

## **GROUP LEADERS MEETING WITH TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES**

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### **NOTES OF THE GROUP LEADERS MEETING WITH TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES MEETING HELD ON 8 FEBRUARY 2018 AT THE NORTH WILTSHIRE ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE, Leader of the Council, Conservative Group Leader

Councillor Ian Thorn, Liberal Democratic Group Leader

Councillor Ian McLennan, Labour Group Deputy Leader

Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Philip Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Finance

#### Union Representatives:

John Drake – Unison

Mike Osment - Unison

Alan Tomala – Unite

Carole Vallely – CMB

Michael Harrison – NUT

John Hawkins – ATL

#### Officers:

Dr Carlton Brand, Corporate Director

Alistair Cunningham, Corporate Director

Michael Hudson, Director – Finance (s151 Officer)

Joanne Pitt, Director - HROD

Robin Townsend, Director – Legal (Monitoring Officer)

William Oulton, Senior Democratic Services Officer

#### **1 Welcome and Introductions**

The Leader welcomed all to the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves

#### **2 Apologies**

It was noted that Councillor Ricky Rogers had tendered his apologies and was substituted at the meeting by Councillor Ian McLennan.

#### **3 Notes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 3 February 2017 were noted as a correct record.

#### 4 **Wiltshire Council Financial Plan Update 2018/19**

he Leader introduced the budget and outlined the challenges facing the Council and the need to address the £25m saving in the year. Additionally, mention was made of the need to meet increasing service demands in social care, and that the council would be seeking a 5.99% increase in council tax which included the 3% social care levy offered by government.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillor Philip Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented further detail, including: that the impact of savings should be lesser in subsequent years as the council's finances became more sustainable; how the savings had been categorised and presented in the report; the Council's developing approach to commercialisation and the intention that traded services should be offered at nil cost to the council as a minimum; how the digilisation programme was projected to save in areas such as customer service transactions.

The union representatives then had an opportunity to make statements and ask questions regarding the budget.

Matters highlighted in the course of the meeting included:

How reserves were presented in the budget and that the council expected to run a small surplus at the end of the year; how projected savings derived from transformation programmes were calculated and profiled; that details of the impact on staff teams could not be published as this would prejudice the requirement to properly consult with staff at risk; that officers were confident that the projected savings were robust, and that further work would be undertaken to detail plans to achieve them; that staff reductions would be focused on operational efficiencies and that the Council would be engaging with staff and unions first; that the council would normally prioritise reducing the where there are vacancies; that the number of staff redundancies would be low; that the Head of Finance, as the s151 officer, had to sign the budget off as robust and deliverable.

In answer to a question, Councillor Whitehead stated that the council was exploring options to reduce the amount of non-household waste taken to Household Recycling Centres, and that the Council would be mindful of the impact of any new process would have on staff. It was likely that additional focus would be required at sites near to neighbouring authorities.

In answer to a question, the Leader stated that some Council services, such as the Libraries, had been protected from reductions in service levels by supporting the professional officers to work with volunteers. Whilst volunteers were given access to proper training, it was recognised that the role of professional officers was respected.

In answer to a question, Councillor Whitehead stated that £3.5 million of the projected savings would be achieved through delivering on decisions already made by Cabinet, but that other decisions would not be implemented until the budget had been debated by Full Council and proper consultation undertaken. There was broad support for the manner in which the council was attempting to protect base budgets and services by expanding the scope of commercial sectors such as school traded services. Specific commendation was made for the new traded services website.

The Leader thanked those for attendance for offering their views and questions.

(Duration of meeting: 9.30 - 10.10 am)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Will Oulton email: [william.oulton@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:william.oulton@wiltshire.gov.uk) tel: 01225 713935, of Democratic Services

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