

# AGENDA

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**Meeting:** Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

**Place:** [Access the online meeting here](#)

**Date:** Tuesday 9 March 2021

**Time:** 10.30 am

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Please direct any enquiries on this Agenda to Kieran Elliott, of Democratic Services, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, direct line (01225) 718504 or email [kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk)

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## Membership:

Cllr Chuck Berry  
Cllr Christine Crisp  
Cllr Kevin Daley  
Cllr Stewart Dobson  
Cllr Howard Greenman  
Cllr Alan Hill (Vice-Chairman)  
Cllr Ruth Hopkinson  
Cllr Atiqul Hoque

Cllr Jon Hubbard  
Cllr Gordon King  
Cllr Pip Ridout  
Cllr Jo Trigg  
Cllr John Walsh  
Cllr Stuart Wheeler  
Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman)

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## Substitutes:

Cllr Clare Cape  
Cllr Ernie Clark  
Cllr Anna Cuthbert  
Cllr Brian Dalton  
Cllr Christopher Devine

Cllr Gavin Grant  
Cllr George Jeans  
Cllr Jacqui Lay  
Cllr Ricky Rogers  
Cllr Suzanne Wickham

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# AGENDA

## PART I

*Items to be considered when the meeting is open to the public*

1 **Apologies**

To receive details of any apologies or substitutions for the meeting.

2 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting** (*Pages 5 - 24*)

To approve and sign the minutes of the meetings held on 26 January and 9 February 2021.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of disclosable interests or dispensations granted by the Standards Committee.

4 **Chairman's Announcements**

To receive any announcements through the Chair.

5 **Public Participation**

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public.

Statements

If you would like to make a statement at this meeting on any item on this agenda, please register to do so by 5pm on 5 March 2021.

Questions

To receive any questions from members of the public or members of the Council received in accordance with the constitution.

Those wishing to ask questions are required to give notice of any such questions in writing to the officer named on the front of this agenda no later than 5pm on 2 March 2021 in order to be guaranteed of a written response. In order to receive a verbal response questions must be submitted no later than 5pm on 4 March 2021. Please contact the officer named on the front of this agenda for further advice. Questions may be asked without notice if the Chairman decides that the matter is urgent.

Details of any questions received will be circulated to Committee members prior to the meeting and made available at the meeting and on the Council's website.

6 **Covid-19 Update**

To receive a report and update in relation to the council's response to Covid-19.

The report to Cabinet and minute extracts from the Select Committees will follow in an agenda Supplement.

7 **Task Group Updates** (*Pages 25 - 28*)

To receive updates on Overview and Scrutiny Task Groups.

8 **Review of Overview and Scrutiny 2017-2021**

A report will follow in an agenda supplement highlighting the key pieces of work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny for the 2017-21 council term, and recommending topics for suggested inclusion in a new Overview and Scrutiny work programme after the May 2021 elections.

9 **Date of Next Meeting**

To confirm the date of the next meeting as 25 May 2021.

10 **Urgent Items**

Any other items of business which the Chairman agrees to consider as a matter of urgency.

**PART II**

*Items during consideration of which it is recommended that the public should be excluded because of the likelihood that exempt information would be disclosed.*

### Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

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#### MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2021 AT ONLINE MEETING.

##### **Present:**

Cllr Chuck Berry, Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Kevin Daley, Cllr Howard Greenman, Cllr Atiqul Hoque, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr John Walsh, Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman), Cllr Jacqui Lay (Substitute) and Cllr Suzanne Wickham (Substitute)

##### **Also Present:**

Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Pauline Church, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr David Halik, Cllr Simon Jacobs, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Horace Prickett, Cllr Toby Sturgis, Cllr Bridget Wayman and Cllr Philip Whitehead

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#### 1 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Stewart Dobson, Alan Hill and Ruth Hopkinson.

Councillor Dobson was substituted by Councillor Jacqui Lay, and Councillor Hill was substituted by Councillor Suzanne Wickham.

The Chairman also welcomed Councillor Atiqul Hoque to the Committee following his appointment in October 2020, and thanked Councillor Tony Trotman, who had been removed from the Committee, for all his contributions to the Committee and to Overview and Scrutiny generally.

