

## Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

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### MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2024 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

#### **Present:**

Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman), Cllr Christopher Williams (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Richard Britton, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Jerry Kunkler, Cllr Tony Pickernell, Cllr Pip Ridout and Cllr Jo Trigg

#### **Also Present:**

Cllr Iain Blair-Pilling, Cllr Nick Botterill, Cllr Jane Davies, Cllr Gavin Grant, Cllr Ashley O'Neill and Cllr Richard Clewer

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#### 11 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jonathon Seed, Cllr Ruth Hopkinson and Cllr Johnny Kidney.

The following substitutions had also taken place with Cllr Tom Rounds attending the meeting in place of Cllr Johnny Kidney.

#### 12 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2024 were presented for consideration, and it was;

#### **Resolved:**

**To approve and sign as a true and correct record of the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2024.**

#### 13 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 14 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's Announcements.

#### 15 **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements submitted by members of the public.

#### 16 **Procedure of Meeting**

The procedure for consideration of amendments to the budget was detailed as set out in the agenda papers.

## 17 **Wiltshire Council's Budget 2024/25: Amendments**

It was noted that though the item was principally for the scrutiny of budget amendments put forward by opposition members; the first report under this item in Agenda Supplement 2 was an update on the administration's Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, as was agreed by Cabinet on 6 February. The Final Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on 5 February, and it included additional funding for Wiltshire over and above that included in the provisional settlement. A verbal update was provided on the implications of this at Cabinet and had now been provided in writing.

Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Clewer outlined that the funding was proposed to be used as follows:

- £0.100m contribution to Air Quality monitoring in 2024/25.
- £0.025m contribution towards volunteer recruitment by Libraries for residents in remote areas.
- £0.603m funding for rural play areas to enable them to continue to be used by the local community that will lead to their transfer to the local town or parish council.
- £3.798m funding for additional investment in SEND and children's services early help and prevention support.

A budget proposal was agreed by Cabinet on 6 February 2024 for discussion at Full Council on 20 February 2024, following its consideration by the Committee at its meeting on 25 January 2024.

On 7 February 2024 proposed amendments to that budget were received from Cllrs Ian Thorn and Gavin Grant.

The amendments were presented as detailed in the Agenda Supplement.

### **Amendment A – Area Boards**

The proposal sought a £0.003m increase in social welfare funding to each of the 18 Area Boards, and the establishment of a central fund of £0.036m that Area Boards can bid for extra social welfare funding.

Comments from statutory officers including the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer were set out in the agenda supplement with further clarifications set out in the appended Committee report.

### **Amendment B – Blue Badge Holders**

The proposal sought to remove the income budget introduced in 2022/23 as a result of the saving included in the budget to introduce parking charges for Blue Badge holders of £0.040m.

Comments from statutory officers including the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer were set out in the agenda supplement with further clarifications set out in the appended Committee report.

### **Amendment C – VisitWiltshire**

The proposal sought a provision of funding of £0.075m to enable partnership working with VisitWiltshire or an equivalent body in both 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Comments from statutory officers including the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer were set out in the agenda supplement with further clarifications set out in the appended Committee report.

The Committee discussed the proposed amendments as detailed fully in the report appended to these minutes, seeking details on the robustness of funding proposals, risks and impacts on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, and confidence in growth assumptions. Other areas explored were the vulnerability and impact on residents/communities.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

### **Resolved:**

#### **The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee agreed:**

- 1. To note the update provided on the administration Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy as was agreed by Cabinet on 6th February.**
- 2. To thank Cllrs Grant and Thorn for submitting their budget amendment proposals to the Committee and to note that they have been scrutinised.**
- 3. To ask Full Council to take note of the comments of the Committee, which will be presented in a report.**
- 4. To seek further information regarding the benefits to the county of third-party tourism organisations.**

*The Chairman called the meeting to a break at 14.54 and resumed at 15.00.*

## **18 Performance and Risk Report 2023/24 - Quarter Three**

The Chairman noted that within the agenda pack was a report providing a quarter three update on performance against the stated missions in the

Council's Business Plan 2022-23. A Strategic Risk Summary was also included. The report had been considered by Cabinet on 6 February.

Leader of the Council, Richard Clewer introduced the report with reference made to how the report enables the Council to be data based and increasingly make efficient use of data through Performance Outcome Boards. It was noted that a Performance Outcome Board working in parallel from a corporate basis was also to be set up.

It was noted that written questions were received from Councillor Jo Trigg, which received the verbal responses during the meeting and would be attached to the minutes.

