed with this provision are SEMH – social, emotional mental health needs. Children's needs can vary and therefore a range of services are required from support in a mainstream classroom, to an independent placement. The gap analysis identified the primary need as SEMH. This describes the type of provision but will not be the name of the provision.

Q4 – Page 30, paragraph 145 – High Needs Block

We understand that Wiltshire has been historically underfunded in this area and it is anticipated that demand and needs will keep growing. Are we confident that the £2.9m drawdown from the DSG reserve will be enough to support a focus on early help and prevention, knowing the backlog in meeting current demand? With the difficulties in recruitment experienced across the sector are we confident we have / will have the right people in place to deliver our planned early help and prevention?

There are a range of strategies being applied to address the issues in this area;

1. Involvement in the DfE's Delivering Better Value Programme which itself, attracts a grant (estimated at £1m)
2. Directing the 2023/24 "additional" HNB grant to support early help and prevention"
3. Use of the Council's transformation reserve (£1.6m over 3 years)
4. Cabinet Investment of £0.8m over the MTFs period to recruit and retain additional education psychologists (EP) SEND and case workers.

5. Focussed use of the early years block of DSG to recruit EY intervention workers and other training and resources to ensure that our youngest children with emerging needs can access support when they need it.

With regard to recruitment difficulties, we are in the process of re-grading the Educational Psychologists (EPs) in an attempt to both retain and attract them, however, there are insufficient numbers of EPs nationally and so this will be a challenge. Roughly 260 EPs qualify nationally each year (number fluctuates a little +/- 10%). There are around the same number of LAs and LAS in general do not feel that they have enough EP capacity. The gender and age profile mixed into this creates a significant supply and demand problem which shows little sign of abating. Many EPs chose to work PT for LAs now and undertake private work for the remainder.

We have restructured the team to appoint assistant EPs who are able to support early years children and allow EPs to focus on statutory school age children.

COMMENT - Pleased to see the proposed increase in budget for Care Leavers' numbers and setting up home allowance, as well as investment to secure recruitment and retention of social workers (page 58, appendix 1, annex 3 – detail by service on Prior Year Budget Changes and annex 4 – detail by service on Cabinet investment).

Q5 - Where is the evidence that reductions in the spend, such as the Early Years Support for settings and schools, do not represent a reduction to delivering the bare minimum statutory service but instead are the benefits of restructuring spend with improved outcomes?

The statutory duties will continue to be delivered in full. The resource will focus on the settings that need most support, this will improve outcomes in these settings.

(as detailed on Page 65 of the budget report – Appendix 1, Annex 7 – detail by service on Savings Proposals - Education and skills – Review of Early Years support for settings and schools with a focus on prioritising statutory work)

Q6 - In the 2022/23 budget Education & Skills had an overspend of 1.783m in Q1, reducing it to £0.976 in Q2. Similarly, Family & Children Services had an underspend in Q1 of £1.178m then an overspend of £0.173 in Q2. I think we are still waiting for Q3 figures, but this just shows the real variation in costs within a years' budget, of which there are many causes.

Q – Is the 2023/24 budget going to be more resilient to these fluctuations and do we know the cause for these significant variations for last year? Are they likely to happen again?

The Education & Skills overspend related to SEN transport. New specialist places have been difficult to negotiate with schools and we are awaiting building contractors' availability and other new DfE schemes have been delayed such as the 150 place Free School. As soon as these changes are known, they are fed into the transport route planner. However, the market is nationally and locally challenging and we are vulnerable to the limited and volatile market. There are several schemes for 2023/24 exploring cost efficient routes however, the length of time spent travelling to school and the mix of children on transport is a deciding factor. Key to this is

establishing quality local provision in mainstream schools. The economic situation, rising fuel and taxi / coach driver recruitment issues have not been resolved and therefore challenges in forecasting costs continue.

The Families & Children's position changed significantly over the summer as residential placements for children were required. A placement sufficiency strategy is in place to tackle this local and national challenge. In addition, providers felt the impact of the economic situation and workforce wage increases; we ourselves, provided an uplift to 4.5% (against a budgeted 2%) to foster carers to retain placements in challenging economic times.

Q7 - The pay award for last year is not yet settled and then there is this year's negotiations (starting in April I think). When it is settled, there will potentially be considerable backpay to come out of the budget. With the economy still very unsettled, are we confident that the budget proposals are robust enough to cover future pay settlements?

