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## NOTES OF THE GROUP LEADERS MEETING WITH TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES MEETING HELD ON 3 FEBRUARY 2017 AT THE SALISBURY ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.

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### **Councillors:**

Councillor Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE, Leader of the Council, Conservative Group Leader  
Councillor Glenis Ansell, Liberal Democratic Group Leader  
Councillor Ricky Rogers, Labour Group Leader  
Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council  
Councillor Richard Tonge, Cabinet Member for Finance

### **Union Representatives:**

John Drake, UNISON  
Gavin Brooks, UNISON  
Carole Vallyelly, GMB  
John Hawkins, ATL  
Alan Tomala, UNITE  
Mike Leigh, NASUWT

### **Officers:**

Dr Carlton Brand, Corporate Director  
Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director  
Michael Hudson, Associate Director - Finance  
Barry Pirie, Associate Director - People and Business Services  
Joanne Pitt, Head of Service - Human Resources Services  
Robin Townsend, Associate Director, Corporate Function and Procurement and Systems Thinking  
Kieran Elliott, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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### 1 **Welcome and Introductions**

The welcomes all those present to the meeting.

### 2 **Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Sue Dawson of the ATL.

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

The notes of the meeting held on 4 February 2016 were noted.

## **Wiltshire Council Financial Plan Update 2017/18**

The Leader introduced the budget proposals ([available online](#)), noting in particular the increased demand on adults and children's social care, as well as continuing decreases in government funding, therefore requiring both increases in council raised funding and further savings and efficiencies. It was stated the council was continuing with other authorities to lobby the government on recognising the pressures of rurality and older populations that were particularly relevant in Wiltshire, when it would introduce its new formula for the realignment for non-domestic rates between local government authorities.

The Leader also drew attention to the fact the council had already approved a four year funding settlement with the government on 18 October 2016 in order to gain more financial stability and enable better forward planning, but that since that agreement councils had been offered the opportunity to impose a 3% social care levy for 2 years rather than 2% each year over three years, and it was the intention of her proposal to take up the offer.

Cllr Richard Tonge, Cabinet Member for Finance, also made comments in relation to the proposed financial plan, stating the proposal to increase the social care levy had met with a muted reaction, as people were aware of the immense pressures on social care. He discussed the proposed £13.331m savings and efficiencies that would be required under the plan, and that while approximately 200 posts would be removed, it was hoped there would be no or few compulsory redundancies necessary.

The Trade Union representatives present were then given the opportunity to raise any questions or issues they had with the elected representatives and senior council officers.

During the course of the discussions, a number of textual errors in the budget documents were noted, including reference to the government apprenticeship levy, and that following negotiation with the Trade Unions a pay increment freeze would remain in place for at least one more year, not a pay increment as stated. These and any other corrections would be listed with updated publication of the financial plan and associated budget documents.

The level of post reductions was discussed at length, with details sought on which services would be affected, and when such reductions needed to be confirmed from vacancies and turnover before actual redundancies were required. It was stated the situation would be monitored throughout the year but particularly in the first six months of the financial year, and that some posts had already been identified in the budget book as some services such as Waste and Highways following restructures were carrying vacancies that could be removed already, with around 120 posts still to be identified. Critical areas such as Children's social care would not be required to reduce posts. It was also highlighted that all councils were facing increasing pressures due to rising demand and reduced government funding, and it was important to assist the private sector to thrive in order to ensure the reduction in public sector jobs did

not reduce employment levels, and that the situation was not as severe in Wiltshire as some areas.

It was noted that despite increased investment significant savings were still needed in social care, and the difficulties in recruitment and supporting care workers was discussed. It was stated that Wiltshire was the second highest payer for social care in the south west, but that unions and the council had to work together, to support workers and encourage employers respectively. Savings would continue to be identified through systems thinking review to improve administration processes and duplications.

The meeting also discussed the impact on the infrastructure and services county due to the transfer of thousands of military personnel to Wiltshire. The Military Civilian Integration Partnership working between the council, Defence infrastructure Organisation, army and other partners was highlighted, with years of improved cooperation to share information to prepare services adequately and improve community engagement for returning personnel. The first tranche of military personnel had been transferred in July 2016 and had been successful other than a shortage of dentists, which was being addressed, and a LGA Peer Review had concluded the work between the council and its partners was effective and successful.

In response to queries on staff morale and overworking it was stated a recent staff survey had identified several key concerns and that the Corporate Leadership Team was receiving a report on the outcomes in order to identify what could be done to assist staff.

Details were also sought on nursery business rates, which it was stated was a issue to lobby nationally to make them exempt, the minimum revenue position which was in the process of review, confirmation no monies were being withdrawn from general reserves, waste contract efficiency savings and that the final settlement from government would not come until after 20 February 2017.

The meeting also discussed the recent news story that BoeingUK had chosen the site at MOD Boscombe Down for a new servicing and manufacturing centre, with 1500 jobs to be based at the site. It was not anticipated that the site would be operational until at least 2020/21, although there would be construction and infrastructure work before then, and it was not yet known what proportion of the jobs might be support services.

The Leader thanked the representatives of the Trade Unions for attending and for sharing their views on the proposed financial plan.

(Duration of meeting: 9.30 - 10.30 am)

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