

COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Item under consideration: BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR JANUARY 2014

Date Considered: 5 March 2014

- 1 At its meeting on 5 March 2014 the Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered the latest Council-wide budget monitoring report, as well as a summary report highlighting the key issues arising from the budget workshops held by each of the Select Committees to consider their budgets for 2014/2015.
- 2 The Committee discussed the financial impacts on the County Council of the recent flooding, and it was noted that the Government had recently favourably revised the terms of the Bellwin scheme so that 100% of emergency spending incurred by the Council above a threshold of £1.5M could now be reclaimed. However, much of the current estimated £20M cost to the Council from flood damage related to capital expenditure, and this was not eligible for reimbursement under the Bellwin scheme. As the capital required for repairs could not reasonably be met from within the existing Environment & Infrastructure capital budget, it was felt that the only viable option would be to increase borrowing. It was also noted that this additional borrowing would need to be approved as a matter of urgency so that the schemes could be programmed for completion in the 2014/2015 financial year. The Committee agreed the following **recommendation**:
 - (a) That, as a matter of urgency, the Cabinet considers how the Council will fund the cost of repairs required as a result of the recent flooding in the County, including the option to approve additional capital borrowing in 2014/2015, with the interest payments arising from the loan in 2014/2015 and future years to be met from within the Directorate's revenue budget.

Select Committee Feedback from Budget Workshops

In addition to the pressures facing the Environment & Infrastructure budget as a result of the flooding, the Committee was particularly concerned about the issues facing Adult Social Care. These concerns related both to the overall budget and the shortage of trained social worker posts.

The Adult Social Care Select Committee had observed that the Friends, Family and Community Support savings expected in 2013/14 were not achieved and that the £15.5m savings expected in 2014/15 were similarly unobtainable and should be reviewed. In the light of this, and the difficulty of raising the cash limit available to the Directorate without imposing balancing reductions on the budgets of other directorates, the Committee agreed the following **recommendation**:

- (b) That the Cabinet accelerate the Family, Friends and Community Support programme from April 2014 to increase capacity using an Invest to Save bid to review open cases.

The Committee also agreed the following **recommendations**:

- (c) That the effectiveness of voluntary sector grants be reviewed to ensure, where appropriate, these align with and support the objectives of the Family, Friends and Community Support programme.
- (d) That initiatives which have the potential to increase value for money be discussed with providers.
- (e) That efforts to recruit and retain qualified staff to unfilled social worker posts be redoubled.

NICK SKELLETT
Chairman of the Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee
5 March 2013