The pay award for 2022/23 was agreed with a flat rate payment of £1,925 with effect from 1 April 2022, which equated to an average across the whole council as a 6.6% increase overall. An estimated increase of 4.5% is included for 2023/24 with the following 2 years estimated at 2.5%. This is higher than the Bank of England inflation forecasts and is considered adequate, but risk remains that this might not be sufficient. This risk is noted in the S25 report on the robustness of budget estimates.

Q8 - Has Education & Skills or Children & Families lost any core grants in the 23/24 budget that they had previously? If so - how will the council "compensate" that loss? (page 45)

No core grants have been lost however there are some funded time limited projects ending which is common. The challenge we experience is when statutory duties change without associated funding from central government as with education welfare service.

We have more opportunity to claim through the Supporting Families grant than previously which will enable us to support more families.

Q9 - Local Youth Network Funding. With many voluntary groups and charities being highly impacted by inflation, have we considered the potential need to increase the financial help that can be offered through Area Boards?
Given the current financial situation, if the amount available for LYN funding does not increase is this not effectively a cut?

There is evidence seen by councillors at area board level (requests for help from schools) and in their other roles of the needs and demands for mental health support and early help for young people.
If the latent demand is coming through Area Board funding is this not an argument again to increase LYN funding?

The Area Board funding investment is continually analysed and assessed, both in terms of its value to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) as well as the impact it offers for local residents. Wiltshire Council Officers are in regular contact with leaders from the VCSE sector to understand the inflationary pressures on the sector. We are currently investigating the potential opportunities of pilot models such as the DCMS funded Local Youth Partnerships, which aims to build capacity in the local youth sector and support resources to go further: [LYP Capacity Building Project \(ypftrust.org.uk\)](http://ypftrust.org.uk). This pilot is being discussed between the local authority, a wide range of VCSE youth partners, Wiltshire Community Foundation and the Young Peoples Foundation Trust.

Area Boards are working better in partnership now than ever before, leveraging their investment by bringing in more funding partners. In 2021/22, for every £1 the boards spent an additional £5.88 was raised through other fundraising and volunteering. Therefore, the local authority investment remains consistent but the overall value of the projects being delivered continues to rise, with the boards supporting organisations to access the wider funding they require.

To date in 2022/23 Area Board youth investment currently stands at £165,192, with over half of the £347,700 budget remaining unallocated. Whilst all Area Boards have at least one grant funding meeting remaining, this would suggest it is likely there will be an underspend in youth activities this financial year.

It is also worth noting that the Area Board youth funding is subject of an Overview and Scrutiny process that is due to start imminently.

Q10 - Capital budget. We understand that the capital budget has been reduced to £200m (previous years around £300m) to make it more manageable. What guarantee can we have that the projects that have been selected will actually be delivered when planned?

Is there urgent work that will not be done this year due to the reduction in capital spend?

Have we been able to balance the need / timing for these projects against the potential academisation for these schools?

As part of the Budget 2023/24 additional schemes are proposed to be added to the Capital Programme, with £6.668m added in 2023/24 and a total over the programme of £28.955m, including all known Health & Safety works required. There are many external factors that impact the timing of capital spend and it is critical that there is a robust budget monitoring process that provides validation and challenge to ensure forecasts are as accurate as possible. The council has seen over-confidence with the deliverability of the scale of the programme that has been set previously in any given year. Profiling of the programme is critical not only to ensure deliverability but also due to the funding assumptions for those that impact revenue are realistic.

In Education, we have not reduced any of our capital budgets, budget has been slightly reprogrammed on some schemes to fit with project delivery but no projects have been delayed simply to push back spend. There has been no reduction in our maintenance budget and we will fully spend this years allocation. No urgent projects have been delayed to reduce capital spend. In fact, if our capital bids are approved we will have significantly more funding to progress additional schemes over the next few years. When selecting schemes for mobile replacements or maintenance we prioritise based on the condition of the buildings, we would not select a mobile

replacement project at a school we knew was going to academise within the next few months but if urgent maintenance work was required we would still need to go ahead to keep the school safe and open.

Q11 – joined up approach. Councillors have been informed of a number of positive projects taking place across the county, warm places, emergency places, safe places, etc. Has consideration been given to a joined-up approach for these and shared use of buildings and resources as this would be likely to provide savings?

In response to the cost of living issues, we are utilising existing places across the county and for council owned property looking at our libraries which are already open and available to offer a warm spaces. These schemes are not using additional funding but some separate funding sources eg Household Support Fund and discretionary energy rebates are being utilised.