The following comments were received by Committee Members, which included but were not limited to the subject of childhood obesity and what the Council was doing to combat this, with reference to the daily mile. It was stated that leisure was part of the answer to this, and though the Council had limited levers, work was being targeted more towards those at the bottom end of the financial scale, with the examples of the FUEL programme and Street Tag cited. The need for the response to be a package incorporating food and exercise was suggested.

It was questioned whether repeat referrals to children's services was on the rise, with it responded that Wiltshire data rates were low in comparison to others and whilst it had gone up, this was a moment in time and the data should rather be considered in longer periods of time. Recently the Council had had an Ofsted inspection and would continue to audit and review thresholds in this area.

Further detail was provided regarding Carbon Literacy training, with it noted that the success was measured by accreditation, with the Council currently having a bronze status and aiming for silver and then gold. It was noted that currently 117 officers had received the training and silver accreditation would happen once 750 officers had received the training. Detail was also provided about how those trained would partake in a pledge and therefore it would be important for the rollout to follow a logical sequence starting with senior officers responsible for teams.

A point was raised about new public vehicle charging points requiring a variety of adaptors to be used. It was agreed by the Director that this point would be taken away for a response as there was a contractual reason behind why different charging units require different adaptors.

Clarity was provided that generally there tends to be more potholes reported in Spring than in Winter, with 4,935 potholes reported last April compared to 1,943 in December.

Clarity was also sought as to who provides scrutiny for the service level risk registers, to which it was outlined that top level risks on the strategic risk register are discussed at Performance Outcome Boards, with the potential for anything coming from these Boards to be taken to the relevant scrutiny committee. An example was provided of how the Children's Select Committee recently sought to see the risk register for clarity, however it doesn't take the registers by default.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

**Resolved:**

**The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee agreed to note:**

- 1. The updates and outturns against the measures and activities mapped against the Council's priorities.**
- 2. The Strategic Risk Summary.**

19 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 13 March 2024.

20 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 1.30 pm - 3.45 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Ben Fielding - Senior Democratic Services Officer of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718656, e-mail [benjamin.fielding@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:benjamin.fielding@wiltshire.gov.uk)

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## APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Minutes of 12 February 2024

**Wiltshire Council**

**Full Council**

**20 February 2024**

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### **Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on the Wiltshire Council Budget 2024/25 - Amendments**

#### **Purpose of report**

1. To provide to Full Council a summary of the main issues discussed at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 12 February 2024.

#### **Background**

2. The meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 12 February 2024 provided an opportunity to scrutinise amendments to the budget. The meeting on 25 January 2024 had considered the initial proposals from the Cabinet, which were subsequently agreed at Cabinet on 6 February 2024 for recommendation to Full Council on 20 February 2024.
3. Three proposed amendments were received for the meeting from Councillors Gavin Grant and Ian Thorn on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group.
4. All proposals were provided to the Committee with comments by the Section 151 Officer, Head of Paid Service, and the Monitoring Officer. They were confirmed as financially and legally viable, with comments included on any increased risks such as in relation to use of reserves or use of assumptions to fund additional expenditures.

#### **Wiltshire Council Financial Plan 2024-25: Addendum**

5. It was noted that though the meeting was principally for the scrutiny of budget amendments put forward by opposition members; a report had been included which was an update on the administration's Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This was agreed by Cabinet on 6 February. The Final Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on 5 February, and it included additional funding for Wiltshire over and above that included in the provisional settlement.
6. It was outlined by the Leader of the Council that the funding was proposed to be used as follows:
  - £0.100m contribution to Air Quality monitoring in 2024/25.
  - £0.025m contribution towards volunteer recruitment by Libraries for residents in remote areas.
  - £0.603m funding for rural play areas to enable them to continue to be used by the local community that will lead to their transfer to the local town or parish council.
  - £3.798m funding for additional investment in SEND and children's services early help and prevention support

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7. It was outlined that the addendum had the effect of amending recommendation A of the proposals included in the Budget 2024/25 report. As the funding had only been confirmed for one year the budget impact and changes would affect 2024/25 only.

### Main issues raised during questioning

8. Clarity was sought regarding how the rural play areas funding would be split up, with some communities investing more in their play areas than others. It was outlined that this process would be evidence driven with a desire for the play areas to be improved in an efficient way.
9. It was noted that the Air Quality monitoring would be county wide and that community conversations had been focused in two areas, Studley Green and Bemerton Heath, however additional members of staff had been hired so community conversations would be rolled out wider with an evidence base starting to be gathered.
10. It was questioned whether there was a timeline for the proportion and use of the £3.798m funding for additional investment in SEND and children's services early help and prevention support. It was stated that there was a first draft with a plan to use the funding over a two-year period.
11. Concern was raised that some parishes with small precepts might not be able to afford improving their play areas and whether this issue could be mitigated, to which the importance of ensuring that empowerment stays with Parish Councils was stated.
12. Clarity was provided that the 33 play areas referenced did not include those which had 7-year leases to the towns.

