

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 6 January 2026

PRESENT – Councillors McGill (Chair), Mrs Culley, Keir, Mahmud, M Nicholson, Snedker and Walters

APOLOGIES – Councillors Cossins and Coe

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Garner (Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Anthony Hewitt (Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects), Ben Grabham (Assistant Director Environmental Services and Community Safety), Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources) and Hannah Miller (Democratic Officer)

CLS15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations reported at the meeting.

CLS16 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2026/27 - 2029/30

The Assistant Director Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that Members give consideration to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2026/27 to 2029/30, which had been approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 2 December, as a basis for consultation.

The submitted report stated that an MTFP Briefing that was delivered to Members on 15 December outlining the overall contents of the MTFP, and requested that Members of this Scrutiny Committee now consider contents in relation to the services and finances within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee to enable a response to be formulated and forwarded to the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for consideration at its meeting scheduled to be held on 20 January 2026.

The Assistant Director of Resources provided an update on the draft Local Government finance settlement, which had been received on 17 December, subsequent to the approval of the draft MTFP by Cabinet and advised on the impact this draft settlement had on the assumptions made within that approved draft MTFP.

Discussion ensued regarding the cost savings related to the children's sufficiency programme including how the changes in service demand were modelled; the spend to save transformation programme and what this entailed; and Members queried the additional £0.5m funding for adult social care and whether any further savings could be made in this area.

Members entered into a discussion regarding the pressure relating to the reduced income from Hopetown, with Members noting that a review of all funding and income streams for the museum was being undertaken to address shortfalls; the assumptions in relation to savings made following the review to reduce the number of Councillors; and the implications should the Council tax not be increased by 4.99 per cent.

Members posed questions in relation to the reserves and were informed of the different types of reserves in place; and sought clarification regarding the schedule of charges, with the proposal that these were set annually in line with the Consumer Price Index to ensure charges reflected the staffing costs to deliver services.

Discussion ensued regarding savings and efficiencies, in particular back-office efficiencies; the reasons for the increased budget for ICT; requested clarification regarding the proposed additional spending in Street Scene and the origin of this additional funding; and figures relating to food waste collection.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee be advised that the Members of the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee:-

- i. Request that further work be undertaken to identify additional savings in Adult Social Care;
- ii. Request that a systematic review of the schedule of charges be undertaken.

b) That the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee be advised that the minority view of the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee is that this Committee does not support the proposed council tax increase of 4.99 per cent.

(c) That the Chair, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers supporting this Scrutiny Committee, be given authority to agree the Minutes of this Scrutiny Committee, to enable the Minutes to be considered at a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee scheduled to be held on 20 January 2026.