Q12 - Page 29, paragraph 139 onward - Dedicated Schools Grant - Do we think this grant will always come from the Government or do we think they could transfer it totally to the LA? If they do transfer it how would it add it to our risk register and what would be the added costs of our running it entirely?

The DfE are moving away from local authority / schools forum control over the schools block with the national funding formula. In our view it is unlikely this will move to local authority control. It is possible the other blocks could move the LA control but they have said that schools forum will remain as a consultative body. The total funding for DSG for 2023/24 is £452m, of that, schools block is £346m. At the moment local authorities rely on an accounting exception, allowing the DSG deficit reserve to be treated as though held outside the accounts. This power has been extended to 31st March 2026. There is significant financial risk to the council if this is removed, as has been indicated by the DfE.

Q13 – Whole Life Pathway – base budget for this year is £96.147m (which is an increase of 18% from previous year at £81.200m) BUT it is set to decrease in 2024/25 (95.747) and 2025/26 (94.306). (page 11)

Last year saw undeliverable savings for Whole Life Pathway of £0.500 for the “improved use of Care Cube” (page 58).

On page 60 we are told we expect increase in level of demand (0.206), we have demand pressure identified through budget monitoring (1.780) and pressures to be funded from latent demand earmarked reserve (0.254)

Q – is the planned reduction in base budget for 24/25 and 25/26 based on savings to be achieved or reduction in services?

This is based on savings to be achieved using different commissioning strategies based on developing the market and alternative provision, moving away from high costs placements where feasible.

Q14 – Families and Children base budget (page 14) - base budget for this year is £62.724m, which – if my maths is correct – is around a 3% increase on previous year £60.776m.

This is below inflation.

Q – is this very modest increase in base budget truly manageable whilst ensuring all our services are delivered?

The strategic approach to this MTF5 was that all services were asked to fund their own demand & growth. Whilst this was not possible in its entirety for Families & Children’s, a number of challenging savings programmes are in place. In addition, external grant has been used to fund existing services thus, lowering the cost to the revenue budget.

Q15 – Paragraph 42 (p13) – “The impact of the pandemic is putting pressure on early years children” – *should that be services (instead of children)?* **Yes**
 £0.2m investment for inclusion advisers and £0.1m for education welfare officers funded from the latent demand reserve have been included in the MTF5

Q – what are the current unmet needs for inclusion and EWO – will this investment be enough to cover the gap? Does this take into account any increase in needs / demand?

Higher numbers of young children are requiring early language support and social skills development following the pandemic. The increased demand has been factored into the budget requests.

Q16 – paragraph 44 (p13) – “investment in statutory SEN is sought” – how much? Is it on top of the £1.6m bid to transformation reserve? (para 45)

Yes – the investment in statutory SEN is permanent base budget opposed to one off investment and is found at Annex 6.

| | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|
| Inclusion & SEND - Planned increase in statutory service staffing over the MTF5 to align to increase in demand plus recruitment strategy grading review to ensure salary offer attractive | 0.725 | 0.305 | 0.281 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|

Q17 - Paragraph 46 (p13) – school transport – an increase in line with EHCP increase is expected and combined with scarcity of resources, we have demand and inflation estimated at £7m. Yet we are also expecting savings of £0.805m in the MTF5 through a number of transformational schemes and route review. In annexe 7 – detail by service on Savings Proposals the SEND transport saving through developing independence for more children and young people with SEND, provide a wider range of options, and improve service delivery and efficiency is showing at £0.313m.

Q – where is the rest of the expected £0.805m savings coming from – is it under highways and transport?

There is a presentational error in the draft budget papers. The £0.805m includes the £0.250m from the 22-23 MTF5 below and the papers included in the Cabinet agenda have been corrected.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Corporate Director People | Education & Skills | Stretch Income Targets for Place Services | 0.250 | - | - | 0.250 |
| Corporate Director People | Education & Skills | SEND Transport Develop independence for more children and young people with SEND, provide a wider range of options, and improve service delivery and efficiency. | 0.313 | 0.121 | 0.121 | 0.555 |

Q18 – paragraph 50 (page 14) “Annual demand for 36 additional children and young people and inflation mirroring staff pay assumptions and from framework agreement

contracts are included in the MTFs at £4.9m and £2.5m respectively for Children’s Social Care placements and support.”

Q - how was 36 additional children and young people calculated? Is this taking into account any possible latent demand? Are we expecting a similar increase year on year through the MTFs?