#### 2 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2020 were presented for consideration, and it was,

##### **Resolved:**

**To approve and sign the minutes as a true and correct record.**

#### 3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

4 **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements submitted.

5 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no announcements.

6 **Meeting Process**

The Chairman took the meeting through the proposed process for the meeting in considering the budget papers, as detailed in the agenda.

Following comments on the timescales for consideration and scrutiny of the budget ahead of Cabinet and Full Council, it was,

**Resolved:**

**To note the process for the meeting.**

7 **Wiltshire Council's Financial Plan Update 2021-2022 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-2026**

The draft Wiltshire Council Financial Plan Update 2021-22 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2021-2026 was presented by Councillor Pauline Church, Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement and Commercial Investment, with support from Andy Brown, Interim Corporate Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, along with Councillor Philip Whitehead, Leader of the Council, Terence Herbert, Chief Executive, and other members of the Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team.

The published budget papers included a 1.99% rise in Council Tax and a 3% Adult Social Care Levy, with additional investment of £34.236m and an additional savings target of £2.000m.

It was stated that the budget was a holding budget with certainty only being provided for one year, and the settlement from Government was based on Covid-19 funding being provided for the first quarter of 2021/22 and estimates in relation to the pandemic response and recovery progress. Details were provided on the setting up of new earmarked reserve accounts, budget monitoring in the current 2020/21 financial year and ongoing and expected impacts or variations from council tax and business rate receipts, especially the ending of furlough arrangements or increases on universal credit.

Full details of matters raised in discussion by and with the Committee would be included in a report appended to these minutes. The report from the Financial Planning Task Group in consideration of the budget was also received and considered.

Topics raised included, but were not limited to, discussion of the Latent Demand Reserve and how it would be allocated, anticipated growth and impact from Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and the calculation of total demand for Children's Social Care, projected impact on library and leisure services, price of recyclables, homelessness grants, inflation estimates, and the risk assessment balance including in relation to care home providers, along with other topics as detailed in the appended report.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

**Resolved:**

- 1) To note the Financial Plan Update 2021-22 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2021-26 and to refer the comments of the Committee and the report of the Financial Planning Task Group to Cabinet and Full Council for consideration on 2nd and 26th February 2021 respectively.**
- 2) To support ongoing scrutiny investigation of the budget, including the Financial Planning Task Group's continued focus on monitoring delivery of the budget and the development of the budget for 2022-23.**

*Councillor Howard Greenman left the meeting at 1100.*

**8 Covid-19 Update**

A Covid-19 update report which would be considered at Cabinet on 2 February 2021 was presented in Agenda Supplement 2. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Philip Whitehead, as well as the Chief Executive, Terence Herbert, and other members of the Corporate Leadership Team were in attendance.

The Committee discussed the report, seeking additional details on communications being sent out regarding the mass vaccination site in Salisbury, and were informed the site had been running as of 25 January 2021 and communications should now have been started to be sent out to residents. It was confirmed the programme was being run through the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Further details were sought on the youth provision and the pause in recovery work was detailed in response to the latest national lockdown. There were also queries on analysis of demand for emotional health and wellbeing services for schools and colleges in response to Covid-19, with it being stated there had been mixed news, with Wiltshire College reporting an increase but some schools reporting a decrease. Work was being undertaken through the Vulnerable People Stakeholders Group to understand demand.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

**Resolved:**

**To note the update on the council's ongoing response to Covid-19.**

9 **Forward Work Plans and Date of Next Meeting**

The forward work plans of the Select Committees and current inactivity of Task Groups during Covid-19 was noted.

The next meeting would be on 9 February 2021 to consider any opposition amendments to the budget provided to Overview and Scrutiny.

The next ordinary meeting would be on 9 March 2021.

