

## COMMENTS FROM THE PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### Background

At its meeting on 17 December 2015 the Performance Scrutiny Committee considered a report that formed part of a series relating to the Service and Resource Planning process for 2016/17 to 2019/20.

The Committee considered in turn the savings proposed by each directorate for their service areas. The Committee were invited to consider and comment on: the savings options and in light of the feedback from the public consultation to identify those savings that are the least acceptable; and the LGA report and the Council response.

The Performance Scrutiny Committee held a further meeting on 7 January 2016 where they considered a further report relating to the Service and Resource Planning process for 2016/17 to 2019/20. The Committee considered the capital programme, the Treasury Management Strategy, the revised Corporate Plan and the Provisional local Government Finance Settlement.

The comments below are presented to Cabinet in order that they can take the comments into consideration in proposing their budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

On 17 December the Committee identified the following saving proposals as those that are least acceptable:

Ref No	Name	Proposal	TOTAL £000
<b>Children, Education &amp; Families</b>			
CEF13	Services for disabled children and families	Contracts for a range of day and overnight short-break care services commissioned for disabled children with parents, young people and other partners are due to finish in March 2017. The council would review these services during 2016, in consultation with families and other key partners. The council wishes to make sure the funding available is used to achieve the best possible outcomes. The review would include the residential short break services, which are jointly funded by the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group with a contribution from Barnardos.	-250

Ref No	Name	Proposal	TOTAL 000s
<b>Adult Social Care</b>			
SCS7	Emergency response - redesign emergency response services	Reduce duplication and overheads by redesigning emergency response and crisis services by combining the Crisis Response Service, the Emergency Carers Support Service and Telecare monitoring and response services. This will lead to more cost effective and responsive services.	-200
SCS8	Carers - Carers Oxfordshire	A reduction in the contract with Carers Oxfordshire could be made by reducing expenditure on marketing, information, advice and support, training, and the carers partnership board. This would focus resources on continuing to meet statutory responsibilities. The remaining funds would be focused on areas of greatest need such as face to face support and volunteer befriending.	-160
SCS9	Information and advice	Consolidating existing contracts information and advice services whilst maintaining statutory requirements under the Care Act, focusing on specialist advice e.g. accessing benefits, managing debt and finding your own care and support.	-120
SCS10	Carers – respite	Review the way respite is provided to focus more on alternatives to bed based respite i.e. increased care at home could provide more effective ways of ensuring carers get the breaks they need.	-100
SCS21a	Tier 2 Day Services (Voluntary Sector provided day services)	Stopping funding day services provided by voluntary and community sector organisations. The majority of users (95%) of these services are not eligible for care and support from the council. Ending the funding could also mean transport savings. The council would assist current services to become financially independent where it is possible to do so; commission a new older peoples' community prevention service; ensure people using these services are aware of the information and advice options, which can inform and advise about what else is available in Oxfordshire, and work with the voluntary sector to look at options for increasing their role in delivering day opportunities.	-750
SCS21b	Tier 3 Day Services (Health and Wellbeing Centres)	A saving of £2,050,000 could be achieved by stopping funding the seven Health and Wellbeing centres provided by the Council, and one provided by the Leonard Cheshire Trust. Stopping the funding would release capital and revenue savings and possibly savings in transport costs. The council would assist current services to become financially independent where it is possible to do so; commission a new older peoples' community prevention service; ensure people using these services are aware of the information and advice options, which can inform and advise about what else is available in Oxfordshire, and work with the voluntary sector to look at options for increasing their	-2,050

		role in delivering day opportunities.	
SCS21c	Transport to day services	Savings of £200,000 may result from stopping funding of Tier 2 and Tier 3 day services as outlined above. This is because the council provides transport to and from these services for a number of people.	-200
SCS25	Intervention and preventative services - Dementia	Savings could be achieved by a reduction in funding for the Dementia Support Service once the current contracts expire in 2019/20.	-400
SCS27	Intermediate care - Reablement	A review and redesign of the reablement service to deliver more effective, lower cost community-based support to help people regain and maintain independence.	-300
SCS28	Carers – Carers charging	Introducing charging for carers' services. This would put carers onto the same basis as the people they support, whereby an assessment and support plan would be developed and the cost of meeting their support needs calculated, as well as an assessment of their ability to contribute to the cost of the support they need. This proposal could lead to a rise in income for the council and there could be an opportunity to target available resources more effectively towards more vulnerable carers who need additional help by reviewing what types of support are most supportive and effective for carers.	-200
SCS29	Carers – Carers grants	Reducing funding to carers with eligible needs for support could save £200,000. This would create a stronger link between need and funding in line with the Care Act and create an opportunity to improve the targeting of available resources towards more vulnerable carers.	-200
Fire & Rescue Service			
FRS2	Trading Standards management and enforcement review	<p>Greater integration with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue and other local authorities and the development of a volunteer co-ordinator post could lead to some functions being supported by volunteers.</p> <p>In the medium term, the council could remove four further enforcement posts, reduce consumer advice and education posts. Greater integration with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue and other local authorities and the development of a volunteer co-ordinator post could lead to some functions being supported by volunteers. The service could also seek to work closer with Thames Valley Police (including joint funding) especially around cyber-crime and human exploitation.</p>	-270
Environment & Economy			

E&E25	Area Stewardship	Reduce service down to statutory only, i.e. maintain a safe highway, incl. through safety inspections. Area Stewards would no longer be available to discuss and resolve issues on day to day basis – would mean increased use of Fix My Street and empowering parish councils to identify and/or undertake potential work.	-620
-------	------------------	---	------

The Committee made the following **RECOMMENDATIONS** on specific proposals:

**SCS20** Review of contracts – Healthwatch (Reducing funding for Healthwatch Oxfordshire by 30%.)

The Committee recommended that in view of the importance of the role played by Healthwatch the saving be phased over 2 years at £50k per year.

**E&E23** Subsidised Buses Consultation Proposals (This remaining funding would result in the routes being totally removed, unless they are linked to home to school transport.) Saving (£000s): **-1,220**

The Committee reiterated the following recommendation from their consideration in November of this matter following the public consultation:

“Cabinet be **RECOMMENDED** to support proceeding with reducing bus subsidies by £2.3m rather than £3.7m and to support updating the methodology to include additional criteria for the rurally isolated and deprived areas.”

The Committee added that if the saving was to go ahead then the Cabinet should ensure that a robust plan was in place on how they will work with communities to reduce the impact.

In addition to the comments on specific proposals the Committee made the following general points:

1. The Committee noted that other bodies including District Councils needed to be engaged around a number of the proposals. It was vital that overarching cuts and budget proposals be aligned with the work of other partners in terms of other models of provision or alternative funding.
2. The Committee discussed the need to ensure that funding to charitable/voluntary organisations was properly accounted for. In recognising that this funding was often in the form of payment for contracted services they asked that Cabinet recognise the need for accountability.

On 7 January 2016, the Committee commented in detail on the Corporate Plan and their comments have been included in draft Corporate Plan before Cabinet.

Referring to the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement Committee noted that that their meeting in December was ahead of the settlement, which had changed the financial position considerably. There was discussion of the change in the formula and the timing of it and Committee supported the Cabinet making the strongest possible response.