

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2018 AT THE KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Stewart Dobson, Cllr Howard Greenman, Cllr David Halik, Cllr Alan Hill (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Simon Jacobs, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Andy Phillips, Cllr John Walsh, Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman) and Cllr Clare Cape (Substitute)

Also Present:

Cllr David Jenkins, Cllr Roy While, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cllr Steve Oldrieve, Cllr Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE, Cllr Jonathon Seed, Cllr John Thomson, Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cllr Philip Whitehead and Cllr Jerry Wickham

11 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Matthew Dean.

An apology was also received from Councillor Ruth Hopkinson, who would be presenting the proposals from the Liberal Democrat Group, and as such absent for the entirety of the meeting in her capacity as a committee member. Councillor Hopkinson was substituted by Councillor Clare Cape.

12 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

13 Chairman's Announcements

Through the Chair there were the following amendments:

- 1) That it be noted that following further meetings with officers the proposals from the Liberal Democrat Group in Agenda Supplement 1 had been updated, along with the report from senior officers, to include use of the recently announced rural grant.

- 2) Scrutiny normally focuses on matters of policy determined by the Executive, rather than on staffing structures, which are determined by management. However, in this case operational savings are listed in the Administration's budget, under Appendix 1C

Savings pertaining to staffing structures refer to "a review of structures and job design to identify inefficiencies and potential duplication with other services" as, at this stage, the detail of exactly where these savings will come from is still to be finalised.

In all cases the first step will be identify the potential for deleting vacant posts, or identifying where vacant posts may provide suitable alternative employment for any staff who may be at risk of redundancy as a result of savings proposals.

Any discussion at this stage about which roles may be affected by these proposals would be inappropriate as this would not only jeopardise the consultation that will be required with staff whose roles are affected, but it may also unsettle staff in these roles unnecessarily.

Managers in these services are responsible for determining how these savings will be delivered so it is important that any discussion about alternative proposals does not include reference to specific roles, or staff.

14 **Public Participation**

There were no statements or questions submitted.

15 **Procedure of Meeting**

The procedure for the meeting was noted.

16 **Wiltshire Council Financial Plan 2018/19: Amendments**

Amendments to the administration budget proposals as published on 26 January 2018 had been received from the Liberal Democrat Group.

Councillor Ruth Hopkinson, in her capacity as Liberal Democrat Group Deputy Leader, presented the Group's proposed amendments as detailed in Agenda Supplement 1. The amendments sought to use the Rural Grant for two years at £0.262m per year to fund the Communities investment whilst further recurring savings are identified and to fund additional borrowing to allow for more LED replacement for street lighting. The total cost of the two investment amendments was £0.345m, and in addition to the rural grant was to be funded with a reduction in the number of Portfolio Holders to achieve £0.058m and to reduce councillors' travel mileage allowance to 25p a mile for a saving of £0.025m

The proposals had been confirmed as legal and financially viable by the Corporate Leadership Team in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and

Section 151 Officer, with additional comments as detailed in the agenda supplement report.

The Committee, along with other members in attendance including members of the Executive, discussed the proposed as detailed fully in the appended report, including examining how savings had been calculated, how the rural grant could be used and the process of achieving the proposed savings.

At the conclusion of discussion and on the motion of Councillor Graham Wright, seconded by Councillor Alan Hill, it was,

Resolved:

- 1) To note that the amendments to the Financial Plan Update 2018/19 proposed by the Liberal Democrat group have been scrutinised; and
- 2) To ask Full Council to take note of the comments of the Committee, which will be presented in a report.

17 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 20 March 2018.

18 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 10.55 am)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kieran Elliott of Democratic Services, direct line (01225) 718504, e-mail kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk

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Wiltshire Council

APPENDIX to the Minutes of 9 February 2018

Full Council

20 February 2018

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on the Draft Financial Plan Update 2018/19

Purpose of report

1. To report to Cabinet and Full Council a summary of the main issues discussed at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 9 February 2018.

Background

2. The meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee provided an opportunity to scrutinise amendments to the budget that were proposed after the committee meeting on 5 February 2018, which considered the initial proposals from the Administration which were published on 26 January 2018. The only proposed amendments received were from the Liberal Democrat Group.
3. Councillor Ruth Hopkinson, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group acknowledged the difficult financial environment the council faced and limited flexibility in meeting its budgetary requirements, and then presented the proposals to the Committee as follows:

Savings (£0.345m)

- To use the Rural Grant (£0.655m) for two years to fund the Communities investment whilst further recurring savings are identified. The balance being used to fund further the interest payments for the LED investment proposal (£0.262m)
- To recommend the number of Cabinet Portfolio Holders is reduced by 50% (£0.058m)
- To reduce councillor's travel mileage allowance to 25p a mile (£0.025m)

Investments £0.345m

- To replace in part the Administration's proposal 49 in relation to '*Communities - A review of structures and job design to identify inefficiencies and potential duplication with other service areas*' £0.245m
 - To set aside further revenue ability to fund borrowing in order to allow for more LED replacement in support of the Administration's budget proposal 27 - '*To...undertake a commercial business case review of some areas moving to usage of LED fittings to reduce costs*' £0.100m
4. The proposals had been commented upon by the Corporate Leadership Team, including the Director of Finance and the Monitoring Officer.

Main issues raised during questioning and debate

5. The Chairman gave the opportunity for the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance respond to the amendments, before seeking any queries or

comments from the Committee and other Members in attendance including those detailed below.

6. In relation to use of the Rural Grant it was confirmed that £0.262m would be required in the next financial year to meet the commitment. There were also questions on whether the grant could be used to supplement a programme such as streetlighting replacement, which would predominantly affect urban areas more than rural ones. In response, it was confirmed the proposals had been assessed by officers as acceptable to use the grant to partly fund the LED street lighting replacement programme.
7. In relation to expanding the LED street lighting programme it was stated that in addition to the greater efficiency of the lights meaning the programme would pay for itself over a 20 year period, it would also significantly reduce the council's carbon footprint and contribute to national targets for reducing carbon emissions. The Cabinet Member also clarified that with the Rural Grant announced after the Administration had published its own proposals, the Administration would detail its alternatives to such a use of the grant at Council on 20 February.
8. In relation to reducing the councillors' mileage allowance from 45p per to 25p per mile it was confirmed that the amount to be saved was not calculated as a full year saving, acknowledging that any change to the Members' Allowances Scheme would require consultation with an Independent Remuneration Panel before it was implemented. In response to queries it was stated the administration cost of a different rate for councillors and officers would be minimal.
9. It was further stated that councillors would be able to claim back the difference from the rate set by HM Revenue and Customs if the mileage rate were set at 25p, and that the efficiency of modern vehicles meant this rate met or exceeded average running costs. Details were sought on how the 25p rate had been calculated and whether it was up to date. In response it was stated that previous council calculations had indicated such a cost, or lower, and that the AA's figures stated this remained an accurate estimate.
10. Regarding the proposal to reduce the number of Portfolio Holders, the Leader of the Council stated she did not believe it was a proper budget proposal to condition how the executive governance arrangements of the council needed to be organised.

Conclusion

11. To note that the amendments to the Financial Plan Update 2018/19 proposed by the Liberal Democrat group have been scrutinised; and
12. To ask Full Council to take note of the comments of the Committee as detailed above.

Councillor Graham Wright Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

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Report Date: 12 February 2018