10 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 - 11.50 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](mailto:kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk)

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## **APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Minutes of 26 January 2021 Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet 2 February 2021**

**Council 23 February 2021**

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### **Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on the Draft Financial Plan Update 2021-22 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2021-2026**

#### **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 (“The Committee”) held on 26 January 2021.

#### **Background**

2. The meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee provides an opportunity for non-executive councillors to question the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance, the Chief Executive, and the Interim Corporate Director of Resources on the draft 2021-22 Financial Plan and medium-term financial strategy before it is considered at Cabinet on 2 February 2021 and Full Council on 23 February 2021.
3. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement and Commercial Investment, Councillor Pauline Church, supported by the Interim Corporate Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, Andy Brown, was in attendance along with the Leader of the Council, Councillor Philip Whitehead, and the Chief Executive, Terence Herbert, to provide clarification and answers to issues and queries raised by the Committee. Other members of the Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team were also in attendance to provide further detail and clarity.
4. In addition to the draft Financial Plan update made available on the council’s website on 18 January 2021, a briefing from the Cabinet Member and Interim Corporate Director of Resources open to all elected Members was held on 20 January 2021.
5. Details published in the budget papers had included:
  - Council Tax to be increased by 1.99% and an Adult Social Care Levy of 3%;
  - A net general fund budget for 2021/22 of £412.561m;
  - Including £34.236m of additional investment and £2.000m of additional savings;
  - The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2021/22 to be set at £23.626m expenditure with social dwelling rents to increase by 1.5% except for rents currently over the formula rent which will be capped at formula rent as per national guidance;
  - A forecast budget gap of £45.512m for the 2022/23 financial year with regular updates to be received on delivery against strategy and addressing the forecast budget gap.

## **APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Minutes of 26 January 2021**

6. Financial management and spending controls together with emergency funding from Government during the Covid-19 pandemic has seen a forecast balanced budget by the end of the 2020/21 financial year.

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

7. This report is divided into sections relating to each of the Select Committee areas as budget proposals and impacts on service areas were discussed, as well as general comments.

#### Financial Planning Task Group

8. The report of the Task Group on the budget proposals was received and noted. The report and its comments are included as an annex to the Committee for attention at Cabinet and Full Council.
9. The Task Group had sought details in relation to council tax and business rate balances, grants, that many planned 2020/21 savings could not be released due to the pandemic, changes to the assessment of risks to the General Fund Reserve, and the further delay to the fair funding review for local authorities.
10. The Task Group stated it may hold further meetings as further budget queries are raised.

#### Children's Select Committee

11. Details were sought on the £6.6m allocated for investment in Children's Social Care in relation to a forecast increase in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) of 10.73%, with 4733 plans estimated and accounts for £1.532m of the cost pressure for Children's Services.
12. In response to queries on whether more specialist support could reduce the need for EHCPs it was stated the service was guided by policy and legislation with a focus on supporting children to remain in schools, and undertook benchmark comparison with other authorities and explored where improvements could be made, however the growth in demand was still anticipated.
13. Questions were asked about the change in the Children's Social care budget including reference to £0.108m of listed unachievable savings and the £5.608m of demand. Which have subsequently been provided to the Chairman of the Children's Select Committee.

#### Environment Select Committee

14. Details were sought in relation to homelessness funding, with it being confirmed that there had been an increase of £0.156m on previous allocations, with other amounts held in earmarked reserves from previous grants. It was stated that a ban on evictions during the pandemic had led to a decrease in demand in one respect, though there had been other increases, and when the ban came to an end a further rise was being planned for.

## **APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Minutes of 26 January 2021**

15. It was noted that there had been an increase in volume of recyclable materials collected from curb side collection during the pandemic, and a reduction in the value of the materials. In response it was stated that prices fluctuated quite widely which made firm estimation of future costs difficult, and also that with Household Recycling Centres closed for much of the year there had been lower collection at those sites.
16. Questions were raised in relation to forecasted impacts in relation to behavioural changes in areas such as leisure and libraries, and whether this was expected to be temporary or permanent behavioural changes. It was explained that estimates had been calculated looking at the impacts of the past year when the services had been in operation, the impact of income loss schemes, and estimations of how long social distancing measures would impact the services.

