

**2026/27 Revenue Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2027/28 to 2029/30); including the Capital Programme**

**Comments of Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth)**

4.1 The Overview & Scrutiny (Performance & Growth) Panel discussed the report at its meeting on 4th February 2026.

4.2 Councillor Jennings sought clarification on the proposed 5% salary increase, noting that this appeared high compared with private sector trends and inflation forecasts. He further queried the overall 12.3% increase in salary costs and requested additional information on employee numbers, seeking to understand the factors contributing to the increase across Council departments.

4.3 Councillor Martin asked whether the internal audit budget bid proposed continuing with an external provider or moving the service in-house, noting that an in-house model might offer greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

4.4 Councillor Jennings referred to Appendix 7 on Reserves and queried the absence of the £3 million allocated for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), suggesting that a single consolidated table of all Reserves would be helpful. He also asked what contributions were being made by other Local Authorities with whom the Council may be aligned following LGR, and how fairness in those contributions would be ensured.

4.5 Councillor Martin enquired about the assessments undertaken to determine the financial impact of the current planning fees on the Council.

4.6 Councillor Martin expressed the view that the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) should cover the standard timeframe rather than a reduced period, noting that Local Government Reorganisation may not proceed and that it would be more prudent to await a confirmed Government timetable.

4.7 Councillor Jennings asked whether the earmarked reserves were being reviewed by Cabinet or the Section 151 Officer, suggesting reserves showing no movement over the MTFS period could be released and redirected to more productive use.

4.8 The S151 Officer advised at various points that where needed, additional clarity or corrections would be picked up prior to Council, or matters implemented once the overall budget framework was agreed by Council.

4.9 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for an informed decision to be made on the report recommendations.