

Wiltshire Council

Council

23 February 2016

Item 7 - Wiltshire Council's Financial Plan Update 2016/17

Amendment to Budget

The following amendment is likely to be moved by Councillors Jon Hubbard and Jeff Osborn:

May we start by offering an apology, it is very late in the day to be introducing a proposed budget amendment, even one for just £50,000, but changes to the funding from Central Government and the decision of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to not ask the Cabinet Member to review his decision regarding the Wiltshire Hopper has led to us deciding to make this last ditch attempt to save this valued service.

Whilst the Wiltshire Hopper does only serve a proportion of the county, this does not mean that there is not a need, nor does it mean that we should automatically cease the service because not all Wiltshire residents can benefit. On that basis, for example, we should not be putting any funding into supporting the CCTV in Salisbury.

However, it is fair to say that a service like this should only receive the same levels of subsidy that other comparable services receive, and should be subject to the same challenges of austerity that all other non-statutory services are.

The amendment below acknowledges fully the administration's decision to cease all funding for the Wiltshire Hopper service, but looks to phase this in over a 12 month period to allow for Town and Parish councils to step up and take over the funding of the service. Should the Town and Parish councils decline to take up this initiative or not be in a position to take ownership of service by end of October 2016 then all funding would cease and the service would end.

This also gives an opportunity to communities that do not currently enjoy the Wiltshire Hopper service to consider if they would like to join the consortium to expand the service area.

The cost to continue to service for a further 6 months will be £50,000.

It is proposed to raise this funding by:

1. Reducing the mileage allowance paid to elected members for travel from 45p per mile to 25p per mile. This would raise £30,000. It is worth noting that members would be able to benefit from Mileage Allowance Relief from the Tax Office for the reduced mileage allowance (<https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/business-mileage-fuel-costs>) meaning that they would be able

claim rebate for any reduction in their fuel payments. It is also worth noting that the concept of councillor allowances is to repay councillors for any out-of-pocket expenses. The council has calculated that the cost of running a fleet car is 25p per mile and the AA calculate the cost of running a car at between 17.26p and 29.06p per mile

(<http://www.theaa.com/resources/Documents/pdf/motoring-advice/running-costs/petrol2014.pdf>) with only the very most expensive vehicles coming in at more than 25p per mile.

2. Using £20,000 of the additional £3.017m transitional funding announced last week by Central Government. This would equate to less than 0.7% of this funding being used to help try and save this vital service.

As stated earlier, this additional £50k of funding will provide 6 month's funding. If funding from Towns, Parishes or other sources cannot be secured within that period then it is clear that there is no further opportunity to save the service and Wiltshire Council will have explored all possible options to try and secure its future.

We hope that you recognise that this is not a Party political issue, it is a community one. We sincerely hope that the council will be able to support this amendment when it is made on Tuesday and give the time for the Wiltshire Hopper Service to find a long-term future.

Statutory Officers' comments

The late proposal from Cllrs Hubbard and J Osborn has been discussed with minimal information by the statutory officers and Corporate Directors. Based on the limited information we have, the proposal could be funded within the proposed net expenditure and is not ultra vires. The proposals would not change the net budget requirement, the level of Council Tax or reserves proposed. However there are potential risks with the proposals that have not been fully scrutinised or thought through and that could affect the level of savings or costings, for example the length of retaining the service before transfer to any Town / Parish council(s) could mean additional costs; without detailed confirmation of how the scheme would run there is a risk of hidden costs; we have no assurances over liability transfer which again could result in hidden costs.