### Health Select Committee

17. The Risk Assessment Balance of the General Fund Reserve was queried, including the estimated cost of organising a new provider to carry out elements of the adult social care service should a large contractor go into administration, and the likelihood of that occurring.
18. It was stated in reply that the budget recognised key financial risks and that the social care market did include a risk of contractors and/or care homes going into administration/liquidation, assessed in the report as 10%. The £20.000m assessment of the potential cost to continue providing the statutory service was a combination of estimates for provision of the service and risks, and the information was factored into work of the council's Commissioning services.
19. In relation to the potential risk of a reduction in the level of income received, it was stated that the council had not previously operated gross payments to care providers and client debt recovery, which was reflected by a higher risk estimate, which is expected to reduce as the process is operated over time. Risks would also be evaluated at least annually.
20. It was stated that Children and Mental Health Services including Thrive hubs were funded by the Clinical Commissioning Group with limited amounts provided by the council, and there had been an impact for some schools as the funding was more evenly distributed.

### Other

21. The Cabinet Member for Finance had provided details of additional reserve funds established during 2020/21 in response to the pandemic. In response to queries it was confirmed that the Latent Demand Reserve of £4.958m, created from the underspend across the council in some services, did not have any elements ringfenced for a particular service. Cabinet would determine on evidence-based metrics how to adjust to the level of demand as the year progressed and utilise the fund.
22. Some Members felt that further time may be needed to fully scrutinise the budget, though the Leader noted that the budget papers had been published at an earlier or

**APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Minutes of 26 January 2021**  
the same point as in previous budget cycles. It was agreed that further questions or meetings may take place as appropriate.

23. Details were sought in relation to estimates of inflation assumptions used within the budget, and it was confirmed that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) forecast by the Bank of England was used as the measure for determining inflation uplifts.

### **Conclusion**

24. To note the Financial Plan Update 2021-22 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2021-26 and to refer the comments of the Committee and the report of the Financial Planning Task Group to Cabinet and Full Council for consideration on 2nd and 26th February 2021 respectively.
25. To support ongoing scrutiny investigation of the budget, including the Financial Planning Task Group's continued focus on monitoring delivery of the budget and the development of the budget for 2022-23.

**Councillor Graham Wright**

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

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Report Author: Kieran Elliott, Senior Democratic Services Officer, 01225 718504,  
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27 January 2021

Annex – Report of the Financial Planning Task Group for 20 January 2020

**APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Minutes of 26 January 2021  
Wiltshire Council**

**Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee - Annex**

**26 January 2021**

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**Report of the Financial Planning Task Group:**

**Wiltshire Council Financial Plan Update 2021/22 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2024/25**

1. The Task Group met with the following guests on 20 January 2021 to discuss the reports:

Cllr Philip Whitehead	Leader of the Council
Cllr Pauline Church	Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement and Commercial Investment
Andy Brown	Interim Corporate Director Resources (S151 Officer)
Lizzie Watkin	Head of Corporate Finance and Deputy S151 Officer
Leanne Sykes	Head of Finance Growth Investment & Place

Observing:

Cllr Graham Wright	Chairman, OS Management Committee
Cllr Alan Hill	Vice-Chairman, OS Management Committee
Cllr Jon Hubbard	Chairman, Children's Select Committee
Cllr Chuck Berry	Chairman, Health Select Committee

2. Due to the limited time available, some scrutiny of all of the budget papers has not been possible in advance of OS Management Committee's meeting.
3. However, below are the key issues raised by the Financial Planning Task Group on 20 January 2021 and the responses provided.

<b>Issue</b> (page and paragraphs numbers refer to the <a href="#">Budget Report</a> )	<b>Further information / Comments</b>
<b>Forecast Collection Fund (Council Tax &amp; Business Rates) Balances</b> (para 66-71)	There is a statutory duty to forecast any Council Tax deficit at the end of the financial year. The assumed deficit has reduced since Q2 to £3.75m. Growth (new build figures) estimates 2020/21 have been revised. Officers are confident that the majority of Council Tax will be recovered. From 2022/23 council should see a return to previous levels.