The MTFs estimates are net of the latent demand estimates. The £4.9m & £2.5m apply to all children in care, care experienced young people and other permanence arrangements including adoption and special guardianship orders. This is why the number is significant. The demand has been estimated across the 3 years MTFs as in annex 6 – this also shows latent demand separately – extract below.

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|--|-------|-------|---------|
| Corporate Director People | Families & Children Services | Pressures of Latent Demand Ear Marked Reserve Childrens Social Care Placements | 0.926 | 0.157 | (1.083) |
| Corporate Director People | Families & Children Services | Pressures for Latent Demand Ear Marked Reserve for Families & Children | 0.197 | 0.005 | (0.201) |
| Corporate Director People | Families & Children Services | Children in Care - demand for internal care placements and planned growth in in house foster carers; Special Guardianship Orders 5%; Adoption Allowances 1.5%; in house foster carers 6% | 0.654 | 0.508 | 0.550 |
| Corporate Director People | Families & Children Services | Children in Care - demand for external care placements, independent foster carers, external residential care placements 1.5% | 1.578 | 0.117 | 1.281 |
| Corporate Director People | Families & Children Services | Children in Care with SEN needs aged 0-18 years, 2.5% | 0.061 | 0.082 | 0.072 |

Q19 – could we have some clarification on the first sentence in paragraph 53 (page 14) - “Other savings plans include badging existing services to grant for supporting families, asylum seeking children and domestic abuse contract; £0.516m.” What does badging mean in this context?

This is where grants are awarded, and the local authority is already providing this service. The impact / outcome will be achieved with existing services. For Supporting Families grant, this aligns with the family key worker prevention model. For the USAC grant, both the rates and guidance have changed which means the grant can be used to fund staff previously funded by the local authority. The Public Health grant is being used to fund the children's element of the Splitz contract.

Q20 – Paragraph 51 (p14) £0.50m investment for competitive salaries and manageable caseloads for social workers.

Q – how many more staff do we anticipate this to equate to / enable the council to recruit - assuming additional recruitment is required to make caseload manageable with expected increase of 36 children for 2023-24.

There are currently vacancies in the service and agency staff are used which are more expensive. The strategy included in this MTFs is to increase numbers of permanent staff using market supplements and reduce the agency spend whilst maintaining caseloads at manageable levels.

Annex 4 – Detail by service on Cabinet Investment

| Corporate Directorate | Service | Description | 2023/24 £m | 2024/25 £m | 2025/26 £m |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Corporate Director People | Families & Children Services | A setting up home allowance (also known as a leaving care grant) helps Care Leavers buy essential things when moving into their own homes. Currently support is at £2,000 per care leaver, investment will raise this to £3,000 per care leaver | 0.060 | - | - |
| Corporate Director People | Families & Children Services | Key to the service ambition to be outstanding in CSC is the recruitment and retention of social workers, market supplements for social workers will ensure a competitive remuneration offer | 0.433 | 0.011 | 0.011 |
| Chief Executive Directorates | Transformation & Business Change | Realising the council's ambition to implement an effective Business Insights function | 0.378 | 0.013 | 0.013 |
| Cabinet Investment Total | | | 0.871 | 0.024 | 0.024 |

Q21 - Paragraph 119 (p26) – sale of the centre at Hayburn Wyke and purchase of a smaller and fit for purpose property.

Q – how confident is the council that this smaller and fit for purpose property exists? Have we explored partnership use of the centre at Hayburn Wyke to lower holding costs (linking with Q11 on joined up approach)

A smaller more conventional four bedroom type property would meet service needs. The Council has experience of acquiring such properties for its own use as well as providing that acquisition service for the Stone Circle housing company thus has good relationships and contacts in the market to secure this purchase. If partnership opportunities exist they can be catered for in any future purchase although they would need to be formalised to achieve cost savings targets.

Q22 – annex 3 – base budget changes

People – families and children’s services - SEN Social care placements demand - reflecting transitional arrangements – reduction in base budget of £1.735m

Q – apologies if this was elsewhere in the report, but what are the transitional arrangements that would support this saving / reduction in base budget?

The proposed new children’s homes and lower cost units would “only” be providing a £0.250m saving in 2023-24 (paragraph 52).

Annex 3 relates to pre-2023/24 changes, so changes that relate to pressures faced in 2022/23. The Q1 budget variances were funded if they were assessed to be on-going pressures. In Q1, there was a forecast underspend in this area which fed into base changes as part of the process. Inflation and demand were later assessed for the MTFs and this is captured in the demand / inflation section.

