

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CABINET
MONDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2016 AT 2.00 P.M.**

Agenda Item No.

X

**COUNTY COUNCIL
TUESDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2016 AT 10.00AM**

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X

**SCRUTINY OF THE INTEGRATED PLAN PROPOSALS 2016/17 – 2019/20:
Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

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1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To inform Cabinet and County Council of

- (a) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's scrutiny of the integrated plan (IP) proposals 2016/17 – 2019/20, including consideration of options identified by the Executive for meeting the unfunded savings gap for 2016/17; and
- (b) the comments and suggestions made by the Committee as a result of that scrutiny.

2. Summary

2.1 At its meeting on 11 December 2015, prior to its formal scrutiny, the Committee received a briefing from the Assistant Director of Finance, Resources and Performance, who provided Members with an authority-wide overview of resources, pressures and key issues for the Council for 2016/17 and future years.

2.2 The Committee's scrutiny of the Integrated Plan 2015/16 – 2017/18 was conducted over two days; commencing on 27 January 2016, when it gathered its evidence via a 'scrutiny café', and concluding on 3 February 2016, when it agreed its comments and suggestions for Cabinet's consideration. These are set out in section 3 of the report below.

3. Committee Comments

3.1 Options for meeting the budget shortfall for 2016/17

- 3.1.1 The Committee was supportive of the proposal to reduce the Member Locality Budgets from £10,000 to £5,000 per Member.
- 3.1.2 There were no other comments on the potential options identified by Cabinet for meeting the budget shortfall in 2016/17.

3.2 Committee Suggestions

3.2.1 That Cabinet gives consideration to the following:-

1. Assessing the impact on the Council's services of the changing demographics in the County so that future pressures and challenges can be addressed through detailed service plans and within the financial constraints within which the Council is operating.
2. Improving and strengthening partnership working through the further development of the relationships between all County Council departments and their stakeholders, including Health, the LEP, other tiers of local government, and the voluntary sector.
3. Investigating how localism and devolution activities can directly involve partners, particularly lower-tier authorities, rather than being driven in 'top-down' manner; and how they can be used to better support local economic development and prosperity.
4. Enabling smaller and medium sized local businesses to better understand the County Council's procurement processes to promote the local economy.
5. Investigating what further cross-portfolio/partnership working opportunities exist to ensure utilisation of the expertise and experience of trained officers/staff across different services to generate future savings and service resilience.
6. Ensuring Council staff have the right skills to secure Hertfordshire County Council's position as a leading, innovative Authority.
7. Continuing to look for opportunities to maximise the use of the Council's property assets:
 - (a) To ensure the most appropriate sites are used for services, including co-location e.g. retained fire stations and libraries
 - (b) To encourage services and partners to share accommodation
 - (c) To ensure rental charges help address budget challenges

- (d) To further support stakeholders and volunteers in helping to deliver services for the community
- (e) To examine ways of increasing business and income through County Council traded services.
- (f) To develop a strategic plan to address the maintenance and quality of school buildings across the County.

- 8. Developing a clear strategy for encouraging and supporting volunteering across services.
- 9. Promoting the use of buses in Hertfordshire.
- 10. Developing an arrangement with local authorities within Hertfordshire to increase the correct collection and usage of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

3.2.2 The Committee also requested that Cabinet and Cabinet Panels note its comments below:-

Adult Care and Health and Environment, Planning and Transport

- 1. That consideration be given to transferring the Dial-A-Ride service from Environment to Adult Care and Health and lowering the age limit for those able to use the service to 60.

Children's Services

- 2. That waiting times for the Family Safeguarding Project be reviewed.
- 3. That the recording of asylum seeking children be reviewed.

Community Safety and Waste Management

- 4. That the risks and uncertainties involved with the proposals to manage Hertfordshire's residual waste be reviewed in detail.

Environment, Planning and Transport

- 5. That the impact on the budget of removing trees across the County infected with ash dieback be investigated so that provision can be put in place to meet the cost of this potential risk.
- 6. That strategic planning partnerships across Hertfordshire and neighbouring authorities be created to clarify the ongoing impact upon infrastructure, particularly with regard to housing development, to assess future budgetary implications for the Council.

Highways

7. That the potential for carrying out work concurrently with partners rather than consecutively in order to improve future cost efficiencies and customer service be established.
8. That Government be lobbied with a view to making public highways data from other local authorities available.

Public Health

9. To aid the lay reader, that future Public Health plans clarify statutory and non-statutory obligations and priorities within the Service's financial constraints.

3.2.3 The Leader of the Council and relevant Executive Members are asked to respond to these comments and suggestions prior to the Committee's meeting on 20 April 2016.

4. Background

- 4.1 As agreed by Members, the Committee received background and contextual information from the Assistant Director, Resources and Performance at its meeting in December 2015. The Director's report provided the Committee with an authority-wide overview of resources, pressures and key issues for the Council for the forthcoming period. As well as providing the Committee with the information necessary to inform its scrutiny, the briefing also provided Members with an opportunity for preliminary discussion on the Council's draft Integrated Plan and to identify some of the issues they wished to explore further during the scrutiny process.
- 4.2 As in previous years, the Committee's formal scrutiny was conducted over two days; the first of which was used to gather evidence; the second to agree its findings, conclusions and suggestions to Cabinet.
- 4.3 The Committee adopted a 'scrutiny café' approach to its evidence gathering and, for this purpose, the Council's service/budget areas were divided into 8 groups, based on the portfolios of each Executive Member:-
 - 'Children's Services'
 - 'Community Safety & Waste Management'
 - 'Highways'
 - 'Public Health, Localism & Libraries'
 - 'Adult Care & Health'
 - 'Enterprise, Education & Skills'
 - 'Environment, Planning & Transport'
 - 'Resources & Performance'
- 4.4 Members of the Committee were divided into eight groups, with each group assigned a portfolio from which to gather evidence based on the following themes:-

- Strategy and Capital Investment
- Engagement
- Performance, Standards & Targets
- Sustainability, Deliverability and Implementation

4.5 All Members of the Council were notified of the scrutiny and were invited to attend. A number of Members took up this invitation and, with the Chairman's agreement, participated in the 'evidence gathering' part of the scrutiny.

4.6 The Committee reconvened on 3 February 2016 to agree its comments and suggestions for Cabinet's consideration.

5. Suggestions from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

5.1 The Committee's comments and suggestions on the draft Integrated Plan 2016/17 – 2019/20 are set out in section 3 of the report above; they will also be considered by the Resources and Performance Cabinet Panel at its meeting on 12 February 2015. The Panel's comments will be reported to Cabinet.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 The financial implications of the Integrated Plan proposals 2016/17 – 2019/20 are as set out in the Integrated Plan proposals also being considered at this meeting.

7. Equalities Implications

7.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the equalities implications of the decision that they are taking.

7.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.

7.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

- 7.4 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken on the draft Integrated Plan proposals 2016/17 – 2019/20 and this is included within the Integrated Plan proposals also being considered at this meeting.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 Cabinet is asked to take into account the comments and suggestions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when considering the Integrated Plan proposals.

Background Information

Reports & Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings held in October 2015 and December 2015

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