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	<p>Business rates are an area of uncertainty, though the 2020/21 deficit is now forecast as £0.045m. It is difficult to assess the overall impact of COVID-19 as there has been limited interaction with businesses in 2020/21. Significant business reliefs and rate holidays may have masked the effects of the pandemic. Any growth in income is unpredictable after 1 April 2021. Uncertainty will begin to be resolved with support from the Government and an overall economic recovery. The council will have a clearer indication of the situation at the end of May 2021.</p> <p>Government has mandated that all councils spread their Council Tax and Business Rate deficit over 3 years. Funds have been set aside to deal with the deficit.</p>
<p><b>Lower tier services grant</b> (para 41)</p>	<p>This is a new non-ringfenced grant believed to be replacing the local services support grant. Further details are awaited from Government.</p>
<p><b>Adult social care</b> (para 77-78)</p>	<p>The growth in adult social care funding is part funded by the adult social care levy (£8.522m). There is growth in the budget (£8.6m) to cover forecast demand. Should latent demand exceed the adult social care budget the new latent demand reserve can be drawn upon. Demand will be reviewed regularly.</p>
<p><b>Children’s Services</b> (para 97-98)</p>	<p>The growth in this budget is driven by increasing numbers of children and young people with an Education Health &amp; Care Plan (EHCP) as well as requirement to provide school transport for those with EHCP.</p> <p>Latent demand has been provided for in the increased reserves held against Assessed Financial Risk (see table at para 122)</p>
<p><b>Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25</b> (para 127 and table)</p>	<p>There is a challenge ahead in terms of efficiencies and savings with significant budget gaps forecast from 2022/23 (£45.512m). The projected deficit figures reflect the current position without any assumptions built in, therefore the position is likely to change. For example, the council is awaiting the outcome of the fair funding review, which is expected to have an impact upon the deficit, as well as the anticipated White Paper on adult social care reform.</p>
<p><b>Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)</b> (para 160)</p>	<p>There is a deficit reserve (£19.933m) in the DSG due to pressures on the high needs block (HNB). Funding has not kept pace with demand and the</p>

## APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Minutes of 26 January 2021

	<p>council has been lobbying Government about this situation. There is a management plan at Appendix 12 (to be signed off by SEN Board and Schools Forum on 21 January 2021) to mitigate that deficit.</p>
<p><b>Detail by service savings</b> (Appendix 6)</p>	<p>Many planned savings in the 2020/21 budget could not be realised due to the pandemic. The council will be looking at future savings going into recovery.</p> <p>Some savings from 2019-20 will still need to be delivered as there continues to be financial challenges and a need to deliver efficiencies. For example, £0.2m identified under Corporate Directors and Service Devolution was a procurement saving, which is now a procurement target for 2021/22.</p>
<p><b>General Fund Reserve – Risk Assessed Balance</b> (Appendix 7)</p>	<p>It is the first time that ‘% likelihood of risk’ has been calculated against the General Fund Reserve. These are the assessments of the Interim Corporate Director Resources. They identify risks unique to Wiltshire against the levels of reserves. Higher percentages relate to higher uncertainty and likelihood e.g. in Adult Social Care.</p> <p>Using a comparison with 2019/20 might not have been helpful as 2020/21 is such an atypical budget year. That unusual situation is reflected in the risk assessments.</p> <p>The Financial Planning Task Group (FPTG) is pleased that the issue of reserves has been addressed and the new methodology of assessment is welcomed.</p>
<p><b>General – business grants</b></p>	<p>Staff have been deployed where needed to and where there is a priority.</p>
<p><b>General – budget data</b></p>	<p>This year’s budget has not been approached in a conventional way. A one year holding budget has allowed a more detailed interrogation and re-evaluation of the figures.</p>

**Cllr Pip Ridout, Chairman of the Financial Planning Task Group**

Report author: Simon Bennett, Senior Scrutiny Officer, 01225 718709

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## Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

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### MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2021 AT ONLINE MEETING.