Q23 – annex 3 (Page 57) Could we have some clarification on the planned increased cost for SGOs – is this staff cost purely to deal with expected increase in demand for SGOs? What about likely increased cost in SGO allowances, is this planned for elsewhere or included in the proposed additional £0.266m?

There is a planned inflationary increase of 4.5% which is included with other internal carer payments below:

| | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| For internal carer payments, staff pay awards are mirrored as an inflation assumption at 4.5%, 2.5% & 2.5% | 0.393 | 0.241 | 0.261 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|

This is in addition to the anticipated demand for special guardianship orders.

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|-------|
| Families & Children Services | Demand for Special Guardianship Orders often, court ordered | 0.266 |
|------------------------------|---|-------|

Q24 – annex 7, page 65 – People – education and skills – could we have an explanation of what “Stretch Income Targets for Place Services” means?

Apologies this is an error and is part of the SEN transport savings target – it has been corrected in the Cabinet agenda public pack online (see response to Q17 above)

Q25 – page 65 and 66, savings proposals – could we have an explanation as to how / why what is effectively extra “income” is classed as savings?

- E&S – price increases in line with inflation rates to cover cost of trading services (£0.067m)
- F&C – extra grants for supporting families (£0.166m) and asylum seeker (£0.170m)

The approach to balancing the budget is that various strategies are in place to achieve savings plans and in line with other MTFs some of these are use of external grants and increased income.

How confident are we that the council will get these grants? The Supporting Families grant has been notified and the Council’s historical success in this area provides confidence this will be achieved.

Q26 – annex 10, capital programme (page 73)

Families and children’s service – Children’s home £0.930m

Q - Is that purchase of one property only or does it also include potential adaptations in all 3 properties the council will own as children’s homes?

This is the purchase of two properties covers refurbishment of three; in addition to the purchased properties, the refurbishment of Aspire House, Melksham.

COMMENT – areas that the committee would like to receive more information on:

- The placement sufficiency strategy (paragraph 52) - £0.350m savings expected in 2025-26 (annex 7, page 70)

The placement sufficiency strategy meeting met for the first time in January which is where oversight of demand and savings is provided by the Director. This is in addition to fostering excellence and the South West sufficiency strategy. It’s important to monitor all savings related to CSC placements (below.) The plan is to achieve savings across the three years of the MTFs and is a continuation of the 2023/24 and 2024/25 savings plans, leaving flexibility to expand or contract, depending on external markets and the success of the children's homes and internal foster carer strategy.

| Service | Saving Proposal Description | 2023/24 £m | 2024/25 £m | 2025/26 £m | TOTAL £m |
|--------------------------------|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Families & Children's Services | Ongoing review of existing placements where children and young people's needs may be better met in a family setting. | 0.150 | 0.100 | - | 0.250 |
| Families & Children's Services | Purchase of residential houses using matched DfE grant to create childrens homes. Commissioning for a block contract at reduced weekly placement fee rates. | 0.150 | 0.150 | - | 0.300 |
| Families & Children's Services | An invest to save approach to increase in-house fostering provision which will reduce demand and thus achieve savings on purchasing from the market | 0.300 | 0.150 | - | 0.450 |
| Families & Children's Services | The is a Placement Sufficiency Programme of work underway between finance, commissioning and operational teams which will be responsible for making this saving, linked to more children placed with in house foster cares, with connected carers or in Independent Fostering Agency placements. | - | - | 0.350 | 0.350 |

- The council’s transformational funding (£1.6m) to support change to align with the “Delivering Better Value” DfE programme to facilitate financial recovery in Wiltshire (paragraph 149)

The bid includes funding for 6 new temporary staff, led by a sustainability programme lead, including operational workstream leads, financial and data & performance staff for up to 30 months in the first instance to lead on consultation and transformation together with a new way of working for AP using an AP classroom robot.

- The potential new SEN and mental health primary school (£16m in future capital programs seeking Cabinet approval in 2023-24) (Paragraph 125)

Please see extract below from the bid:

Demand for special educational support is rising year on year in Wiltshire. The number of requests for Educational Health Care Needs Assessments has risen 27% in the year to September 2022. The number of learners with Education Health Care Plans has grown by 227 to 4,526, in the nine months to September 2022. Space planning forecasts suggest that Wiltshire Council needs to grow special school places by 7.2-7.8% (equating to 68 additional special school places) every year to meet growth – even taking account SEND & Inclusion initiatives to support learners in mainstream provision. The growth requirements are in addition to the known gaps in special school provision that already exist in term 1 of 2022/23.