### Proposed Amendments

#### Amendment A

13. The proposal from Councillors Grant and Thorn was as follows:

*A £0.003m increase in social welfare funding to each of the 18 Area Boards, and the establishment of a central fund of £0.036m that Area Boards can bid for extra social welfare funding.*

14. This would have the following financial impact on the 2024/25 base budget:

Proposal	Impact £m
£0.003m increase in social welfare funding to each of the 18 Area Boards	0.054
Establishment of a central fund of £0.036m that Area Boards can bid for extra social welfare funding	0.036
<b>Total annual pressure of proposals</b>	<b>0.090</b>
<b>Total pressure across MTFs</b>	<b>0.270</b>

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<b>Funding Proposal of Pressure</b>	
Reduce the Business Plan Priority reserve allocation of £0.821m for Council wide enforcement activity by the total of £0.270m	0.270

Amendment B

15. This proposal from Councillors Grant and Thorn was as follows:

*To remove the income budget introduced in 2022/23 as a result of the saving included in the budget to introduce parking charges for Blue Badge holders of £0.040m.*

16. This would have the following financial impact on the 2024/25 base budget:

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Impact £m</b>
Remove the income budget introduced in 2022/23 as a result of the saving included in the budget to introduce parking charges for Blue Badge holders	0.040
<b>Total annual pressure of proposal</b>	<b>0.040</b>
<b>Total pressure across MTFS</b>	<b>0.120</b>
<b>Funding Proposal of Pressure</b>	
Reduce the Business Plan Priority reserve allocation of £0.821m for Council wide enforcement activity by the total of £0.120m	0.120

Amendment C

17. This proposal from Councillors Grant and Thorn was as follows:

*Provision of funding of £0.075m to enable partnership working with VisitWiltshire or an equivalent body in both 2024/25 and 2025/26.*

18. This would have the following financial impact on the 2024/25 base budget:

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Impact £m</b>
Provision of funding of £0.075m to enable partnership working with VisitWiltshire or an equivalent body	0.075
<b>Total pressure of proposal in 2024/25</b>	<b>0.075</b>
<b>Total pressure across 2024/25 and 2025/26</b>	<b>0.150</b>
<b>Funding Proposal of Pressure</b>	
Reduce the Wiltshire Towns Funding by £0.150m to allow for a budget surplus to fund this pressure	0.150

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19. For each amendment the Chairman gave the opportunity for Members of the Cabinet who were present to respond if they wished, as well as opportunity for the Corporate Leadership Team to add anything further to the statutory officer comments provided with the submissions. The Section 151 Officer, Lizzie Watkin, provided clarification on the amendments where appropriate.

### **Main issues raised during questioning and debate**

#### Amendment A

20. Councillor Grant introduced his amendment and explained its purpose and implications. He stated that each of the 18 Area Boards would receive £3,000 and that there would be a central pot of funding available with Area Boards able to bid for additional funding.

21. Details were provided that the impact of the funding of the proposal would have the effect of reducing the Business Priority Plan Fund commitment of £0.821m to Council wide enforcement activity by £0.090m in 2024/25, and by a total of £0.270m over the MTFS period.

22. Queries were raised on whether the additional funding to Area Boards would be a straight split of £3,000 each as generally Area Board funding had a formula applied to it to represent the size and need of the area. It was clarified that this was not the case, and the additional pot would represent an opportunity for Area Boards to receive more funding.

23. It was questioned where the money would be taken from to fund Amendments A and B, to which clarity was provided from the Section 151 Officer, that the Business Plan Priority reserve allocation for Council wide enforcement activity was a reserve set aside for additional enforcement activity. Further clarity was provided that this reserve referred to enforcement activity as a whole to provide a coherent approach to tackling enforcement as a joined-up authority, with planning, licensing and other departments linked. The reserve would fund a One Council approach to dealing with enforcement issues particularly where there were concerns about safety to life.

24. Emphasis was placed on the need for evidence when conducting enforcement activity and that such work would be reliant on the need to develop an evidence base through officers.

25. The need for Members to discuss the risks and priorities of not having the reserve for enforcement activity or not having the additional Area Board funding was stressed.