#### **Present:**

Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Kevin Daley, Cllr Stewart Dobson, Cllr Howard Greenman, Cllr Alan Hill (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Cllr Atiqul Hoque, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr John Walsh, Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman) and Cllr Suzanne Wickham (Substitute)

#### **Also Present:**

Cllr Chuck Berry, Cllr Gavin Grant, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Pauline Church, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Simon Jacobs, Cllr Jerry Kunkler, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Toby Sturgis, Cllr Ian Thorn, Cllr Bridget Wayman and Cllr Robert Yuill

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#### 11 **Apologies**

Apologies for the meeting were received from Cllr Chuck Berry, who was substituted by Cllr Suzanne Wickham.

#### 12 **Declarations of Interest**

There were declarations.

#### 13 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no announcements.

#### 14 **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements submitted.

#### 15 **Procedure of Meeting**

The procedure for the meeting was noted.

#### 16 **Wiltshire Council Financial Plan 2021-2022: Amendments**

A budget proposal was agreed by Cabinet on 2 February 2021 for discussion at Full Council on 23 February 2021, following its consideration by the Committee at its meeting on 26 January 2021.

On 4 February 2021 a proposed amendment to that budget was received from Cllrs Gavin Grant and Ian Thorn.

The amendment was presented as detailed in the agenda supplement. The proposals sought to reduce the adult social care levy from 3% in 2021/22 to 2% in 2021/22 and to apply a 1% levy in 2022/23. This would result in a loss of funding of £2.841m in 2021/22, with the shortfall to be met by drawing the same level of funding from the Latent Demand Reserve. It was also proposed to increase the Hardship Fund by £0.700m to a total of £1.000m, with the additional funds funded by drawing upon the Collection Fund Volatility Reserve by the same amount. Lastly, it was proposed to ringfence a budget commitment for £1.000m in business support, in the event that there was a favourable variance against the reduction of section 31 grants as set out in the supplement and budget papers.

Comments from statutory officers including the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer were set out in the agenda supplement.

The Committee discussed the proposed amendment as detailed fully in the report appended to these minutes, seeking details of the status and extent of the council's reserves, any service impacts arising from the proposals, and the level of financial or other risks to the council should the amendment be approved by Full Council.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

**Resolved:**

- 1) **To note that the amendments to the Financial Plan Update 2021-22 proposed by Cllr Gavin Grant and Cllr Ian Thorn 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 9 March 2021.

18 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 - 11.55 am)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kieran Elliott of Democratic Services,  
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**APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Minutes of 9  
February 2021  
Wiltshire Council**

**Full Council**

**23 February 2021**

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**Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on the Wiltshire  
Council Financial Plan 2021/22 - 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 9 February 2021.

**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 26 January 2021, which considered the initial proposals from the Executive which were subsequently agreed at Cabinet on 2 February 2021.
3. Three proposed amendments were received for the meeting from Councillors Gavin Grant and Ian Thorn on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group.
4. The proposals were as follows:
  - a. *To reduce the Adult Social Care levy from 3% in 2021/22 to 2% in 2021/22 and to apply a 1% levy in 2022/23. The loss of funding is approximately £2.841m in 2021/22. The £2.841m shortfall is to be met from a draw of funds from the Latent Demand Reserve.*
  - b. *To increase the Hardship Fund from £0.300m to £1.000m in 2021/22. The pressure is £0.700m. That pressure to be made up by an additional draw of funds from the Collection Fund Volatility Reserve.*
  - c. *To ring-fence any in-year favourable variance that arises against the £1m reduction of section 31 grants attributed to Business Rate reliefs in the budget report (paragraph 64 & 65) and that variance be transferred to an earmarked reserve specifically to support businesses that are in financial distress by way of discretionary reliefs or discretionary grants.*
5. The above proposals have the following impact on the 2021/22 financial year:

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Impact £m</b>
a. Reduction in Adult Social Care Precept	2.841
b. Increase Hardship Fund	0.700
<b>Total pressure of proposals</b>	<b>3.541</b>
a. Draw from the Latent Demand Reserve	(2.841)
b. Draw from Collection Fund Volatility Reserve	(0.700)
<b>Total draw from Earmarked Reserves</b>	<b>(3.541)</b>

