

Full Council

26 February 2019

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on the Draft Financial Plan Update 2019/20

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 12 February 2019.

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 31 January 2019, which considered the initial proposals from the Executive which were subsequently agreed at Cabinet on 5 February 2019.
3. One proposed amendment was received for the meeting, from Councillor Gavin Grant. It was confirmed that the proposed amendment was an individual proposal, not on behalf of any political group. A seconder would be sought at Full Council if the proposed amendment was moved.
4. The proposal was as follows

| Proposal | Saving £m | Investment £m |
|--|----------------|------------------|
| Remove bank holiday parking charges across Wiltshire Council car parks | | (0.060) |
| Total growth/ investment proposal | | (0.060) |
| Additional drawdown of general reserves | (0.060) | |
| Total savings proposals | (0.060) | |

5. The proposals had been commented upon by the Corporate Leadership Team, including the Section 151 Officer, Head of Paid Service and the Monitoring Officer, and confirmed as legal and deliverable.

Main issues raised during questioning and debate

6. The Chairman gave the opportunity for the Leader of the Council and other members of the Executive to respond to the proposed amendment, before seeking any queries or comments from the Committee.
7. Details were sought on how the figure of £0.060m had been calculated, and whether the additional investment required included the cost of altering car park signage and other associated costs such as reprogramming parking machines. It was confirmed that the figure had been discussed with the service and that the £0.060 constituted of foregone income net of all necessary costs for the amendment.

8. It was noted that the additional investment to allow free car parking on Bank Holidays would be achieved for the next financial year through drawdown on reserves, and that this would result in reserves of £12.883m. Were the policy continued there would either need to be further savings identified for future years or further drawdown upon reserves. Councillor Grant noted in return that while £0.060m was not an insignificant amount it was a small additional cost within the overall budget and reserves, and that now that the cost of ensuring free bank holiday car parking had been established he and others could pursue other options for the necessary savings for any future years much further in advance.
9. One of the potential aims of the proposal was to support town centre retail and hospitality outlets potentially affected by car parking charges. The Committee discussed whether there was a possibility any removal of the charges would lead to an increase in commuter parking or if it would actually assist independent outlets who may be less likely to be open on Bank Holidays. Councillor Grant drew attention to the Executive proposals to introduce free Sunday parking all year round, a more substantial policy which he welcomed, and noted that his proposal simply extended that policy for a few more days of public holidays to seek the same benefit.
10. There was discussion of impact upon council staff, and it was confirmed that no parking enforcement officers were currently deployed on Christmas Day, and that owing to other duties such as enforcing other traffic issues like double yellow parking, accepting the amendment would not involve the deployment of additional officers.
11. The legal process for amending the car parking charges was discussed, and it was confirmed that the view of the council's legal services was that a new full Traffic Regulation Order would not be necessary, with associated costs, and that as a variation to the existing order the alteration could be advertised and made with minimal financial impact.

Conclusion

12. To note that the amendments to the Financial Plan Update 2019/20 proposed by Cllr Gavin Grant have been scrutinised; and
13. To ask Full Council to take note of the comments of the Committee, was detailed above.

Councillor Graham Wright
Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Report Author: Kieran Elliott, Senior Democratic Services Officer, 01225 718504 or kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk

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