The provision of additional special school places is part of the 'jigsaw' of provision. To meet increasing demand for SEND provision, Wiltshire Council have plans to increase special school places; resource bases in both primary and secondary schools; and enhanced support for mainstream provision across all age groups. The proposal sits alongside the bid for a DfE free school for SEMH learners – the outcome of which will be known in January 2023. All the above are deemed preferable to the more costly Independent Special School placements, which attract on average a £30,000- £50,000 annual premium, per place. In October 2022 there were 331 learners in ISS and 67 children awaiting a special school place.

Even if Wiltshire Council secures DfE funding for the Free School, there will still be the need to provide additional special school places. Aside from Social Emotional and Mental Health designation specified in the Free School bid, there is unmet need for Severe Learning Difficulties, as well as Autism Spectrum Disorder.

This proposal is to secure capital funding to acquire land and buildings for an Independent Special School, run as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Wiltshire Council. The proposal is modelled on Coombe House special school, which is owned by Dorset Council in partnership with education providers.

The project aim is to build the number of Wiltshire special school places (by 70 – 100), for children and young people aged 5-19. Following identification of a suitable site, there may be the potential to increase numbers on roll further. Capital funding is required to acquire land and existing buildings (through purchase or lease), together with the refurbishment required to create an excellent learning environment for children and young people with SEND. The primary designation for learners will depend on the location and the success (or otherwise) of the DfE Special School Free School bid – the outcome of which will be known in January 2023.

Health Select Committee

Overall good to see an increase in the budgets of the services relevant to HSC work, i.e. Whole Life Pathway and Living and Ageing Well.

- Clarification needed around **Care** savings
- Reference to savings being made as a result of Care Act but narrative not clear. (p 67)

The Care Act allows us to consider best value to the Local Authority when making decisions with individuals in relation to their care and support plan i.e how we will meet eligible need. We will need to have clear conversations with individuals and their families regarding this and what it is possible to fund and also consider more broadly use of community and universal resources to meet eligible need rather than reliance on traditional Domiciliary Care and Placements.

- £1 million in savings with clients contributing more towards their care, but how does this work? (p68)

We uplift the amount that people have to contribute to their care each year when benefits/pensions etc are also increased. This uplift will generate additional impact for the local authority. This is a process that take place each year at the beginning of the financial year and does not represent any change in standard process. The uplift is in line with benefit/pension increases and is a considerable value this year due to the larger increase in benefits/pension as a result of inflation.

- In Quarters 1&2 savings were identified as being undeliverable amongst a rising overspend. We note an expectation of further savings in the budget for 2023/24.
- Given the continued volatility in the social care market how confident can we be that these identified savings are anymore deliverable than those in the current budget?

The care market is volatile. However, the savings identified in the MTFs will be delivered alongside the transformation program in adult social care which is focused on diversifying the care market and ensuring we have sufficient capacity. The savings also have a different focus including more collaboration with voluntary and community organisations in sustainable way.

- Could these savings assumptions be justified?

Yes, see above. In addition we are confident as a number of savings plans are developed around evidenced efficiencies we can make in our processes, for example maximising use of existing block contracts .

- **Shared Lives (p69)**
- Is the £150,000 a cut to the programme or savings as a result of the success of the programme?
This is not a cut to the programme. By delivering more shared lives capacity we can make savings as this often represents better value for money than other options e.g. placement and offers benefits to the individual.
- Should we be investing more in the short term for longer term benefits? The service has the investment it requires – we are focused on recruiting more shared lives carers which will allow us to expand.

- Could we be more ambitious with this programme?

Yes, there are other areas shared lives could support with i.e. hospital discharge. We are considering these areas in our social care transformation program.

- **Adult Care Transformation (p12 para 36-38)**

1. What are the expected target rates?
2. What are the total savings resulting from that?

We are not currently able to directly attribute savings against the transformation program as a whole, there are significant co-dependencies that are being identified and worked through that will enable us to be more specific going forwards.

Workshops are booked to work through the savings attributable to the transformation programme in the coming weeks.

- Assumption that **Social Care Levy** will continue for the next 2 financial years (p42).
 - How confident are we that there will be Social Care reform at the end of that period?

We are working on the basis that the reforms will take place in 2025 as indicated by government and will adapt our plans as further information becomes available.

