

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

8 February 2022

Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Report on Proposed Amendments for the 2022/23 Budget

Purpose of report

1. To report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee the proposed amendments from Cllr Ian Thorn and Cllr Gavin Grant to the budget recommended to Cabinet on 1 February 2022 for the committee to appraise and raise any comments to Full Council.

Background

2. This meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee provides an opportunity for non-executive councillors to question Cllr Ian Thorn and Cllr Gavin Grant, on the proposed amendments before the budget is considered by Full Council on 15 February 2022.

Proposed Budget Amendment from Cllr Ian Thorn and Cllr Gavin Grant

3. The proposal is to remove the following savings:
 - Reduce funding for lunch clubs for older adults
 - Reduce funding for Friendship Clubs for adults with learning disabilities
4. The savings above total £0.106m in 2022/23 and an additional £0.106m in 2023/24.
5. 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.
6. The impact of the removal of the savings is proposed to be met by drawing on the new Business Plan Priority Reserve for 2022/23. The value to be set aside in the Business Plan Priority Reserve is estimated in the Quarter 3 Revenue Budget Monitoring report 2021/22 to be £0.397m with an additional contribution planned in 2022/23 of £0.112m and the balance in this reserve would therefore reduce to £0.403m at the end of 2022/23.
7. Future year impacts from 2023/24 will be dependent on the Rapid Scrutiny outcomes which could result in a recommendation to Cabinet one of four outcomes. If the recommendation affects future years budgets this would need to be addressed as part of future budget setting processes. The outcomes are set out below:

- The saving is delivered at the same level
- The saving is delivered at a reduced level
- The saving is not delivered
- A pressure may be identified if funding is deemed insufficient

8. The above proposal has the following impact on the MTFS:

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

S.151 Officer Comments

9. The proposal has been costed and this has been included in the figures above. This identifies that the amendment balances and therefore does not impact on the 2022/23 net base budget proposed in the original paper to Cabinet and in doing so meets the financial test for an amendment to the budget to be considered by Full Council.
10. However, the amendment has the potential to increase the financial pressure facing the Council in future years. Although this is dependent on the outcome of the proposed rapid scrutiny exercise, 3 out of 4 of the outcomes listed will lead to an increased financial pressure.
11. The intended use of the Business Plan Priority Reserve in 2022/23 and potentially again in 2023/24 will fund this to enable this amendment to be funded on a one off basis, but this will mean there is reduced one off funding available to be spent on priorities to meet the Councils new business plan as the reserve was intended.
12. Ultimately if the rapid scrutiny process outcome is one that increases cost, the potential worse case position is that further savings to the value of £0.212m will be needed to be found from 2024/25, and this will be on top of the existing £10.705m budget gap the Council estimates in year 3 of the MTFS.
13. There are tables in Appendix 1 – MTFS of the budget report that will be amended if the amendment is approved.

Monitoring Officer Comments

14. As Monitoring Officer, I can confirm that having considered the proposal in advance and in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, I can confirm that bearing in mind the set of decisions that Council will be asked to consider in setting the budget for 2022/23,

including the net budget requirement and the level of Council Tax, there is nothing in the proposals, as drafted, that could impact adversely on the Cabinet's budget recommendations. Clearly questions of policy are a matter for Members, but I can also confirm, that there is no legal reason that would prevent the amendment being implemented, were it agreed.

15. The Constitution at Part 8 and paragraph 11 contains provision for agenda items to be added to the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, such as the proposed Rapid Scrutiny process, including because of a request from the Council, the Leader of the Opposition and any five Members.

Head of Paid Service Comments

16. As Head of Paid Service, I can confirm that officers have provided independent advice. We are aware of the full details of the amendments, and they are policy amendments in nature. Officers view is that commissioned provision outcomes are preferable to grant payments.

Conclusion

17. Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee are asked to consider the proposed amendments to the financial plan 2022/23 and inform Full Council on 15 February 2022.