#### Amendment B

26. Councillor Grant presented the amendment, whose purpose was to remove the income budget introduced in 2022/23 as a result of the saving included in the budget to introduce parking charges for Blue Badge holders of £0.040m.

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27. Clarity was provided by the Monitoring Officer that though this had been a decision regarding the previous budget, the financial implications would remain on this budget, therefore meaning that the amendment was relevant.
28. Clarity was provided that if accepted, this amendment would allow Blue Badge holders to have free parking in Wiltshire Council car parks.
29. A point was raised that if someone can afford to run a car, then it would be likely that they would be able to afford to pay for parking.
30. It was questioned that if this amendment was accepted, what would the implications be for the capital funded programme to move parking machines, to which it was clarified that this programme was separate and aimed to achieve several objectives including improved accessibility of car parks and the introduction of cashless payments.
31. The Section 1515 Officer provided clarity that as it is not possible to calculate the actual income generated through disabled or able-bodied residents paying for parking. Therefore, the estimate of £40,000 was included as the figure included as a saving included as part of a previous budget setting process.
32. A point was raised that some residents with disabilities would be happy to pay for their parking.
33. A suggestion was made that it would be preferred that the savings from this amendment, if accepted, be used for enhancing the capital fund programme and ensuring that more accessible meters were put into communities faster.

### Amendment C

34. Cllr Gavin Grant presented the amendment, detailing the provision of funding of £0.075m to enable partnership working with VisitWiltshire or an equivalent body in both 2024/25 and 2025/26. It was also noted that a competitive process for tender would have to take place should the amendment be passed.
35. It was outlined that the £150,000 funding for the amendment would be from the Wiltshire Towns Funding.
36. The Leader suggested that the £500,000 of unallocated funding referenced as being within the Wiltshire Towns Funding did not relate to the latest figures and that everything within the Wiltshire Towns Funding had been allocated in one way or another.
37. It was agreed that officers would obtain the precise details of the Wiltshire Towns Funding and that this would be shared with Members as soon as possible.
38. The Monitoring Officer provided clarity that regarding the amendment and withdrawal of funding from the Wiltshire Towns Funding, that as there was no legal commitments and binding, this may lead to disappointed partners at the end of the process should

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the amendment be accepted. Clarity was provided that conversations with partners take place off the record initially, before then being made public and contractual.

39. Queries were raised as to the benefit of approving the amendment and what return might be expected to communities and the county following the investment. A question was also posed that if the Council was not to spend money on building such partnerships with bodies, then what would be done to promote the tourism and economic health of the county.
40. Reference was made to the deadlines within the scrutiny process.
41. A point was made which suggested that statistically Wiltshire was the worst performing county in the Southwest in terms of value for money from Visit Wiltshire's efforts.
42. Assurance was provided that bodies other to VisitWiltshire did exist and would seek such a tender if it was available.
43. It was suggested that it would be beneficial for the amendment to outline the potential benefits of going out to tender to an outside body for such a provision.

### **Conclusion**

44. Cllrs Thorn and Grant were thanked for submitting their budget proposals to the Committee, and it was noted that they have been scrutinised.
45. To ask Full Council to take note of the comments of the Committee, as presented in this report.

**Councillor Graham Wright**

**Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee**

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Report Date: 15 February 2024

## **Written Responses: Corporate Performance and Risk Monitoring Report: Q3 2023/24**

**Regarding disadvantaged performance gaps, there is an awareness that lots of work going into this space. However, reassurance was sought that this is an area being resourced to level required to impact outcomes in positive way.**

*Response from Andrew Best (Head of School Effectiveness):*

As a Local Authority the disadvantaged gap remains a dual responsibility of both schools and the Council in addressing the gap, with what is a mixed system of maintained schools and academies. In terms of resourcing, all our schools have had the opportunity of attending a Disadvantaged Learners Conference in the Autumn Term, where we launched our Affordable Schools Strategy. This has been followed by a series of Network events that provide practical support to leaders and practitioners. The programme focuses not just on improving academic performance outcomes, but the health, well-being and attendance of the most vulnerable. 12 schools have also engaged in a targeted programme of Disadvantaged Learner support called IPPOP which looks at systems and processes in schools that have the greatest gap. It is also a strategic priority of the Wiltshire Learning Alliance as an area of focused improvement. Academy Trusts also have their own strategies and approaches at a strategic level, with their own priority work undertaken around disadvantaged outcomes within each individual Trust.