- **Joint funding policy implementation with ICB (p68)**

- What impact do we expect as a result of integration of health and care? Do we anticipate savings or increased costs?

The joint funding policy is a positive step forwards as it acknowledges that individuals often have both health and care needs. It will provide a framework to identify where this is the case and ensure that costs are attributed to the appropriate organisation. We anticipate savings as we believe that there are a number of packages of care that are fully funded currently by social care where there a significant health needs.

- When can we see production of a new, improved Better Care Plan?
- How will this contribute to the uplift in savings?
- Is there an equitable distribution of payment between health and social care? Are budget discussions part of the integration process/partnership work?

BCF is being reviewed, many of the existing schemes were commissioned over 5 years ago, and the pandemic has changed the needs and the way people access care and support. The focus needs to be on maintaining people to be healthy and independent at home, including new technological advances and ways of working together. Community based offers need to be developed, and neighbourhood based care organised into a consistent offer.

- **Technology Enabled Care (p10, para 28 & 29)**

- Given the known difficulties of recruitment to key posts how confident can we be that the TEC transformation will contribute to the significant savings identified in the social care transformation programme?

TEC is new area of development for the council and we have been able to recruit to some key posts within this area. The staff who have these specific skills may come from areas that are not traditionally seen as social care. We also have knowledge and expertise within our current workforce – particularly Occupational Therapists who are able to prescribe TEC options alongside more traditional assistive equipment

- What are the assumptions based on?

Savings assumptions are based on an evaluation of use of TEC on a small number of packages of care. As this is rolled out there will more scope to deliver care and support in a more innovative way and potentially deliver increased savings while ensuring individuals are receiving the right support that enables them to remain at home.

- Has this been issue been given a red rating on the risk register? No as no current indication that we will be unable to recruit in these areas.

- **Potential Pay increases**

- The pay settlement in 2022 is unresolved as we approach the settlement for 2023. What assurance can be provided that sufficient capacity exists in the budget for 2023/24 to cover a settlement over two pay years?
- How accurately do the assumptions cover risks relating to pay?

The pay award for 2022/23 was agreed with a flat rate payment of £1,925 with effect from 1 April 2022, which equated to an average across the whole council as a 6.6% increase overall. An estimated increase of 4.5% is included for 2023/24 with the following 2 years estimated at 2.5%. This is higher than the Bank of England inflation forecasts and is considered adequate, but risk remains that this might not be sufficient. This risk is noted in the S25 report on the robustness of budget estimates.

- **Considerations of inflation (p7, para 7)**

- Could there be clarification of the calculations around inflation?

Please see the above response on pay inflation. Other inflation explanation can be seen in Appendix 1. Given the volatility experienced in inflation, the significant level of uplifts already applied in the current year and the forecast provided above the average CPI that is being used in 2023/24 for contractual inflation is 6%, and this will fall back down to 2% from 2024/25 onwards.

A significant amount of inflation, around £14m of the £27.7m for 2023/24, has been applied to Adult Social Care and will be used in the engagement and negotiation with providers to agree fee uplifts that will support the Adult Social Care market and the provision of care packages in Wiltshire.

Environment Select Committee

1. It is stated that there are inflationary pressures factored into the Street Scene contract. This contract was retendered last year (2022) delivering savings to the council. Can it be clarified what the inflationary issue are with this contract given it was agreed so recently? (para 54)

The Streetscene Contract was awarded in March 2022 prior to inflation pressures. We achieved a saving of £0.4m at the time of tender, with further savings proposed for 2023/ 24. The contract is a standard NEC 4 contract and is used by other services. The contract states indices to be used to calculate the inflation increases which are applied automatically on an annual basis. This mitigates the risk of tenderers having to predict inflation increase from the time of tender to the 1st payment uplift, removing the risk this has on higher contract rates. Hence the action ensures the best value is achieved.

2. Phase 1 of the Fleet Strategy provides for a proposed vehicle replacement plan over 2023/24 to 2025/26 totalling £4.964m. Electric vehicles will be purchased up to the council's current electric infrastructure capacity. What does that mean in terms of vehicle numbers and types? (para 120).