## **APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Minutes of 9 February 2021**

6. The proposals have the effect of reducing the amount set aside in Earmarked Reserves as shown in the above table. Excluding Dedicated Schools Grant balances this would reduce the balance of Earmarked Reserves from an estimated £32.332m to £28.791m.
7. 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**

8. Councillors Grant and Thorn introduced the proposals, noting that it was intended to spread the adult social care levy over two financial years to reduce its impact, and stated that there would be no impact upon service delivery. The increase to the Hardship Fund in the Executive budget was welcomed, but it was argued this should be increased further, and details were provided on the level of council reserves.
9. 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

10. Details were sought on the proposed draw down of additional funds from the Latent Demand Reserve, in particular given the anticipated increase in demand or overspend within Children's Services and given the Latent Demand Reserve would be shared across many services where, in particular, the impact of Covid-19 had reduced demand in 2020/21. In response it was stated that potential risks had been assessed, but also noting that there were also no adjustments to the service budgets for Children's Services.
11. It was suggested that the Latent Demand Reserve may have included a small element of double counting in relation to an adult mental health component, but it was clarified the reserve was created from variances within the last financial year and drawdown depended on when delayed demand came in, which factored in assumptions in relation to 2021/22.
12. Queries were raised relating to the overall council position on reserves, including General Reserves, with it noted that there was projected to be total reserves of £33.192m reducing to £28.791m should all amendments be accepted by Full Council. It was stated that the Latent Demand Reserve was estimated in the Executive Budget to draw down £3.000m in 2021/22. The proposers highlighted the overall level of reserves and difficulty in estimating how much of the earmarked reserves would be required, against the certainty of the financial impact of the 3% adult social care levy, and that the risk of the government not providing the 1% if deferred to next year, given the commitments made, was minimal. Comments were made regarding whether, if the amendment were approved, the reserve would cover future years' estimates.
13. In response to queries around the balancing of financial risks by the council, it was noted that the S151 Officer had estimated the cover of that risk from 96% to 80% in the event all amendments were approved.

**APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Minutes of 9 February 2021**  
**Amendment B**

14. Details were sought on the proposed increase of £0.700m to the Hardship Fund, drawn down from the Collection Fund Volatility Reserve, which was monies set aside to manage the on-going deficit on council tax collection and other impacts. It was confirmed £7.913m would remain in the reserve should the amendment be approved
15. There was discussion over links between usage of the Hardship Fund and the Collection Fund Volatility Reserve.

**Amendment C**

16. In response to queries it was clarified that the purpose of the amendment was, as much as possible without binding a future council, to constrain the use of any additional funds should the section 31 grant received from government in respect of small business rates relief and other reliefs not be reduced by the anticipated level of £1.000m. The Executive budget proposed that the balance of any such variance, if it occurred, should be utilised to support local business. The proposed amendment sought to ringfence any such amount that might be received above what was currently projected in order to safeguard that intention.
17. As the funds could only be so allocated in the event there was a positive variance, there was no impact on the budget calculations from the amendment. In response to queries, it was confirmed that therefore there was no additional risks to the council arising from the amendment.

**Conclusion**

18. To note that the amendments to the Financial Plan Update 2021-22 proposed by Councillor Gavin Grant and Councillor Ian Thorn have been scrutinised; and
19. 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: 10 February 2021

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**Wiltshire Council**

**Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee**

**9 March 2021**

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## **Task Group Update**

### **1. Financial Planning Task Group**

#### Membership

Cllr Pip Ridout (Chairman)  
Cllr Richard Britton  
Cllr Stewart Dobson  
Cllr Gavin Grant  
Cllr Ruth Hopkinson  
Cllr George Jeans  
Cllr Stuart Wheeler

*Supporting officer: Simon Bennett*

#### Terms of Reference:

1. To understand and review the Medium Term Financial Strategy (4 year financial model)
2. To understand and review the approach and robustness of the financial planning regime within the Council
3. To understand and help develop the approach to the annual budget setting cycle
4. To review the specific contribution of overview and scrutiny in the annual budget setting cycle with a focus on outcomes
5. To undertake periodic budget monitoring including reviews of key midyear trends and developments and to ensure that these are taken into account when updating the Financial Plan
6. To work under the direction and guidance of the Management Committee and report regularly to the Cabinet Member, Management Committee and select committees (as appropriate) on its work and findings and to make any necessary referrals
7. To review the council's Performance and Risk monitoring reports and the Corporate Performance Framework.

