

APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Minutes of 13 February 2025

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

25 February 2025

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on the Wiltshire Council Budget 2025/26 - Amendments

Purpose of report

1. To provide to Full Council a summary of the key issues discussed at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 13 February 2025.

Background

2. The meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 13 February 2025 provided an opportunity to scrutinise amendments to the budget. The meeting on 28 January 2025 had considered the initial proposals from the Cabinet, which were subsequently agreed at Cabinet on 4 February 2025 for recommendation to Full Council on 25 February 2025.
3. Two proposed amendments were received for the meeting from Councillor Jon Hubbard.
4. All proposals were provided to the Committee with comments by the Section 151 Officer, Head of Paid Service, and the Monitoring Officer. They were confirmed as financially and legally viable, with comments included on any increased risks such as in relation to use of reserves or use of assumptions to fund additional expenditures.

Proposed Amendments

Amendment A

5. The proposal from Councillor Hubbard was as follows:

To introduce free swimming for children and young people during school holidays across Council run facilities within Wiltshire.

6. This would have the following financial impact on the 2025/26 base budget:

Proposal	Impact £m
To introduce free swimming for children and young people during school holidays across Council run facilities within Wiltshire.	
2025/26 pressure of proposal	0.406
2026/27 pressure of proposal	0.429
2027/28 pressure of proposal	0.453

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Total pressure across MTFS	1.288
Funding Proposal of Pressure	
Increase Council Tax by 0.115% in 2025/26 resulting in an impact of £1.288m over the MTFS period	1.288

Amendment B

7. The proposal from Councillor Hubbard was as follows:

A permanent increase in Wiltshire Reablement Services. This would deliver increased capacity to work with individuals to improve levels of independence and quality of life and reduce reliance of funded long-term care.

8. This would have the following financial impact on the 2025/26 base budget:

Proposal	Impact £m
A permanent increase in Wiltshire Reablement Services. This would deliver increased capacity to work with individuals to improve levels of independence and quality of life and reduce reliance of funded long-term care.	
2025/26 pressure of proposal	1.324
2026/27 pressure of proposal	1.400
2027/28 pressure of proposal	1.477
Total pressure across MTFS	4.201
Funding Proposal of Pressure	
Increase Council Tax by 0.375% in 2025/26 resulting in an impact of £4.201m over the MTFS period	4.201

9. For each amendment, the Chairman gave the opportunity for Members of the Cabinet who were present to respond if they wished, as well as opportunity for the Corporate Leadership Team to add anything further to the statutory officer comments provided with the submissions. The Section 151 Officer, Lizzie Watkin, provided clarification on the amendments where appropriate.

Introduction of the Amendments

Amendment A

10. Councillor Jon Hubbard presented the amendment with it outlined that there had been a decline in physical activity levels for children particularly from low-income backgrounds and that swimming was a life skill and that regardless of background young people should have an opportunity to stay active. It was suggested that swimming would provide structure and reduce isolation whilst improving wellbeing. It was noted that this amendment was proposed on the cautious assumption that some people would continue to pay for swimming lessons which would mitigate the potential impact. Furthermore, that the amendments would cost 4p per week. It was suggested that this proposal was in line with the Wiltshire Council Business Plan and represented sensible, evidence-based investment whilst being financially sustainable.

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Amendment B

11. Councillor Jon Hubbard presented the amendment with it noted that reablement was a proven cost-effective approach for supporting individuals to regain independence after hospital stays and reduced pressure on social care. The amendment proposed an additional 450 hours of support a week including therapy and the expansion of the reablement team which would prevent higher costs in the future should adult social care prices rise. It was suggested that this would be a sustainable way of expanding the service for 13p per week. It was suggested that this proposal was in line with the Wiltshire Council Business Plan and represented sensible, evidence-based investment whilst being financially sustainable.

Key issues raised during questioning and debate

12. Clarity was sought regarding how much free swimming has cost in the past, to which it was noted that the costing basis for the amendment had been based on current use and charges for children and up to date information for leisure services rather than past and pre-pandemic data. Additionally, the notion of additional administrative and lifeguarding costs had been considered as prudent assumptions.

13. It was noted that additional income such as paying parents had not been included within the costing of amendment A and that the proposal costing took a worst-case scenario perspective.

14. Other ways of providing free swimming were discussed, with a past example of Area Board grant funding being used to provide swimming lessons.

15. A discussion took place as to why these specific amendments had been proposed rather than ones to increase other areas of funding, to which it was clarified that Councillors were able to put forth amendments for individual areas in which they held passion for and that it was a personal belief that these areas could benefit from further spending.

16. Clarity was sought as to how the amendments correlated or caused risk to the Business Plan, to which it was noted that the Business Plan had strategic objectives for prevention, early intervention and improving the quality of resident's lives, to which it was suggested that the amendments aligned with.

17. A point was raised as to why the respective Cabinet Members had not considered these amendments within the draft budget, to which it was suggested that it was likely that the Cabinet Members had considered the spending within the amendments, however they had not been included within the financial envelope proposed by the administration. The amendments tabled therefore sought to expand the spending proposed, with it suggested that investment in both services would bring a higher return in cash savings and life quality.

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Conclusion

18. Cllr Hubbard was thanked for submitting his budget proposals to the Committee, and it was noted that they had been scrutinised.
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

Report Author: Ben Fielding, Senior Democratic Services Officer (Democratic Services), 01225 718656 or Benjamin.Fielding@wiltshire.gov.uk

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