We are improving our electric charging infrastructure along with deploying new electric vehicles. Over the next 3 years we will be purchasing 120 new electric vehicles ranging from 4x4/ Mini Buses/Panel Vans and Tankers

| Vehicle | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
| 4x4 | 4 | 13 | |
| Car | 7 | | |
| Car | | | 3 |
| Estate Car | | | 1 |
| Demounts - Tanker – LGV | 1 | | |
| Tanker – LGV | 1 | | |
| Display Van | | | 1 |
| High Van | | | 3 |
| Panel Van | | 1 | |
| Small Pan Van | 17 | | 27 |
| Large Panel Van | | | 2 |
| Medium Panel Van | | | 5 |
| Minibus | 5 | 17 | |
| Minibus Chair Ramp | 2 | | |

| | | | |
|---------|----|----|----|
| MPV | 4 | | |
| Tractor | | 6 | |
| | 41 | 37 | 42 |

3. The staff vacancy factor is set at 6.5%, in 2022/23 it was 1.5%, can you explain the reason for the significant rise this year particularly as services have offered up staff reductions as savings? (para 195)

In prior years the vacancy factor was not consistently applied to services but for the majority of services was in the region of 5%. We are continuing with the proposal agreed last year to increase the vacancy factor by 1.5% to a consistent 6.5% across all service areas.

4. The assumption for this years' pay award is 4.5% with 2.5% in later years, given the current inflation rate is that realistic? (Appendix 1, Annex 4)

The pay award for 2022/23 was agreed with a flat rate payment of £1,925 with effect from 1 April 2022, which equated to an average across the whole council as a 6.6% increase overall. An estimated increase of 4.5% is included for 2023/24 with the following 2 years estimated at 2.5%. This is higher than the Bank of England inflation forecasts and is considered adequate, but risk remains that this might not be sufficient. This risk is noted in the S25 report on the robustness of budget estimates.

5. There are several increases in charges and changes in opening hours for household recycling centres (Annex 7, pg63). Has an assessment of the impact been undertaken, and will that mean an increase in the budget for anti-fly-tipping enforcement?

- Impacts of the proposals have all been considered, including tonnage variations, accessibility to sites and capacity. Many of the proposals will free up capacity on sites and enable a better flow for Wiltshire residents using them. The proposal for charging will also help to prevent cross boarder and commercial waste being disposed of at the expense of Wiltshire taxpayers.
- Recent studies by both DEFRA (November 2022) and by WRAP (September 2021) have been unable to show a direct link between HRC policy changes and fly tipping rates. Generally, fly tipping is an attitudinal behaviour by a very small minority of the community. You either fly tip or you don't.
- There are no plans to increase the enforcement resources as a direct consequence of these savings proposals and Enforcement have recently extended their team with additional funding and will continue to take the necessary steps to investigate fly tipping and take prosecutions where possible.

6. Reductions of Streetscene provision to 'statutory levels' is suggested (saving £0.315m); what does this mean in terms of delivery and impact? (Annex 7, pg64).

- **Litter bins which are non statutory service.** - The council now pays per litter bin empty. This proposal is for the reduction in litter bin emptying to achieve improve service efficiencies for example, not emptying a bin if it is only a quarter full.
- **Street cleansing:** -Moving to statutory level responding to litter complaints. The council's local standards for response remains better than statutory requirements.
- **Play area maintenance** -Continue under the current delegation to Parish and Town Councils.
- **Grounds maintenance.** -The council now pays a per m2 rate. Reducing the frequency of cutting in appropriate areas reduces the m2 or moving to a reaction service driven by reports.

7. Leisure income growth has been set at £1.155 over the MTF5 period, how confident are we that this can be achieved? (Annex 7, pg65).

A large amount is forecast to be made from price increases, and based on the current trajectory of growth this estimate was considered realistic

Within the savings proposals it refers to a reduction / repatterning and in some cases cessation of bus services that have the 'least impact upon public transport users' e.g., out of county, non-essential shopping journeys or being out of catchment school pupils. This would save £0.250m over three years. What process will be used to identify such routes particularly if they have the least impact? (Annex 7, pg65).

All routes will be assessed across the network to ensure service efficiencies and in general terms any decision to cease services will likely be made upon current usage and whether there might be a viable alternative

8. Wiltshire Council's Commercial Policy [Wiltshire Council - Commercial Policy 2017-27 Final.pdf](#) includes at Para 3-15: "...use our infrastructure for commercial gain where we can trade advertising or activities that can use our digital platforms, street furniture, vehicles or other assets...." This may have led to the Council's Advertising Policy [Advertising and sponsorship - Wiltshire Council](#) but does not appear to be reflected in the budget. Do we have any income from these sources, and do we foresee any in future? [Cllr Jackson]

A programme is yet to be developed - We currently have an advertising contract with Clear Channel which provides advertising on 39 bus shelters in Salisbury