#### Recent activity

Due to the pandemic the task group did not meet, and then informally, until the end of summer. On 8 October it considered the Month 5 Budget Monitoring report before it went to the COVID-19 task group. Formal meetings began again from November 2021. In December (4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>) the task group held several meetings, with the

Chairman of the Select Committees, looking at the highways, waste, adult social care, adult mental health, safeguarding and school transport budgets 2020/21.

On 20 January 2021 the task group met to consider the council's Budget 2021/22 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25. A report of the meeting went to [OSMC](#) on 26 January 2021 and to [Full Council](#) on 23 February 2021.

## 2. Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) Joint Scrutiny Panel

### Membership

#### **Wiltshire Councillors:**

Cllr Alan Hill (Chairman)  
Cllr George Jeans  
Cllr Ian McLennan

#### **Swindon Borough Councillors:**

Cllr Junab Ali  
Cllr Vinay Manro  
Cllr Kevin Parry (Vice-chair)

#### **Business Representative**

Amanda Newbery  
(2 vacancies)

*Supporting officer: Marie Gondlach*

### Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the Joint Scrutiny Panel are quite lengthy and therefore not included in full here, however an extract detailing the purpose of the panel is included below (*paragraph numbering from the terms of reference*):

(9.) This Panel will act as a critical friend, developing an overview of strategies and plans and providing independent scrutiny of the work of the LEP Board. It is an essential element of assuring democratic accountability for the use of public funds.

(10.) The objective is to make constructive recommendations for how future decisions of the LEP can be effectively implemented.

(11.) The Panel will not have the power to delay the SWLEP's decisions but it will be able to make recommendations for improvement to the SWLEP's decision making process and will be able to make its conclusions public.

### Recent activity

The proposal for the establishment of the joint scrutiny panel and terms of reference were presented to this committee on 17 March 2020 (access [here](#)).

The joint scrutiny panel then held its first meeting in July 2020 and has met three more times since.

Understandably, as a newly established body, the first meetings have been dedicated to developing knowledge and understanding of the SWLEP itself.

Nonetheless, the joint scrutiny panel has also reviewed the new arrangements for the SWLEP Board governance framework, mid-year performance, development of the Growth Hub and the Getting Building Fund.

The joint scrutiny panel has also received regular updates on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on any spending or delivery of projects.

In January 2021, three members of the joint scrutiny panel (one from each membership group) started a deep dive exercise on the Growth Hub with the following aims:

To review the Growth Hub's current role, activity and performance, in the context of information nationally available on Growth Hubs and applying comparison, where relevant and comparable (i.e comparable data), to identify best practice and areas for development or improvement.

The outcome of the deep dive will be reported to the joint scrutiny panel in April and further updates will be provided to this committee as well.

Work is also underway to appoint to the two vacancies for Business Representatives.

### 3. **Commercialism Task Group**

#### Membership

Cllr Richard Britton  
Cllr Tony Deane  
Cllr Gordon King  
Cllr Ian Thorn  
Cllr Stuart Wheeler (Chairman)

*Supporting officer: Marie Gondlach*

#### Terms of Reference

- a) To support implementation of the council's commercialism agenda, by considering and making recommendations regarding,
  - Developing existing income streams
  - Developing new commercial opportunities, either through existing assets or developing or acquiring new ones
  - Councillor and officer expertise in this area
  - The experiences of other local authorities
  - Legal and commercial issues

- The ethos, values and reputation of the council when considering opportunities.
- b) To liaise with the Financial Planning Task Group, Audit Committee and the Traded Services for Schools Task Group to ensure that a holistic approach is taken with regards to commercialism for the council.

### Recent activity

Under the agreed streamlined overview and scrutiny approach during the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been no meeting of the task group since March 2020

### Proposals

**To note the update on Task Group activity provided.**

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