**Paragraph 22 - EHCPs. There is an awareness of the Safety Valve plan. Considering all the implications highlighted to wider Safety Valve plan – (recognising for individual families involved for whom this is extremely difficult) – the fact this metric is not moving at expected pace, how is that going to impact SV plan?**

*Response from Ben Stevens (High Needs Block Sus Strat Lead) and Lisa Fryer (Performance and Quality Lead (SEND)):*

The metric is not out of line with expectations. While EHCP numbers have gone up compared to last year (+704 as at Jan '24 compared to Jan '23), we are broadly in line with the unmitigated forecast on which Safety Valve was based. The actual numbers are 31 EHCPs ahead of the forecast, and this is likely a result of the faster than expected backlog clearance and so will not impact the plan. At this stage, we expected the number of EHCNA requests to remain high: 99(+14) as at Jan '24 compared to Jan '23. The mitigations required to begin bringing this number down are being prioritised in the plan.

While the work on the Safety Valve plan has begun, the Safety Valve deal formally begins from April 1<sup>st</sup> and we are expecting to see the impact of our mitigations in the first quarter of 24/25.

**Paragraph 38 – Anti-social Behaviour. The service is under resourced with just one officer for whole of county. Is the Council looking at alternative ways to cover rather than just replacement of maternity cover?**

*Response from John Carter (Head of Public Protection):*

The ASB team comprises of 2 ASB Officers, together with a Community Safety Officer. The ASB Officers focus on domestic related ASB, which is often linked to drug and alcohol issues. The Community Safety Officer deals more with ASB issues which impact on wider areas and town centres, and is leading on the implementation of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs).

The maternity leave of one of the ASB Officers is having a significant impact on the resources available to deal with ASB complaints. We do work closely with Wiltshire Police, housing providers and Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner to identify which agency is best placed to deal with an issue. We have recently advertised for temporary ASB Officer to cover the maternity leave and following the second advert we have now had a good number of suitable applicants and interviews will be held on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> February, and it is hoped that we will be able to recruit to the maternity cover post at that time.

In addition the Technical Support Officer who provides administrative supports the ASB team has been seconded to another role and we are unable to backfill so that is having a further impact on the ASB team

**Paragraph 40. It was cited that care experienced young people not in suitable accommodation = 6%. What length of time are these individuals in unsuitable accommodation and are these as a result of lack of capacity?**

*Response:*

The 6% of Care experienced young people reported as not in suitable accommodation equates to 12 young people :

- 3 are in custody and therefore deemed to be in unsuitable accommodation and for 1 of them we are paying a retainer so they can return to their home when they are released.
- 3 are in fact in suitable accommodation and this was a recording error which has now been corrected.
- 3 have informed their Personal Advisor that they are living out of area and have not been engaging, we do not know their address but Personal Advisors continue to regularly try to contact them.
- 3 young people have been offered suitable accommodation, 2 have declined it and 1 is due to move in in February.

The length of time that young people are in unsuitable accommodation varies according to their circumstances and choices. Wiltshire Council's Accommodation & Support Protocol for Care Experienced Young People has recently been launched which outlines how Wiltshire Council's Children in Care Team will work together with the Property & Support Service and Housing Solutions Service to support care experienced young people as they transition from placements funded by Wiltshire Council into suitable, long-term accommodation. Securing suitable accommodation for care experienced young people is, therefore, much more than just finding them somewhere to stay and a multi-agency approach is adopted when securing and sustaining accommodation for care experienced young people; agencies work

together to meet their statutory duties and corporate parenting responsibilities to provide a safe and supportive pathway to independent living.

**Paragraphs 47 & 48 - Planning application time frames. What % of Planning applications have an agreed 'extension' and is that % increasing?**

*Response from Simon Day (Performance Delivery Manager, Building Control & Planning Tech Services):*

Below are the data relating to the number of decisions/number of EOTs and the percentage. Whilst the percentage of EOTs agreed on Majors has increased steadily over each year, the same cannot be said of Non-Majors as 2021 showed a higher percentage of EOTs agreed than 2022 and 2023. This is despite officers being encouraged to agreed EOTs more and more recently.

<b>Major Decisions</b>	<b>Number of Decisions</b>	<b>Number of EOTs</b>	<b>Percentage of EOTs</b>
2021	135	88	65%
2022	117	82	70%
2023	117	86	74%

<b>Non-Major Decisions</b>	<b>Number of Decisions</b>	<b>Number of EOTs</b>	<b>Percentage of EOTs</b>
2021	4290	2692	63%
2022	3947	1852	47%
2023	3317	1696	51%

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