

**APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Minutes of 8
February 2022
Wiltshire Council**

Full Council

15 February 2021

**Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on the Wiltshire
Council Financial Plan 2022/23 - Amendments**

Purpose of report

1. To report to Full Council a summary of the main issues discussed at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 8 February 2022.

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 25 January 2022, which considered the initial proposals from the Executive which were subsequently agreed at Cabinet on 1 February 2022.
3. Three proposed amendments were received for the meeting from Councillors Ian Thorn and Gavin Grant on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group.
4. The proposals were as follows:

a. To remove the following Car Parking Savings:

- *Introduce Parking charges for Blue Badge holders*
- *Introduce Sunday charges in all car parks*
- *Remove free event parking from Town Councils*
- *Increase car parking charges by 10p per hour on every tariff.*

The listed savings would total £0.710m in 2022/23 and an additional £0.120m in 2023/24.

b. To remove the following savings:

- *Reduce funding for Lunch Clubs for older adults*
- *Reduce funding for Friendship Clubs for adults with learning disabilities.*

The listed savings above would total £0.106m in 2022/23 and an additional £0.106m in 2023/24. Council is additionally asked to request that the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee add a Rapid Scrutiny process to their work programme to review the payments made under the schemes included in the proposed savings above and consider the impact of the proposed savings from 2023/24, with the terms of reference to be agreed.

- c. To increase the Area Board Capital Grants to the previous level of funding of £0.800m prior to the re-allocation of £0.400m to Local Highways and Footpath Improvement Groups (LHFIG), an increase of the budget of £0.400m. It is proposed that this increase in the Capital Programme is funded by borrowing.*

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5. The above proposals have the following impact on the 2022/23 financial year:

Amendment A

Proposal	Impact 2022/23 £m
Removal of Car Parking savings listed above	0.710
CPI increase to Season Tickets	(0.024)
Reduction in High Street Budget	(0.686)
Total Revenue Impact	0

Amendment B

Proposal	Impact 2022/23£m
Removal of saving to reduce funding for lunch clubs for older adults	0.060
Removal of saving to reduce funding for Friendship Clubs for adults with learning disabilities	0.046
Total pressure of proposals	0.106
Draw from Business Plan Priority Reserve	(0.106)
Total Revenue Impact	0

Amendment C

This impact will not affect the 2022/23 budget as any borrowing is assumed to be undertaken at the end of the financial year and therefore no interest cost is assumed and the MRP is charged the year following the expenditure.

- The proposals have the effect of reducing the amount set aside in the High Street Budget as well as drawing from the Business Plan Priority Reserve as shown in the above tables.
- The proposals had been commented upon by the Section 151 Officer, Head of Paid Service and the Monitoring Officer, and confirmed as financially and legally sound, with comments regarding the increased risks of reducing allocated reserves.

Main issues raised during questioning and debate

- Councillors Thorn and Grant introduced the proposals, noting that they were intended to protect marginalised members of society, support the economic recovery of towns as well as supporting the work of Area Boards.
- The Chairman then gave the opportunity for Members of the Executive to respond to the proposed amendment, before seeking any queries or comments from the Committee. The Section 151 Officer, Andy Brown, provided clarification where appropriate.

Amendment A

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10. Queries were raised about the provision of high street regeneration funding if the proposed amendment was to draw from such reserves and what would be done to help market towns in the future. It was suggested that the amendment would be an opportunity to make an impact on market towns by not increasing car park charges, with further evaluation and understanding needed regarding regeneration funding as it is a function of the Council to distribute such funding. It was suggested in response that an increase in tariff and season ticket charges would impact directly on the finances of either employers of individual workers, which could cause a knock-on effect if they were to choose to park in residential areas rather than car parks, potentially causing complaints.
11. The notion of balance risk and harm was discussed, with the point raised as to whether the Council should be aiming to discourage driving given the climate emergency and net-zero carbon emissions aim.
12. It was suggested that though the amendment would potentially help Blue Badge holders, those using public transport rather than cars would need to be treated the same. In response it was stated that the amendment wouldn't be seeking to subsidise public transport through Blue Badges and that if charges were to increase, this would encourage residents to travel to free car parks rather than the ones servicing individual traders. It was also noted that there had recently been a presentation from the Cabinet Member for Transport, which outlined how improvements could be made to rural bus services.
13. It was suggested that as Blue Badge holders have the ability to park within waiting restriction areas for two-hour periods, this could potentially cause an increase in parking within sensitive areas of town centres. Clarification was also provided in regard to the health and community benefits of being able to use appropriate car parking facilities, with the response noting declines to church congregations due to Sunday parking charges. An additional response was provided, that noted how free weekend parking provision had previously been used to facilitate carnivals, which provided a positive impact to both community revenue streams and social fabric.
14. It was confirmed that the budget amendment did not incorporate a response to the proposal to remove current windows of free parking, such as in Culver Street car park – Salisbury.

Amendment B

15. It was queried whether the proposed future commissioning model had potentially been dismissed by the amendment. It was clarified that one element of the proposed scrutiny would be to scrutinise the appropriateness of small voluntary groups as well as procurement processes in order to examine what the correct route could be for funding, including potential other sources for funding such as Area Board Health and Wellbeing Funds.

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16. It was discussed that positive overview and scrutiny should enable understanding to be spread by engaging with the clubs as well as voluntary organisations; enabling them to through understanding to consider other ways of working.
17. Regarding the role of the proposed scrutiny exercise itself, it was clarified by the Monitoring Officer that though it would be difficult to discuss the role of broader scrutiny, the Terms of Reference for the potential rapid scrutiny exercise could be defined with the advice of officers. Therefore ensuring the amendment could proceed based on financial advice.
18. The potential long-term financial implications of the amendment on the Council were discussed, with further reference given to the need for the rapid scrutiny exercise in order to fully assess the amendment.

Amendment C

19. Details were sought on what potential reductions would be proposed to fund the potential amendment, to which it was clarified that there would be no impact on the budget debated and that it would cost £20,000 a year per the lifetime of the amendment to source the proposed £400,000. It was discussed whether the amendment would amount future costs that would have to be dealt with.
20. In response to queries about potentially putting money into funding of the current Community Area Transport Groups (CATG), it was clarified that the amendment would not impact on such funding.
21. It was noted that a Rapid Scrutiny Task Group had been set up to scrutinise the way that Area Boards operate, which would not provide feedback until after Council.

Conclusion

22. Cllrs Ian Thorn and Gavin Grant were thanked for submitting their budget proposals to the Committee and it was noted that they have been scrutinised.
23. To ask Full Council to take note of the comments of the Committee, as presented in this report.
24. Regarding the proposed amendments to the budget for lunch clubs for older people, and friendship clubs for adults with learning disabilities, to:
 - a) The request for a rapid scrutiny exercise reviewing payments made under the club schemes and the impact of the proposed savings from 2023/24 was noted.
 - b) The Chair and Vice-chair were asked to make any necessary arrangements following consideration the request for referral to scrutiny by Full Council.

Councillor Graham Wright Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

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Report Author: Ben Fielding, Democratic Services Officer, 01225 718504 or Benjamin.fielding@wiltshire.gov.uk

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